



Writing It and Saying It

You say [tə'matəʊz] and I say [tə'meɪDouz] . . .
From Let's call the whole thing off, lyrics by Ira Gershwin

1.1 Introduction

The cartoon with the two men preparing to duel over the pronunciation of the word *tomato* (figure 1.1) nicely illustrates some points that I want to make in this chapter: First, although spellings are usually the same in American and British English, there are pronunciation differences, and transcribing those differences can be a problem.

1.2 Writing American or British

Although most words are written in exactly the same way in the two varieties, there are a few eye-catching differences in spelling. These differences exist very largely because of Noah Webster, an American lexicographer who published a *Spelling Book* in 1783, which was designed to standardize American spelling. In 1789 his *Dissertation on the English Language* appeared, where he made his position clear. The independent United States should not look to Britain for a linguistic model:

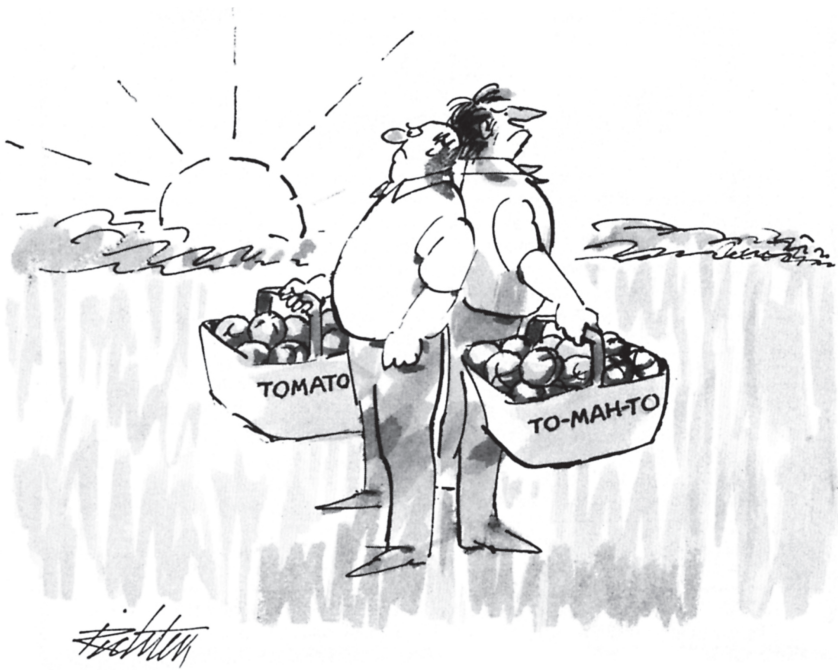


Figure 1.1 Same word, different pronunciations

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our honor requires us to have a system of our own, in language as well as government. Great Britain . . . should no longer be *our* standard; for the taste of her writers is already corrupted, and her language on the decline. (Webster 1789, quoted in Baugh and Cable 1993: 361)

Webster was also concerned with the establishment of schools and with the establishment of a uniform standard of spelling. His major work, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, was published in 1828, and many of the characteristics of American spelling were introduced by Webster, such as *honor* or *favor* instead of *honour* or *favour* and *center* for *centre*. (He also introduced the spelling *-ic* for the older *-ick* in words such as *public* and *music*; this change was also adopted in British English.) The fact that these changes were so easily accepted in the United States may have had to do with the great concern about linguistic correctness among the early immigrants. People even organized so-called spelling bees, or spelling contests, where you were eliminated if you spelled a word wrong.

Most of the spelling differences between American and British English are of a systematic nature and can be reduced to a few rules, but a number of words have to be learned individually. Among the systematic differences some of the most important are the above-mentioned American spellings, *-or* where British English has *-our* and *-er* where British English has *-re*. (Usage is not always consistent; thus *glamour* is normally spelled with *-our*, and the spelling *theatre* is often seen, especially in names of theaters.) Some common words that follow these rules are listed here:

American	British	American	British
<i>color</i>	<i>colour</i>	<i>parlor</i>	<i>parlour</i>
<i>favor</i>	<i>favour</i>	<i>rigor</i>	<i>rigour</i>
<i>flavor</i>	<i>flavour</i>	<i>rumor</i>	<i>rumour</i>
<i>harbor</i>	<i>harbour</i>	<i>center</i>	<i>centre</i>
<i>honor</i>	<i>honour</i>	<i>kilometer</i>	<i>kilometre</i>
<i>humor</i>	<i>humour</i>	<i>liter</i>	<i>litre</i>
<i>labor</i>	<i>labour</i>	<i>luster</i>	<i>lustre</i>
<i>odor</i>	<i>odour</i>	<i>meager</i>	<i>meagre</i>

