

## **BRITISH ENGLISH VERSUS AMERICAN ENGLISH: A PHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

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### **Abstract**

*English is the language of the English. But, nowadays, this language is used as the native speech of the people of different countries likely, the United States of America (U.S.A), Australia, New-Zealand, Zimbabwe, as well as South Africa and so on. Although English language was flourished in England for the first time, it is now spoken by more people in America than in Britain and this situation of English language in England and America has given birth to two diversities of English such as, British English and American English. At this moment both branches are considered to be the most highly-flavoured and distinguished forms of English language. But, due to the historical, cultural, interactional, geographical, pedagogical and for other factors these two varieties of English language differ to each other and for these reasons various dissimilarities in vocabulary, grammar, phonology, spelling, and punctuation and so on are found between these two branches of English language. The main purpose of this article is to present the phonological differences between these two varieties of English with the help of phoneme and its inventories, its articulatory realization and distributional or phonotatic differences as well as with the help of the stress and intonation patterns of sounds.*

**Key Words:** Phonology, phoneme inventory, phonotatic difference, intonation and stress.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

As a *Lingua franca* of today's world English is spoken as a native or first language or mother tongue by about 380 million (Islam & Begum, 2008) people and this world language is also used as a second language by another 400 million (Crystal, 1990, 2) people. It is a common means of communication among the world people. The number of English speakers is increasing day by day. 'Today a rough agreement can be found on figures that put the total number of speakers of English at between 700 million and 1 billion. This figure can be divided into three groups: native speakers of English, speakers of English as a second (or international) language and speakers of English as a foreign (or international) language. The

last group is the fastest growing section of world speakers of English ((Nasrin, 2010)'. In fact, 'English is the mother tongue of the people of the United Kingdom, but they alone can not claim to be the native speakers of this language. The people of the United States of America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa also come within the fold of the native speakers of English (Ahmed, 2013). This implies that 'the native speakers are not confined in the United Kingdom only, but are spread over four continents of the world namely Europe, Australia, America and Africa. Besides, the quality of its being *lingua franca* as a means of communication engulfs almost the entire globe so to say (Amanullah, 2010, 122)'.

There are many factors that have helped English language to reach this glorious position, likely, the massive colonialism, econo-cultural designs, geo-political impact, international forces, inflectional implication, flexibility and positive attitudes etc (Bhattacharjee, 2003). Praising the status of English, Crystal (1987, 358) remarks, 'In the minds of many people, there is no longer an issue. They argue that English has already become a world language by virtue of the political and economic progress made by the English speaking nations in the past 200 years, and is likely to remain so, gradually consolidating its position'. If a close look is paid at the history of English language, it will be clear that this language has a long history. This language started its glorious journey from the Roman conquest and till now the journey is continuing restlessly. And on the way of this journey nothing could stop its glorious development.

During the old and middle ages Latin was the *lingua franca* (Hornby, 2005, 781) or medium of education in the Western Europe. But French attained this significant position in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Presently, English language has attained this prestigious position by means of its unparallel influence on world communication, international relationship, international trade and business, sports, science and technology as well as electronic and printing media. Moreover, the world people are very much eager to know English. The popularity of English language has been expanded so highly that Kachru (1985 quoted in Bhattacharjee, 2003) regards this language as a 'window on the world.' Therefore, with the development of English as a global or a universal language, two main streams of it are very common in the world nowadays, British English-English spoken by the British people and American English-English spoken by the American people. This means that English in Canada, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and American Samoa is recognizably related to American English; all other NS (native speakers) and NNS (non native speakers) varieties are recognizably related to British English, in this derivational and linguistic sense (Ahmed, 2013).

Once upon a time British English was accepted to be the standard form of learning and teaching .But the demand of time has changed this situation and American English has taken an important place in the area of world language. At present, British English and American

English can be regarded as the most distinguished forms of English language. Although other varieties of it likely Caribbean English, Indian English, South African English and above all Austral English, and so on are available, they are not so significant as these two are. As a result both American English and British English have been considered as the means of communication among the people of the world as well as the means of expression all over today's global village (Bhattacharjee, 2003).

