

PART I



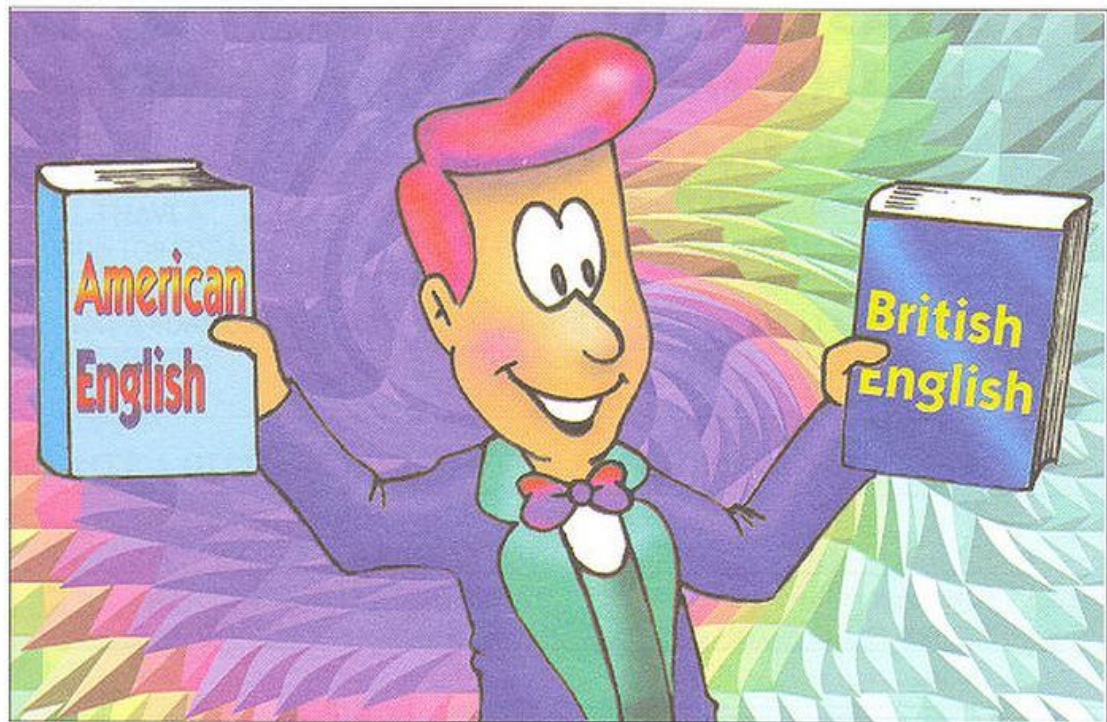
■ LISTEN AND READ.

21

Lesson twenty one

Twenty First (21st)
Lesson

BRITISH ENGLISH Vs. AMERICAN ENGLISH



When people talk about language, we realize that the discussion generally reveals a number of legends, popular beliefs and prejudices which confuse the issue and obscure the facts. Everybody uses language and so everybody feels like an expert on the subject. In particular most people have an irrational but understandable feeling that what they themselves do is in some way "right" or "good", and that anything different is in some way inferior or unacceptable. As a consequence of these myths and prejudices, many people are worried about the idea that there exists a single kind of English, "good English", and that any spoken or written English should follow its rules.

There is quite a large number of people who equate this notion of "good English" with British English.

This leads them to express opinions, such as "British English is better than American English", "British English is more beautiful", "The English are the only people who speak good English", and "Americans don't speak English". It is often hard to convince them that though there are some differences between the several varieties of the English language, none of them is intrinsically superior to the others.

Every variety of English, as with any other language, has a so called standard form, which is spoken by the educated section of the population that usually belongs to a particular social group.

All languages unavoidably change as time passes, and English is no exception. That is why today's English is different from Shakespeare's. And the changes continue, inevitably.

In conclusion, we must keep in mind that judgements that British English is "better" or "worse" than American English are prejudices without basis. We must also accept changes that occur in all languages and forget common legends about language, which hinder a clear understanding of what language is and how it functions.



■ DECIDE WHETHER THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE TRUE OR FALSE.

