

**JIHOČESKÁ UNIVERZITA V ČESKÝCH BUDĚJOVICÍCH**

Pedagogická fakulta

Katedra anglistiky

**DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE**

**Non-systemic differences of British and American pronunciation**

Nesystémové odlišnosti britské a americké výslovnosti

Autor: Ondřej Vobora

Studijní obor: Učitelství anglického a španělského jazyka pro 2. stupeň ZŠ

Vedoucí diplomové práce: PhDr. Vladislav Smolka, Ph.D.

2014

## **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci na téma nesystémové odlišnosti britské a americké výslovnosti vypracoval samostatně s použitím pramenů uvedených v bibliografii.

V Českých Budějovicích dne 27.6. 2014

Ondřej Vobora

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my supervisor PhDr. Vladislav Smolka, Ph.D. for giving me the opportunity to work on such an interesting and remarkable subject, for broadening my knowledge in the field this diploma thesis is focused on. I would also like to thank him for his professional guidance and patient provision of advice and information.

## **Anotace**

Hlavním cílem této diplomové práce je studie nesystémových rozdílů ve výslovnosti mezi britskou a americkou angličtinou. V teoretické části se zabývám historickým pozadím vývoje výslovnosti u amerických a britských mluvčích. Následně jsou podrobně nastíněny systémové odlišnosti mezi americkou a britskou řečí. V závěru teoretické části je věnována pozornost výslovnostním tendencím, jež pravděpodobně mohou nastat v dohledné době. Stěžejním bodem celé práce je diferenční slovníček vytvořený na základě reprezentativních slovníků britské a americké výslovnosti. Diferenční slovníček se skládá ze dvou částí, přičemž ta první se zabývá odlišnostmi u každodenně používaných slov a slov s nízkou úrovní výskytu, kdežto druhá část zkoumá výslovnostní rozdíly u slov s vlastními jmény.

## **Abstract**

The main objective of this diploma thesis is the study of non-systemic pronunciation differences between America and British English. The historical development of American and British speech is outlined in the theoretical part of the thesis. Furthermore, the systemic pronunciation differences between American and British accents are delineated in the theoretical part as well. Finally, the possible future tendencies that are likely to occur in the pronunciation of aforementioned varieties are looked into. The central aim of the practical part is to compile a comparative dictionary based on the study of Longman's representative dictionary for British and American English. The comparative dictionary consists of two parts; the focus of the first is on the general words both from everyday usage and words not so commonly used, whereas the other is on the proper names.

# Table of contents

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Received Pronunciation	8
1.2 General American	9
<b>2 History of Received Pronunciation and General American</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 The Pilgrims reached the New World	11
2.2 The situation after the American Revolution	12
2.3 New England under the influence of Britain	15
2.4 Introduction of broad [ɑ:] in England	18
2.5 Yod-Dropping phenomenon in General American	20
2.6 Spread of the American speech	21
2.7 The paradox of British and American accents	23
<b>3 Systemic pronunciation differences</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>3.1 Differences in Consonant Pronunciation</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1.1 Rhotic and non-rhotic accent	25
3.1.2 Pronunciation of the consonant [t]	27
3.1.3 Yod dropping	29
3.1.4 Dark [ɫ] vs. clear [l]	31
<b>3.2 Different Vowel Pronunciation</b>	<b>32</b>
3.2.1 Change of Vowel [ɒ]	32
3.2.2 Change of Vowel [æ]	34
3.2.3 Change of diphthong [əʊ] to [vɔ]	35

<b>3.3 Differences in Word Stress</b>	36
<b>3.3.1 Differences in the primary stress</b>	36
3.3.1.1 Word ending –ate	36
3.3.1.2 Word ending -ily	37
3.3.1.3 Stress in three- or four-syllable words	38
<b>3.3.2 Differences in the secondary stress</b>	39
3.3.2.1 Word Endings -ary, -ery, -ory and -mony	39
3.3.2.2 Word ending – ile	42
3.3.2.3 Place names ending with -aster/ ester	42
<b>4 Future tendencies</b>	43
<b>5 Practical Part: Comparative dictionary</b>	46
5.1 Miscellaneous words	47
5.2 Proper names	58
<b>6 Conclusion</b>	62
<b>7 Resumé</b>	64
<b>8 Bibliography</b>	65
<b>9 Appendix</b>	67

# 1 Introduction

In the learning process of English, one of the stumbling block that foreign students often hit is the relatively rich variety of accents that they may encounter along the way and that may be perplexing for them. They might find themselves puzzled as to which pronunciation is correct and which is incorrect. As a consequence, they are likely to speak with a mixture of English accents that may become unintelligible for native speakers.

Going down into history, Britain in the heyday of colonisation, spread its language across the globe at a swift pace, building an empire on which the sun never sets and thus creating new variations of English. Since each variation underwent its own development, several accents came into existence. Despite numerous varieties of the English language nowadays, we distinguish three standard pronunciations: the Received Pronunciation used primarily in Great Britain, the General American as the standard pronunciation of North America (probably the most widespread) and the General Australian pronunciation that is the accent spoken in Australia.

In my work, however, I am going to deal with the study of the differences between British English, as represented by Received Pronunciation (RP), and American English, as represented by General American (GA).

The purpose of this work is to study the noticeable pronunciation differences between the British and American English, and analyse representative pronouncing dictionaries of both variations, creating a comparative dictionary of American and British language. I am going to approach this study mainly from a phonetic point of view but British and American English will be studied from a historical and cultural standpoint. It is also important to mention that when comparing those two varieties of English we have to bear in mind that a number of features of American pronunciation can be found in separate British local dialects.

## 1.1. Received Pronunciation

The accent which enjoys the highest prestige in England is known as Received Pronunciation (RP). Geographically, RP is associated with England, although not with any particular region within England. It is the most general type of educated British pronunciation.<sup>1</sup>

The term “Received Pronunciation” was first introduced by John Walker. He held the opinion that London pronunciation “is undoubtedly the best, that is, not only by courtesy, and because it happens to be the pronunciation of the capital, but best by a better title, that of being more generally received”.<sup>2</sup> He was convinced that London pronunciation represented the pronunciation of the London elite. “Received” in the sense that Walker used it, meant generally “adopted” or “approved”.

There is actually more than one kind of Received Pronunciation. A distinction could be made between marked and unmarked forms. The marked form, which one hears less and less, is a more obvious sign of somebody’s being upper class. This isn’t just “talking proper” but “talking posh” – which is regarded as an affectation. It is noticeable that the younger members of Britain Royal Family and many of today’s aspiring politicians strive to avoid marked RP, for fear of being considered aloof and old-fashioned.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> WELLS J.C. *Accent of English 2: The British Isles*. Cambridge University Press, 1982 ISBN: 0521285402.

<sup>2</sup> ALGEO, J. *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume VI – English in North America*, New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN 0-582-55011-4.

<sup>3</sup> HITCHINGS H. *The Language Wars: A History of Proper English*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2011. ISBN: 978-0-374-18329-5.



Received Pronunciation began developing at the end of the eighteenth century, during the period of the American Revolution. Before that time there was no standard pronunciation that would distinguish American people from Britons.<sup>4</sup>

Nowadays, Received Pronunciation, rather than some other variation, is taught to non-natives learning English. But there has been a move to change this. Given the small number of RP speakers (3% of all native speakers), it might, for practical purposes, make more sense to teach foreign learners a different accent because some non-native speakers are amazed when they arrive in Britain that the RP accent they have learned is considered by many speakers to be outdated and embarrassing.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2 General American

In the United States there is no accent whose status and role correspond to that of RP in England. General American (GA) is a term that has been applied to the two-thirds of the American population who do not have a recognizably local accent in the sense just mentioned.<sup>6</sup> General American is the English dialect spoken by approximately 70 per cent of the native speakers of English, which makes it the most widespread variety in the US. In 1828, Noah Webster published his most famous *American Dictionary of the English Language*,<sup>7</sup> introducing the inhabitants of America to the fact that they spoke in a slightly different way than the people living on the British Isles. The publication of Webster's dictionary could be regarded as the starting point for General American.

Whereas in Britain, accent and pronunciation can still affect one's chances in a career or the way he or she is perceived by others, the US shows a more equal attitude in

---

<sup>4</sup> ALGEO, J. *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume VI – English in North America*, New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN 0-582-55011-4.

<sup>5</sup> HITCHINGS H. *The Language Wars: A History of Proper English*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2011. ISBN: 978-0-374-18329-5.

<sup>6</sup> WELLS J.C. *Accent of English 2: The British Isles*. Cambridge University Press, 1982 ISBN: 0521285402. p. 118

<sup>7</sup> Noah Webster. Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia [online]. San Francisco: Foundation, 2001- [2014-04-23]. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah\\_Webster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noah_Webster)

this regard. That does not mean that there is no discrimination but only that the American accent is not considered a significant factor.<sup>8</sup>

Having introduced both varieties of the English that will be studied in the next chapters, one would be hoping to discover the time when General American started to differentiate from local British accents. However, it was certainly the British speech that began diverging from the American accent and developed new pronouncing features. To this day there is a prevailing dogma in England that American English is a corrupted form of British speech and that the inhabitants of the US display a desperate need to refine their pronunciation.<sup>9</sup> In fact, in several significant ways it was British speech that has quietly evolved into its current form as we will see in the following chapters.

---

<sup>8</sup> GOODEN P. *The Story of English: How the English Language Conquered the World*, Quercus 2011. ISBN-10: 0857383280

<sup>9</sup> BRYSON B. *Made in America: An Informal History of the English Language in the United States*. William Morrow Paperbacks, 2001. ISBN: 978-0380713813

## 2 History of Received Pronunciation and General American

### 2.1 The Pilgrims reached the New World

The first steps that led to the distinction between British and American speech was the arrival of Pilgrims in the New World in 1620. In terms of language, the Pilgrims could hardly have chosen a more exciting time to come. Perhaps no other period in the history of English was linguistically more diverse and dynamic, more suitable to verbal change than that, in which they were living. As the American Mary Helen Dohan said: “Had the first settlers left England earlier or later, had learned their speech ways and their attitudes, linguistic and otherwise, in a different time, our language like our nation-would be a different thing”.<sup>10</sup>

Although the first English-speaking inhabitants of the New World started to coin new words almost from the very first days they reached the land, it isn't clear when they began pronouncing them in a distinctively American way. No one can exactly pinpoint the time when two variations started evolving separately. It is thought that the first accent of around the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century that was heard on the US soil was more or less similar to today's General American.<sup>11</sup>

Not much has been recorded about the newly created way of speech in the New World, nonetheless, one thing seems certain: the American pronunciation slowly developed in its own course without any necessity to split into regional variations and did not undergo any regional variations before the American Revolution.

In 1756, one observer of New York reported: “English is the most prevailing Language amongst us, but not a little corrupted by the Dutch Dialect, which is still so

---

<sup>10</sup> BRYSON B. *Made in America: An Informal History of the English Language in the United States*. William Morrow Paperbacks, 2001. ISBN: 978-0380713813. p. 26

<sup>11</sup> ALGEO, J. *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume VI – English in North America*, New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN 0-582-55011-4

much used in some Counties, that the Sheriffs find it difficult to obtain Persons sufficiently acquainted with the English Tongue, to serve as Jurors in the Courts of Law.”<sup>12</sup>

## 2.2 The situation after the American Revolution

Following the American Revolution the US nation started to head off in its own course, having established their independence, their own constitution and its own laws. Thus, one would expect that the newly created nation would adopt a new way of speaking. It is no secret that the hostility between Britain and America at the end of the Revolutionary War was so deep that America seriously considered adopting another official language.

