

: STRUCTURE :**16.0 Objectives****16.1 Introduction to the Varieties of English****16.2 Various Groups of ‘English’ Countries****16.3 Contemporary Divisions of English Speaking Countries****16.3.1 Britain****16.3.2 America****16.3.3 Africa****16.3.4 Asia, Pacific****16.4 Let Us Sum Up****16.5 Check Your Progress****16.6 Key Words****16.7 Books Suggested****Answers**

16.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall discuss;

- different versions of English being in practice across the globe,
- various countries practicing such varieties of Englishes,
- the clusters/groups which differentiate them from one another.

On completing this unit, you should be able to;

- differentiate various trends and styles of English in Practice,
- understand the difference of linguistic connotation of language across the world.

16.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

In this discussion, the term “variety” is used to refer to any variant of a language which can be adequately surrounded from another variant. The basis for this differentiation can be social, historical or a combination of both.

English is spoken today in almost every part of the world as a result of colonial expansion in more than last four centuries. The colonial era is now definitely over but its consequences clearly can be seen in the presence of English as an official and often native language in many of the former colonies along with more or less strongly diverging varieties which arose in particular socio-political conditions.

Another legacy of colonialism is where English fulfils the function of a lingua franca. Many countries, like Nigeria, use English as a lingua franca

because there are many different and mutually incomprehensible languages and a need for a common language as means of communication.

English has also come to play a central role as an international language. There are a number of reasons for this, of which the rising economic status of the United States is certainly one of the most important now a days. Internal reasons for the success of English in the international arena can also be given : a little bit of English goes a long way as the grammar is largely analytic in type so that it is suitable for those groups who do not wish to give a great effort on learning a foreign language.

The concept of Isogloss

Isoglosses Boundaries between two regions which differ with some linguistic feature are called isoglosses. The term isogloss literally means ‘same language’ (iso + gloss). The term is used in two slightly different ways and is also represented graphically in two different ways. One way of displaying an isogloss is to draw a single line between two regions which are found to differ with respect to some linguistic feature(s). The single line separating the regions is the isogloss.

16.2 VARIOUS GROUPS OF ‘ENGLISH’ COUNTRIES

For the present overview the varieties of English in the modern world are divided into four geographical groups as follows :

- (1) **Britain** : England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland
- (2) **America** : United States, Canada, African American Vernacular English, The Caribbean
- (3) **Africa** : West Africa, South Africa, East Africa
- (4) **Asia, Pacific** : India and South–East Asia, Australia and New Zealand, The Pacific islands region

The two main groups are Britain and America. For each there are standard forms of English which are used as yardsticks for comparing other varieties of the respective areas.

16.3 CONTEMPORARY DIVISIONS OF ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES

16.3.1 Britain :

16.3.1.1 British English :

“The phrase British English has . . . a monolithic quality, as if it offers a single clear–cut variety as a fact of life (alongside providing a brand name for language–teaching purposes). It shares, however, all the ambiguities and tensions in the word British, and as a result can be used and interpreted in two ways, more broadly and more narrowly, within a range of blurring and ambiguity.”

(Tom McCarthur, The Oxford Guide to World English. Oxford University Press, 2002)

“Before English speakers began to spread around the world, first in large numbers in America, there was no British English. There was only English. Concepts like ‘American English’ and ‘British English’ are defined by comparison. They are relative concepts like ‘brother’ and ‘sister.’”

(John Algeo, preface to *The Cambridge History of the English Language : English in North America*. Cambridge University Press, 2001)

There are a couple of obvious isoglosses for English dialects. The clearest one acoustically is the presence or absence of syllable-final /r/. Within England such absence is typical of large regions of the south, but parts of the south and south-west still retain /r/ in this position.

The next obvious isogloss is that separating the northern area with unshifted short /u/ and that in the south where this sound has been unrounded and lowered to /v/. An additional isogloss is that separating areas with initial /h-/ and those without it. The loss of /h/ in initial position is endemic in British English with the exceptions of Scotland and the far north of England, the region of Newcastle and Durham.

16.3.1.2 Welsh English :

The English spoken in Wales is not as different with respect to more standard forms of English, especially when it is compared to either Scottish or Irish English. There is little in the syntax which is specifically Welsh so that the main features are phonological with one or two morphological characteristics and a few lexical items.

The most general feature of Welsh English is the lilting intonation due to the rise-fall at the end of statements as opposed to the fall in other forms of English. Long vowels tend to occur only in stressed syllables. There is little distinction in length among low vowels so that words like grand and grass sound as if they had the same vowel.