Another simplification rule is that verb-final *-l* is not doubled before the endings *-ed* and *-ing* as in British English:

American	British
<i>canceled, canceling</i>	<i>cancelled, cancelling</i>
<i>traveled, traveling</i>	<i>travelled, travelling</i>
<i>marveled, marveling</i>	<i>marvelled, marvelling</i>

Yet another simplification is the spelling *-log* for *-logue* in American English:

American	British
<i>catalog</i>	<i>catalogue</i>
<i>dialog</i>	<i>dialogue</i>
<i>prolog</i>	<i>prologue</i>
<i>monolog</i>	<i>monologue</i>

(However, these sometimes have the longer form in American English.) American English normally spells *program* where British English has *programme*, but the spelling *program* is also used in Britain for computer programs. Some abbreviations have never really made it into the standard language but are sometimes seen in print, like *tho* for *though* or *thru* for *through*.

In a few other cases, words are longer in American English:

American	British
<i>fulfill</i>	<i>fulfil</i>
<i>skillful</i>	<i>skilful</i>
<i>willful</i>	<i>wilful</i>

Some words have the ending *-ense* in American English but are spelled with *-ence* in British English:

American	British
<i>defense</i>	<i>defence</i>
<i>license</i>	<i>licence</i>
<i>offense</i>	<i>offence</i>
<i>pretense</i>	<i>pretence</i>

But notice that this alternation between *s* and *c* is reversed in some words: the verb is spelled *practice* in American English and *practise* in British English. American English always uses the spellings *connection*, *inflection*, etc., where British English will sometimes have *-exion*: *connexion*, *inflexion*. (But *complexion* is always spelled with *x* in both varieties.)

Loanwords from Latin or Greek tend to have simplified spellings with *e* instead of *ae* and *oe* in American English. In British English both types of spellings can be found; the practice varies between publishing houses.

American	British
<i>esthetic</i>	<i>aesthetic</i>
<i>gynecology</i>	<i>gynaecology</i>
<i>medieval</i>	<i>mediaeval</i>
<i>ameba</i>	<i>amoeba</i>
<i>fetus</i>	<i>foetus</i>
<i>esophagus</i>	<i>oesophagus</i>

The verb-ending *-ize* is the prevalent spelling in American English rather than *-ise*, as in *fraternize*, *jeopardize*, *militarize*, *naturalize*, *organize*. In British English there is variation between *-ise* and *-ize*: *organise/organize*, *naturalise/naturalize*, etc. American English also has *analyze*, but British English tends to spell *analyse*.

A number of spelling differences cannot be systematically accounted for; some common ones are listed in table 1.1. Notice that the list is not exhaustive, and that many other differences exist.

Table 1.1 Some non-predictable differences between American and British spellings

<i>American</i>	<i>British</i>
<i>ax, axe</i>	<i>axe</i>
<i>balk</i>	<i>baulk</i>
<i>cozy</i>	<i>cosy</i>
<i>caldron, cauldron</i>	<i>cauldron</i>
<i>check</i>	<i>cheque</i>
<i>dike 'embankment,' 'barrier'</i>	<i>dyke</i>
<i>fillet, filet</i>	<i>filet, fillet</i>
<i>jail</i>	<i>gaol, jail</i>
<i>gray, grey</i>	<i>grey</i>
<i>curb 'roadside'</i>	<i>kerb</i>
<i>mold, mould</i>	<i>mould</i>
<i>molt</i>	<i>moult</i>
<i>plow, plough</i>	<i>plough</i>
<i>skeptic(al)</i>	<i>sceptic(al)</i>
<i>tire</i>	<i>tyre</i>
<i>woolen</i>	<i>woollen</i>
<i>yogurt</i>	<i>yoghurt</i>

Finally it is worth mentioning that, just as in Britain, there is a playfulness and creativity about language in America which manifests itself not only in the many coinages of new words but also in new spellings of already existing words. Often these appear in trademarks, like *U-Haul* ('you haul'), the name of a truck rental company, *EEZE-GLO* ('easy-glow,' a furniture-polish), or the well-known *Kleenex* ('clean').