However, at that time the Founding Fathers were so little occupied with the question of a new official language for the United States that they did not mention it in the Constitution. What is certain is that many people, including both Thomas Jefferson and Noah Webster, expected the American speech to evolve into a separate language over some time. Benjamin Franklin, having lived along with the Germans in his native Pennsylvania, was afraid that America would split into a variety of speech communities.<sup>13</sup> But nothing like that happened and America kept using English as their mother tongue.

On the other side of the Atlantic on the British Isles, in the aftermath of the American Revolution the members of the upper class society in Southern England were about to introduce a pronunciation feature that would considerably distinguish the Britons from Americans. Over a certain period they gradually dropped the postvocalic consonant r, introducing a new way of pronunciation of the words *hard* and *cord* as [hɑ:d] and [kɔ:d], instead of the standardized [hɑ:rd] and [kɔ:rd]. The accents that preserve the postvocalic

---

<sup>12</sup> FINEGAN E., RICKFORD J.R. *Language in the USA, Themes for the Twenty-first Century*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN: 0-511-21231-3. p. 11

<sup>13</sup> BRYSON B. *The Mother Tongue – English and How It Got That Way*, William Morrow Paperbacks, 2011. ISBN-10: 0380715430

*r* are called rhotic, whereas accents, in which the *r* is not pronounced after a vowel within a syllable are described as non-rhotic. This newly adopted phonetic modification was brought about due to sociolinguistic identity as the upper class of the London elite was looking for a way to set themselves apart from the working class. Consequently, the population that chiefly consisted of lower working classes, such as Scotland and Ireland, didn't acquire this way of speaking, which means that those two countries presently speak the rhotic accents.<sup>14</sup>

London was the political and cultural focus of Britain, so the language of London was recognized as the prestige dialect. The pronunciation of the capital city of Great Britain became the model of a new breed of specialists — orthoepists and teachers of elocution. The orthoepists decided that their pronunciation is the correct one, published pronouncing dictionaries and in private and expensive tutoring sessions, drilled enterprising citizens in fashionable articulation.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> ALGEO, J. *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume VI – English in North America*, New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN 0-582-55011-4.

<sup>15</sup> ALGEO, J. *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume VI – English in North America*, New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN 0-582-55011-4.

The map below illustrates the parts of England where rhotic accent was present in the 1950s (in blue). The isoglosses are based on the survey of English dialects that was conducted by the direction of Professor Harold Orton of the English department of the University of Leeds between 1950 and 1961.<sup>16</sup>



---

<sup>16</sup> Survey of English Dialects. Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001- [2014-04-26].  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Survey\\_of\\_English\\_Dialects](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Survey_of_English_Dialects)

Over some time the rhotic accent have lost prestige on the British Isles and the blue areas show the presence of rhoticity in England toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The map is based on the findings of P.Trudgill.<sup>17</sup>



### 2.3 New England under the influence of Britain

With the non-rhotic feature having been introduced on the British Isles, the American people were ignorant of such a new modification, except for one area – New England. A region that currently consists of six states: Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Partly because these areas

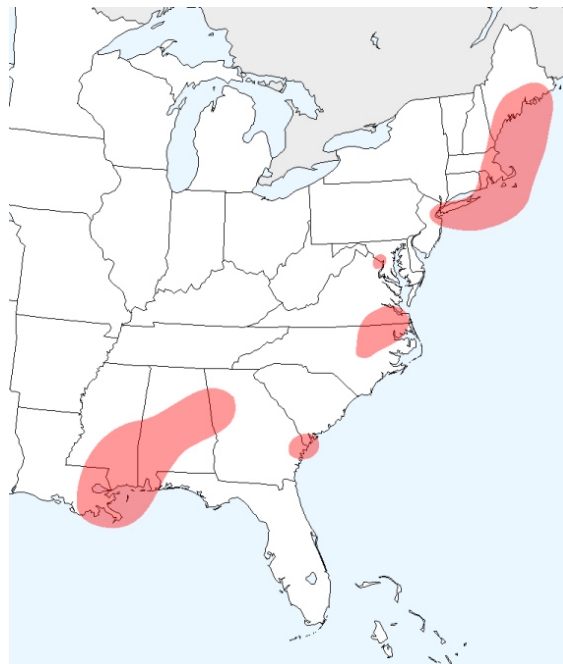
---

<sup>17</sup> HUGHES A., TRUDGILL P., WATT D. *English Accents and Dialects: An Introduction to Social and Regional Varieties of English in the British Isles, Fourth Edition*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2005. ISBN: 978 0 340 88718 9

maintained closer ties with England during the Colonial period and imitated prestigious variety of English at a time when British speech was undergoing changes.

During this period the *r-less* variety of English began to become common in the south of Britain.<sup>18</sup> The continual influence from the British *r-less* standard reinforced the possible r-weakening tendencies of the original dialect of the Pilgrims, and this explains the non-rhotic speech in New England area today. This broader spread of non-rhotic pronunciation in New England reflects greater prestige of elite there.

Following the overview of the pronunciation and vowel systems of the dialects of the U.S published by William Labov, Sharon Ash and Charles Boberg, we can observe that r-dropping is a feature of the English speech generally spoken in the states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and New York.<sup>19</sup>



---

<sup>18</sup> DAVIES, CH. *Divided by a Common Language: A Guide to American and British English*. New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN: 0-582-55011-4.

<sup>19</sup> LABOV W., ASH S., BOBERG CH. *Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology and Sound Change*. Mouton de Gruyter, 2005. ISBN-10: 3110167468.



The relatively few who lived along the borders were not only cut off from changes in fashion but also change in the language. So when, for instance, Britons and eastern Americans began to insert a voiced *r* in some words while removing in from others, the frontier people were less likely to adopt the new trend of dropping the postvocalic *r*.<sup>20</sup>

As recently as the 1930s such *r*'s were never clearly voiced by the people in New York. However over the years they have come increasingly to be spoken – but only sometimes. Labov found that there was actually a pattern to it. In a word, New Yorkers were using *r*'s as a way of marking their social standing. The more often the *r*'s were pronounced, the higher one's social standing. Upper middle-class speakers pronounced the *r* about 20 percent of the time in casual speech, about 30 percent in careful speech, and 60 percent of the time in highly careful speech (when they were asked to read a list of words).<sup>21</sup>

When Americans began to return to England after 1800, they were surprised at the change in fashionable pronunciation. James Fenimore Cooper observed: “even though Americans passed for natives every day in England, it was next to impossible for an Englishman to escape detection in America.”<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> DILLARD J.L. *All-American English*, Random House, 1975. ISBN-10: 0394489659

<sup>21</sup> BRYSON B. *The Mother Tongue – English and How It Got That Way*, William Morrow Paperbacks, 2011. ISBN-10: 0380715430

<sup>22</sup> ALGEO, J. *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume VI – English in North America*, New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN 0-582-55011-4. p. 73

## 2.4 Introduction of broad [ɑ:] in England

Another British English change, in which the majority of North Americans did not participate, was the shift of flat [æ] to broad [ɑ:], thus making words *class* [klæs], *path* [pæθ] and *bath* [bæθ] sound as [kla:s] [pa:θ] and [ba:θ]. Pronunciation guides and dictionaries around 1809 give no hint of a pronunciation of broad [ɑ:] in the British speech, although there is some evidence that it was first used by the London's cockneys, which would make it one of the few instances in modern linguistics in which a feature of lower class became a manner of utterance for the upper classes.<sup>23</sup> The first records of the distinction between flat [æ] to broad [ɑ:] in American speech were found in Webster's dictionary from 1828.<sup>24</sup>

From Webster's Dissertations it is evident that flat [æ] was in use in New England in 1789 since the pronunciation of such words as *wrath*, *batch* and *path*, rhyme with *hath* [hæθ]. Moreover, he gives the word *aunt* the same a-sound. It became flattened by the sixteenth century and until 1780 or so the standard language had no broad [ɑ:]. Even in such words as *father*, *car*, and *ask* the flat [æ] was generally used.

This feature of flattening [æ] was brought over by the early colonists and was in general use in the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century both in America and in England.<sup>25</sup>

Benjamin Franklin, when he wrote his "Scheme for a New Alphabet and a Reformed Mode of Spelling", in 1768, apparently had no idea that any other allophone of the vowel *a* was possible. However, between 1780 and 1790, a sudden fashion for the broad [ɑ:] arose in England. This fashion soon found its place in the so called Boston pronunciation in New England and was imitated along the eastern seaboard as well, but not further inland. However, it was as much an affectation in those days as it is today and Webster also expressed his belief in his dissertation how, despite his opposition, the broad [ɑ:]

---

<sup>23</sup> BRYSON B. *Made in America: An Informal History of the English Language in the United States*. William Morrow Paperbacks, 2001. ISBN: 978-0380713813

<sup>24</sup> MENCKEN H. L. *The American Language: A Preliminary Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States*. New York: 1919. ISBN: 978-145100463-2.

<sup>25</sup> MENCKEN H. L. *The American Language: A Preliminary Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States*. New York: 1919. ISBN: 978-145100463-2.

prevailed and how he himself yielded to it and even tried to force it on the whole nation.

<sup>26</sup>

In Boston, the new fashion was embraced to such an extent that in 1857 Oliver Wendell Holmes reported the Webster intended to use broad [ɑ:] in *matter* ['mɑ:tər], *handsome* ['hɑ:nsəm], *caterpillar* ['kɑ:təpɪlər], *apple* ['ɑ:pl], *satisfaction* [ˌsɑ:tɪs'fæ:kʃn], *hammer* ['hɑ:mər], *practical* ['prɑ:ktɪkl] and *Saturday* ['sɑ:tərdeɪ].<sup>27</sup>

Despite Webster's great influence as one of the Founding Fathers of the nation, none of the previous modifications, however, ever found its place in either of the modern pronouncing dictionaries.

---

<sup>26</sup> MENCKEN H. L. *The American Language: A Preliminary Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States*. New York: 1919. ISBN: 978-145100463-2.

<sup>27</sup> BRYSON B. *The Mother Tongue – English and How It Got That Way*, William Morrow Paperbacks, 2011. ISBN-10: 0380715430

## 2.5 Yod-Dropping phenomenon in General American

On the other hand, North American English underwent some sound changes that are not found in Britain, especially not in the Received Pronunciation. One of these phonemic differentiations is the yod-dropping feature. The word *yod* comes from Hebrew and stands for the letter /j/. *Yod-dropping* refers to the elision of the consonant *j* in certain cases.

The first stage of this phenomenon began to be evident in general English in the mid to late 17<sup>th</sup> century and was called “Early Yod Dropping”. This change of dropping /j/ took place after palatals [tʃ] and [dʒ], thus *chew* [tʃju] became [tʃu:], *juice* [dʒju:s] became [dʒu:s], and after alveolars [r] and [l], transforming *rude* [rju:d] into [ru:d] and *blue* [blju:] into [blu:]. Toward the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century the yod-dropping feature caught on after the coronal in General American English, introducing *tune* [tu:n] instead of [tju:n], *duke* [du:k] replaced [dju:k] and *new* [nju:] became [nu:]. This stage is known as the “Late Yod Dropping”.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Olivier G. The yod /j/: palatalise it or drop it! How Traditional Yod Forms are Disappearing from Contemporary English, Cercles 22, Université Jean Monnet, 2012

## 2.6 Spread of the American speech

As the American accent was gradually evolving into its form there were several reasons that helped to spread the speech across the continent.