Welsh – the Celtic language – is found in two major varieties, a northern and a southern one. The north of Wales tends to be more rural and the south, certainly in the regions of Swansea and Cardiff, is mainly urban. Southern Welsh English is h-less where Northern Welsh English tends to be h-ful, i.e. /h/ occurs in initial position. In the south a clear /l/ is commonly used for all types of English /l/ – i.e. in syllable-initial and in syllable-final positions which have a clear and a dark /l/ in Received Pronunciation respectively whereas in the north the velar /l/ may well predominate.

16.3.1.3 Scottish English :

The advance and variety of English which established itself at this early stage later on developed into what is called Lallands (E ‘lowlands’) and has kept its identity as a distinct variety of Scottish English even to the present-day. The speakers of English in this initial period were very often English settlers who had been invited by the Scottish king to settle and render arable the plains of the Lowlands. Through mixed marriages and gradual assimilation of the Gaelic speaking community in the lowland area, Gaelic became weaker and weaker. By the Early Modern English period (in

the Elizabethan era) Gaelic was only spoken by monolinguals in the Highlands and Islands (i.e. on the large islands on the west coast of Scotland). A further language, Norn, which was a remnant of Old Norse spoken on the Orkney and Shetland islands, disappeared finally in the 18th century.

For the 20th century, there are varieties of Scottish English :

- (1) Lallands, the most original of all varieties of Scottish English,
- (2) Contact English which is that spoken by speakers of both Scottish Gaelic and English and
- (3) Standard Scottish English which is a locally flavoured version of mainland British English (derived ultimately from Received Pronunciation),
- (4) more recently developed urban varieties spoken chiefly in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

In phonology, the native Scottish varieties show strong deviations from Southern British English. Syntactic particularities have been found in the contact varieties of English where the syntax of Gaelic has led to a variety of constructions which do not have parallels in Southern British English.

The aspect of Scottish English which has attracted most attention from linguists recently is the so-called Scottish Vowel Length Rule or Aitken's Law, after the linguist who first described it linguistically, which specifies that vowels are lengthened (normally they are short in Scottish English) before voiced fricatives, /l/ and /r/. Here one has a case of phonetic conditioning for lengthening as a following voiced sound often causes a vowel preceding it to be realised as long, cf. the vowel in standard English *bad* [bæ :d] vs. *bat* [bæt].

Two others sources for Scottish English which deserve mention are :

- (1) The Linguistic Survey of Scotland (with its centre at the University of Edinburgh) and
- (2) The Survey of English Dialects (centered at Leeds) which deals with Scottish English alongside the other varieties of British English. Both these projects have produced much linguistic literature (atlases and interpretative monographs) with information on the English spoken north of the border.

16.3.1.4 Irish English :

Irish English is a variety of the English language that is used in Ireland. Also known as Hiberno-English or Anglo-Irish. As illustrated below, Irish English is subject to regional variation, especially between the north and south. "*In Ireland,*" said Terence Dolan, "*Hiberno-English means that you have two languages in a kind of unruly shotgun marriage together, fighting all the time*" (quoted by Carolina P. Amador Moreno in "*How the Irish Speak English,*" Estudios Irlandeses, 2007).

“Irish (or Hiberno–English) has distinctive varietal features of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, although patterns vary considerably between North and South and East and West. In grammar”.

(R. Carter and J. McRae, *The Routledge History of Literature in English*, 2001)

“Although the knowledge of Irish among the majority is, in general, very poor, there is a curious habit of flavouring one's speech by adding a few words from Irish, what is sometimes called using the cúpla focal (Irish ‘couple of words’)...”

(Raymond Hickey, *Irish English : History and Present–Day Forms*. Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Northern Irish English

Rural dialects in the south carry a shame of being unacceptable to educated people, whereas in the North doctors, dentists, teachers and lawyers lace their speech with either Ulster Scots or Northern Irish English.

“Examples of Northern Irish English : Seamus Heaney has written of glar, soft liquid mud, from the Irish glár; glit, meaning ooze or slime (glet is more common in Donegal); and daligone, meaning nightfall, dusk, from ‘daylight gone.’ I have [heard] daylight–falling, day–fall, dellit fall, duskies and duskit, also from Derry.”

(Diarmaid Ó Muirithe, “Keep Your Ears Open and You'll Have a Sonly Holiday.” *The Irish Times*, Aug. 26, 2009)

Southern Irish English

Some characteristics of the grammar of southern Irish English include the following :

- (1) Stative verbs can be used with progressive aspect : I'm seeing it very well; This is belong to me.
- (2) The adverb after can be used with a progressive where a perfective would be used in other varieties : I'm after seeing him (I've just seen him'). This is a loan translation from Irish.
- (3) Clefting is common, and it is extended to use with copular verbs : It was very well that he looked; Is it stupid you are ? Again, this shows a substrate effect from Irish.

