

Regional Dialect Variation in English Language

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Abstract

Many researchers have proven English to be an international language that extends beyond limitation and imagination. The English language is widely spoken across the world to the extent that it has varieties. A number of countries and regions especially British and America have their own ways and style of spelling English words, using irregular verbs past and past participle, using English vocabularies, abbreviating words, interpreting words, pronouncing words, expressing sounds, pronouncing accents, pronouncing numbers, using grammars, describing events, applying words and inserting collective nouns. The current study attempts to specifically focus on English dialect variations in Jordan, Britain and America. The study compares English grammars, spellings, pronunciations and vocabularies in these regions. The study extends its analysis to the difficulties encountered by EFL and native speakers in speaking, writing, listening and reading other dialects. To achieve the research objectives, comparative and analytical approaches were adopted. The study concludes that familiarizing oneself with these variations is essential and unavoidable. This is to ensure that a dialect speaker benefits from other dialect speakers, comprehends the content of their message correctly and avoids committing dialect blunders. Consequently, the study recommends that EFL teachers and learners must possess orthographical and oral knowledge of these dialects. It suggests that variations in these regional dialects be incorporated in course-books for educational practices.

Keywords: English Language, Dialect Variations, EFL Teachers and Learners, Orthographical

Introduction

Dialects modify the daily spoken language between the people and the language aspects due to the close relationship between the phenomena of language. Dialects are among the most important requirements of language. If the goal of studying language is to understand its mentality and culture, then studying dialect is one of its tools. Language records the intellectual and cultural changes that have taken place, and local dialects are influenced by these changes. The study of dialects has made a significant contribution to unlocking the mysteries of change and development affecting linguistic structures and compositions, as well as tracing their recurring transformations over time, and the resulting paradoxical uses governed by the process of linguistic and dialectal modernization (Beal, 2010).

Researchers in the field of linguistic research cannot fail to recognize the importance of dialect studies and the justifications they have reached, which transcend the weight of theoretical references and reach the practical achievements of the field within European higher research centers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as the modernization developments that have occurred in this field at the present time. Following this, the research turned to some concepts and approaches specific to the study of dialects, in terms of etymology and derivation, within the ancient linguistic study. This was done in an attempt to identify the features of hybridization and purity between regional dialect variation in the English language. Accordingly, the research turned to tracing dialectal studies within a given language, with the aim of exploring the mechanisms and circumstances of its development, as well as how to extract fixed rules for the development of a language or several languages. These rules can then be compared to the rules of development of other languages, which are more comprehensive and stable (Hughes, Trudgill & Watt, 2013). Thus, researchers can arrive at a better understanding of the evolution of language within humans.

There is no doubt that this type of study helps us understand the levels of convergence and divergence between regional dialects in terms of sounds, morphologies, structures, and other aspects that will help future researchers develop a linguistic atlas of Jordanian dialects, similar to what we find in developed countries that have made great strides in this type of study (Kretzschmar, 2004). Therefore, the study examines the issues raised by this approach, based on the premise it seeks to address, namely: "Regional Dialect Variation in English Language". This approach necessitated approaching this question by starting from the following questions:

- 1) To what extent is there a connection or relationship between the regional dialects and the English language?
- 2) What are the justifications that led the regional dialect to diverge from its origin?
- 3) What are the areas of similarities and variations between regional dialects and English language at the phonetic level?

It is worth noting that the choice of choosing this topic stems from some of the problems that comparative linguistics studies in general raise, and the need for the phonetic component to clarify the features of regional dialect variation in English language with a degree of specificity and uniqueness. Perhaps this is reinforced by the fact that the research is not satisfied with the theoretical aspect alone, but rather attempts to work on the theoretical approach, supported by the practical approach, as it is readily available in some spoken dialect models.

Hence, working on comparing it with regional dialects, with the aim of revealing the features of similarity and difference between the two approaches.