1.3 The Pronunciation of American English

If the differences between the American and British English systems of writing are thus very small, the differences in pronunciation are much larger. One problem in describing these differences is of course that, as Ladefoged puts it (1993: vii) "there is no such thing as British English or General American English." In both cases we are dealing with a wide spectrum of varieties of language, with vast variations in the pronunciation of individual sounds. In order to be able to produce a working description of either main variety, we

have to resort to idealizations for both of them. I will choose Received Pronunciation (RP) for British English and Network English for American English.¹ Very few people actually use RP or Network English, but those varieties are understood by the largest number of people and are therefore in my opinion the most useful models for non-native speakers. Network English is the kind of pronunciation used for most broadcasting in the United States; it can be defined negatively by saying that it does not have any of the features of North-Eastern or Southern dialects that are perceived as regional by the majority of American speakers (see 9.3).² The regional variety it comes closest to is educated Midwestern English.

Another difficulty in describing the differences between American and British English pronunciation is that there are many different ways of transcribing spoken English, and that different traditions prevail in different parts of the world as well as in different types of publications. The system of transcription that will be adopted here is a modified version of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), similar to that used by Peter Ladefoged in *A Course in Phonetics* (1993) and by John Wells in the *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary* (2000), two works that many students know and use. I follow Ladefoged in that vowel quality is indicated but not quantity (length), as is done by Wells. I have chosen to do this because I take American English as my point of departure, and differences in vowel length are usually small in American English and always linked to vowel quality in any case.³ An overview of transcription symbols for vowels is given in table 1.2; apart from length, only the vowels in *bet*, *bother*, *bought*, *no*, and *nurse* show transcription differences between the three systems. Readers who are not concerned about transcription systems can just consult the left-hand column. Table 1.3 shows consonant transcription, a much simpler matter. Here I differ from both Ladefoged and Wells in my use of [D] for the medial consonant in *bitter* and *bidder*, and from Ladefoged in that I use [j] for the transcription of the first sound in *yet*, *young*, etc.

Obviously this chapter can only give general guidelines, and it will always be necessary to look up the pronunciation of individual words in handbooks. The *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary* by John Wells (2000) is a comprehensive and reliable pronouncing dictionary that gives American variants after the British pronunciations. The 1997 edition of Daniel Jones' *English Pronouncing Dictionary* now also has American pronunciations. Among desk dictionaries, the British *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* give good information concerning American pronunciation.⁴

Most American desk dictionaries are difficult for non-native speakers to use as they do not use the IPA system. This is because they are not written for

Table 1.2 A comparison of vowel sounds transcribed according to different systems

<i>Key word</i>	<i>This book</i>	<i>Ladefoged (1993)</i>	<i>Wells (2000)</i>
<i>beat</i>	i	i	i:
<i>bīt</i>	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ
<i>bet</i>	e	ɛ	e
<i>bād</i>	æ	æ	æ
<i>fāther</i>	ɑ	ɑ	ɑ
<i>būt</i>	ʌ	ʌ	ʌ
<i>bōther</i>	ɑ/ɒ	ɑ/ɒ	ɑ:/ɒ
<i>bōught</i>	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ:
<i>pūt</i>	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ
<i>bōot</i>	u	u	u:
<i>fāce</i>	eɪ	eɪ	eɪ
<i>hīgh</i>	aɪ	aɪ	aɪ
<i>bōy</i>	ɔɪ	ɔɪ	ɔɪ
<i>nɔ</i>	oo/əʊ	oo/əʊ	oo/əʊ
<i>nɔw</i>	aʊ	aʊ	aʊ
<i>nūrse</i>	ɜr/ɜ	ɜ-/ɜ	ɜ:/ɜ:
<i>commā</i>	ə	ə	ə

Note: Where two symbols are shown for a particular vowel, the first refers to American English (Network English) and the second to British English (RP)

students of language but for native speakers who do not know that system. Therefore the dictionaries generally have their own systems based on familiarity with the pronunciation of other English words.⁵ Further information concerning dictionaries can be found at the end of the chapter. (See also Bronstein 1998 for a discussion of American dictionary practices as regards pronunciation.)

This chapter is not intended to teach the practical mastery of the pronunciation of American English. For that, only listening to the speech of native speakers or recordings of native speakers' output will do. What I wish to do here is to give an overview of differences between American and British pronunciation that will create an awareness in students when they listen to native speakers. Hopefully, it will make it easier for them to be consistent in their choice of variant pronunciation, if that is what they wish to achieve.