☐

1. Some languages are better than others.

☐

2. Mexican Spanish is not as good as European Spanish.

☐

3. The standard form of a language is ordinarily spoken by people who have attended school.

☐

4. The British are not the best speakers of the English language.

☐

5. Languages never change.

PART II



DIALOGUE

CARLOS WOULD LIKE TO GET SOME ANSWERS FROM PROFESSOR TAYLOR.



CARLOS FERNANDEZ, A STUDENT TAKING COURSES IN LINGUISTICS AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE, IS TALKING WITH PROFESSOR RONALD TAYLOR AT A CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY.

Prof. Taylor: Let's see, Carlos. You said you wanted to see me. Is there something I can do for you?

Carlos: Yes, sir. I'd like to ask you some questions about the differences, if there are any, between British and American English.

Prof. Taylor: Well, there are certainly some differences between those two forms of the same language.

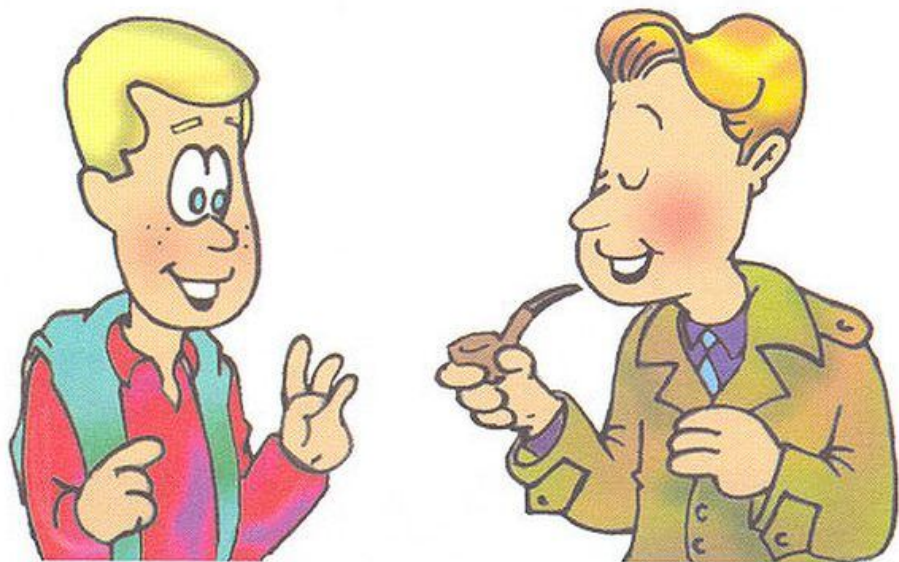
Carlos: I've heard people say that British English is better than American English, that the British speak good English, and that American English is in some way inferior.

Prof. Taylor: Such judgments are based on popular myths. Most people share a number of prejudices about what language is and how it should be taught. In the present case, neither is better nor worse; they're just a little different.

Carlos: But I've often felt kind of confused. As you know, some of our teachers here are British and others are Americans. What kind of English am I supposed to learn or imitate?

Prof. Taylor: If I were you, I'd try to acquire one pronunciation; that is, I'd try to speak as the Americans or as the English, depending on my personal preference or needs. But remember that you should also try to understand other forms of English.





Carlos: Could you please tell me a little more about the differences?