Here, the research objective appears: to identify the phonetic changes that have affected English language in general and distanced it from the regional dialects. Thus, it is possible to explore the features of phonetic differences between English dialects, according to the requirements of their distinct and unique contrast. The regional dialect may differ in some phonetic phenomena, but may also be compatible and agree with the standard English language in many phonetic phenomena. Based on this foundation, phonetic change may deviate a word from its origin due to similarity, disagreement, spatial inversion, substitution, or deletion, whether of a vowel or a letter. This increases the ambiguity of the word and makes it difficult to interpret it, as it appears to the listener at first glance to be completely different from standard English. Therefore, the current study defines the main concepts of the research, then examines linguists' views of dialects. Naturally, this study relies on description and comparison across various linguistic fields. It attempts to explain and justify these phenomena by referring to other English dialects in British and America. Consequently, the phonetic phenomena observed in regional dialects include substitution, assimilation, conversion, deletion, inclination, stress, intonation, and carving.

The Relationship between Language and Dialect

The relationship between language and dialect is essential, as they are embedded within the fabric of linguistic communication in the social environment. The relationship between them is one of generality and particularity. However, the elements of agreement between them remain to maintain understanding between the environments of a single language (Kretzschmar, 2018).

The historical context of any language indicates the possibility that it was a dialect among a number of dialects. Then many factors occurred that led to the death and extinction of the language, and the spread of each dialect across a region of the earth, forming a language with its own characteristics and features that distinguish it from other languages. This has also occurred in the various semitic languages, which trace their origins back to the mother tongue, which disappeared long ago (Linguistics and World Englishes, 2020).

What is clear is that the relationship between language and dialect was not clearly defined among scholars, as we find them dealing with the term dialect according to a vision that differs from modern linguistic usage. Scholars sometimes expressed what we now call dialect by using the word 'language' and at other times by 'tongue'. This is clearly evident in ancient dictionaries and in some literary novels (Munawaroh, 2023).

While the ancients used the term "dialect" as a synonym for "language," modern scholars have recognized the fundamental differences between the two categories and have treated language as a root from which a number of dialects branch out. Each dialect acquires specific characteristics belonging to a particular environment, and these characteristics are shared by all members of this environment. As for language in modern usage, it comprises several dialects, each with its own distinctive features. All of these dialects share a set of linguistic characteristics and speech habits that constitute a language independent from other languages (Wolfram, 1991).

The Concept of Dialect

According to the modern scientific definition, a dialect is based on a set of linguistic characteristics that belong to a particular environment, and which are shared by the individuals of that environment. The dialect environment is part of a broader, more comprehensive environment, comprising several dialects, each with its own characteristics, but all of which share a set of linguistic phenomena that facilitate communication between the individuals of these environments and enable them to understand the conversations that may take place between them. Hence, it is a specific way of linguistic usage, found in specific language environments. It can also be described as the speech habits of a small group of people within a larger group who speak a single language (Abdul-Jeleel, 2013). Therefore, a dialect is a local form of speech used in a wide environment.

According to this principle, dialect becomes a variable regional discourse, whose phonetic and phonological characteristics, as well as its lexical and, rarely, morphosyntactic peculiarities, differ from those of the dominant English language. This variation is generally not so different as to lead to incomprehension between Jordanian English speakers who speak only this regional dialect and others who speak British or American English language.

From this statement, It could be inferred that dialect is a form of language with a specific system at the individual, syntactic, and phonetic levels, and is used in a narrow environment compared to the language itself. Dialects generally have a specific environment and are usually used in everyday life. Perhaps this explains the multiplicity and diversity of dialects within a single language, as village dialects differ from one another. We also find this difference existing between Bedouin dialects, on the one hand, and urban dialects, on the other. Indeed, within a single city, the dialects vary according to the variety of neighborhoods or crafts. For example, the language of fishermen differs from the language of carpenters and from the language of intellectuals. Indeed, the language of poetry differs from the language of prose among intellectuals themselves. This is due to the difference in environment and the difference in the daily affairs that concern each of them. Each dialect is distinguished by characteristics that make it different from other dialects. These characteristics are limited to sounds, their nature, and how they are produced. What distinguishes one dialect from another is some phonetic difference. However, the dialects of a single language must share the overwhelming majority of words and their meanings, most of the foundations that govern the structure of words, and, above all, the structure of sentences. Hence, it could be concluded that dialect is the sum of linguistic features spoken by the inhabitants of a particular environment to express their purposes. These features are evident in its sounds, meanings, and structures, distinguishing them from other dialects or from the mother tongue. With these linguistic characteristics, a dialect is not completely separate from the mother tongue. The patterns within which the various uses are organized are merely conventions agreed upon by previous people according to need, context, and the times in which they were introduced (Ibrahimi, 2015).