New Dublin English

The term Dublin English may refer to any one of the varieties of the English language used in Dublin, Ireland. There is no doubt that the spread of features of new Dublin English has accelerated considerably in the past few years.

“Apparent time study of Dublin English shows that female speakers over 30 do not always, and those over 40 rarely, have the features which are so indicative of new Dublin English. In the recordings for A Sound Atlas of Irish English nearly all females under 25, whose self–image appeared to be one of urban modernity, showed the new pronunciation. . . . [W]e are dealing here with a fairly unified, structural realignment of the entire accent

of southern Irish English and not just one or two minor changes in pronunciation.”

(Raymond Hickey, *Dublin English : Evolution and Change*. John Benjamins, 2005)

The changes in Dublin English can be seen in both vowels and consonants. The consonant changes seem to be individual changes whereas area of vowels represent a coordinated shift which has affected several elements.

16.3.2 America :

16.3.2.1 English in the United States :

The most general means of referring to English in the United States is American English which does not include Canadian English. The English of the United States in any way represents a separate language from kinds of British English with which it is mutually understandable.

There is a further complex of varieties which is a terminologically sensitive area : the English of the African American population. American sociolinguists came to use the term *Black English (BE)* or *Black English Vernacular (BEV)*. With the advent of political correctness as a socio–political phenomenon the terms had to be revised for fear of appearing discriminatory.

Afro–American English was used but then the ‘Afro’ element was thought to be subordinate to American and so African American English (AAE) came to be employed and is current today, usually with the word Vernacular as an additional qualifier. Occasionally the term Ebonics (from ‘ebony’ where the colour of the wood is sometimes associated with blacks) is found, particularly outside linguistic circles.

British and American English were fundamentally similar till the 17th century. After this period, the two major varieties of English drifted apart with American English being more conservative in keeping with a generally observed tendency of peripheral dialects whereas British English continued to develop quite rapidly, losing syllable–final /r/ for example. Evidence of the conservative side of American English is found for instance in verb forms : English has simplified the past forms of *get* to just *got*; with the verb *forget* there is both *forgot* and *forgotten*, whereas American English still has *gotten*. In the area of lexis one could cite words like *fall for autumn* or *mail for post* where the American terms are more ancient terms than the English ones.

British and American English

Spelling

AE	BE	AE	BE	AE	BE
<i>honor</i>	<i>honour</i>	<i>realize</i>	<i>realise</i>	<i>theater</i>	<i>theatre</i>
<i>favor</i>	<i>favour</i>	<i>criticize</i>	<i>criticise</i>	<i>center</i>	<i>centre</i>
<i>odor</i>	<i>odour</i>	<i>idealize</i>	<i>idealise</i>	<i>meter</i>	<i>metre</i>

AE	BE	AE	BE	AE	BE
<i>traveled</i>	<i>travelled</i>	<i>defense</i>	<i>defence</i>	<i>program</i>	<i>programme</i>
<i>labeled</i>	<i>labelled</i>	<i>offense</i>	<i>offence</i>	<i>dialog</i>	<i>dialogue</i>
<i>woolen</i>	<i>woollen</i>	<i>license</i>	<i>licence</i>	<i>sulfur</i>	<i>sulphur</i>
AE	BE	AE	BE	AE	BE
<i>inquiry</i>	<i>enquiry</i>	<i>cozy</i>	<i>cosy</i>	<i>draft</i>	<i>draught</i>
<i>inclosure</i>	<i>enclosure</i>	<i>check</i>	<i>cheque</i>	<i>plow</i>	<i>plough</i>

AE : American English

BE : British English

16.3.2.2 English in Canada :

Canadian English can be said to occupy an approximate position between American and British English. This can also be understood in historic terms, seeing as how Canada was under the influence of Britain for very much longer. Furthermore the Canadians do not like to be mistaken for Americans and so they tend to avoid the more obvious traits of English practiced in the United States. Despite occupying a large amount of size, there is not much deviation within Canadian English.

There are one or two further particular areas in Canada which have a special significance linguistically. For instance, the Ottawa Valley in the west of the city of Ottawa in Ontario is noted for its Scottish and Irish settlement history and structures typical of Irish English are found.

16.3.2.3 African American Vernacular English :

The term *African American Vernacular English*, formerly known as 'Black English', refers to the varieties of English spoken by those people in the United States who are originally African population transported there. These speakers are currently distributed geographically across the entire country. However, the African Americans were originally settled in the south.