It is known that the reign of Queen Elizabeth (the first, from 1558 to 1603, Crystal, 1990, 1) is regarded to be the golden age of England. During this period English language and literature celebrated a tremendous development. As a literary master William Shakespeare provided a majestic representation of English language in his literary works. This period also observed the development of British English as well as of American English. But in spite of being the two branches of the same language, both British and American English differ to each other for their cultural, historical and political consequences. Besides, the geographical diversion plays a great role to create distinctions between these two varieties of English language.

In fact, the two World Wars (I & II) brought the English and the American close to each other after three centuries of separation, emerged after the independence of America in 1776. This reunion also helped to annihilate the linguistic difference. All these activities had been intensified by radio; television, the talkie and air travel (Roy, 1993, 94). These activities also brought American speech into almost every English home as well as into the homes of millions of people all over the world who speak the English language or can understand it (Ibid).

Linguistically speaking, the two styles of English are far more similar than they are difference (Stevens, 1987). In fact, a few differences in vocabulary, orthography, lexicology, pronunciation and idioms are frequent. But the speakers of both regions rarely face any difficulty in understanding each other. If a close look is paid at the current features of modern British English, it is found that 'British English is tremendously influenced by American English especially through the culture of pop (popular) music and films and some of the contrasts are disappearing gradually Bhattacharjee, 2003).

While British English and American English each possesses its own range of local dialectal variants, educated usage is by and large sufficiently similar for easy intercommunication (Stevens, 1987). But in spite of these similarities, there are remarkable differences in the field of grammar and spelling between these two outstanding varieties of English language. There are also some lexical differences between these two varieties, although such lexical differences do not cause any interruption to the flow of meaning. At the level of pronunciation the systems (of vowels, consonants, stress, rhythm and above all phonological behaviors) are similar, but the 'coloring' as it were, of the sounds is different (Ibid). The main

interest of this paper is to consider the most discernable phonological differences between the two widely used forms of English: British English and American English.

## **2. The phonological differences between British English and American English**

Standard British phonology, also known as Received Pronunciation (RP) is associated with London and Home Countries without any regional variations. Sometimes it is known as 'B.B.C. English' (Cruttenden, 2001, 85). For the phonological purposes the United States of America (U.S.A) is secluded into several wings likely the Eastern that includes New York and New England, the Southern that is expanded from Virginia to Texas, as well as the General that deserves all the remaining areas of the U.S.A. and as the General American possesses no regional characteristics, it can be considered to be the 'Network English' as RP is known as 'B.B.C. English' (Ibid). Some phonological differences that are found between British and American English are discussed below.

### **2.1 Difference in phoneme inventory (Gramely and pätzold, 2004, 273)**

The most significant issue introducing differences between the two varieties of English is phoneme and its classes. With the help of its two classes likely vowels and consonant, a phoneme causes differences between British English and American English. Regarding the vowel system there is a clear difference in the number of phoneme available: British have 20 vowels and American have 16 vowels (Gramely and pätzold, 2004, 273). While the Americans use the combinations likely /ir/, /er/ and /ur/ in bird, fare and dour respectively, the British have /ə /, /eə /and /ə / diphthongs, though / ə / is merging with / ɔ: / in many words like sure and/ eə / may be rendered as [ɛ:] (Ibid). Currently it is the most widespread in the progress of British phoneme. According to wells (1982, 292f), it is known as smoothing which is the simplification of a diphthong to a monophthong or of a triphthong to a diphthong or a monophthong.

Generally, the function of this system is to lead to 'the reduction of the vowels of tower and tire to the monophthong [ɑ:] and [a:] respectively. Sometimes it also goes so far as to produce homophonous tower, tire and tar, all as [tɑ:] (Ibid)'.

