

HISTORICAL PRECONDITIONS FOR DIVERGENCE BETWEEN BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH LEXICAL UNITS

Introduction. British and American English are correlated with each other as intersecting microsystems. Controversy over the issue which of the variants of the English language should be considered «exemplary» and if American English should become an independent language, finally isolating from British English, continue to this day. A characteristic feature in this case is a clear exaggeration of the differences between British and American versions.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the vocabulary of British and American variants of English on the example of various publications from newspapers, magazines, dictionaries, advertisements, fiction and identify differences in usage.

In the work, there are the following tasks:

1. Analysing development of American English;
2. Selecting lexical groups that have discrepancies in British English and American English;

Discussion and Results. The English first entered North America in the early 17th century. The history of the English language in America spans three and a half centuries.

The early period (from the beginning of the 17th century to the end of the 18th century) is characterised by formation of American dialects of the English language. Later period (XIX-XX centuries) is characterized by the creation of the American version in English.[1]

One of the most interesting matters in the field of vocabulary is divergence due to the replenishment of the vocabulary of the English language in America.

Neologisms of the 17th-18th centuries reflected new conditions of the

lives of the first English colonists in America. Here we can find a common group of words denoting the natural conditions of the American continent, its flora and fauna, for example: *moose, live-oak, hickoku – North American hazel, gap – mountain pass, backwoods – deep forest.*[4]

Vocabulary related to everyday life of the first settlers, to new ways of farming, etc., should be distinguished as a special group. For example, *corndodger, coleslaw, lot – a piece of land.*

Appearance of a significant group in the language belongs to the same period. Those are words that denoted various realities related to life and everyday life of indigenous inhabitants of the continent – the Indians. For example, *moccasin, squaw – Indian woman, medicine man – shaman of an Indian tribe.*

The replenishment of the vocabulary of the English language in America went on in several ways: 1) through the formation of new words and set phrases and rethinking the old ones; 2) the method of borrowing from other languages.

The coexistence of the old and the new meaning is noted, for example, in noun *frontier*, which acquired in America an additional meaning: newly developed or sparsely populated area, directly adjacent to a desert or uninhabited area.

Based on this new meaning, a number of complex words and stable phrases in which one of the elements is *frontier* in its American meaning. For example, *frontierman, frontier country, frontier town* [4].

Sometimes the reason for the development of a word in a new meaning is the functional identity or similarity of items denoted by this word. This phenomenon is found, for example, in the English word *store*, which in America has acquired the meaning of a *store, shop*. Such rethinking was caused by the fact that at that time in the colonies any store if necessary was at the same time a warehouse for goods. From here a stable phrase *keep the store* (to have a store) appeared.

A special group is made up of words whose lexical meaning has

undergone a complete rethink. There so called narrowing of the meaning should be noted. This process can be seen, for example, in the English noun *corn*, which in England means any grain. In America, the word *corn* came to mean corn, i. e. precisely the crop that was mainly cultivated by the first settlers [3].

One of the sources of replenishment of the vocabulary during this period was borrowings from other languages and, first of all, from the languages of Indian tribes that inhabited North America. Here, basically, the terms denoting the flora and fauna of the American continent are common: *squash*, *pumpkin*, *chinkapin*.

For the later period, the most characteristic is the quantitative growth of Americanisms. New state institutions, political parties and public military organizations - all this is primarily reflected in the inconsistency in political terminology. Intensive growth of American industry, development of transport and agriculture all this caused creation of a special social terminology. Arising in the USA in the 19th century, the railway terminology differed sharply from English.

In the 19th century, there was a number of lexical features of the American colloquial speech. Various resistant phrases with the adverb *right* (for example, *right along* – always, continuously, constantly, *right up* – immediately, *right smart* – a lot).

However, along with the process of separation of both variants of English, it should be noted that in the 19th century there was a convergence of both options. This trend, which has developed in XX century, so far only manifested itself to a small extent and reduced, mainly to the penetration of individual Americanisms into the speech of English. For example, the names of flora and fauna, political terms.

The following layers of English vocabulary are distinguished:

1. Vocabulary included in the territorial dialects of Great Britain and USA;
2. Vocabulary included in the literary language, but having a territory

restrictions within one of the variants of English;

3. Vocabulary limited by one of the variants of the literary language and not having territorial restrictions within its limits;

4. Vocabulary that is part of the literary language and does not have a territory restrictions.

The lexical units included in the first group are dialectisms. Lexical units included in the second and third groups are respectively Americanisms and Britishisms. Vocabulary included in the fourth group (general English) is common core of the lexical-semantic system of literary English.

Conclusions. At the level of the lexical semantic system of American English and British English are in close contact and interaction. The boundaries between such categories as «Americanism», «Britishism» and «common English lexical unit» are sometimes quite fluid.

Analysis of the studied literature allows us to assert that the American and British variants of the English language have interpenetrated, that the role of semantic differences is small, since the variant of English spoken in the US is understandable to native speakers of the British variant and vice versa.

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