With the industrialization of the United States in the last century a migration from south to north began leading to considerable numbers of African Americans settling in industrial centers, particularly of the north and north east. These speakers are severed from the historical core area of African American Vernacular English and have frequently undergone developments not shared with the original speakers in the south. The remarks below hold for the most undiluted form of African American Vernacular English.

There are three basic views on the origin of African American Vernacular English

- (1) **Baby talk theory** : Now completely outdated; African American Vernacular English is said to have developed from a simplified form of English used in communication with slaves, supposedly akin to language in early childhood.

- (2) **Creole hypothesis** : African American Vernacular English is viewed here as having developed out of the necessity of slaves from different linguistic backgrounds on the plantations of the south to have a form of basic communication, i.e. an English-based pidgin, later a creole with native speakers).
- (3) **Dialect origin view** : Also known as the segregation hypothesis. This sees African American Vernacular English as having developed from dialects of English cut off from others hence independent features arose not shared by the input forms.

16.3.2.4 English in the Caribbean :

The Caribbean is a large area extending from the southern coast of the United States to the northern coast of South America, bounded on the west by Mexico and the Central American states and facing out to the Atlantic on the east.

The English of Jamaica shows the typical creole range of former English colonies. The basilect exhibits many of the features of true creoles : analytic grammatical structure (little or no inflections), simplified phonology, lack of consonant clusters. As well as this Jamaican creole is a syllable-timed language, much as French. More than 2 million inhabitants speak a variety of English which has developed over the past few centuries during the colonial period. In addition to this, Jamaican English is spoken to a considerable extent in England notably in London due to immigration mostly after the Second World War.

The two main Anglophone islands here are Barbados and Montserrat, both of which had an intake of English speakers already in the 17th century. Many of these speakers furthermore came from Ireland and it is known that English speakers later disseminated from Barbados to other islands so that there is a distinct possibility that some of the parallels between Irish English and forms of Caribbean creole – for instance structures involving verbal aspect – are not coincidental.

16.3.3 Africa :

16.3.3.1 English in West Africa :

The term ‘West Africa’ is used to refer to the set of nations on the coast of western Africa from Gambia in the north and Cameroon in the south. Almost all of them are former colonies of England (hence the official language of many of them is English) and the base for the pidgins spoken in this region is English.

There is no name for the dialect spoken in Ghana; additionally English is spoken as a second language by many speakers as opposed to a pidginized form of English being used. English has been spoken since the early 17th century and the pidgin of English is used by millions of speakers and used on official or semi-official occasions. The position of English is particularly strong because of the huge variety of native languages in Nigeria.

After the First World War the country was divided among the French and British to the advantage of the former. For this reason both English and

French are official languages in present day Cameroon, which is geographically based on former French Cameroon, most of former British Cameroon having gone to Nigeria.

16.3.3.2 English in South Africa :

In 1652, the Cape of Good Hope was colonized by Dutch navigators, thus establishing the Dutch claim to this part of Africa. For 150 years the English did not disturb the colony; in 1806 however they attacked the region and brought the English language there and initiated the dual European language tradition which exists till present day.

Nowadays one can recognize at least four main varieties of English in South Africa :

1. Afrikaner English (the English of those South Africans whose mother language is Afrikaans),
2. Coloured English (the kind of English used by the coloured (racially mixed, or Asiatic) portion of the population,
3. The English of the black section of the population and of course the language of those native speakers of English.
4. South African Indian English which derives from the speech of those Indian immigrants who came to Kwazulu–Natal in the late 19th century.

English is the first language of more than 10% of which two thirds are white. Furthermore English is used as a lingua franca by millions and in this context co–exists with Afrikaans – mixtures of Afrikaans and English are not uncommon and termed ‘Anglikaans’) and many indigenous languages such as those of the Bantu and Khoisian groups. Since the change–over in power to a largely black government the Republic of South Africa recognizes some 11 languages, including English and Afrikaans, as official languages in the country.

16.3.3.3 English in East Africa :

The position of English is somewhat different from that in South and West Africa as here there has been for centuries an indigenous lingua franca, Swahili. English was thus used as a supplementary language and not a primary pidginized one as was the case in West Africa for many speakers. e. g. in a country like Nigeria with many mutually unintelligible indigenous languages.

16.3.4 India :

16.3.4.1 English in India :

India was originally in the hands of English firms which organized trade with the colony, the most important of these was the powerful East India Company founded in 1600 and which established bases later in 17th century at many of the sites which were to become major cities of India such as Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. In these early days, Portuguese was an important language, being replaced in the following centuries by English with the missionary activity and the establishment of English educational institutions in India.