British (RP) and American English are not different on the basis of the number of consonants. Both the varieties have the same 24 consonants (Ibid). There are a few differences to be found between these two varieties in the maintenance of the /hw/-/w/ distinction or in the use of 'wh' words. For all words that begin with 'wh' the Americans pronounce a /h/ sound whereas the British do not (Amanullah, 2010, 125). For examples,

<b>wh- words</b>	<b>British</b>	<b>American</b>
where	/weə(r)/	/hweər/
whip	/wɪp/	/hwɪp/
whistle	/'wɪsl/	/'hwɪsl/
white	/waɪt/	/hwaɪt/
when	/wen/	/hwen/

Sometimes, there are also a few similarities between these two forms of English in the pronunciation of wh-words. With respect to some 'wh-words' both the British and the American pronounce a /h/ (Ibid, 126). For examples,

<b>wh- words</b>	<b>British</b>	<b>American</b>
who	/hʊ: /	/hʊ: /
whole	/həʊl/	/həʊl/
whom	/hʊ:m/	/hʊ:m/
whose	/hʊ:z/	/hʊ:z/

## **2.2 Differences in the phonetic quality of phonemes (Ibid)**

One of the most striking differences between British and American pronunciation occurs in the treatment of /r/. Generally, American English emphasizes the retroflexion of /r/ sound while the British people use this sound as a constricted continuant (Gramely and Pätzold, 2004, 274). Besides, 'the /r/ between two vowels (as in very) is sometimes articulated with a single flap of the tongue against the alveolar ridge in British English although this realization is rare after an accented syllable (Ibid)'.

A great diversity between these so called forms of English language exists in the usage of /ə/ (schwa vowel). 'The first element of / əʊ / is a central vowel (schwa) in British but a back vowel in American English, such as [oʊ] (Ibid)'.

The vowel / ʌ / (as in cut) is more or less mid central in American phonology (Ibid) while it is an open and front vowel in British phonology. Both American and British have 'a long, mid, central vowel realization of /ɜ:/ (as in bird) and generally, in British English this vowel is almost never followed by the vowel /r/ while in American it is always followed by the /r/ (Ibid)'. Although the pure vowel /ɜ:/ is a central vowel (as in shirt, nurse, burst, far, burn and so on) in both British and American phoneme, it causes the differences between them.

## **2.3 Phonotactic differences (Ibid, 274)**

The phonotactic features that means the arrangement of the distinctive sound units also causes various types of diversities between the two varieties of English. Some of them are discussed in the following.

### 2.3.1 Rhoticity(Ibid)

One of the most important differences between British and American pronunciation is found in the treatment of /r/. Both British and American people pronounce the initial /r/ in all words likely red, real, rose, right, race, rat etc.

In the British pronunciation /r/ is never articulated before consonants but before vowels. This is for the reason; ‘words such as learn, sort and farm and so on do not contain /r/ (lɜ:n, sɔ:t, fɑ:m) although other varieties of English likely American, Irish, and Scottish pronounce the /r/ in these words while in the words such as, photograph /fəʊtəgrɑ:f/, digression /daɪɡreʃn/, carry /kæri/ and suffrage/sʌfreɪdʒ/ the middle /r/ is sounded because it is followed by a vowel(Amanullah, 2010, 125)’.

Besides, ‘in the words likely later/leɪtə(r)/, over/əʊvə(r)/, paper/peɪpə(r)/, father/fɑ:ðə(r)/ the final /r/ is silent. But the final /r/ is sounded when the next word commences with a vowel. For example, better off /betə ɒf/, four or five/fɔ:r ɔ: faɪv/, here it is/hɪə ɪt ɪz/. This type of /r/ is known as the ‘linking r’ (Gramely and Pätzold, 2004, 274) that may link two words into a phonetic unit. The use of such linking is also found where no ‘r’ is present in the spelling (Ibid). For examples,

English	Phonemic transcription
Law Officer	/lɔ: ɒfɪsə/
china and Japan	/tʃaɪnə ən dʒəpæn/
lena and sue	/li:nə ən su:/

Such type of the use of ‘r’ is called an intrusive ‘r’ (Ibid) that can be used after / ɔ:, ə, ɑ:/ before a vowel in the following word. On the other hand, the Americans pronounce /r/ regularly where the spelling indicates. An intrusive ‘r’ is not used in American English.