First, until about 1840 around 20,000 immigrants poured into America, mostly from two places: Africa, as slaves, and from the British Isles. Total immigration between 1607 and 1840 reached almost one million. Then suddenly, owing to the famine in Ireland in 1845 and political upheaval elsewhere, America's immigration became a flood. In the second half of the nineteenth century, 30 million people entered the country, and the pace quickened further in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup>

Between 1901 and 1905, America absorbed a million Italians, a million Austro-Hungarians, half a million Russians and tens of thousands of other people from many different places. At the turn of the century, New York had more speakers of German than anywhere in the world except for Vienna and Berlin, more Irish than anywhere but Dublin, more Italians than in Milan or Naples.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that America became such a cosmopolitan nation greatly contributed to the spread of General American. The continuous movement of people across the continent did not favour the formation of any permanent regional accent or dialect. Also, the desire for a common national identity encouraged people to resort to using General American instead of their native language.

Second, around 1870, New York City was established as a national centre for traders from all parts of the country and the desired destination for many immigrants from Europe, especially from Ireland, whose native languages were all rhotic.<sup>31</sup> The rise of the rhotic dialect as a more prestigious way of speaking in the United States was a phenomenon that emerged after the Civil War. Before the Civil War, the richest and

---

<sup>29</sup> BRYSON B. *The Mother Tongue – English and How It Got That Way*, William Morrow Paperbacks, 2011. ISBN-10: 0380715430. p. 167

<sup>30</sup> BRYSON B. *The Mother Tongue – English and How It Got That Way*, William Morrow Paperbacks, 2011. ISBN-10: 0380715430.

<sup>31</sup> ALGEO, J. *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume VI – English in North America*, New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN 0-582-55011-4.

politically most powerful regions in America were Boston and Virginia that were both non-rhotic and under great influence of the British royalty.

The Colonial elite soon found out that it had much less influence in New York City than in Boston or Virginia, so that non-rhotic pronunciation was gradually losing its prestige. The fact that the Civil War was won by the rhotic speakers certainly contributed to the spread of rhotic accent. The sudden influx of British Northerners, together with the Welsh, Germans and other immigrants who moved westward caused the spread of American dialect.<sup>32</sup>

Third, the final cause that might have led to the promotion of the American accent was the fact that by 1860, 94 per cent of the population in the northern United States were literate and the school year was 135 days, whereas in New England, where the immigrants lived, 54 percent were literate and the school year was 80 days. The backcountry libraries were not so well equipped compared with those on the seaboard in New England. Their common language was not controlled by the written tradition but was strictly oral.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> ALGEO, J. *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume VI – English in North America*, New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN 0-582-55011-4.

<sup>33</sup> ALGEO, J. *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume VI – English in North America*, New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN 0-582-55011-4. p. 84

## 2.7 The paradox of British and American accents

A paradox about both accents is that on the British Isles, where people coming from a common heritage have been living together in a relatively small area for thousands of years, there is still a fascinating variety of accents, while in America, where people raised from a broad mix of backgrounds have been living together in a vast area for quite a short period of time, and yet they speak in just a few accents. As Simeon Potter notes: “It would be no exaggeration to say that greater differences in pronunciation are discernible in the north of England between Trent and Tweed (a distance of about 100 miles) than in the whole North America.”<sup>34</sup>

Surely, one would expect it to be the other way around. Great Britain with a close proximity of people should be unified in accents, whereas in America the geographical isolation of many people ought to encourage regional accents.

The surprising uniformity of American speech is found in letters and journal between the eighteenth and nineteenth century. In 1770 William Edis found it almost miraculous that “the language of immediate descendants of such a non-uniform ancestry is perfectly unified and pure; nor has it borrowed any provincial or national accent, from its British or foreign language parentage.”<sup>35</sup>

Dr. David Ramsay, one of the first American historians, noted in his *History of the American Revolution* in 1791 that Americans had a particular purity of speech, which he attributed to the fact that people from all over Britain were thrown together in America where they “dropped the peculiarities of their several provincial idioms.”<sup>36</sup>

However, it has been believed that once there was much greater diversity in American speech than nowadays. According to Bryson, Mark Twain needed seven separate dialects

---

<sup>34</sup> POTTER S. *Our language*, Penguin Books 1976. ISBN-10: 0140202277. p. 168

<sup>35</sup> DILLARD J.L. *All-American English*, Random House, 1975. ISBN-10: 0394489659. p. 55

<sup>36</sup> BRYSON B. *The Mother Tongue – English and How It Got That Way*, William Morrow Paperbacks, 2011. ISBN-10: 0380715430. p. 166

to reflect the speech of various characters in *Huckleberry Finn*, even though they all came from much the same area.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> BRYSON B. *The Mother Tongue – English and How It Got That Way*, William Morrow Paperbacks, 2011. ISBN-10: 0380715430.



## 3 Systemic pronunciation differences

In this chapter I will outline the overview of systemic pronunciation differences between American and British English. This section is divided in three parts: the first part studies the divergences in consonant pronunciation, the second part lists the differences in the vowel system and the focus of the third part is on the word stress.

### 3.1 Differences in Consonant Pronunciation

#### 3.1.1 Rhotic and non-rhotic accent

One of the most salient differences between American and British speech is the presence of the rhotic accent, sometimes also called rhoticity. General American English is a rhotic accent, which means that it permits the pronunciation of the letter *r* after a vowel (post vocalic [r]). Received Pronunciation, on the other hand, does not have post vocalic [r], and therefore, is marked as non-rhotic accent. In English, rhotic accent is realized as a **retroflex approximant** [ɹ].<sup>38</sup>

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Bird	[bɜ:d ]	[bɜ:ɹd]
Car	[kɑ:]	[kɑ:ɹ]
Beer	[bɪə]	[bɪ <sup>ɹ</sup> ]

---

<sup>38</sup> ROACH P. *English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course*. Cambridge University Press, 2001. ISBN-10: 0521797993.

The RP speakers do not generally use the retroflex approximant but rather, they produce it as a **postalveolar approximant** [ɹ].<sup>39</sup> We can encounter this phoneme in a prevocalic position, syllable or syllable-clusters.

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
ride	[ɹaɪd]	[ɹaɪd]
camera	[ˈkæməɹə]	[ˈkæməɹə]
train	[tɹeɪn]	[tɹeɪn]

In the following examples the symbol [r] will be used for both the alveolar approximant [ɹ] and retroflex approximant [ɻ].

### Linking [r]

The linking *r* phenomena occurs when words that end in *r* are followed by a word that begins with a vowel, a linking [r] is typically inserted. Therefore, RP has *far* [fɑ:] but *far away* [fɑ:ɹəˈweɪ].<sup>40</sup>

### Intrusive [r]

Even when a word ends with a non-high vowel and precedes a word beginning with a vowel, the intrusive *r* may be added, thus the word *saw* is pronounced as [sɔ:] but RP tends to pronounce the sentence: *I saw it* as [aɪ ˈsɔ:ɹɪt]. There is also a tendency in RP for intrusive *r* to occur within words before beginning with a vowel – *drawing* [ˈdɹɔ:ɹɪŋ].<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> YAVAS M. *Applied English Phonology*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. ISBN: 978-1444333220

<sup>40</sup> HUGHES A., TRUDGILL P., WATT D. *English Accents and Dialects: An Introduction to Social and Regional Varieties of English in the British Isles, Fourth Edition*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2005. ISBN: 978 0 340 88718 9. p. 46

<sup>41</sup> HUGHES A., TRUDGILL P., WATT D. *English Accents and Dialects: An Introduction to Social and Regional Varieties of English in the British Isles, Fourth Edition*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2005. ISBN: 978 0 340 88718 9. p. 46

### 3.1.2 Pronunciation of the consonant [t]

Another noticeable difference between RP and GA involves the pronunciation of the letter *t* in words like *city*, *button* or *twenty*. We can observe that the consonant *t* can differ in four different ways.<sup>42</sup>

- 1) **Alveolar tap [ɾ]** - this is another way to produce the sound [t]. It occurs in words like *water* and *computer*. For non-American speakers it may sound like the consonant *d* rather than *t* and the pair of word *latter/ladder* can sound identically. It can either appear in the intervocalic position (*city*) or before a vowel when the preceding consonant is [ɹ] (*party*).

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
City	[ˈsɪtɪ]	[ˈsɪɾɪ]
Water	[ˈwɔ:tə]	[ˈwɔ:ɾər]
Party	[ˈpɑ:tɪ]	[ˈpɑ:ɾɪ]
Forty	[ˈfɔ:tɪ]	[ˈfɔ:ɾɪ]

The alveolar tap is also used in cases when the consonant *t* appears at the end of a word and another word follows and the first letter of the word is a vowel, as in: *It is* [ɪtɪz], *at eleven* [ætɪˈlevn].

---

<sup>42</sup> CELCE-MURCIA M., BRINTON D. *Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages*, Cambridge University Press, 1996. ISBN: 978-0521406949.

- 2) **Glottal stop [ʔ]** - Another characteristic feature of American accent is the pronunciation of the letter *t* as a glottal stop. It is a voiceless sound produced by the obstruction of the airflow in larynx.

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Mitten	[ˈmɪtən]	[ˈmɪʔn]
Button	[ˈbʌtən]	[ˈbʌʔn]

- 3) **Elision** - Under some circumstances the sound of the letter *t* can be entirely omitted in GA. It usually happens in the pattern formed by a stressed vowel followed by a consonant cluster *nt*.

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Twenty	[ˈtwentɪ]	[ˈtwenɪ]
International	[ˌɪntəˈnæʃənəl]	[ˌɪnəɪˈnæʃənəl]

### 3.1.3 Yod dropping

This change involves the omission the consonant [j] in General American English after other consonantal sounds within the same syllable. In General American we observe *yod-dropping* in following cases:<sup>43</sup>

- After alveolar fricatives [s] and [z].

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Consume	[kən'sju:m]	[kən'su:m]
Suitcase	['sju:t,keɪs]	['su:t,keɪs]
Zeus	[zju:s]	[zu:s]

- After alveolar plosives [t] and [d], and an alveolar nasal [n].

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Tuesday	['tju:zdeɪ]	['tu:zdeɪ]
Tuna	['tju:nə]	['tu:nə]
Due	[dju:]	[du:]
Reduce	[rɪ'dju:s]	[rɪ'du:s]
Nuisance	[nju:səns]	[nu:səns]

- After dental fricative [θ].

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Enthuse	[ɪn'θju:z]	[ɪn'θu:z]

<sup>43</sup> Olivier G. The yod /j/: palatalise it or drop it! How Traditional Yod Forms are Disappearing from Contemporary English, Cercles 22, Université Jean Monnet, 2012

- After alveolar lateral approximant [l]. However, both forms of pronunciation are considered correct in Received Pronunciation.

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Pollute	[pə'ljʊ:t] and [pə'lu:t]	[pə'lu:t]
Luke	[ljʊ:k] and [lu:k]	[lu:k]

*Yod –dropping* does not apply to cases where a syllable break before the [j] occurs, words such as *volume*, *Matthew*, *menu* and *annual*.

### Yod-coalescence

With the yod being present in RP, we can very often find a phenomenon called yod-coalescence. It occurs when the [j] from the sequence /ju/ palatalises and coalesces with the preceding consonant, becoming an affricate e.g. *tube* becomes [tʃu:b] or *duke* is pronounced as [dʒu:k], provided that the preceding consonant is alveolar.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Olivier G. The yod /j/: palatalise it or drop it! How Traditional Yod Forms are Disappearing from Contemporary English, Cercles 22, Université Jean Monnet, 2012

### 3.1.4 Dark [ɫ] vs. clear [l]

Regarding the pronunciation of [l], GA speakers tend to produce a darker, more velarized allophone in all positions, whereas British speakers produce a very distinct clear or light allophone in prevocalic position and before [j]. This British [l] is especially clear before front vowels – as opposed to the dark [ɫ] that occurs in postvocalic position – especially after back vowels.<sup>45</sup>

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Like	[laɪk]	[ɫaɪk]
Value	[ˈvælju:]	[ˈvælju:]

---

<sup>45</sup> CELCE-MURCIA M., BRINTON D. *Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages*, Cambridge University Press, 1996. ISBN: 978-0521406949.