A word of caution: the transcriptions given here for "standard" varieties of British English and American English are based on conservative pronunciations in both countries. Especially in Britain, great changes are taking place,

Table 1.3 A comparison of consonant sounds transcribed according to different systems

Key word	<i>This book</i>	<i>Ladefoged (1993)</i>	<i>Wells (2000)</i>
<u>p</u> en	p	p	p
<u>b</u> ack	b	b	b
tea	t	t	t
<u>b</u> etter	D/t	r/t	t/t
<u>d</u> ay	d	d	d
<u>k</u> ey	k	k	k
<u>g</u> et	g	g	g
<u>ch</u> urch	tʃ	tʃ	tʃ
<u>j</u> udge	dʒ	dʒ	dʒ
<u>f</u> at	f	f	f
<u>v</u> iew	v	v	v
<u>th</u> ing	θ	θ	θ
<u>th</u> is	ð	ð	ð
<u>s</u> oon	s	s	s
<u>z</u> ero	z	z	z
<u>sh</u> ip	ʃ	ʃ	ʃ
<u>pl</u> ease	ʒ	ʒ	ʒ
<u>h</u> ot	h	h	h
<u>m</u> ore	m	m	m
<u>n</u> ice	n	n	n
<u>r</u> ing	ŋ	ŋ	ŋ
<u>l</u> ight	l	l	l
<u>r</u> ight	r	r	r
<u>y</u> et	j	y	j
<u>w</u> et	w	w	w

Note: Where two symbols are shown for a particular consonant, the first refers to American English (Network English) and the second to British English (RP).

and younger speakers of so-called advanced RP differ a great deal from older standard speakers in their pronunciation, having, for instance, more glottal stops. In the United States as well, changes (especially in the vowel system) are taking place in some major cities like Chicago (the “Northern Cities Shift” – see 9.3.3) and Philadelphia. How these current developments will affect future standards is uncertain. As there is as yet no reliable pronunciation dictionary incorporating these changes, readers can only be advised to keep their ears open.

Before going on to the description of individual sounds (segmental phonemes), it is important to mention some general characteristics of American English. American English tends to be spoken more slowly and more loudly than British English, and there are also differences in intonation. Intonation is the systematic variation in pitch used by speakers of a language variety. It is one of the most difficult areas of linguistics to describe, and much less research has been carried out on intonation than on segmental phonetics. (See Bolinger 1989 and Pike 1945.) It is therefore difficult to give precise information concerning differences in intonation or to provide models for students. Generally speaking, however, American English is considered to have a more level intonation than British English, which shows great differences in pitch, particularly often in women's speech. (See Baugh and Cable 1993: 369.) Another aspect of pronunciation is stress, which will be treated at the end of this chapter, after the individual sounds.

1.3.1 Individual sounds

Differences in the pronunciation of individual sounds between American and British English can be divided into systematic (predictable) ones, and non-systematic (unpredictable) ones. The former follow from differences in the sound systems of American and British English, whereas the latter need to be specified for individual words or parts of words. I will begin here with the systematic differences, starting with consonants.⁶

Probably the most noticeable difference between American English and British English is that Americans tend to pronounce post-vocalic /r/; American English is what is called a *rhotic* accent. Thus words like *father*, *mother*, *pleasure*, *tar*, *year*, *part*, *cart*, *board*, etc. are pronounced with an audible [r] or with a strong retroflex *r*-coloring of the vowel, i.e. with the tip of the tongue turned back against the roof of the mouth. In both American and British English, /r/ is not trilled or fricative but a so-called approximant, i.e. the airstream is less narrowed than for a fricative, and no friction is produced. (The pronunciation of /r/ is a legacy from the early days of American English and ultimately, from earlier British English; see 9.3.1).

Another very salient feature characteristic of American English is the pronunciation of intervocalic /t/. It is not articulated as a voiceless stop as in British English but as a voiced tap. A tap is like a very rapid articulation of a stop, with just a single tongue tip movement. This is also how /d/ is articulated in American English, and intervocalic /t/ tends to sound like this /d/. The sound can be phonetically symbolized [r] or [D]; [D] is used in this book because it is typographically clearer. We have this phenomenon in words

like *butter*, *bitter*, *batter*, *better*, *matter*, *fatter*, etc. As /d/ is also pronounced in this way between vowels in words spelled with *d*, some words will become homophones, i.e. they will sound the same: in American English, there is often no difference in pronunciation between *bidder* and *bitter*, *udder* and *utter*, *medal* and *metal*.⁷ Some speakers have a longer vowel in *bidder*, *medal*, etc. than in *bitter*, *metal*, however. In the speech of many people, /t/ tends to disappear entirely after /n/ so that *winter/winner* and *banter/banner* become homophones.

A third systematic difference between American and British consonants concerns /l/. In British English, this consonant is pronounced differently depending on whether it occurs before a vowel or not. Thus the /l/-sounds in *live* and *feel* are different, and a word like *little* contains two different kinds of /l/. The /l/ that occurs before a vowel is sometimes called “clear l,” or “light l” and the non-initial one “dark l.” For dark /l/, the back part of the tongue is arched upwards toward the palate, i.e. it is velarized, as for a back vowel like [ʊ]. Many speakers of American English have dark /l/ in all positions. *Bill* and *Billy* are then pronounced with the same kind of /l/. The difference is not indicated in the transcription.

