

## **Chapter II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, the writer presents English style, American English, British English, and differences between American English and British English.

#### **2.1 Language Style**

Kerf (2005) says that language style is the way we use a language. Language style allows us to assess the personality, character, and ability of a person who uses that language. The better the person's language style, the better the assessment against him; the worse the person's style, the worse the assessment given to him anyway.

Related to Kerf's definition about language style, it is concluded that an English style is the way we use English language; the way we speak, the way we write, and the way we communicate.

English grammar has a variation in the structure and use; it depends on the tradition that influences a country in using their native language. Generally, the grammar used as guides are American English and British English.

#### **2.2 American English**

Crystal (1997) cites that American English is a set of dialects of the English language used mostly in the United States. He also says that approximately two-thirds of the world's native speakers of English live in the United States.

Furthermore, Crawford (2012) also says that English is the most widely-spoken language in the United States. English is the common language used by the federal government and is considered the *de facto* language of the United States due to its widespread use. English has been given official status by 30 of the 50 state governments.

The use of English in the United States is a result of British colonization. The first wave of English-speaking settlers arrived in North America during the 17th

century, followed by further migrations in the 18th and 19th centuries. Since then, American English has been influenced by the languages of West Africa, the Native American population, German, Irish, Spanish, and other languages of successive waves of immigrants to the U.S.

Some people in Learn English forum agree that American English is easier to understand than British English. Boriy (2011) says that American English is much easier than British English, because most of the time he uses American English in his school.

### **2.3 British English**

Peters (2004, p.79) says that British English is the broad term used to distinguish the forms of the English language used in the United Kingdom from forms used elsewhere.

Jeffries (2009, p.12) explains that there are slight regional variations in formal written English in the United Kingdom. For example, although the words *wee* and *little* are interchangeable in some contexts, *wee* (as an adjective) is almost exclusively written by some people from some parts of northern Great Britain (and especially Scotland) or from Northern Ireland, whereas in Southern England and Wales, *little* is used predominantly. Nevertheless, there is a meaningful degree of uniformity in written English within the United Kingdom, and this could be described by the term British English. The forms of spoken English, however, vary considerably more than in most other areas of the world where English is spoken, so a uniform concept of British English is more difficult to apply to the spoken language.

British English is considered more elegant than American English. People who use British English will consider more educated than people who do not. Most of people in English-test forum agree that British English is more standard than American English. Carbonarius (2005) states that British English has more standard English than American English. Also, it is also more elegant than American English.

## 2.4 Differences between American and British English

British Council (2014) and Sehgal et al. (2007) cite some differences of American and British English; they include the use of tenses, preposition, spelling, verb usage, vocabulary, time telling, punctuation, pronunciation, and accent.

### 1. The Use of Tenses

Sehgal et al. (2007) explain that in the use of tenses, British English traditionally uses the present perfect to talk about an event in the recent past and with the words *already*, *just* and *yet*. In American usage these meanings can be expressed with the present perfect or the simple past. This American style has become widespread only in the past 20 to 30 years; the British style is still in common use as well. For example in British we use “I have just arrived home”, meanwhile in American we use “I just arrived home”.

In British English, *have got* or *have* can be used for possession and *have got to* and *have to* can be used for the modal of necessity. The forms that include *got* are usually used in informal contexts and the forms without *got* in contexts that are more formal. In American speech the form without *got* is used more than in the UK, although the form with *got* is often used for emphasis. Colloquial American English informally uses *got* as a verb for these meanings. For example, *I got two cars*, *I got to go*.

### 2. Preposition

In using preposition, there are also some differences. For example, American English use *on the weekend* and *on the team* rather than British English use *at the weekend* and *in a team*. (Sehgal et al., 2007)

### 3. Spelling

It is explained by British Council (2014) that there are a number of different spelling rules between American and British English.

1. Some words that end with ‘-tre’ in British English end with ‘-ter’ in American English.
2. Some words that end with ‘-our’ in British English end with ‘-or’ in American English.
3. Some words are shorter in American English than in British English.

Furthermore, Sehgal et al. (2007) add a majority of the spelling differences between American and British English fall into the following categories:

- **Latin-derived spellings**

- -our (British) and -or (American). e.g. colour vs color
- -re (British) and -er (American). e.g. centre vs center
- -ce (British) and -se (American). e.g. defence vs defense

- **Greek-derived spellings**

- -ise (British) and -ize (American). e.g. centralise vs centralize
- -yse (British) and -yze (American). e.g. analyse vs analyze
- -ogue (British) and -og (American). e.g. dialogue vs dialog
- Simplification of *ae* and *oe* in American English. e.g. gynaecology vs gynecology

Some examples are:

American English spelling	British English spelling
Color	Colour
labor	Labour
theater	theatre
Fulfill	Fulfil
catalog	catalogue

Program	programme
Center	Centre
Analyze	analyse
Aging	Ageing
Dialog	dialogue
Anesthesia	anaesthesia

Table 1. English words in different spelling

#### 4. Verb Usage

In using verbs in past form, Sehgal et al. (2007) explain that American is more common with regular form (dreamed, learned, smelled) rather than British with irregular ones (dreamt, learnt, smelt).

#### 5. Vocabulary

According to British Council (2014), while some words may mean something in American English, the same word might be something else in British English and vice versa. For example, Athlete in American English is one who participates in sports in general whereas Athlete in British English is one who participates in track and field events

There are also some words which are common in American English and not used very often in British English. The following table shows a few of commonest

British	American
Angry	Mad
Autumn	Fall
Boot (of a car)	Trunk
Chemist's	Drug store
Cupboard	Closet

Flat	Apartment
Lift	Elevator
Nappy	Diaper
Pavement	Sidewalk
Petrol	Gas/gasoline
Rubbish	Trash
Tap	Faucet
Trousers	Pants

Table 2. Commonest words in American and British English

## 6. Time Telling

In describing the time, Sehgal et al. (2007) also explain that while Americans will say *quarter after ten* to denote 10:15, British will consider say *quarter past ten*. Also, American prefer use digital times with a colon (6:00), rather than British will use a point (6.00).

## 7. Punctuation

According to Sehgal et al. (2007), in writing the title of someone's name, Americans commonly use a point after the title for example Mr. Wonka, Mrs. Paxton, and Dr. Doolittle, while British would rather to write without a point, Mr Wonka, Mrs Paxton, and Dr Doolittle.

## 8. Pronunciation

Sehgal et al. (2007) also state that some words in American and British English are sometimes pronounced differently. For example, **schedule** will be pronounced /sedʒuəl/ in British English whereas in American English it will be pronounced /skedzəl/. Also, **leisure** will be pronounced /lezə/ in British English whereas in American English it will be pronounced /li:zər/.

## **9. Accent**

It is stated by British Council (2014) that in American English, someone who speaks with clear R will consider as more prestige than someone who does not. Whereas in British English, someone who speaks with soundless R will consider as the upper class. Also, the non-rhotic speech was standardized and has been spreading to all people in Britain.