## 3.2 Different Vowel Pronunciation

### 3.2.1 Change of Vowel [ɒ]

A further distinctive feature that can be heard between GA and RP speech involves the pronunciation of the vowel *o*. In British English this sound is pronounced as an open back rounded short vowel [ɒ], as in *lot* [lɒt] or *stop* [stɒp]. By contrast, the General American English speakers adopted the pronunciation of this vowel either as an open back unrounded long sound [ɑ:] (father-bother merger), as in *lot* [lɑ:t] or as an open-mid back rounded long sound [ɔ:] (lot-cloth split), as in *cost* [cɔ:st].<sup>46</sup>

**The father-bother merger.** A merger happens when two contrastive sounds become one. In this case, it caused the transformation of a short vowel [ɒ] into a long vowel [ɑ:], making the pair of words *father* and *bother* sound identical. The short vowel [ɒ] was altered in two stages. First, it was lengthened to the long vowel [ɒ:] and then it lost its roundedness and became a long sound [ɑ:].<sup>47</sup>

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
<b>Snob</b>	[snɒb]	[sna:b]
<b>Flop</b>	[flɒp]	[flɑ:p]
<b>God</b>	[gɒd]	[gɑ:d]
<b>Folly</b>	[fɒli]	[fa:li]
<b>Concert</b>	[kɒnsət]	[ka:nsərt]
<b>Sorry</b>	[sɒri]	[sa:ri]

<sup>46</sup> GÓMEZ P. British and American English Pronunciation Differences.

<sup>47</sup> Phonological history of English low back vowels. Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001- [2014-05-04]. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonological\\_history\\_of\\_English\\_low\\_back\\_vowels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonological_history_of_English_low_back_vowels)



**The lot-cloth split.** A split occurs when a once identical phoneme diverges in different instances. This split is responsible for lengthening and raising the short vowel [ɒ] into [ɔ:] before voiceless fricatives [f], [t], [s] and [θ] but the velars [k], [g], and [ŋ] were also affected by this phonemic change.<sup>48</sup>

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
<b>Off</b>	[ɒf]	[ɔ:f]
<b>Spot</b>	[spɒt]	[spɔ:t]
<b>Lost</b>	[lɒst]	[lɔ:st]
<b>Shock</b>	[ʃɒk]	[ʃɔ:k]
<b>Dog</b>	[dɒg]	[dɔ:g]
<b>Gong</b>	[gɒŋ]	[gɔ:ŋ]

Despite the fact that the *father-bother merger* had a stronger impact on the American vocabulary than the *lot-cloth split*, there is a certain degree of overlapping in those phonemic changes and it is quite common that some words have two ways of pronunciation.

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
<b>Off</b>	[ɒf]	[ɔ:f] and [ɑ:f]
<b>Spot</b>	[spɒt]	[spɔ:t] and [spɑ:t]
<b>Lost</b>	[lɒst]	[lɔ:st] and [lɑ:st]
<b>Shock</b>	[ʃɒk]	[ʃɔ:k] and [ʃɑ:k]
<b>Dog</b>	[dɒg]	[dɔ:g] and [dɑ:g]
<b>Gong</b>	[gɒŋ]	[gɔ:ŋ] and [gɑ:ŋ]

<sup>48</sup> Phonological history of English low back vowels. Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001- [2014-05-04]. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonological\\_history\\_of\\_English\\_low\\_back\\_vowels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonological_history_of_English_low_back_vowels)

### 3.2.2 Change of Vowel [æ]

Another prominent feature that distinguished Received Pronunciation from General American was the adoption of the vowel [ɑ:] instead of [æ]. They first lengthened the mid-open front unrounded vowel [æ] into [æ:] and later lowered to the open back unrounded vowel [ɑ:].

It has also been believed that the more common the word in the daily use is, the more likely this change is to happen. This phonemic shift, however, is considered irregular and inconsistent and is subject to several conditions.

- When the vowel [æ] occurs before sounds [s], [f], and [θ]

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
<b>Brass</b>	[brɑ:s]	[bræs]
<b>Half</b>	[hɑ:f]	[hæf]
<b>Bath</b>	[bɑ:θ]	[bæθ]

Exceptions to this rule are the words *decahlon*, *athlete*, *math* and *hath*. Both RP and GA allow only: [dɪ'kæθlən], ['æθli:t], [mæθ] and [hæθ].

- When the vowel [æ] and consonant is followed by another consonant, especially by [ns], [nt], [ntʃ], and [mpl].

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
<b>Chance</b>	[tʃɑ:ns]	[tʃæns]
<b>Plant</b>	[plɑ:nt]	[plænt]
<b>Branch</b>	[brɑ:ntʃ]	[bræntʃ]
<b>Example</b>	[ɪg'zɑ:mpəl]	[ɪg'zæmpəl]

### 3.2.3 Change of diphthong [əʊ] to [ɒʊ]

The pronunciation of the diphthong [əʊ] in British English is also distinct from the way the American English pronounce it. This difference involves the change of the mid central unrounded vowel [ə] to the close-mid back rounded vowel [ɒ] as the first component of the diphthong.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Received Pronunciation</b>	<b>General American</b>
<b>Low</b>	[ləʊ]	[loʊ]
<b>Go</b>	[gəʊ]	[goʊ]
<b>Commotion</b>	[kə'məʊʃən]	[kə'moʊʃən]
<b>Opponent</b>	[ə'pəʊnənt]	[ə'poʊnənt]
<b>Roman</b>	['rəʊmən]	['roʊmən]

## 3.3 Differences in Word Stress

So far I have summarized the most prominent differences between American and British English concerning the change of consonants and vowels. Nonetheless, the differences in word stress also contribute to the distinction of both variations.

### 3.3.1 Differences in the primary stress

#### 3.3.1.1 Word ending *-ate*

Usually verbs with an ending *-ate* have a different stress pattern in both variations depending on the length of word.

- In two-syllable words with an ending *-ate* GA speakers tend to put the stress on the first syllable, whereas RP speakers prefer the second-syllable pattern.

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
<b>Fixate</b>	[fɪk 'seɪt]	[ 'fɪkseɪt]
<b>Rotate</b>	[rəʊ 'teɪt]	[ 'rəuteɪt]
<b>Donate</b>	[dəʊ 'neɪt]	[ 'doʊneɪt]

There are exceptions where both accents pronounce the words in the same way with the stress on the second syllable: *abate*, *duplicate*, *evacuate*, *graduate* and *imitate*.

- In polysyllabic words both variations agree as far as the stress placement is concerned. Nonetheless, there are a few exceptions where GA prefers the second-syllable stress while RP has a tendency to use the first-syllable pattern.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Received Pronunciation</b>	<b>General American</b>
<b>Remonstrate</b>	[ 'remənstreɪt ]	[ rɪ 'mɑ:nstreɪt ]
<b>Elongate</b>	[ 'i:lɒŋgeɪt ]	[ ɪ 'lɑ:ŋgeɪt ]
<b>Tergiversate</b>	[ 'tɜ:dʒɪvəseɪt ]	[ tər 'dʒɪvəseɪt ]

### 3.3.1.2 Word ending *-ily*

Many five-syllable words with the ending *-ily* carry the stress on the second syllable in RP but it is usually the third syllable in GA that has the stress. The RP speakers tend to reduce the third syllable or omit it altogether, which means that they pronounce it as a four-syllable word.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Received Pronunciation</b>	<b>General American</b>
<b>Momentarily</b>	[ 'məʊməntɪ(ə)lɪ ]	[ ,mooməntə'reɪlɪ ]
<b>Militarily</b>	[ 'mɪlɪtərəlɪ ]	[ ,mɪlɪ'tərəlɪ ]

### 3.3.1.3 Stress in three- or four-syllable words

- There are also several types of three- or four-syllable words in which stress falls on the second syllable in GA but on the first syllable in RP.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Received Pronunciation</b>	<b>General American</b>
<b>Composite</b>	[ˈkɒmpəzɪt]	[kəmˈpɑːzət]
<b>Aristocrat</b>	[ˈæɪstəkɹæt]	[əˈɪstəkɹæt]

### 3.3.2 Differences in the secondary stress

The following group of words contains words in which the primary stress falls on the same syllable in both variations but what differs one accent form the other is the placement of the secondary stress. It may seem that this difference is insignificant and does not much change the pronunciation of a word. Nonetheless, the secondary stress affects the quality of vowels and thus, the whole rhythmical pattern of a word. The British speakers tend to put the secondary stress before the primary stress, whereas the GA speakers prefer placing the secondary stress on the syllables following the primary stress.

#### 3.3.2.1 Word endings *-ary*, *-ery*, *-ory* and *-mony*

In this group of words the General American speakers tend to place the secondary stress on the penultimate syllable that in the Received Pronunciation is most likely to be dropped out.

- **Ending *-ary*:** In the General American the suffix *-ary* is usually pronounced as [erɪ] with the secondary stress on the last syllable, whereas in RP the pronunciation is [əɪ] and no secondary stress is given.

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Necessary	['nesəsərɪ]	['nesə,serɪ]
Sedentary	['sednterɪ]	['sedn,terɪ]
Customary	['kʌstəmərɪ]	['kʌstə,merɪ]

- **Ending -ery:** GA has a tendency to pronounce the full suffix as [erɪ] and RP tends to either substitute the vowel [e] by schwa, creating [əɪ] or even avoid the first vowel, leaving simply [rɪ].

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Monastery	[ˈmɒnəstri]	[ˈmɑ:nəs,teri]
Cemetery	[ˈsemətəri]	[ˈsemə,teri]
Slippery	[ˈslɪpəri]	[ˈslɪ,peri]

- **Ending -ory.** RP speakers have kept the pronunciation [əɪ] on condition that the preceding syllable is unstressed. On the other hand, GA speakers prefer the pronunciation [ɔ:].

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Mandatory	[ˈmændətəri]	[ˈmændə,tɔ:ri]
Exclamatory	[ekˈsklæmətəri]	[ekˈsklæmə,tɔ:ri]
Laudatory	[ˈlɔ:dətəri]	[ˈlɔ:də,tɔ:ri]

When the preceding syllable is stressed in RP the sound schwa is in many cases omitted altogether, whereas GA preserves the same pronunciation [ɔ:].

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Laboratory	[ləˈbɒrətəri]	[ˈlæbrətɔ:ri]
Obligatory	[əˈblɪgətəri]	[əˈblɪgətɔ:ri]
Territory	[ˈterətəri]	[ˈterətɔ:ri]

There are exceptions to this last rule where both GA and RP adopted the pronunciation [əɪ] in words: *advisory*, *contradictory*, *compulsory*, *cursory*, *illusory*, *peremptory*, *rectory*, *satisfactory*.



- **Ending –mony.** It is characteristic of GA speakers to pronounce this suffix after a stressed syllable as [moʊnɪ] and in the RP it is pronounced with reduced vowel as [məni].