The glottal stop is the sound produced by complete closure of the glottis, or vocal cords, and is symbolized by [ʔ]. It is often said to be characteristic of some British dialects, most particularly of Cockney, but it is also used in American English instead of other stops, for instance to replace /t/ in *bitten* ['bɪʔn]. Here it is worth pointing out that it is frequently used in spoken American English. Thus instead of *No* you often hear ['ʔʌʔʌ] or ['ʔmʔm], written *uhuh* or *mhm*. Similarly, the mild alarm cry often written *uh-oh* is pronounced ['ʔʔʔʔʔʔ]. (See also 8.2.3.)

The American vowel system differs in many ways from that of British English. One very noticeable difference is the pronunciation of words like *dance*, *example*, *half*, *fast*, *bath*, where British RP has [ɑ] and American English [æ]. Thus for instance, *ant* and *aunt* are homophones in American English. This difference can be observed before /n, m, f, s, θ/: however, before /r/ and in words spelled with *-lm* (sometimes pronounced [lm] in American English) we have [ɑ], as in *far*, *car*, *calm*, *palm*. Similarly, *father* and *sergeant* have [ɑ].

The British/American differences between rounded back vowels are more difficult to describe. British English distinguishes between three different back vowels in the words *caught*, *cot*, and *calm*: [ɔ, ɒ, ɑ], respectively. American English is usually characterized as having two, [ɔ] in *caught* and [ɑ] in *cot* and *calm*. However, in some dialects of American English, especially the Midwest and West, they merge and are pronounced with the same articulation, so that *caught* and *cot*, *stalk* and *stock*, *naughty* and *knotty*, or *dawn* and *don* may become homophones. Before [r], the vowels are kept distinct, thus *core/car*

and *store/star* are not homophones. There is great variation here, even between individual speakers of the same dialect.

Diphthongs also vary a great deal in their pronunciation between American and British English. The diphthongs in *name*, *pale* and *home*, *road* usually have a narrower range in American English than in British English, i.e. the distance between starting-point and end-point of articulation is shorter, so that the American variants often come close to being monophthongs. This is in part reflected in the transcription: for words like *home* and *road*, [əʊ] is used for British English and [oʊ] is used for American English. For *name* and *pale* the transcription [eɪ] is used for both varieties.⁸

In words where dental or alveolar consonants precede the vowel, American English has [u] where British English would have [ju]. This phenomenon is sometimes called *yod-dropping*. Some examples follow:

	American	British
<i>tune</i>	[tun]	[tjun]
<i>duke</i>	[duk]	[djuk]
<i>new</i>	[nu]	[nju]
<i>sue</i>	[su]	[sju]
<i>resume</i>	[rɪ'zum]	[rɪ'zjum]
<i>enthusiasm</i>	[ɪn'θuzɪæzm]	[ɪn'θju:zɪæzm]

After labials as well as /k/ and /h/, American English also has [ju], and there is no difference between American and British pronunciations of words like *beauty*, *few*, *view*, *music*, *cue*, and *hue*.⁹

In words like *leer*, *lure*, *lair* British English has the diphthongs [ɪə], [ʊə], [eə], but in American English the pronunciation is monophthong plus /r/, thus [lɪr], [lʊr], and [ler].

The fact that American English is rhotic also leads to a general *r*-colouring of vowels preceding /r/. Many Americans also strike foreigners as having a nasalized pronunciation.

Some differences between American and British English are borderline cases between systematic and non-systematic ones. Thus there are groups of words that share common pronunciation differences. A few words spelled with *er* have [ɜr] in American English but [ɑ] in British English:

	American	British
<i>clerk</i>	[klɜrk]	[klɑk]
<i>derby</i>	['dɜrbɪ]	['dɑbɪ]
<i>Berkeley</i>	['bɜrklɪ]	['bɑklɪ]

In some other words American English has [ɜr] where British English has [ʌr]:

	American	British
<i>hurry</i>	['hɜrɪ]	['hʌrɪ]
<i>courage</i>	['kɜrɪdʒ]	['kʌrɪdʒ]
<i>nourish</i>	['nɜrɪʃ]	['nʌrɪʃ]
<i>worry</i>	['wɜrɪ]	['wʌrɪ]
<i>borough</i>	['bɜrə]	['bʌrə]

A list of non-systematic differences is given in table 1.4. (In a few cases there are also minor differences in spelling, namely, in *aluminum* for *aluminium* and *mustache* for *moustache*, where the shorter variant is American, and in *mom(my)/mum(my)*, where American English has *o* and British English *u*.) Several of the differences are stress-related.

