

THE MAIN LEXICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ENGLISH VARIETIES (BRITISH, AMERICAN, CANADIAN)**Abdusattorova Mohigul Jamshid qizi**

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This thesis examines major lexical differences across British, American, and Canadian English, focusing on semantic variation, pragmatic distribution, and sociolinguistic conditioning. The study applies contrastive analysis supported by corpus-oriented observation and thematic lexical grouping. Its novelty lies in a coherent account of Canadian English as an “intermediate” lexical model and in identifying stable markers relevant for teaching and translation.

Keywords

British English, American English, Canadian English, lexical variation, semantic divergence, corpus analysis, pragmatic markedness.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu tezis britan, amerika va kanada ingliz turlarida leksik farqlarning tabiati, ularning semantik, funksional-uslubiy va sotsiolingvistik omillar bilan bog‘liqligini tahlil qiladi. Tadqiqot korpusga yo‘naltirilgan yondashuv, leksik-semantik guruhlash va kontrastiv tahlilga tayangan. Ilmiy yangilik sifatida kanada inglizchasining “oraliq model”dagi leksik xususiyatlari izchil asoslanadi.

Kalit so‘zlar

Britan inglizchasi, amerika inglizchasi, kanada inglizchasi, leksik variativlik, semantik farqlanish, korpus tahlili, pragmatik belgilanish.

Аннотация

В тезисе анализируются основные лексические различия между британским, американским и канадским вариантами английского языка с учетом семантики, прагматики и социолингвистических факторов. Методология включает контрастивный анализ, корпусно-ориентированное наблюдение и группировку лексики по тематическим доменам. Научная новизна состоит в уточнении статуса канадского варианта как промежуточной модели и в описании его маркеров.

Ключевые слова

британский английский, американский английский, канадский английский, лексическая вариативность, семантические различия, корпусный анализ, прагматическая маркированность.

Introduction

This thesis aims at analyzing the main lexical differences by scientific criteria which encountered in Britain, American, and Canadian English ,explaining their factors and determining practical implications in translation, teaching language and academic discourse. The

pluricentric nature of English language implies that linguistic norm is not only in a “close” form, but also active in regional variants. Therefore, these lexical varieties are inherent characteristics of normative system and not represented as a mere random deviation. This approach includes how the conception “lexical variety” shows existing two different terms and each of them has semantic volume, methodological marking, and level of institutional codification. Modern variation studies show that the lexical layer is the most rapidly updated and social-signaling prone part of language; therefore, it holds a significant place in sociolinguistic identification and “accommodation strategies” in communication[1;6]. The methodological framework of the thesis comprises a combination of contrastive analysis, lexico-semantic grouping, corpus-oriented observation, and functional-stylistic interpretation; priority is given to explaining differences between national varieties not through the 'correct-incorrect' opposition, but through 'variant-norm' relationships [2; 4].

Between British and American English the most prominent level “referential” which refers to same objects denoting differently: transport, real-world objects or concepts they denote. For example,

Britain	American
Lift	elevator
lorry	truck
flat	apartment
petrol	gasoline

are considered as general norm. In this case, deference is not only synonym, but it belongs to institutional and cultural model. Objects frequently encountered in a specific society receive a systematized naming, whereas in another variety, the same object is 'perceived' through a different social experience, resulting in the nomination being fixed through a different unit. Furthermore, while certain lexical units may be shared across varieties, their collocational patterns often diverges. For instance, the established use of at the weekend in British English versus on the weekend in American English illustrates how lexical items undergo variation dictated by their specific grammatical environments. In this context, the distinction lies in the divergence of lexical norms through prepositional choice [3]. Such instances suggest that lexical variability does not emerge in a purely 'vocabulary-based' vacuum, but rather manifests at the lexico-grammatical interface.

Semantic divergence - where the same form undergoes a shift in meaning or semantic focus across different varieties - remains one of the most frequent catalysts for error in practical communication. As an example, in British English, a public school historically refers to an 'exclusive, fee-paying private institution,' whereas in American English, it typically denotes a 'state-funded school.' Such discrepancies often lead to significant misunderstandings in translation and intercultural dialogue.