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Ceremony	[ˈserəmənɪ]	[ˈserəˌmoʊnɪ]
Matrimony	[ˈmætrəmənɪ]	[ˈmætrəˌmoʊnɪ]

According to H. L. Mencken, the American tendency to pronounce the separate syllables of a word with much more care than an Englishman is caused by the fact that the Americans of his day read a great deal more than the English and were thus much more influenced by the spelling of words.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> MENCKEN H. L. *The American Language: A Preliminary Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States*. New York: 1919. ISBN: 978-145100463-2.

### 3.3.2.2 Word ending – *ile*

Another suffix - *ile* is typically pronounced with a full vowel in RP, whereas in the American English it is usually reduced a syllabic consonant –*l*.

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Mobile	[ˈməʊbaɪl]	[ˈmoʊbl]
Fertile	[ˈfɜːtaɪl]	[ˈfɜːrtl]
Hostile	[ˈhɒstaɪl]	[ˈhɑːstl]

There are some exceptions to this pattern, as in: *crocodile, exile, gentile, reconcile*

### 3.3.2.3 Place names ending with *-aster/ ester*

The group of this words carries a primary stress on the first syllable in both accents but the American variation gives the secondary stress on second syllable, whereas in the Received Pronunciation it remains unstressed.

Word	Received Pronunciation	General American
Rochester	[ˈrɒtʃɪstə]	[ˈrɑːtʃəstər]
Lancaster	[ˈlæŋkəstə]	[ˈlæŋkəstər]

There is an exception to this rule in the word *Worcester* that has its irregular pronunciation– [wɜːstə(r)]

## 4 Future tendencies

Even though changes in pronunciation have always been unavoidable it is close to impossible to guess which words will be the next ones to be affected by a stress shift, vowel and consonant change. We can always tell when it has happened but with linguistic change, it is only possible to be wise after the event.<sup>50</sup>

One of the most interesting observation about the future of the American and British speech was made by the English philologist, phonetician and grammarian Henry Sweet, who in 1877 incorrectly predicted that: “within a century American English, Australian English and British English would be mutually unintelligible just as Latin, after the collapse of the Roman empire had disintegrated into French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and other Romance languages.”<sup>51</sup> Native speakers of all three variations of English sometimes do have a difficulty understanding each other’s accents but we cannot say that they have become mutually incomprehensible.

Some phoneticians have, however, noticed a couple of changes that are happening in British and American speech. In Received Pronunciation, for example, there has for some considerable time been a tendency, through a process known by linguists as smoothing, for certain triphthongs and diphthongs to become monophthongs. Thus the word *tyre*, which was once commonly pronounced [taɪə] (with a triphthong), came to be pronounced [taɪ] (with a diphthongs), and is now increasingly reduced to [ta:] with a monothong, reflecting the same pronunciation as the word *tar*.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> CRYSTAL D. *Language matters, reflecting linguistic change, The Teacher Trainer*. Spring 2006, Vol. 10, No.1

<sup>51</sup> Comparison of American and British English. Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001- [2014-05-02]. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison\\_of\\_American\\_and\\_British\\_English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_American_and_British_English)

<sup>52</sup> HUGHES A., TRUDGILL P., WATT D. *English Accents and Dialects: An Introduction to Social and Regional Varieties of English in the British Isles, Fourth Edition*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2005. ISBN: 978 0 340 88718 9. p. 4

Another example of a feature entering modern RP which probably has its origins in a non-standard accent is the [w]-like labio-dental approximant [ʋ], which is also known as R-labialization. It is a process occurring in certain dialects of the English language, particularly Cockney, in which the [r] phoneme is realized as a labiodental approximant [ʋ] in contrast to an alveolar approximant [r]. To English speakers who are not used to [ʋ], this sounds nearly indistinguishable from /w/.<sup>53</sup>

In most parts of England, we could say that the use of [ʋ] is no longer regarded by schoolteachers and speech therapists as a 'speech impediment' as it once was. Children no longer learn to stop using the 'childish' [ʋ] pronunciation when they reach adulthood because the social pressure to switch to a more 'adult' pronunciation has been removed.<sup>54</sup>

This modification certainly belongs to the group of factors influencing language change, called imperfect learning. Children could be the initiators of a language change. They might learn the adult form imperfectly and a new standard could gradually emerge. Children imitate society, rather than the reverse.<sup>55</sup>

In General American English, the consonant *t* that appears between two vowels is pronounced as the alveolar tap [ɾ], which resembles the *d*-sound. Because the sounds *t* and *d* are paired in a system of consonants that also pairs *k* with *g* and *p* with *b*, it is quite possible that, under the same circumstances, *k* will become *g* and *p* will become *b*. Indeed,

---

<sup>53</sup> R-labialization. Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001- [2013-01-03]. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R-labialization>

<sup>54</sup> HUGHES A., TRUDGILL P., WATT D. *English Accents and Dialects: An Introduction to Social and Regional Varieties of English in the British Isles, Fourth Edition*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2005. ISBN: 978 0 340 88718 9. p. 5

<sup>55</sup> CRYSTAL D. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language, Third Edition*. Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-521-73650-3. p. 343

these changes have already been heard in the speech of some individuals in *significant* [sɪg'nɪfɪgənt] and *historical* [hɪ'stɔ:rɪgl].<sup>56</sup>

According to Crystal, another factor that could lead to a language shift in pronunciation is the geographical factor. When people move away from each other, their language will diverge. The two groups will have different experiences, and at the very least their speech will change. Similarly, when people come into contact with each other, their language will converge. The sounds of one group are likely to exercise some influence on the other. These days, the increased mobility of people within and between countries makes this a major factor.<sup>57</sup>

According to the Census Bureau, 11 percent of people in America speak a language other than English at home. In California alone, nearly one fifth of the people are Hispanic. In Los Angeles, the proportion of Spanish speakers is more than half. New York City has 1.5 million Hispanics and there are a million more in the surrounding area.<sup>58</sup>

For this reason, perhaps the most fundamental question that the General American is facing nowadays is whether it will remain a generally cohesive variety of English or whether the contact with other languages will have an impact on the pronunciation of American speech.

---

<sup>56</sup> MILLWARD C.M, HAYES M. *A Biography of the English Language, Third Edition*. Cengage learning, Wadsworth, 2012. ISBN: 0-495-90641-7. p. 15

<sup>57</sup> CRYSTAL D. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language, Third Edition*. Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-521-73650-3. p. 343

<sup>58</sup> BRYSON B. *The Mother Tongue – English and How It Got That Way*, William Morrow Paperbacks, 2011. ISBN-10: 0380715430. p. 239

## 5 Practical part: comparative dictionary

As much as I tried to find good pronunciation dictionaries representing American and British English pronunciation, my efforts were futile. Since the latest pronunciation dictionary of American speech is “A pronouncing dictionary of American English” by John Samuel Kenyon dated from 1953, I have opted to trace the non-systemic differences both for American and British English from the Longman Pronunciation Dictionary written by the British professor John C. Wells. The reason for this choice is that the scope of the dictionary is quite enormous, providing useful data both about the American and British pronunciation.

In addition, the dictionary features pronunciation preference polls that give interesting insights about the frequency of occurrence of a preferred pronunciation in percentage. The fact that I chose only one dictionary also brought consistency in the transcription symbols since American dictionaries use different phonemic transcriptions of vowels and consonants than British dictionaries. The transcriptions of Received Pronunciation is more consistent and based on the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

The actual comparison is based on an excerpt of single words and their pronunciation variations from the above-mentioned dictionary. I analysed word by word in alphabetical order and ultimately decided whether to add it in the final comparative dictionary. Some divergences between the American and British pronunciation were so insignificant that their inclusion would not be justified. I included commonly used everyday words but, simultaneously, some less frequent ones in everyday speech as I found their diverging features quite interesting.

To achieve a better comparison of borrowed words I also added the original pronunciation in the source language. When possible, I outlined the possible alternation either in the Received Pronunciation or General American. The comparative dictionary is divided into two parts, one aimed at the analysis of general lexical words and the other focussing on proper names.

## 5.1 General words

Word	RP	GA	Comments
<b>accomplice</b>	[ə'kʌmplɪs]	[ə'kɑ:mplɪs]	
<b>accomplish</b>	[ə'kʌmplɪʃ]	[ə'kɑ:mplɪʃ]	The same pattern also applies to the derivate: <i>accomplishment</i>
<b>advertisement</b>	[əd'vɜ:tɪsmənt]	[,ædvər'taɪzmənt]	The verb <i>advertise</i> is pronounce in both variation: ['ædvɜ:təɪz]
<b>adult</b>	['ædʌlt]	[ə'dʌlt]	Preference polls of American English shows that 88% prefers [ə'dʌlt] and 12% ['ædʌlt]; In British English: 84% prefers 'ædʌlt and ə'dʌlt 6%.
<b>aesthete</b>	['i:sthi:t]	['esθi:t]	
<b>amen</b>	[ɑ:'men]	[eɪ'men]	Although ,ɑ:- is the usual form among Protestants in Britain, ,eɪ- is preferred by Roman Catholics and also in non-religious contexts, as in ,Amen 'Corner. In American English, ,eɪ- predominates in speech, but ,ɑ:- is preferred in singing.
<b>amenity</b>	[ə'mɪ:nəti]	[ə'menəti]	
<b>anaesthetize</b>	[ə'ni:sθətaɪz]	[ə'nesθə'taɪz]	
<b>apparatus</b>	[,æpə'reɪtəs]	[,æpə'rætəs]	
<b>apricot</b>	['eɪprɪkət]	['æprɪkɑ:t]	
<b>asphalt</b>	['æsfælt]	['æsfɔ:lt]	
<b>asthma</b>	['æsmə]	['æzmə]	
<b>authorisation</b>	[,ɔ:θəraɪ'zeɪʃn]	[,ɔ:θərə'zeɪʃn]	
<b>basil</b>	['bæzəl]	['beɪzəl]	
<b>barrage</b>	['bæra:ʒ]	[bə'rɑ:ʒ]	GA also allows the pronunciation of ['bʌrɪdʒ] that referst to a

			cement wall built across a river.
<b>baton</b>	[ˈbætən]	[bəˈtɑ:n]	GA reflects the French pronunciation of [batɔ:]
<b>been</b>	[bi:n]	[bɪn]	
<b>beret</b>	[ˈberɛɪ]	[bəˈreɪ]	Formaly, the pronunciation of [berɪt] was in use.
<b>beta</b>	[bi:tə]	[ˈbeɪtə]	
<b>bitumen</b>	[ˈbɪtʃəmən]	[bəˈtu:mən]	
<b>blouse</b>	[blaʊz]	[blaʊs]	In the original pronunciation in the British English was [blu:z], reflecting the French pronunciation [bluz].
<b>booth</b>	[bu:ð]	[bu:θ]	Preference poll of British English shows that 62% prefer ˈbu:ð and 38% ˈbu:θ
<b>boulevard</b>	[ˈbu:ləvɑ:d]	[ˈbʊləvɑ:rd]	
<b>brasserie</b>	[ˈbræsəri]	[ˌbræsəˈri:]	
<b>brusque</b>	[brʊ:sk]	[brʌsk]	The same pattern also applies to the derivate: <i>brusquely</i>
<b>buffet</b>	[ˈbʊfeɪ]	[bəˈfeɪ]	
<b>burrow</b>	[ˈbʌrəʊ]	[ˈbɜ:roʊ]	
<b>buoy</b>	[bɔɪ]	[ˈbu:i]	The derivates <i>buoyant</i> and <i>buoyancy</i> feature in both variations bɔɪ-
<b>butyl</b>	[bjʊ:tʌɪəl]	[bjʊ:təl]	
<b>cantaloupe</b>	[ˈkæntə,lʊ:p]	[ˈkæntə,lʊʊp]	
<b>canton</b>	[kænˈtu:n]	[kænˈtɑ:n]	The pronunciation differs only in the meaning of the verb: to quarter soldiers
<b>capillary</b>	[kəˈpɪləri]	[ˈkæpələri]	
<b>cassia</b>	[ˈkæsiə]	[kæʃə]	