Foreign loan-words are often treated differently in American and British English; cf. *banana*, *garage*, *tomato*, which all appear in table 1.4. Notice that in these three words, American pronunciation shows three different values for the stressed vowel: [æ] in *banana*, [ɑ] in *garage*, and [eɪ] in *tomato*. In older loanwords with an [ɑ] in the donor language, there is often [ɑ] in British English and [æ] in American English, as in *morale* and *khaki*, featured in table 1.4. However, in recent loanwords with original [ɑ], there has been a reversal so that there is now a strong tendency to use [ɑ] in American English and [æ] in British English. Thus *pasta*, *salsa*, and *macho* often have [æ] in Britain and [ɑ] in the United States. Similarly, some names of famous people, like *Cézanne*, *Dante*, *Gandhi*, *Kant*, *Kafka*, *Mann*, *Picasso*, and *Vivaldi*, tend to be pronounced with stressed [ɑ] in the States and [æ] in Britain, and so do, for example, *Mazda*, *Karachi*, *Sri Lanka*, *Rwanda*, and *Zimbabwe*. (See Boberg 1999.)

1.3.2 Stress

Stress assignment may also vary between American and British English. To some extent, differences are systematic here, as for instance in French loan-words, where American English often retains the stress on the final syllable. Pronunciation will then vary according to the phonological system of either variety:

	American	British
<i>attaché</i>	[æDə'ʃeɪ]	[ə'tæʃeɪ]
<i>ballet</i>	[bæ'leɪ]	['bæleɪ]
<i>café</i>	[kə'feɪ]	['kæfeɪ]
<i>chagrin</i>	[ʃə'grɪn]	['ʃægrɪn]

Table 1.4 Non-systematic pronunciation differences between American and British English

	<i>American</i>	<i>British</i>
<i>advertisement</i>	[ædvər'taɪzmənt]	[əd'vɜ:tɪsmənt]
<i>Anthony</i>	['ænthəni]	['æntəni]
<i>alumin(i)um</i>	[ə'lumɪnəm]	[ælə'mɪnjəm]
<i>anti-</i> (prefix)	['æntaɪ], ['æntɪ]	['æntɪ]
<i>apricot</i>	['æprɪkət], ['eɪprɪkət]	['eɪprɪkət]
<i>banana</i>	[bə'nænə]	[bə'nənə]
<i>Bernard</i>	[bər'nɑ:d]	['bɜ:nəd]
<i>borough</i>	['bɜ:rəʊ]	['bʌrə]
<i>brassiere</i>	[brə'zɪr]	['bræziə]
<i>buoy</i>	['bɔɪ], [bɔɪ]	[bɔɪ]
<i>depot</i>	['dɪpəʊ]	['depəʊ]
<i>docile</i>	['dasəl]	['dɔʊsaɪl]
<i>dynasty</i>	['daɪnəstɪ]	['dɪnəstɪ]
<i>falcon</i>	['fælkən]	['fɔlkən]
<i>garage</i>	[gə'rɑ:ʒ], [gə'radʒ]	['gærɑ:ʒ], ['gærədʒ], ['gærɪdʒ]
<i>herb</i>	[ɜrb], [hɜrb]	[hɜb]
<i>inquiry</i>	['ɪŋkwəɪrɪ]	[ɪŋ'kwairɪ]
<i>khaki</i>	['kæki]	['kɑki]
<i>leisure</i>	['li:ʒər]	['lezə]
<i>lieutenant</i>	[lu'tenənt]	[lef'tenənt]
<i>lever</i>	['levər], ['lɪvər]	['lɪvə]
<i>morale</i>	[mə'ræl]	[mə'ral], [mɒ'ral]
<i>mom, mum</i>	[mɑm]	[mʌm]
<i>mommy, mummy</i>	['mɑmi]	['mʌmi]
<i>m(o)ustache</i>	['mʌstæʃ]	[mə'stɑʃ], [mə'stæʃ]
<i>produce</i> (noun)	['prɔʊdʌs]	['prɒdʒʊs]
<i>rather</i>	['ræðər]	['rɑðə]
<i>route</i>	[raʊt], [rut]	[rut]
<i>schedule</i>	['skedʒul]	['ʃedʒul], ['skedʒul]
<i>semi</i>	['semaɪ] 'truck'	['seɪnɪ] '-detached house'
<i>shone</i>	['ʃɔn]	['ʃɒn]
<i>solder</i> 'join (metals) together'	['sɑdər]	['sɔʊldə]
<i>tomato</i>	[tə'meɪtəʊ]	[tə'matəʊ]
<i>vase</i>	[veɪs]	[vɑz]
<i>vitamin</i>	['vaɪtəmi:n]	['vɪtəmi:n]
<i>wrath</i>	[ræθ]	[rɒθ], [ræθ]
<i>z</i> (the letter)	[zi]	[zed]
<i>zebra</i>	['zɪbrə]	['zebrə]