Regarding the treatment of /r/, J. D. O’ Connor (1980, 61) illustrates, ‘In R.P. (Received Pronunciation) /r/ only occurs before consonants, so words like learn, sort, farm, do not contain /r/ (lɜ:n, sɔ:t, fɑ:m). Other varieties of English pronounce /r/ in these words (e, g, American Irish, Scottish), so if your model is one of these, you will pronounce /r/ before consonants; if it is R.P. you will not. At the end of words R.P. has /r/ only if the immediately following word begins with a vowel; so the word *never*, if it occurs before a pause or *before* a word beginning with a consonant (as in *never better*), is pronounced nevə with no /r/ in R.P. But in *never again* where it is immediately followed by a vowel /r/ is pronounced, nevə ɹəgen. This is called the linking /r/; some R.P. speakers do not use it (and say nevə əgen), so you may do this if you find it easier, but most people do use it’.

### 2.3.2. Intervocalic /t/ (Ibid, 274)

Usually, a written < t > is perceived as /d/ in American pronunciation as it occurs between two vowels and voiced sounds with a flap of the tongue tip against the alveolar

ridge (Gramely and Pätzold, 2004, 275) while it is pronounced quite differently in British phonology. For examples,

British English	American English
helter	helder (held her)
heterogeneous	hederogenous
hurting	hurding
Latter	Ladder
matter	madder
totem	towed'em

This voicing of intervocalic < t > does not apply if the syllable following the < t > is stressed, such as, a – tom = A-dam (Ibid) while in the British English the realization of /t/ is variable before an unstressed syllable (Ibid). For examples,

British English	American English
butter	budder,
writer	rider

### **2.3.3 Post nasal /t/ (Ibid, 275)**

Generally, in American English the /t/ is never articulated when the unstressed vowels follow it. For examples,

Winter	Winner
intercity	innercity

On the other hand, 'if the following syllable is stressed, /t/ is pronounced as in in-'ter. Besides, /t/ is also pronounced if a consonant follows as in intra-city (Ibid)'.

### **2.3.4 Dental and alveolar consonants + /j/ (Ibid)**

In American English the combinations of /nj, tj, dj, sj, zj, lz, θj/ do not occur (Ibid). although they are spontaneous in British English. In fact, American people usually use the vowel /u:/ (R.P. vowel no-9) in place of /ju:/ or /ʊ/ (R.P. vowel no-8) that is used frequently in British style. That is, all the words spelled with < u >, < ew >, < eu >, < ui >, and < ue > and a few combinations containing < u > have simple /u:/ or /ʊ/ in American but /ju:/ or /ju/ in British phonology (Ibid). For examples,

Words	British English	American English
Dew	/dju:/	/du:/
deuce	/dju:s/	/du:s/
Due	/dju:/	/du:/
duty	/'dju:ti/	/'du:ti/
neutral	/'nju:trəl/	/'nu:trəl/

New	/nju: /	/nu: /
Tulip	/tju:lip/	/tu:lip/
tune	/'tju:n/	/'tu:n/

Usually, the Americans do not use the semi-vowel /j/ in words where it follows /t/, /d/, /n/, /l/, /s/, /θ/ etc (Amanullah, 2007, 125). For examples,

<b>word</b>	<b>British</b>	<b>American</b>
attitude	/'ætɪtju:d/	/'ætɪtu:d/
due	/dju: /	/du: /
enthusiasm	/ɪn'θju:zɪæzəm/	/ɪn'θu:zɪæzəm/
news	/nju:z/	/ nu:z/
nucleus	/'nju:klɪəs/	/'nu:klɪəs/
nude	/nju:d/	/nu:d/
prelude	/'prɪlju:d/	/'prɪlu:d/
Student	/'stju:dənt	/'stu:dənt/
tunic	/'tju:nɪk	/'tu:nɪk/

But in both British and American English the spelling < oo > is perceived as /u: /. For examples,

<b>word</b>	<b>British</b>	<b>American</b>
doom	/du:m/	/du:m/
loose	/lu:s/	/lu:s/
noose	/nu:s/	/nu:s/

### **2.3.5Palatalization (Ibid)**

In American pronunciation palatalization happens hardly before a stressed syllable but it is frequently used when the following syllable is unstressed. For some words likely assure, sure, sugar and for other words palatalization occurs before a stressed syllable. The British people follow this tradition in most cases, but there are the possibility of unpalatalized / dj, tj, sj, zj / in those cases where a /u/ follows which are totally impossible in American English (Gramely and Pätzold, 2004, 275).