<b>carillon</b>	[kə'ri:ljən]	['kærələ:n]	
<b>catenary</b>	[kə'ti:nəri]	['kætənəri]	
<b>chanteuse</b>	[ʃɑ:n'tɜ:z]	[ʃɑ:n'tu:z]	British pronunciation reflects the French pronunciation [ʃɑ̃tø:z]
<b>charade</b>	[ʃə'rɑ:d]	[ʃə'reɪd]	The -'reɪd form, previously only American English, is now occasionally also heard in British English
<b>cicada</b>	[sɪ'kɑ:də]	[sɪ'keɪdə]	
<b>clerk</b>	[klɑ:k]	[klɜ:rk]	The same pattern also applies to the name of place: <i>Clerkenwell</i>
<b>cognac</b>	['kɒnjæk]	['kɒnjæk]	
<b>compatriot</b>	[kəm'pætriət]	[kəm'peɪtriət]	
<b>complaisant</b>	[kəm'pleɪzənt]	[kəm'pleɪsənt]	British pronunciation reflects the French pronunciation [kɔ̃plezɑ̃].
<b>comrade</b>	['kɒmreɪd]	['kɑ:mræd]	
<b>consortium</b>	[kən'sɔ:tiəm]	[kən'sɔ:rɪəm]	
<b>constable</b>	['kɒnstəbl]	['kɑ:nstəbl]	The derivate <i>constabulary</i> features the pronunciation [kən'stæbjələri] in both variations.
<b>cordial</b>	[ˌkɔ:di'æɪl]	[ˌkɔ:rdʒi'æɪl]	The same pattern also applies to the derivatives: <i>cordially</i> , <i>cordiality</i>
<b>coupon</b>	['ku:pɒn]	[kju:pɑ:n]	GA retains the yod, whereas RP dropped it and adopted the French way [kupɔ̃]
<b>covert (adj.)</b>	['kɒvət]	['kɒvɜrt]	Preference poll of British English shows that 54% prefers 'kɒv-, 37% 'kəʊ-, 9% ,kəʊ 'vɜ:t; Preference poll of American English shows that 53% prefers 'kɒv vɜ:t, 40% ,kɒv 'vɜ:t, 7%.

			'kʌv-
<b>cremate</b>	[krə'meɪt]	[kri:meɪt]	The same pattern also applies to the derivatives: <i>cremation</i> , <i>crematorium</i> and <i>crematory</i>
<b>crescent</b>	['kresnt]	['kreznt]	Preference poll of British English shows that 55% prefers 'krez-, 45% 'kres-
<b>cretin</b>	['kretɪn]	['kri:tɪn]	The same pattern also applies to the derivatives: <i>cretinous</i> and <i>cretonne</i>
<b>cuckoo</b>	['kʊku:]	['ku:ku:]	
<b>dahlia</b>	['deɪliə]	['dæliə]	
<b>debris</b>	[debri:]	[də'bri:]	
<b>deity</b>	['deɪəti]	['di:əti]	Preference poll of British English shows that 80% prefers deɪ- and 20% di:-
<b>depot</b>	['depəʊ]	['di:pəʊ]	Preference poll of British English shows that 95% prefers 'di:p, 5% 'dep-
<b>derby</b>	['dɑ:bi]	['dɜ:rbɪ]	
<b>detail</b>	['di:teɪl]	[dr'teɪl]	
<b>diagnose</b>	[,daɪəg'nəʊz]	[,daɪəg'nɒʊz]	Preference poll of American English shows that 58% prefers '-nɒʊz, 32% '-nɒʊs, 7% '-nɒʊz, -3% 'nɒʊz.
<b>digitalis</b>	[,dɪdʒɪ'teɪlɪs]	[,dɪdʒɪ'tæɪlɪs]	
<b>direct</b>	[daɪ'rekt]	[də'rekt]	Preference poll of American English shows that 78% prefers də-, 22% daɪ-
<b>docile</b>	[dəʊsaɪl]	['dɑ:sl]	The same pattern also applies to the derivative: <i>docility</i>
<b>double entendre</b>	[,dʌbl̩ ɑ:ˈtɑ:drə]	[,du:bl̩ ɑ:ˈtɑ:drə]	The American English reflects the French pronunciation [du blɑ̃

			tã:dʒ]
<b>dynasty</b>	[dɪnəsti]	['dʌnəsti]	
<b>either</b>	[aɪðə]	['iːðər]	Preference poll of British English shows that 87% prefers 'aɪð-, 13% 'iːð-, Preference poll of American English shows that 84% 'iːð- and 16% 'aɪð-
<b>envelope</b>	[ɛnvələʊp]	['ʌnvələʊp]	The British English also allows the pronunciation [ɒnvələʊp]
<b>epoch</b>	['iːpɒk]	['epɒk]	The pronunciation of the derivate <i>epochal</i> is in both varieties: [ 'epɒkəl]
<b>erase</b>	[ɪ'reɪz]	[ɪ'reɪs]	
<b>err</b>	[ɜː]	[eər]	The pronunciation of the derivate <i>errancy</i> is for both varieties: [ 'erəntsɪ]
<b>evolution</b>	[,iːvə'luːʃn]	[ɛvə'luːʃn]	Preference poll of British English shows that 85% prefers ,iːv-, 15% ,ev-
<b>falcon</b>	['fɔːlkən]	['fælkən]	Preference poll of British English shows that 38% prefers 'fɔːlk-, 32% 'fælk-, 27% 'fɒlk-, 3% 'fɔːk- . Preference poll of American English: 84% prefers 'fælk-, 13% 'fɔːlk- or 'fɑːlk-, 3% 'fɔːk- or 'fɑːk-
<b>febrile</b>	[fiːbrɪl]	['febrɪl]	
<b>femme fatale</b>	[,fæm fə'tɑːl]	[,fem fə'tæl]	The French pronunciation is [fam fatal]
<b>figure (verb)</b>	['fɪgə]	['fɪgjər]	The pronunciation without j, standard and usual in British English, is in American English generally condemned.

<b>föhn</b>	[fɔ̃:n]	[fɛɪn]	The German pronunciation is [fø:n]
<b>fracas</b>	['frækɑ:]	['frɛɪkəs]	British pronunciation resembles the French [fraka]
<b>furrow</b>	['fʌrəʊ]	['fɜ:rəʊ]	
<b>gala</b>	[gɑ:lə]	['geɪlə]	
<b>garage</b>	['gæra:ʒ]	[gə'ra:ʒ]	The British English alternations are: 'gær-a:dʒ/-ɪdʒ; the American is: gə'ra:dʒ. Preference polls of the American English shows that 52% prefer -'ra:ʒ, 48% -'ra:dʒ; British English: 56% 'gæra:dʒ (31% dʒ, 25% ʒ), 38% -ɪdʒ, gə 6% 'ra:dʒ.
<b>geyser</b>	['gi:zə]	['gaɪzər]	In British English, 'gaɪzə (if at all) particularly for the meaning 'hot spring'; the water heater is always 'gi:z-
<b>glacier</b>	['glæsiə]	['gleɪʃər]	In RP also possible ['gleɪsiə]
<b>gooseberry</b>	['gʊzbəri]	['gu:sberi]	
<b>gulag</b>	[gu:læg]	[gu:lɑ:g]	
<b>heinous</b>	['heɪnəs]	['hi:nəs]	
<b>herb</b>	[hɜ:b]	[ɜ:rb]	Preference poll of American English shows that 90% ɜ:rb, 10% hɜ:rb
<b>hessian</b>	['hesiən]	[heɪn]	
<b>hoof</b>	[hu:f]	[hʊf]	
<b>housewifery</b>	['haʊswɪfəri]	['haʊswaɪfəri]	Formerly was also ['hʌzɪfəri] in use.
<b>hovel</b>	['hɒvl]	['hʌvl]	
<b>hover</b>	['hɒvə]	['hʌvər]	
<b>hurricane</b>	['hʌrɪkən]	['hərə,keɪn]	Preference poll of British English shows that 40% prefers -kən

			(born before 1942, 70%), 60%. - kem
<b>hygienic</b>	[haɪ'dʒiːnɪk]	[haɪ'dʒenɪk]	
<b>idyll</b>	[ˈɪdɪl]	[ˈaɪdl]	The same pattern also applies to the derivate: <i>idyllic</i>
<b>inherent</b>	[ɪnˈherənt]	[ɪnˈhɪərənt]	Preference poll of British English shows that 66% prefers -'her-, 34% -'hɪər-
<b>iodine</b>	[ˈaɪədiːn]	[ˈaɪədɑɪn]	
<b>jaguar</b>	[ˈdʒæɡjəwə]	[ˈdʒæˌɡwɑːr]	
<b>jalousie</b>	[ʒælʊziː]	[dʒəˈluːsi]	
<b>junta</b>	[ˈdʒʌntə]	[ˈhʊntə]	The Spanish pronunciation [ˈxunta]
<b>kebab</b>	[kəˈbæb]	[kəˈbɑːb]	
<b>kümmel</b>	[ˈkʊməl]	[ˈkɪməl]	The German pronunciation [ˈkʏməl]
<b>lasso</b>	[læˈsuː]	[ˈlæsʊ]	
<b>legalization</b>	[ˌliːgəlaɪˈzeɪʃən]	[ˌliːgəliˈzeɪʃən]	
<b>leisure</b>	[ˈleɪzə]	[ˈliːzr]	
<b>lever</b>	[ˈliːvə]	[ˈlevər]	
<b>lieutenant</b>	[lefˈtenənt]	[luːˈtenənt]	
<b>lychee</b>	[ˌlaɪˈtʃiː]	[ˈliːtʃi]	
<b>masseuse</b>	[mæˈsɜːz]	[məˈsuːs]	
<b>medieval</b>	[ˌmediˈiːvl]	[ˌmiːdˈiːvl]	
<b>methane</b>	[ˈmiːθeɪn]	[ˈmeθeɪn]	
<b>milieu</b>	[miːˈljɜː]	[mɪlˈjuː]	The French pronunciation [miljø]
<b>migraine</b>	[ˈmiːgreɪn]	[ˈmaɪgreɪn]	Preference poll of British English shows that 61% prefer 'miːg- and 39% 'maɪg-
<b>minority</b>	[maɪˈnɔːrəti]	[məˈnɔːrəti]	
<b>moustache</b>	[məˈstaːʃ]	[ˈmʌˌstæʃ]	
<b>neither</b>	[naɪðə]	[niːðər]	The Preference is the same as with the word <i>either</i>