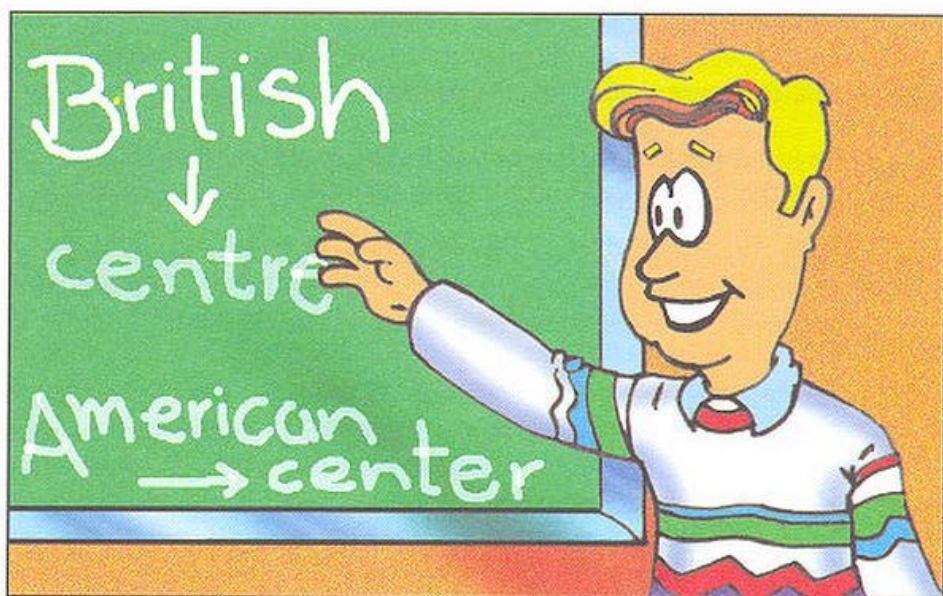
Prof. Taylor: To satisfy your curiosity I'll give you a few examples:
In pronunciation the word fork in the U.S.A. is pronounced "FORK" while in England it is pronounced "FOK". In grammar, people in the U.S.A. say, "Do you have a match?" While in England this question doesn't take the auxiliary do: and they ask, "Have you a match?"
In vocabulary: people in the U.S.A. rent a car: whereas, in England "they hire a car".
Observe the differences in spelling in the following words: we write **center, traveled, organize**, but the British write **centre, travelled, organise**.

Carlos: But... isn't that confusing?

Prof. Taylor: There's nothing to worry about. In spite of these differences, the Americans and the English understand each other very well. They share a common language, and that's a fact.

Carlos: Thank you, Professor Taylor. I've learned a lot from your explanations.

Prof. Taylor: You're welcome. Feel free to come anytime you need some help.





■ ANSWER:

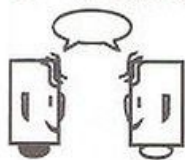
- 1.- What does Carlos want to know about American English and British English?

- 2.- Why is he a little confused about the way his teachers speak English?

- 3.- Faced with the problem of choosing one English pronunciation, what should Carlos take into account to make his decision? _____
- 4.- Would you say that the British speak better than the Americans?

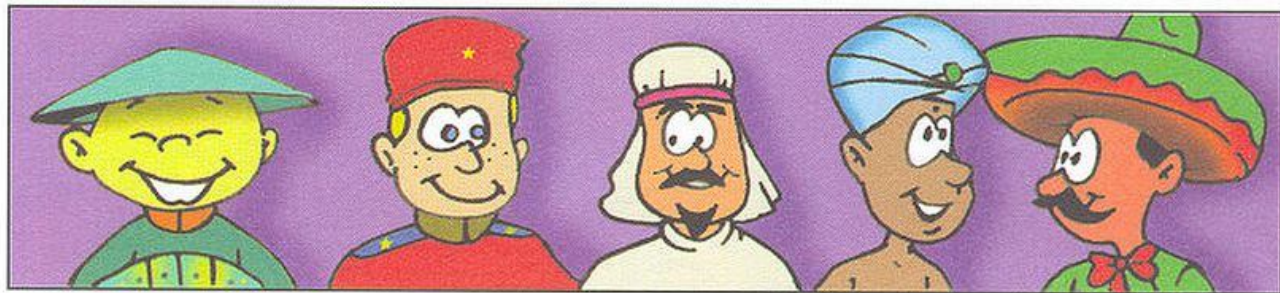
- 5.- Name some differences in British and American English.

PART III



FUNCTION:

TALKING ABOUT LANGUAGES



Where did you learn French?

-I studied at L'Alliance Francaise for three years.

Is John bilingual?

-Yes, he learned Spanish in Mexico.

Mary is fluent in German.

-I heard she lived in Germany for three years.

Why don't you learn French instead?

-English is more useful than French.

Should we study American English?

-Well, you know there are a lot of American companies established in Mexico.



vocabulary

■ WRITE SENTENCES FOR THE FOLLOWING WORDS:

**BELIEFS, ISSUE, FACT,
EQUATE, JUDGEMENT,
HINDER, SHARE, LEGEND, FLUENT, USEFUL**