Language Variation

To command any language perfectly and command it confidently, it is essential to learn, study, explore and understand its variations. English is no longer a local language, but an international and official language in many countries (Kretschmar, 2018). As a result of the

worldwide acceptance of the English language, Tsui (2007) predicts billion users of English in the next few decades to come.

Accent or dialect is the major factor that draws differences and variations between various kinds of spoken English globally. Factors like diction, pronunciations, spelling, sound and structure bring variations between American and British English (Péter and Robert, 2015). An individual could be a cause of English language variations. Individual's vicinity, region or nation may influence variations in English language. Therefore, it would be of utmost importance to use sociolinguistic study to investigate all these language variations (Crystal, 2003).

Hitherto, American English is still the most powerful and largest spoken English worldwide because the United States of America controls the important structures and sectors across the world (Castells, 2007). Conversely, Pam (2009) argues that British English is not universally used and promoted as American English (Linguistics and World Englishes, 2020).

Randi Reppen et al (2002) submits that a number of factors systematically control language variation phenomenon. The researchers summarize that: *"Variability is inherent in human language: a single speaker will use different linguistic forms on different occasions, and different speakers of a language will express the same meanings using different forms. Most of this variation is highly systematic: speakers of a language make choices in pronunciation, morphology and grammar depending on a number of non-linguistic factors. These factors include the speaker's purpose in communication, the relationship between speaker and hearer, the production circumstances, and various demographic affiliations that a speaker can have"*.

The rationale behind English language variations across Europe, England, United Kingdom and Western World is not just geographical but historical. Language simultaneously operates in two main dimensions such as vertical dimension of time and horizontal dimension of space. The former is also known as synchronic axis, while the latter is referred to as diachronic axis. Additionally, language variation may also be caused by another dimension called social dimension. Social dimension may be as a result of variation between social classes in the society. Meanwhile, language variations occur more in the United Kingdom than the USA because of its historical involvement. Hence, studying the social history of the English language would give a clearer picture on how variations find its way to the English language (Crystal, 2022).

English in recent times has no geographical boundary as English in the UK comes and appears with its accent known as Received Pronunciation (RP), which is equally BBC English largely used by middle and upper classes in the society. RP as a popular concept in the UK has no recognition and relevancy in all other English speaking countries. Linguists argued that Standard English (SE) is not tied to language accent, structure, vocabulary, orthography or pronunciation, but best defined as a written form of English language (Trudgill 1995). Stubbs (1986) contended that accent is however standardized because people have knowledge of what is standard and less-standard in pronunciation. An example of a standard accent is the "RP accent" widely accepted and recognized as the British English accent standard, just as

“standard English” is globally recognized as the standard written form of English language (Mugglestone, 2017).

Succinctly, while regional dialects and accents synchronize, it is however established that Standard English can be expressed and spoken with any accent. As a matter of fact, the BBC as a body promoting both RP and Standard English has lately encouraged regional accents and dialects for its presenters. Meanwhile, during the establishment days of the BBC, RP accents alongside Standard English were embraced, but regrettably, attitudes towards the use of regional dialects and accents in public domain has drastically changed, thereby devaluing the recognition of regional dialects in the face of international-foreign language in a place like Jordan.

Despite the fact that English is a worldwide language with uncountable users and speakers across the globe, it is still unescapable from variations that happen to other languages. English accent, sound and tone vary from one individual to another; one community to another and one region to another region. Abderrahim (2015) demonstrates the fact that grammar, phonology, semantics and vocabularies distance American English from British English. As such, the current study aims at analyzing the phonological and syntactic variations between American and British English used in the Jordanian official broadcasting “News at Ten”.

Status of English Language in Jordan

English is majorly the dominant foreign language in Jordan. Towards making English a second language after the official Arabic language, policy makers have made it a compulsory subject at universities, colleges and all primary, secondary, private and public schools levels. Apart from making English a medium of instruction in schools and institutions, it has been made a prerequisite for securing a reliable and well-paid job at Jordanian job-markets. As a matter of fact, the importance of English language as a second and foreign language in Jordan has also been extended to media, businesses and scientific studies (Pandey & Pandey, 2014).