In fact, palatalization is strictly maintained for the word education while it stands for /edʒju:keɪʃən/ or /edʒəkeɪʃən/ in the British pronunciation. Besides, there are few place names to be frequently used for which the British accepts unpalatalized forms whereas the American perceives palatalized forms. Such as,

word	British	American
Tunisia	/tʃʊnɪzɪə/	/tu:nɪ:zə/
Indonesia	/ɪndəni:zɪə/	/ɪndəni:ʒə/

But both the varieties have the unpalatalized forms of Tuesday: British /tʃu:zdi/ and American /tu:zdi/ while English literature is palatalized /lɪ(ə)rətʃ ə(r)/ in both varieties, although few American accents have the unpalatalized /lɪtərətʃ/ forms (Ibid).

### 2.3.6 Vowels (Ibid, 276)

There are few vowels that can claim to be used for arousing diversities between British and American phonology. Among them the back vowels /ɑ:/ and /ɒ/ or /ɔ/ as well as the diphthongs /aʊ/, /ɪə/, /ʊə/ and /eə/ and so on are mentionable. The differences between these two forms of English regarding the treatment of the above vowels are discussed below:

One of the most significant diversities between these two popular fields of English language is found in the pronunciation of the vowel /ɑ:/. Generally, in American English the front vowel /æ/ (RP vowel no-4) is used in place of /ɑ:/ (RP vowel no-5). Mainly, this difference is found when the vowel is followed by a voiceless consonant or by the nasal /n/ for different words in which the vowel /ɑ:/ takes place before f, sk, sp, st, ss, th, and n in words (Amanullah, 2007, 133). For examples,

word	British	American
after	/'ɑ:ftə(r)/	/'æftə(r)/
aghast	/ə'gɑ:st/	/ə'gæst/
ask	/ɑ:sk/	/æsk/
aunt	/ɑ:nt/	/ænt/
bath	/bɑ:θ/	//bæθ/
calf	/kɑ:f/	/kæf/
can't	/kɑ:nt/	/kænt/
Castle	k'ɑ:sl/	/'kæf/
chance	/tʃɑ:ns/	/tʃæns/
glass	/glɑ:s/	/glæs/

grasp	gra:sp/	/græsp /
grass	/grɑ:s/	/græs /
half	/hɑ:f/	/hæf/
pass	/pɑ:s/	/p æs/
past	/pɑ:st/	/pæst/
path	/ pɑ:θ/	/ pæθ/

However, both British and American English use /æ/ likely, /bæd/, /bæk/, /kæb/, /kæt/, /hæŋ/, as well as /læk/ and so on when the consonants occur after vowel as in bad, back, cab, cat, hang, lack, and pack. There are appropriately 450 commonly used words which behave in this fashion (Ibid).

In English phonemes there are some nasal vowels that are pronounced at the same time through the nose and the month. Although such types of vowels are spontaneously used in some varieties of American English, they are entirely absent in British English. J. D. O'Connor (1980, 50) in this connection says, 'The word can would then be pronounced kæ, where æ represents æ pronounced with the soft palate lowered and camp would be kæp'. Besides, 'there are some vowels in American English that sit at the end of a word are long vowels, diphthongs and schwa while British English advocating the ultimate unstressed /ɪ/ is an exception to this rule. This is for the reason, all those words ending in unstressed <-y> and <-ie> such as cloudy and birdie have /ɪ/ in R.P. but /i:/ in General American (Gramely and Pätzold, 2004, 276)'.