Because of the size and linguistic complexity of India, English has had a special function as a means of communication. This has been officially encoded in the three language formula which in the sixties was suggested for education : the state language, Hindi and English were to be taught to allow local identity, national feeling and international access to be maintained.

Indian English – irrespective of where it derives from – has quite distinctive features, above all in its phonology. The grammar of Indian English varies greatly depending on the background native language and the degree of proficiency of the individual speaker. Substrate influence makes itself felt in morphology and syntax, this interference declining sharply with education and fluency in English.

16.3.4.2 South East Asia :

From the Anglophone point of view this large area consists of Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong. The types of English spoken here again depend on degree of education and substrate influence.

16.3.4.3 Australia and New Zealand :

In Australia, the official language is English, a large variety of native languages are spoken in small quantities by the aborigines (native Australians).

The white population derives traditionally from Irish or English immigrants and is known as ‘Anglo–Celtic’. In the present century immigration from other European countries took place, e.g. from Greece and Italy. Furthermore, Australia feels the proximity to major Asiatic neighbors like China.

Basically similar to Australian English. New Zealand has Maori loanwords which are obviously not found in Australian English, e.g. tamarillo for tomato. In the area of phonology one can note that front short vowels are raised considerably – even more than in Australian English – giving man /men/, men /min/ with a diphthongization of /i/ : pin /piqn/.

16.3.4.4 The Pacific region :

The term *Polynesia* (from Greek ‘many islands’) refers to all the islands in the south–west and west of the Pacific stretching from the north of Australia up to Hawaii. This is an area which is characterised by pidgins rather than forms of English with clear historical continuity as in Australia and New Zealand.

The term Melanesian Pidgin English is often used to refer to the pidgins of the region but it is more a linguistic than a general term and refers to the pidgins and creoles spoken in Papua New Guinea (Tok Pisin), on the Solomon Islands (Pijin) and on Vanuatu (Bislama).

The islands of Hawaii were first known as the *Sandwich Islands* after their discovery by James Cook in 1778. The official language is of course English and the influence of mainland American English is quite obvious; the influence of Hawaiian is restricted to a few lexical items.

16.4 LET US SUM UP

Thus, an awareness of the origins and traditions of the metalanguage, naming practices, and discourses of “varieties of English” will be helpful to assist our own understand the concepts and theories of this branch of linguistics.

We have learnt here,
the concept ‘variety’ in English,
versions of Englishes in various countries.

16.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1
ANSWER THE FOLLOWING.

1. The Term _____ is used in two slightly different ways and is also represented graphically in two different ways
2. Irish English is a variety of the English language that is used in Ireland. Also known as _____ .
3. _____ English can be said to occupy an approximate position between American and British English.
4. The English of _____ shows the typical creole range of former English colonies.
5. There are four main varieties of English in South Africa : (a) Coloured English (b) The English of the black section (c) South African Indian English and (d) _____

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2
ANSWER THE FOLLOWING IN DETAIL.

1. What the implication by “variety” of English ? How it has emerged as Lingua Franca ?
2. What is “Isogloss” ? How does it work with the English of Britain and America ?
3. What is the status of English in Africa and its subordinate territories ?
4. What varieties of English are practiced in India, New Zealand and Australia ?

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3
SHORT NOTES.

1. Varieties of English in Britain.
2. Characteristics of English in America and its subordinates.
3. Irish English and its subtypes
4. Variants of English in America

16.6 KEY WORDS

- **Colonialism** : the belief in and support for the system of one country controlling another
- **Monolithic** : too large, too regular, or without interesting differences, and unwilling or unable to be changed
- **Morphology** : the study of the form of words and phrases
- **Phonology** : the study of sounds in a particular language or in languages generally
- **Vernacular** : the form of a language that a particular group of speakers use naturally, especially in informal situations
- **Creole** : a language that has developed from a mixture of languages :
- **Anglophone** : a person who speaks English, especially in countries where other languages are also spoken
- **Pidgin** : a language that has developed from a mixture of two languages. It is used as a way of communicating by people who do not speak each other's languages
- **Lingua franca** : a common language used for communication between groups of people who speak different languages

(Courtesy : Cambridge English Dictionary)

16.7 BOOKS SUGGESTED

Varieties of English : A Typographical Approach by Peter Siemund
(Cambridge 2013)

A Handbook of Varieties of English : Morphology and Syntax by
Edgar Werner Schneider, Bernd Kortmann, Mounon De Gruyter
(2004)

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Isogloss
2. Hiberno–English/ Anglo–Irish
3. Canadian
4. Jamaica
5. Afrikaner English

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