<i>detail</i>	[dɪ'teɪl], ['diteɪl]	['diteɪl]
<i>debris</i>	[də'bri]	['debri]
<i>frontier</i>	[frʌn'tɪr]	['frʌntɪə]
<i>premier</i>	[pri'mɪr]	['premiə]

On the other hand, a number of verbs ending in *-ate* usually have the stress on the first syllable in American English: *donate*, *migrate*, *vacate*, *vibrate*, but on the ending in British English.

Some longer words (usually with four syllables) ending in *-ary*, *-ery*, or *-ory* have different stress assignment in the two varieties. Thus some words are stressed on the first syllable in American English but on the second in British English.

	American	British
<i>ancillary</i>	['ænsɪ,læɪrɪ]	[æn'sɪləɪrɪ]
<i>capillary</i>	['kæpɪ,læɪrɪ]	[kæ'pɪləɪrɪ]
<i>corollary</i>	['kɔrə,læɪrɪ]	[kə'rɒləɪrɪ]
<i>laboratory</i>	['læb(ə)rə,tɔrɪ]	[lə'bɔrət(ə)rɪ]

The majority of words with these endings are stressed on the first syllable in both varieties, however, but there is still a difference in pronunciation. American English has a full vowel in the second syllable from the end, whereas that vowel is either reduced to [ə] or not pronounced at all in British English:

	American	British
<i>commentary</i>	['kʌmən,teri]	['kɒmənt(ə)rɪ]
<i>category</i>	['kæDə,ɡɔrɪ]	['kætəɡ(ə)rɪ]
<i>cemetery</i>	['semə,teri]	['semət(ə)rɪ]
<i>dictionary</i>	['dɪkʃə,nerɪ]	['dɪkʃən(ə)rɪ]
<i>inventory</i>	['ɪnvən,tɔrɪ]	['ɪnvənt(ə)rɪ]
<i>secretary</i>	['sekrə,teri]	['sekrət(ə)rɪ]

This also applies to words in *-ony* and sometimes to words in *-ative*. However, some words have the same stress in American and British English, e.g. *speculative*, *demonstrative*.

	American	British
<i>ceremony</i>	['serə,mʊnɪ]	['serəmənɪ]
<i>testimony</i>	['testə,mʊnɪ]	['testɪmənɪ]
<i>administrative</i>	[əd'mɪnə,streɪDɪv], [əd,mɪnə'streɪDɪv]	[əd'mɪnɪstrətɪv]

American English also has secondary stress on the last element of many compounds where British English has only primary stress on the first element. Some good examples are names of berries:

	American	British
<i>blueberry</i>	['blu,berɪ]	['blub(ə)rɪ]
<i>cranberry</i>	['kræn,berɪ]	['krænb(ə)rɪ]
<i>gooseberry</i>	['gus,berɪ]	['gʊzb(ə)rɪ]
<i>raspberry</i>	['ræz,berɪ]	['razb(ə)rɪ]

On the other hand, words ending in *-ile* have reduced vowel in American English but not in British English:

	American	British
<i>docile</i>	['dasəl]	['dəusaɪl]
<i>fertile</i>	['fɜːDəl]	['fɜːtaɪl]
<i>fragile</i>	['frædʒəl]	['frædʒaɪl]
<i>hostile</i>	['hɒstəl]	['hɒstaɪl]
<i>versatile</i>	['vɜːrsədəl]	['vɜːsətaɪl]
<i>virile</i>	['vɪrəl]	['vɪraɪl]

Place names that are spelled in the same way in American and British English are often pronounced differently. Thus, *Birmingham*, Alabama, is pronounced ['bɜːrɪŋ,hæm], not like the British *Birmingham*, which is pronounced ['bɜːrɪŋəm]. *Norfolk*, Virginia, can be pronounced ['nɔː,fouk] or ['nɔːfək] whereas the English county is always ['nɔːfək].