In ensuring that the English language is spread across Jordan and becomes a national language, education was used as a driving factor to ensure every Jordanian is versed and proficient in English language. Similarly, media platforms including Radio and TV stations were used to spread and expose Jordanians to the English language (Drbseh, 2013). Internet and English newspapers equally assisted in reaching and preparing a large number of Jordanians with English knowledge. All these in sum gave English national recognition in Jordan (Al-Saidat, 2009).

Variations between British and American English

It is essential for a language learner to know that variations and differences exist between British and American English. British and American English is the main reference for all English speakers and writers across the world. British English in particular has motivated many countries to develop their own unique sound, idioms, vocabularies, pronunciation and dialects from the English language.

According to Munawaroh (2023), spelling, vocabulary, phonology and grammar draw major differences between British and American English. The most strongest level of variations between British and American English occurs at the phonological level, followed by the

vocabulary level. Grammatical differences and spelling variations are proven to be less important and significant in the language variations (Smith, 2018).

Examples of Variations in American and British English

Crystal (2003) established the fact that vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation variations exist between British and American English. Following are examples of these differences and distinctions (Thompson & Johnson, 2023):

Lexical Variations

<u>American English</u>	<u>British English</u>
antenna	aerial
fall	autumn
bill	bank note
lawyer	Barrister
check	bill (restaurant)
cookie	Biscuit
hood	bonnet
french fries	Chips
stove	Cooker
intersection	Crossroads
drapes	Curtains
garbage can	Dustbin
motor	Engine
movie	Film
apartment	Flat
soccer	Football
yard	Garden
purse	Handbag
vacation	Holiday
sweater	Jumper
elevator	Lift
truck	Lorry
subway	Metro
diaper	Nappy
sidewalk	Pavement
gas	Petrol
line	Queue
railroad	Railway
garbage	Rubbish

Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>)

Under these variations come certain spelling differences between American and British English such as:

Spelling Variation

British English	American English
Colour (ou)	color (o)
Licence (ce)	license (se)
analyse (s)	analyze (z)
centre (re)	center (er)
cancelled (ll)	canceled (l)
Skilful (l)	Skillful (ll)
tyre (y)	tire (i)
programme (mm)	program (m)
catalogue (ue)	catalog (Ø)

Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>)

While lexical and spelling differences are proven to be significant, pronunciation and phonetic variations are considered less-important.

Other variations that could be linked to British and American English include grammatical and idiom differences. As for the grammatical differences, below are popular examples to explain each variation:

Grammatical distinctions

British English	American English
Experiential perfect: <i>Have you ever gone to Paris?</i>	Simple past: <i>Did you ever go to Paris?</i>
Perfect: With certain adverbs, (e.g. <i>just, already, recently</i>): <i>I have just finished my homework; He has left already.</i>	Simple past can be used: <i>I just finished my homework; He left already.</i>
No use of additional past participle form <i>gotten</i> of the verb <i>get</i>	The verb "get" has two past participle forms: <i>got</i> and <i>gotten</i> .
at the weekend. at Christmas Monday to Friday. It's different from/to the others.	on the weekend. on Christmas Monday to Friday/Monday through Friday It's different from/than the others.
Possession: Have you got a car? He doesn't have any friends. She's got a beautiful new home.	Possession: Do you have a car? He hasn't got any friends. She has a beautiful new home.

Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>)

Idioms Distinctions

<u>British English</u>	<u>American English</u>
touchwood	knock on wood
throw a spanner	throw a (monkey) wrench
sweep under the carpet	sweep under the rug
skeleton in the cupboard	skeleton in the closet
a home from home	a home away from home

Cambridge Dictionary (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>)

Noteworthy, English as a worldwide spoken language is not supposed to be complex. It should rather be flexible in reading, speaking, writing and composition. As a matter of fact, British or American accent, spelling, pronunciation and writing is not supposed to be a barrier for both an English speaker or listener. British rules or American principles must not be an obstacle or roadblock for ESL and EFL non-native English speakers to comprehend or interact with native speakers around the world.