There are other issues to be available regarding the involvement of the unstressed syllables. While the British English possesses /ɪ/, 'especially where the endings {D} and {-S} are pronounced vowels, American English tends to curtail unstressed vowels to schwa vowels (Ibid)'.

The three centering diphthongs likely /ɪə/, /ʊə/ and /eə/ have been used in British phonology, while the Americans use a simple vowel followed by /r/ that cast through the light on the differences between British and American pronunciation. For examples,

Word	British	American
Farewell	/feə'wel/	/fer'wel/
Hair	/heə(r)/	/her/
Near	/niə(r)/	/nir/

Pure	/pjʊə(r)/	/pjʊr/
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#### **2.4 Different types of individual words that differ (Ibid)**

There are some long words that are completed with ary, ery, or ory have been pronounced differently with one more syllable in American English (Bhattacharjee, 2003): For examples (Ibid):

<b>word</b>	<b>British</b>	<b>American</b>
territory	/ˈterətri/	/ˈterətɔːri/
secretary	/ˈsekrətri/	/ˈsekrətəri/
stationary	/ˈsteɪʃənri/	/ˈsteɪʃənəri/

Moreover, there are some words that are pronounced quite differently in British and American English. They are as follows:

<b>word</b>	<b>British</b>	<b>American</b>
aesthetic	/i:sˈθetik/	/esˈθetik/
apparatus	/æpəˈreɪtəs/	/æpəˈrætəs/
clerk	/kla:k/	/klɜːrk/
data	/ˈdeɪtə/ or /dɑ:tə/	/ˈdætə/
dynasty	/ˈdɪnəsti/	/ˈdɑːnəsti/
either	/aɪðə(r)/	/iːðə(r)/
era	/ˈɪərə/	/ˈɪrə/
erase	/ɪˈreɪz/	/ɪˈreɪs/
geyser	/ˈgiːzə(r)/	/g aɪzər/
goose berry	/ˈguːzbəri/	/ˈguːsbəri/
herb	/hɜː(r)b/	/ɜːrb/ or /hɜːb/
leisure	/ˈleɪzə(r)/	/ˈliːzər/
lieutenant	/lefˈtenənt/	/luːˈtenənt/
neither	/naɪðə(r)/	/niːðə(r)/
Privacy	/ˈprɪvəsi/	/ˈpraɪvəsi/
process	/ˈprəses/	/ˈpraːses/

progress	/'prəʊɡres/	/'pra:ɡres/
quinine	/'kwɪnɪn/	/'kwaməɪn/
route	/ru:t/	/raʊt/
schedule	/'ʃedʒu:l/	/'skedʒu:l/
simultaneous	/sɪml'teɪniəs/	/saɪml'teɪniəs/
squirrel	/'skwɪrəl/	/'skwɜ:rəl/
viola	/vɪ'əʊlə/	/vɪ'oulə/
What	/wɒt/	/wɑ:t/
wrath	/rɒθ/	/ræθ/

## 2.5 Stress and Intonation (Ibid, 278)

The stressed and intonated words as well as syllables also introduce a few phonological differences between the British and American English. A close look can be paid at how the stress and intonation systems create differences between these two forms of English language.

### 2.5.1 Stress Pattern

There is a little difference between in the treatment of stress pattern .One of the most important difference regarding stress pattern is found in the pronunciation of those words that conclude with <ary>, <ery> and <ory> . Generally, in British English there is a stress on the first or the second syllable of a word while in American English it is used on the first syllable of a word and secondary stress also takes place on the next to the last syllable (Potter,1969 in Amanullah 2007,126). For examples,

word	British	American
Corollary	/kə'rɒləri/	/ 'kɔ:rələri/
Laboratory	/lə'bɒrətɪ/	/'læbrətɔ:ri/
library	/'laɪbrəri/	/'laɪbreri/
Secretary	/'sekrətɪ/	/'sekrəteri/
Stationary	/'steɪʃənɪ/	/'steɪʃənəri/

Besides, there are some words in which the American people put stress on the second syllable whereas the British on the first (Ibid).