Stress assignment varies between British and American English in a number of words. Stress assignment in British English is more variable than in American English and often age-related. The same stress pattern as in American English is often used by older speakers in Britain. (See Bauer 1994.) Some examples follow:

American	British
' <i>applicable</i>	ap' <i>licable</i>
' <i>formidable</i>	for' <i>midable</i>
' <i>fragmen,tary</i>	frag' <i>mentary</i>
' <i>hospitable</i>	hos' <i>pitable</i>
' <i>metallurgy</i>	me' <i>tallurgy</i>
' <i>nomenclature</i>	no' <i>menclature</i>
prema' <i>ture</i>	' <i>premature</i>

Exquisite and *controversy* tend to have the main stress on the first syllable in American English and on the second in British English, but there is great variability here. The verb *harass* and the derived noun *harassment* traditionally have the stress on the first syllable in British English; in American English the second syllable is usually the accented one, as in the common expression *sexual ha'rassment*. This stress pattern is currently becoming frequent in British English as well, especially among younger speakers.

Notes

- 1 *General American* is a term that has also been used.
- 2 However, some well-known broadcasters have traces of regional accents, e.g. Peter Jennings (Canadian) and Dan Rather (Southern), and the term *Network English* has been criticized.
- 3 American phoneticians prefer to distinguish between tense and lax vowels, a practice that will not be followed here; see e.g. Ladefoged (1993: 86ff).
- 4 The new *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Pronunciation of Current English*, scheduled to come out in 2001, will also provide both American and British pronunciations.
- 5 Only more specialized dictionaries such as Kenyon and Knott's *Pronouncing Dictionary of American English* (1995) use some variant of IPA, but that too differs from the regular IPA practices. Ladefoged (1993: 76) has a very useful chart summarizing the different transcription practices used by different dictionaries.
- 6 In the running text of this chapter, I distinguish between a phonemic transcription in slanting brackets, as in /t/, /d/, and a phonetic transcription in square brackets, as in [t], [d], [D]. In lists and tables, and in all other chapters, I use only square brackets. I adopted this simplification because of my wish to include phonetic representations of flaps and glottal stops in words like *butter*, *bitter*, *ready*, *uh-oh*, etc.
- 7 Tapping rules are complicated. Tapping normally only takes place after stressed and before unstressed syllables. A word like *editor* is therefore pronounced with a tap for *d* but with a regular dental [t] for the second occurrence, and *deter* does not have a tap at all. Tapping can also take place before a stressed syllable across a word boundary, as in *It is*, which is pronounced [r'Dɪz].
- 8 Many American linguists as well as dictionary-makers use a "monophthongal" transcription for both sounds, transcribing these sounds as /e/ or /o/.
- 9 A couple of less well-documented pronunciations may be mentioned here: ['kju, pən] for *coupon* is frequently heard nowadays in American English, and ['nukjələr] for *nuclear* is now gaining acceptance. ['fɪgjər] is the normal American pronunciation of *figure*.

Recommended Reading

Dretzke, Burkhard (1998) *Modern British and American Pronunciation*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh. A brief introduction to the pronunciation of American and British English.

Ladefoged, Peter (1993) *A Course in Phonetics*. Third edn. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers. An excellent introduction to phonetics; very useful for an understanding of differences in pronunciation between American and British English. The fourth edition appeared in 2001, too late to be considered for this work. Note that it has several changes in the transcription system.

Dictionaries

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2000) Fourth edn. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. The printed version can be useful for American pronunciations when the transcription system has been mastered, but a soundtrack is available online for free at: <http://www.bartleby.com/cgi-bin/tehis/webinator/ahdsearch>.

Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. One of the best all-purpose dictionaries with excellent IPA transcriptions of both American and British pronunciations.

Jones, Daniel (1997) *English Pronouncing Dictionary*. Edited by Peter Roach and James Hartman. Fifteenth edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. This new edition of Daniel Jones' classic dictionary also gives American pronunciations.

Kenyon, John S. and Knott, Thomas A. (1995) *A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English*. Second edn. Springfield, MA: G. and C. Merriam.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) London and New York: Longman Dictionaries. A good all-purpose dictionary.

The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Pronunciation of Current English (2001) Edited by Clive Upton, William A. Kretzschmar, Jr., and Rafal Konopka. Oxford: Oxford University Press. A comprehensive new pronunciation dictionary providing both American and British variants.

The Oxford English Dictionary (1989) Second edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press. This major dictionary now has IPA phonetics, but indicates only British pronunciation.

Wells, John (2000) *Longman Pronunciation Dictionary*. Second edn. Harlow: Longman. A reliable and useful pronunciation dictionary giving American and British variants.