Factors Responsible for Dialect Variations

We all have a natural tendency to have different phonetic forms for a single dialect. It is possible that someone forgot word pronunciation which in turn gives room for dialect variations. Meanwhile, frequent use of a dialect plays a major role in normalizing word forms within a particular linguistic group. This uniqueness in speech does not occur suddenly, but rather the result of the interaction of several factors that allowed it to emerge spontaneously in speech. These factors can be summarized, based on specialized linguistic field research in this field, as follows:

- a) **The Historical Factor:** The historical struggle of a country might affect the dialects therein whereby each sect would maintain and promote their respective dialect. Fonaay (2006) in describing the theory of simultaneous and gradual language change, stated that: "In order to reconstruct the internal structure of a language, we must understand the language's phonological rules and the chronological development of its words in the daily conversations of its users" (Fonaay, 2006). In a similar vein, the speech and pronunciation of a particular linguistic group may be affected by phonological instability as a result of social changes, such as the dominance of a particular social class over the lower class in the society.
- b) **The Geographical Factor:** The geographical nature of language has an impact on the variation of dialects and the number of dialects. Considering the broad geographical environment, which includes several regions of varying terrain and climate, and according to some linguists who have studied the linguistic atlas, the geographic climate has a unique impact on the inhabitants of that region (Fatina, 2011). This is the case for the inhabitants of Jordan, who are characterized by their coarse pronunciation and syllable strength.
- c) **The Social Factor:** Sociolinguists base their interpretation of changes affecting language on the interaction between it and its environment, which is formed from a set of external variables that influence the use and employment of language by its speakers. These

variables include the formation and social mix, as well as the speaker's class, position, and the nature of the situation in which he speaks. The standard of living and its circumstances also influence the nature of the language used in daily conversations (Fatina, 2011).

- d) **The Friction Factor:** This is considered one of the factors that lead to the emergence of hybrid languages and even dialects. It occurs as a result of a linguistic conflict between two languages, the first of which is strongly influential, especially if there are cultural and social differences, or even economic and political dominance over the second language. The deviation of the second language is inevitable as a result of the attempt of its speakers to subject it to new pronunciation customs. Thus, the new language undergoes distortion at all levels, affecting their dialects, its original sounds, the daily pronunciation and habits they have adopted (Umar, 2017).
- e) **The Psychological Factor:** According to researchers in the development of dialects, the characteristics of the speaker have a significant impact on how they produce sounds. This is evident in their psychological state, which is reflected in their speech and affects the strength of their accent through the intensity of their accent (Antonin, 1932). It has been pointed out that peoples who are proud and powerful tend to have high-pitched voices, while peoples who are characterized by a calm psychological state tend to have softer and more flexible voices. This is evident in the high and low pitch of their voices (Muhammad, 1969).

Conclusion

Therefore, it becomes clear that the factors leading to linguistic diversity and dialect variations are numerous. A closer examination of the influence of most of these factors, even if they are not all of them, reveals that various regional dialects were formed under the dynamics of change that Jordanian society has experienced over the years, up to the present day. However, they combine historical factors that have greatly influenced the psychological and socio-geographical makeup of the individual, most notably the linguistic aspect. This has led to numerous changes in aspects of Jordanian life, and some of these factors have had a significant impact on the Jordanian dialect variations. Although the influence of some of these factors on the Jordanian dialect cannot be denied, it is more likely that the influence of certain regions over others is due to contact with the coastal regions and Europe, and strong connections with their peoples. As for the remaining regions of the country, it may be because of their geographical proximity to the strategic location and the availability of ports that caused it.

As for the prevalence and diffusion factors, all Jordanian dialects have been influenced by it. This is due to the innate human tendency to economize physiological effort during pronunciation and to choose sounds to facilitate the speech process and ensure smooth flow. Ease of effort necessarily leads to a gradual change in phonetic characteristics. However, the challenge remains.

Local and regional dialects remain an expression of the unique and distinctive way of speaking of a particular linguistic group. They retain many of the characteristics of the language, but they are the result of socio-geographical factors. They are also a result of historical and psychological factors that cannot be prevented. This is due to the failure to consider these phonetic differences, which are false accusations of being inconsistent with the spoken language. However, their characteristics must be carefully considered, their phonetic rules

and the resulting phonological interactions that govern their structures must be determined. In oral expression, an individual has the freedom to speak comfortably, without being restricted by linguistic rules and principles, except for the commitment to clarity and fluency in speech.

In our long-standing practice, it is essential for every specialist in the field of examining and evaluating language disorders to note that the impact of phonological processes on language and dialect is important. Knowing this allows us to identify the mechanism of the disorder, understand the structure and organization of speech, and the depth of the disorder's impact on other processes. It can also help to understand the effects of certain sounds when combined with the sound production that affects dialect as a whole.

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