
BRITISH AND AMERICAN MEDICAL ENGLISH: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES

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Abstract. *The paper discusses two basic variants of English – British and American – in regard of their influence on the medical and healthcare discourse. The author claims that language differences between British and American medical terminology may be significant for international language learners and need clarification. The objective of the research is to identify and analyze the differences using the techniques of lexicographical and comparative analysis. The results of the research are categorized into healthcare and medical education terminology differences, medical specialty differences and spelling differences.*

Keywords: *British medical English, American medical English, comparative analysis, vocabulary and spelling differences.*

Nowadays more and more medical students learning languages due to the growth of global communication and healthcare [1]. However, it is often not obvious for naive language learners that two large Englishes – British English and American English – may influence the way we understand the environment these languages reflect [2]. This is also fair for medicine and healthcare which are discovered by language learners through British or American English. Since human activity in the field of medicine in our time is inseparably linked with the English language and its variants, the topic of this article is to determine and study of lexical and spelling differences between British English (UK) and American English (US) in the medical vocabulary.

The objective of the research is to identify and analyze linguistic differences between British and American English in medical and healthcare discourses. The method of research is descriptive and comparative analysis of lexical and spelling features of British and American medical vocabulary [3]. The lexicographical sources of the research are Oxford English Dictionary (OED), Cambridge Learner's Dictionary; the material for analysis has been taken from the British Medical Journal (BMJ), official website of the National Health Service (NHS) of the United Kingdom, Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA).

Results and discussion. As a broad equivalence of positions in the US hospital systems and in the NHS of the UK might create certain problems in understanding, we have identified and categorized the analyzed vocabulary into several groups.

Terminology differences in healthcare and medical education positions

After analyzing Cambridge Learner's Dictionary, we have discovered that an **intern** (US) – a young doctor who works in a hospital to finish their medical education. However, in the UK a corresponding title is **Pre-registration House Officer (PRHO)** – was the title given to medical graduates in the UK until 2005, who had passed their final year exams at medical school and had received their medical degrees but were not fully registered with the General Medical Council. This was usually the first year after graduation. PRHO was the lowest grade in the medical hierarchy in the National Health Service.

Resident (US) – a doctor who is working in a hospital to get extra training in a particular area of medicine. But in the NHS of the UK it is **Foundation House Officer** – a two-year, general postgraduate medical training programme which forms the bridge between medical school and specialist /general practice training.

In the field of medical education, there are specific terms for each dialect due to the difference in training programmes. The terms

defining nursing positions are specific to each dialect. Almost all nurses in Britain work in the NHS (National Health Service). So there is a British hierarchy that starts with more responsible positions in hospitals:

In the US there is a **headnurse**, but in the UK this term is differentiated: **senior nursing officer** – the person in charge of all the nurses in a hospital; **charge nurse** – a nurse who is responsible for a particular part of a hospital. In the US there is a **registered nurse**, according to the Cambridge English Dictionary, is a nurse who has formally trained and passed an exam and is officially qualified to perform all nursing duties. In the UK it is a **state registered nurse** with the same definition.

The other thing to consider is that **practical nurse** is a person who has had practical

experience in nursing care but who is not a graduate of any kind of nursing school; not to be confused with a **licensed practical nurse (LPN)** in the USA - a graduate of a school of practical nursing whose qualifications have been examined by a state board of nursing and who has been legally authorized to practice as a licensed practical or vocational nurse, under the supervision of a physician or registered nurse (US).

Vocabulary differences in medical specialties

The language differences in the area of medical specialties and fields is one of the most numerous and important for future healthcare professionals. The table below demonstrates the British and American variants of equivalent specialties.

Table 1. US and UK vocabulary differences in medical specialties

US specialties	UK specialties
anesthesiologist	anaesthetist
physician	general practitioner (GP)
pediatrician	paediatrician

To illustrate the difference between commonly used terminology in medical resources consider the following table. For example, anaesthetist (UK) or anesthesiologist (US) – have same nature of the work (give anaesthetics for surgical, medical and psychiatric procedures). According to the information on the website Health Careers of NHS, general practitioners (GPs) treat all common medical conditions and refer patients to hospitals and other medical services for urgent and specialist treatment.

Spelling differences

Firstly, it should be pointed out that many words in British English keep the features of the languages from which they passed into English, whereas in the American version of English their spelling is influenced by pronunciation. The source of the selection of terms was the most complete English-language medical dictionaries of the American and British publishers: Butterworth's medical dictionary (London); Dorland's illustrated medical dictionary (Philadelphia); Stedman's medical dictionary (Baltimore), The New Oxford dictionary for scientific

writers and editors, The American Heritage Medical Dictionary.

Some words from the field of medicine in British English differ in the way of how they are written through 'ae' and 'oe', and in American English only through 'e': leukaemia, manoeuvre, oestrogen – leukemia, maneuver, estrogen.

Data are given in the form: type of alternation (example: British option / American option):

1. The spelling of the borrowings from the Latin language:

-oe-/e-

(oesophagus/esophagus, diarrhoea/diarrhea)

-ae-/e- (anaemia/anemia, anesthesia/anaesthesia, paediatrician/pediatrician)

-ph-/f- (sulphate/sulfate, adrenocorticotrophic/adrenocorticotropic)

2. The spelling of the borrowings from the French language:

-re/-er-(fibre/fiber, titre/titer),

-our/-or-(vapour/vapor, tumour/tumor),

-ogue/-og-(homologue/homolog)

3. The spelling of other words:

-ction/-xion-(retroflexion/retroflexion)

-size-lyse- (hydrolyse/hydrolyze, haemolyse/hemolyze)

4. Other alternations: (immunization /immunization, distill / distil, mucous /mucus, naevus / nevus)

Conclusion. The results of the comparative analysis of medical terminology in British and American English have revealed vocabulary and spelling differences in healthcare discourse. The development of spelling in American English has demonstrated a tendency to simplification. American spelling of many words is closer to their pro-

nunciation. Most common American spelling simplifications are borrowed from Latin and French languages.

The knowledge of various terms in two main English dialects can be used in teaching English language in medical universities to broaden students' horizons and prepare them for independent reading and understanding authentic medical literature in English. These differences are especially significant for students who are interested in international practice and willing to avoid confusion in history-taking.

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БРИТАНСКИЙ И АМЕРИКАНСКИЙ МЕДИЦИНСКИЙ АНГЛИЙСКИЙ: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ РАЗЛИЧИЙ ЯЗЫКА

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Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются два основных варианта английского – британский и американский – с точки зрения их влияния на медицинский дискурс. Автор утверждает, что языковые различия между британской и американской медицинской терминологией могут быть значительными для изучающих иностранный язык и нуждающихся в разъяснении. Целью исследования является выявление и анализ различий с использованием методик лексикографического и сравнительного анализа. Результаты исследования подразделяются на терминологические различия в здравоохранении и медицинском образовании, различия в медицинских специальностях и правописание.

Ключевые слова: британский медицинский английский, американский медицинский английский, сравнительный анализ, словарный запас и орфографические различия.