<b>niche</b>	[niːʃ]	[nɪtʃ]	Preference poll of British English shows that 95% prefers niːʃ and 5% nɪtʃ
<b>nonpareil</b>	[ˌnɒnpəˈreɪl]	[ˌnɑːnpəˈreɪl]	
<b>nougat</b>	[ˈnuːɡɑː]	[ˈnuːɡət]	The alternative pronunciation in British English is [ˈnʌɡət]
<b>nourish</b>	[ˈnʌrɪʃ]	[ˈnɜːrɪʃ]	
<b>oblique</b>	[əbˈliːk]	[əbˈlaɪk]	The American pronunciation [əbˈlaɪk] is especially military.
<b>oestrogen</b>	[ˈiːstrədʒən]	[ˈestrədʒən]	
<b>oestrous</b>	[ˈiːstrəs]	[ˈestrəs]	
<b>oregano</b>	[ɒrɪˈɡɑːnəʊ]	[əˈregənəʊ]	
<b>papier-mâché</b>	[pæpiɛr ˈmæʃeɪ]	[peɪpər məˈʃeɪ]	In GA also possible [ˌpæpjɛr məˈʃeɪ]
<b>pasta</b>	[ˈpæstə]	[ˈpɑːstə]	
<b>patent</b>	[ˈpeɪnt]	[ˈpætnt]	In British English the pronunciation ˈpæt- is mainly restricted to technical use; in American English the pronunciation ˈpeɪt- is used only in the sense ‘open, obvious’.
<b>patriotic</b>	[ˈpætriət]	[ˈpeɪtriət]	Preference poll of British English shows that 79% prefers ˈpætr- and 21% ˈpeɪtr-
<b>pecan</b>	[piˈkæən]	[piˈkɑːn]	The alternative pronunciation in British English is [ˈpiːkæən]
<b>phalanx</b>	[ˈfæˌlæŋks]	[ˈfeɪˌlæŋks]	
<b>piazza</b>	[piˈætsə]	[piˈɑːzə]	The Italian pronunciation [ˈpjatsa], the alternative pronunciation in RP is [ˈpiːædzə]
<b>pipette</b>	[pɪˈpet]	[paɪˈpet]	
<b>penchant</b>	[ˈpɒ̃ʃɑ̃]	[ˈpentʃɑ̃nt]	The French pronunciation [pɑ̃ʃɑ̃]

<b>penult</b>	[pɛˈnʌlt]	[pɪˈnʌlt]	
<b>plait</b>	[ˈplæt]	[ˈpleɪt]	
<b>pogrom</b>	[ˈpɒgrəm]	[ˈpougrəm]	
<b>polka</b>	[ˈpɒlkə]	[ˈpoulkə]	In <i>polka dot</i> , American English usually [ˈpoukə]
<b>predecessor</b>	[ˈpriːdɪsəsə]	[ˈpredəsəsər]	Preference poll of American English shows that 88% prefers 'pred-, 9%, ,pred'- and 3% 'pri:d-.
<b>première</b>	[ˈpremieə]	[prɪˈmiːr]	The alternative pronunciation in GA is [preˈmjɪər]
<b>primer</b>	[praɪmə]	[prɪmə]	In the meaning of introductory book
<b>privacy</b>	[ˈprɪvəsi]	[ˈpraɪvəsi]	Preference poll of British English shows that 88% prefers 'priv-, 12% 'praɪv-
<b>pro rata</b>	[ˌprəʊˈrɑːtə]	[ˌproʊˈreɪtə]	
<b>promenade</b>	[ˌprɒməˈnɑːd]	[ˌprɑːməˈneɪd]	However, in square dancing, -'neɪd even in British English
<b>quark</b>	[kwɑːk]	[ˈkwɔrk]	The German pronunciation [kvaɐ̯k]
<b>quinine</b>	[kwɪˈniːn]	[ˈkwɑɪˌnaɪn]	
<b>reconnoiter</b>	[ˌrɛkəˈnoɪtə]	[ˌriːkəˈnoɪtə]	
<b>record (noun)</b>	[ˈrekɔːd]	[ˈrekərd]	
<b>repatriate</b>	[ˌriːˈpætriət]	[ˌriːˈpeɪtriət]	
<b>resource</b>	[rɪˈzɔːs]	[ˈriːsɔːrs]	Preference poll of British English shows that 49% prefers -'zɔːs, 51% - 'sɔːs
<b>respite</b>	[ˈrespait]	[ˈrespət]	The alternative pronunciation in GA is [rɪˈspait]
<b>reveille</b>	[rɪˈvæli]	[ˈrevəli]	
<b>route</b>	[ruːt]	[raʊt]	In British English the form raot is confined to army usage, but in

			American English it is more widespread. Preference poll in American English shows that 68% prefers ru:t and 32% raot.
<b>salve</b>	[sælv]	[sæv]	
<b>satrap</b>	['sætræp]	['seɪtræp]	
<b>schedule</b>	[ʃedju:l]	['skɛdʒu:l]	The American English pronunciation with <i>sk-</i> is increasingly heard in British English. Preference poll in British English shows that 70% prefers ʃ-, 30% sk- (born since 1973, 65%); 79% -dj-, 21% -dʒ-.
<b>scone</b>	[skɒn]	[skoun]	
<b>shone</b>	[ʃɒn]	[ʃoun]	
<b>simultaneous</b>	[,sɪml'teɪniəs]	[,saɪml'teɪniəs]	Preference poll of British English shows that 97% sɪm-, 3% ,saɪm-.
<b>snooker</b>	['snu:kə]	[snʊkər]	
<b>sojourn</b>	['spɔ:dʒən]	['soʊdʒɜ:rn]	Some speakers of American English make a stress difference between the noun and the verb.
<b>solder</b>	['sɒldə]	['sɑ:dər]	The alternative pronunciation in RP is ['səʊldə]
<b>status</b>	['steɪtəs]	['stætəs]	
<b>stratum</b>	['strɑ:təm]	['streɪtəm]	The alternative pronunciation in RP is ['streɪtəm]
<b>theta</b>	['θi:tə]	[θeɪtə]	
<b>thorough</b>	['θʌrə]	['θɜ:rou]	
<b>tomato</b>	[tə'mɑ:təʊ]	[tə'meɪtəʊ]	
<b>tourniquet</b>	['tɔ:nɪkeɪ]	['tɜ:rnəkət]	
<b>trapeze</b>	[trə'pi:z]	[træ'pi:z]	
<b>troll</b>	[trɒl]	[trouɫ]	In British English both pronunciations shown appear to



			be in use for all the various meanings (both noun and verb) of the word.
<b>twat</b>	[twæt]	[twɑ:t]	
<b>untoward</b>	[,ʌntə'wɔ:d]	[ʌn'tɔ:rd]	
<b>vase</b>	[vɑ:z]	[veɪs]	American English preserves the original English pronunciation (Swift rhymes it with face, Byron with place and grace), while British English shifted mid-19c. to preference for a pronunciation that rhymes with brass [brɑ:s].
<b>valise</b>	[və'li:z]	[və'li:s]	
<b>vitamin</b>	['vɪtəmin]	['vaɪtəmin]	
<b>waft</b>	[wɒft]	[wæft]	The alternative pronunciation in RP is [wɑ:ft]
<b>waltz</b>	[wɔ:ls]	[wɔ:lts]	The alternative pronunciation in RP is [wɑ:ft]
<b>wigwam</b>	['wɪgwæm]	['wɪgwɑ:m]	
<b>wont</b>	[wəʊnt]	[wɔ:nt]	
<b>woof</b>	['wu:fə]	['wʊfər]	
<b>wrath</b>	[rɒθ]	[rɑ:θ]	The alternative pronunciation in RP is [rɔ:θ]
<b>xenon</b>	['zɛnɒn]	['zi:nɑ:n]	
<b>yogurt</b>	['jɒgət]	['jʊɹgət]	
<b>letter Z</b>	[zed]	[zi:]	
<b>zebra</b>	['zebrə]	[zi:brə]	Preference poll of British English shows that 83% prefers 'zeb-, 17% 'zi:b-.
<b>zenith</b>	['zɛnɪθ]	['zi:nəθ]	
<b>zeta</b>	[zi:tə]	['zeɪtə]	

## 5.2 Proper names

Word	RP	GA	Comments
<b>Abbeville</b>	[ˈæbvɪl]	[æbˈviːəl]	The French pronunciation is: [ˈabvɪl]
<b>Alexander</b>	[ˌæliɡˈzɑːndə]	[ˌælegˈzɑːndə]	
<b>Ali</b>	[ˈæli]	[ˈɑːli]	
<b>Amos</b>	[ˈeɪmɒs]	[ˈeɪməs]	
<b>Anthony</b>	[ˈæntəni]	[ˈæntθni]	
<b>Asia</b>	[ˈeɪʃə]	[ˈeɪzə]	Preference poll of British English shows that 64% prefer ˈeɪzə and 36% ˈeɪʃə, though, those born before 1942: 68% ˈeɪʃə and 32% ˈeɪzə.
<b>Berkeley</b>	[ˈbɑːkli]	[ˈbɜːrkli]	British place and names [ˈbɑːkli], American place and names [ˈbɜːrkli]
<b>Berkshire</b>	[ˈbɑːkʃə]	[ˈbɜːrkʃɪr]	The English county is [ˈbɑːkʃə], the hills in Massachusetts are [ˈberkʃɪr]
<b>Birmingham</b>	[ˈbɜːmɪŋəm]	[ˈbɜːmɪŋhæm]	The place in England is [ˈbɜːmɪŋəm] but places in the United states are [ˈbɜːmɪŋhæm]
<b>Burrows</b>	[ˈbʌrəʊz]	[ˈbɜːrouz]	
<b>Byzantine</b>	[baɪˈzæntaɪn]	[ˈbɪzəntiːn]	
<b>Carlisle</b>	[kɑːˈlaɪəl]	[ˈkɑːrlaɪəl]	In British English usually kɑːˈlaɪəl, although the place in Cumbria is locally ˈkɑːrlaɪəl; in American English usually ˈkɑːrlaɪəl
<b>Chichester</b>	[ˈtʃɪtʃɪstə]	[ˈtʃaɪ,tʃɛstər]	In England [ˈtʃɪtʃɪstə] a place in upstate New York [ˈtʃaɪ,tʃɛstər].

<b>Derby</b>	[ˈdɑːbɪ]	[ˈdɜːrbɪ]	Derbyshire is in both varieties pronounced as [ˈdɑː(r)bɪʃə(r)]
<b>February</b>	[ˈfebrʊəri]	[ˈfebjuəri]	The forms with j, although sometimes criticized, are often heard from educated speakers (especially in AmE) and preferred by them. Casually also ˈfebri. Preference polls of American English: -ju- 64%, -ru- 36%
<b>Glasgow</b>	[ˈglɑːzgəʊ]	[ˈglæskoo]	Preference poll of British English shows that z forms 85%, s forms 15%.
<b>Greenhough</b>	[ˈgri:nɒf]	[ˈgri:nhoʊ]	
<b>Greenwich</b>	[ˈɡrɛnɪtʃ]	[ˈɡri:nwɪtʃ]	This applies both to the London borough, location of the meridian, and to G~ Village in New York City; also to the town in Connecticut, though this is sometimes [ˈɡri:nwɪtʃ]
<b>Helene</b>	[heˈleɪn]	[ˈheliːn]	
<b>Hereford</b>	[ˈhɛrɪfəd]	[ˈhɜːrfərd]	The city and former county in England [ˈhɛrɪfəd], the town in Texas [ˈhɜːrfərd]
<b>Hertford</b>	[ˈhɑːfəd]	[ˈhɜːrtfɜːd]	
<b>Israel</b>	[ˈɪzreɪl]	[ˈɪzrijəl]	In singing is usually used the form [ˈɪzreɪl]
<b>Knossos</b>	[ˈknɒsɒs]	[ˈnɑːsəs]	
<b>Leominster</b>	[ˈlempstə]	[lemɪnstər]	The place in England [ˈlempstə], that in Massachusetts [lemɪnstər]
<b>Los Angeles</b>	[ləs ˈændʒəliːz]	[ləs ˈændʒəl]	
<b>Malaysian</b>	[məˈleɪziən]	[məˈleɪzən]	