Also, one of the common prototypical case is the relationship between the British biscuit and the American cookie. While frequently presented as direct equivalents, their conceptual scope differs in authentic speech: in British usage, a biscuit is primarily a crisp sweet treat enjoyed with tea, while in American English, biscuit can refer to a completely different type of savory bread product. Consequently, formal equivalence does not guarantee total semantic alignment. This 'deceptive correspondence' (false friends) within variational lexis constitutes a distinct layer that necessitates a targeted approach in pedagogical methodology [4]. Another important aspect of semantic differentiation concerns stylistic register. A word that sounds neutral in one variety of English may appear more formal—or, conversely, more informal—in another. For example, a lexical item that is stylistically unmarked in British English may carry a

different connotation in American English. As a result, when a text moves from one variety to another, it can unintentionally lose its original pragmatic tone, even if the literal meaning remains unchanged. From a lexical perspective, Canadian English is often described as occupying an “intermediate” position between British and American standards. However, this position should not be understood as a simple blend of the two. Rather, Canadian English represents a dynamic system shaped by selective borrowing and local innovation.

Many lexical items associated with American English are widely used in Canada. This can be explained by geographical proximity, shared media space, and strong economic ties, all of which have encouraged extensive lexical diffusion. On the other hand, certain terms reflecting British heritage and connections with Commonwealth institutions have been retained. Most importantly, the uniqueness of the Canadian variety becomes especially visible in so-called Canadianisms. These nominative units are tied to specific social institutions, geographical features, cultural practices, or historical experiences unique to Canada. Significantly, such expressions do more than simply name local realities; they also function as markers of national identity. For this reason, their use is often pragmatically marked, signaling not just reference but belonging. The interpretation of Canadian English as an intermediate model can thus be explained at the intersection of three major factors: the pressure of American mass lexical usage, the legacy of traditional British codification, and local nominative needs. In other words, Canadian English develops within a space shaped simultaneously by the strong influence of American English, the historical norms of British English, and the necessity to name realities specific to the Canadian context. When analyzing the mechanisms behind lexical differences, several processes are particularly significant: borrowing, semantic extension, semantic narrowing, and analogy. Historically, American English has actively employed internal word-formation resources to designate new realities, while also expanding its vocabulary through contact with immigrant languages and Indigenous languages. British English, in turn, acquired numerous regional borrowings through linguistic contact during the period of the British Empire. In the case of Canadian English, the institutional status of the French language exerts both direct and indirect influence on the lexical system. This influence is especially visible in the official-administrative sphere, where certain terminological pairs occur, as well as in toponymy and vocabulary related to cultural realities. However, for any borrowing or innovation to develop into a stable feature of variant distinction, three conditions are required: wide social distribution, stable collocational usage, and at least partial codification. Only under these conditions does a unit move beyond being an individual speech innovation and become recognized as an element of normative variation [1; 5]. This is also supported by observations, which show that, despite the prevalence of certain words in mass media and fiction, they are often introduced later into written communication. This, in turns, confirms that the presence of stylistic filters influences the development of lexical innovations. From the point of view translation practice and language teaching the management of such lexical variations must start with the clear identification of the target variety. If the target text is intended for an American audience, it is not always necessary to change the British English variants, since these variants are also generally intelligible within the framework of global English varieties. Nevertheless, adaptation becomes relevant in the following areas: institutional terminology, measurement systems, daily vocabulary, and potentially misleading semantic pairs. If these areas are not adapted correctly, the effectiveness of the text’s communication may be diminished, and the author’s credibility in style may come into question.

At the same time, the absolutization of a particular variant is methodologically unproductive. From a pedagogical point of view, the learner should master the skills of adaptability across variants. This does not mean learning the list of synonyms; rather, the learner should know which word is pragmatically relevant in a particular situation. For Canadian

English, the question is particularly relevant. Even if the learner is familiar with the vocabulary of American English, he/she will not understand the texts if he/she does not know Canadian words. On the other hand, “Americanization” of a Canadian text can lead to the elimination of local “color” and “identity” markers. The Research findings show that the differences between British, American, and Canadian English variants in their lexicon operate on some levels: nominative equivalence (different proper names for one and the same referent), semantic shift (different meanings of one and the same word), collocational and prepositional variation (stable combinations), and pragmatic-stylistic marking (register and social markers). Canadian English should not be treated as a passive variant “in between” – rather, it has developed as a relatively stable model of English lexicon.

In conclusion, this thesis has managed to prove that the differences in British English, American English, and Canadian English vocabulary have a presence on the semantic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic levels. Special emphasis has been put on the Canadian English variety, which is considered to be a “stable intermediate model of vocabulary.” This variety is the result of selective borrowing from other varieties. Generally speaking, the study of vocabulary differences contributes to the understanding that English is a unified system with differences. These differences should not be considered in isolation but rather as part of a process that is governed by certain rules. This process includes historical contacts, institutional frameworks, codification, and pragmatic needs. Such a process improves the quality of translations, helps to pinpoint errors in language teaching more accurately, and enables the management of variety in academic communication.

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