word	British	American
buffet	/ˈbʊfeɪ/	/bəˈfeɪ/
debris	/ˈdebriː/	/dəˈbriː/
detail	/ˈdiːteɪl/	/dɪˈteɪl/
eczema	/ˈeksɪmə/	/ɪgˈziːmə/
harass	/ˈhærəs/	/həˈræs/
precis	/ˈpreɪsiː/	/preɪˈsiː/

There are also some English words that use stress on different syllables. Some important words are as follows with their phonemic transcription.

word	British	American
advertisement	/ədˈvɜːtɪsmənt/	/ədvr̩ˈtaɪzmənt/
artisan	/ɑːtɪˈzæn	/ˈɑːrtəzn/
ballet	/ˈbæleɪ/	/bəˈleɪ/
baton	/ˈbætən/	/bəˈtɑːn/
doctrinal	/dɒkˈtrɪnl/	/ˈdɑːktrɪnl/
garage	/ˈgærɑːʒ/	/gəˈrɑːʒ/
frontier	/ˈfrʌntɪə(r)/	/frʌnˈtɪr/
lamentable	/ˈlæməntəbl/	/ləˈmentəbl/
resume	/ˈrezjumeɪ	/ˈrezəmeɪ/
valet	/ˈvæleɪ/ or /ˈvælit/	/væˈleɪ/

### **2.5.2 Intonation Pattern**

The intonation pattern is also responsible in a few cases for the diversities between the British and American English. The British English now and then is specialized as more varied than that of American which is flat in its characteristics. Generally, British English has more gradual rises than that of Americans. American English has falling intonation in wh questions while British English frequently uses an alternative pattern with a low rise at the end, something which is perceived as friendlier (Gramely and Pätzold, 2004, 279). In the treatment of yes/no questions there is also a rapid rise in American English that remains high and finishes with a small rise. On the other hand, in the British English final rise may be

preceded by a falling contour (Ibid). Besides, an important difference lies between British and American pronunciation regarding the intonation pattern in the following pairs of sentences of Marckwardt (1986 in Amanullah, 2007, 127).

**British**

**American**

My name is John.

My name is John.

Are you quite sure?

Are you quite sure?

Could you pass the salt, please?

Could you pass the salt, please?

The above information implies that the tonal melody is the key to arouse a few significant differences between British and American pronunciation. Usually, the range of the sentence and the distance from the highest to the lowest tone is greater for the British variety. Besides, in the British variety it is also found that the sentence reaches a high tone either at the very beginning or soon after, and then the tone descends gradually until the final juncture, with its accompanying intonation turn, is reached (Bhattacharjee, 2003) whereas the American sentence maintains a fairly level tone until just before the termination.

**CONCLUSION**

Recently, English has achieved the prestige of *lingua franca* (Hornby, 2005, 781) for its econo-cultural and political development, accelerated by the people of different countries, such as, England, Ireland, the USA, Canada, Australia, New-Zeland as well as the Caribbean, and other countries who use this language as their mother tongue. But, now English is not the unique possession of the people of these countries. It is a language that belongs to the people of the world. In fact, 'the bilingual and multilingual users of English have far outnumbered the native speakers. This phenomenon has led to a bewildering variety of other Englishes around the world (Bhattacharjee, 2003)'. The varieties of English used in the United States of America and Britain are the most important in terms of population and used throughout the world. The paper has presented one of the most important issues, e.g. phonological differences between American English and British English. Although phonological differences are available, the British and the American people can exchange their speech, thoughts, feelings and desire to each other without facing any problem. In this respect A.C. Baugh (1995, 435-436) says, 'The difference between British and American Pronunciation are not such as should cause any alarm for the future, any fear that Englishmen and the Americans may become unintelligible to each other'. In fact, the diversities between these two varieties of English language as discussed above are crucial, but they are not frequent and they are almost worthless.

**NOTES**

1. The phonemic transcriptions used in the paper are taken from Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English by A S Hornby, Eighth Edition, Oxford University Press (UK), 2010.

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