<b>Malvern</b>	[ 'mɔ:lvən]	[ 'mælvərn]	The town in England [ 'mɔ:lvən], the place in the United States [ 'mælvərn]
<b>Möbius</b>	[ 'mɜ:biəs]	[moo <b>bi</b> əs]	The German pronunciation [ 'mø:biəs], the alternative pronunciation in GA is [ 'meɪbiəs]
<b>New Orleans</b>	[ ,nju: 'ɔ:ljənz]	[ ,nu: 'ɔ:rlənz]	
<b>Newark</b>	[ 'nju:ək]	[ 'nu: 'ɑ:k]	Newark in England [ 'nju:ək], place in Delaware [ 'nu: 'ɑ:k]
<b>Nicaragua</b>	[ ,nikə 'rægjuə]	[ ,nikə 'rægwə]	
<b>Norfolk</b>	[ 'nɔ:fək]	[ 'nɔ:fɔ:k]	
<b>Norwich</b>	[ 'nɔ:rɪdʒ]	[ 'nɔ:rwɪtʃ]	Place in England [ 'nɔ:rɪdʒ], place in Connecticut [ 'nɔ:rwɪtʃ]
<b>Notre Dame</b>	[ ,nəʊtrə 'deɪm]	[ ,nəʊtrə 'dɑ:m]	'deɪm for the Paris cathedral, and for the religious order in France and Britain ; in the United States 'dɑ:m
<b>Parisian</b>	[pə 'rɪzən]	[pə 'rɪzən]	
<b>Sabine</b>	[ 'sæbəm]	[ 'seɪbəm]	
<b>Salesian</b>	[sə 'li:ziən]	[sə 'li:zən]	
<b>Slovakia</b>	[slə 'vækiə]	[slou 'vɑ:kiə]	
<b>Sophia</b>	[səʊ 'faɪə]	[soʊ 'fi:ə]	
<b>Shrewsbury</b>	[ 'ʃrəʊzbəri]	[ 'ʃru:zbəri]	The place in England is usually [ 'ʃrəʊzbəri], though locally also [ 'ʃru:zbəri]. The places in the United States are [ 'ʃru:zbəri].
<b>Teresa</b>	[tə 'ri:zə]	[tə 'ri:sə]	
<b>Thames</b>	[tɛmz]	[θeɪmz]	The river in England is [tɛmz] and the place in Connecticut is [θeɪmz].
<b>Tunisia</b>	[tju 'ni:ziə]	[tu 'ni:zə]	
<b>Vivaldi</b>	[vi 'vældɪ]	[vi 'vɑ:ldɪ]	

<b>Warwick</b>	['wɒrɪk]	['wɔrwɪk]	The English name and the places in Warwickshire and Queensland are ['wɒrɪk]; the place in Rhode Island and the American name are usually ['wɔrwɪk].
----------------	----------	-----------	---

## 6 Conclusion

The comparative dictionary based on a close analysis of the Longman Pronunciation Dictionary has shown that many of the words that diverge in pronunciation are loanwords, such as *charade* (French origin), *quark* (German origin), *junta* (Spanish origin), *pasta* (Italian origin) or *gulag* (Russian origin). These words entered the English vocabulary after the pronunciation split between American and British English and therefore, either accent adopted the words in a different manner.

Furthermore, the dictionary contains many words that vary in stress pattern, which causes a reduction of unstressed syllables, this can be exemplified in *reveille* [rɪ'væli] in RP and [ˈrevəli] in GA or *moustache* [mə'stɑːʃ] in RP and [ˈmʌstæʃ] in GA.

It is also quite common to encounter diphthongization and monophthongization in the comparative dictionary. We can observe the shift from [ɪ] to [aɪ] in words like *vitamin* [ˈvɪtəmin] and [ˈvaɪtəmin] or *simultaneous* [ˌsɪml'teɪniəs] and [ˌsaɪml'teɪniəs].

Another feature that is characteristic of the American pronunciation is the assimilation of the fricatives [s] into [ʃ] as in the words *cassia* [ˈkæsiə] and [kæʃə] or *glacier* [ˈglæsiə] and [ˈgleɪʃər]. Having said that, there is also a strong tendency for the American speakers to pronounce the voiced alveolar fricative [z] at the end of the words or syllable boundaries, which is in contrast with the British tendency to use the voiceless alveolar fricative [s] *diagnose* [ˌdaɪəg'nəʊz] and [ˌdaɪəg'nəʊs] or *gooseberry* [ˈgʊzbəri] and [ˈgʊːsbəri]

The pronunciation preference polls are indicating that it is possible that one pronunciation preference might gradually replace the other as it has been observed with the word *schedule* where the American form [ˈskedʒu:l] is greatly preferred by British speakers. Language is a living organism and these tendencies will probably become more and more common. Future research of this subject should therefore be diachronic in order to reveal possible development tendencies.

I do not expect the results obtained in the comparative dictionary to be a scientific breakthrough. Should there be more pronunciation dictionaries to compare, this phenomenon could be studied in more depth.

Nonetheless, I believe that the findings collected in this thesis will not only help foreign students of English to generally refine their accent and achieve a better clarity of pronunciation with fewer traces of their native language but also increase the awareness of these pronunciation differences among non-native English teachers because being consistent in either accent or any other, is definitely one of the abilities that they should possess.

## 7 Resumé

Hlavním cílem této práce bylo vytvořit diferenční slovníček britské a americké angličtiny na základě studia jednotlivých slov reprezentativních výslovnostních slovníků obou variant.

V teoretické části se nejprve stručně zabývám historickým pozadím, které mapuje vývoj výslovností diferenciacie v obou variantách. Zmíněny jsou také sociokulturní faktory, které jsou považovány za nedílnou složku každého jazyka.

Následující kapitoly shrnují systémové rozdíly, jež jsou charakteristické pro britskou či americkou výslovnost. Příslušné oddíly se nejdříve věnují diferenciaci na poli anglických samohlásek, následně jsou nastíněny rozdíly mezi souhláskami a v neposlední řadě také pozice přízvuku u jednotlivých slov.

Závěrečná kapitola teoretické části se soustřeďuje na možný vývoj anglické výslovnosti obou variant a předpokládá pravděpodobné budoucí tendence, jež by se mohly stát standardními odlišnostmi.

V praktické části jsou porovnána jednotlivá hesla ze slovníku Longman Pronunciation Dictionary a výsledný diferenční slovník je rozdělen do dvou částí, přičemž první část zkoumá výslovnostní rozdíly obecně používaných slov, zatímco druhá část slovníku porovnáva odlišnosti vlastních jmen a názvů míst mezi britskou a americkou angličtinou.

Součástí práce je také příloha obsahující přehled fonetických znaků, které byly při zkoumání výslovnostních rozdílů použity při fonetické transkripci.



## 8 Bibliography

ANYANWU R.J. *Fundamentals of Phonetics, Phonology and Tonology*. Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2008. ISBN-10: 363157746

ALGEO, J. *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume VI – English in North America*, New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN 0-582-55011-4

BRYSON B. *Made in America: An Informal History of the English Language in the United States*. William Morrow Paperbacks, 2001. ISBN: 978-0380713813

BRYSON B. *The Mother Tongue – English and How It Got That Way*, William Morrow Paperbacks, 2011. ISBN-10: 0380715430

CELCE-MURCIA M., BRINTON D. *Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages*, Cambridge University Press, 1996. ISBN: 978-0521406949.

CRYSTAL D. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language, Third Edition*. Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-521-73650-3

CRYSTAL D. *Language matters, reflecting linguistic change, The Teacher Trainer*. Spring 2006, Vol. 10, No.1

DARRAGH G. *A to Zed, A to Zee: A Guide to the Differences between British and American English*, Irun-Spain Editorial Stanley 2000. ISBN: 84-7873-346-9

DAVIES, CH. *Divided by a Common Language: A Guide to American and British English*. New York: Longman Group Limited, 1992. ISBN: 0-582-55011-4.

DILLARD J.L. *All-American English*, Random House, 1975. ISBN-10: 0394489659

DZIUBALSKA-KOLACZYK K., PRZEDLACKA J. *English Pronunciation Models: A Changing Scene*. Peter Lang International Academic Publishers 2008. ISBN-13: 978-3039116829

FINEGAN E., RICKFORD J.R. *Language in the USA, Themes for the Twenty-first Century*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN: 0-511-21231-3

GOODEN P. *The Story of English: How the English Language Conquered the World*, Quercus 2011. ISBN-10: 0857383280

HITCHINGS H. *The Language Wars: A History of Proper English*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2011. ISBN: 978-0-374-18329-5.

HUGHES A., TRUDGILL P., WATT D. *English Accents and Dialects: An Introduction to Social and Regional Varieties of English in the British Isles, Fourth Edition*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2005. ISBN: 978 0 340 88718 9.

LABOV W., ASH S., BOBERG CH. *Atlas of North American English: Phonetics, Phonology and Sound Change*. Mouton de Gruyter, 2005. ISBN-10: 3110167468.

LADEFOGED P. *A Course In Phonetics*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers

MENCKEN H. L. *The American Language: A Preliminary Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States*. New York: 1919. ISBN: 978-145100463-2.

MILLWARD C.M, HAYES M. *A Biography of the English Language, Third Edition*. Cengage learning, Wadsworth, 2012. ISBN: 0-495-90641-7

POTTER S. *Our language*, Penguin Books 1976. ISBN-10: 0140202277

ROACH P. *English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course*. Cambridge University Press, 2001. ISBN-10: 0521797993.

WELLS J.C. *Accent of English 2: The British Isles*. Cambridge University Press, 1982 ISBN: 0521285402.

YAVAS M. *Applied English Phonology*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. ISBN: 978-1444333220

Phonological history of English low back vowels. Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia [online]. San Francisco (CA): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001- [2014-05-04]. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonological\\_history\\_of\\_English\\_low\\_back\\_vowels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phonological_history_of_English_low_back_vowels)

Olivier G. The yod /j/: palatalise it or drop it! How Traditional Yod Forms are Disappearing from Contemporary English, Cercles 22, Université Jean Monnet, 2012

# 9 Appendix

IPA transcription symbols

	IPA	Sample Word
Consonants	b	<u>b</u> est
	p	<u>p</u> ainful
	d	<u>d</u> ream
	t	<u>t</u> aste
	g	<u>g</u> et
	k	<u>k</u> ocker
	v	<u>v</u> ery
	f	<u>f</u> riend
	ð	<u>th</u> is
	θ	<u>th</u> ing
	z	<u>z</u> one
	s	<u>s</u> inger
	ʒ	treas <u>u</u> re
	ʃ	sh <u>in</u> y
	dʒ	<u>g</u> in
	tʃ	<u>ch</u> in
	l	<u>b</u> log
	h	<u>h</u> ide
	m	<u>m</u> otion
	n	<u>n</u> othing
	ŋ	han <u>g</u>
	r	<u>r</u> ight
	j	<u>y</u> ell
	w	<u>w</u> ater

	IPA	Sample Word
Vowels	i:	<u>pe</u> ek
	ɪ	k <u>i</u> ck
	e	<u>b</u> ed
	æ	s <u>a</u> t
	ɒ	<u>d</u> ot
	ɔ:	<u>c</u> ourt
	ʊ	<u>p</u> ut
	u:	<u>co</u> ol
	ʌ	<u>pu</u> tt
	ɑ:	<u>c</u> ar
	ɜ:	<u>bi</u> rd
	ə	<u>a</u> bout

	IPA	Sample Word
Diphthongs	eɪ	<u>ei</u> ght
	aɪ	<u>bu</u> y
	ɔɪ	<u>to</u> y
	əʊ	<u>bo</u> at
	aʊ	<u>hou</u> se
	ɪə	<u>ear</u>
	eə	<u>care</u>
	ʊə	<u>tour</u>