

British vs. American English

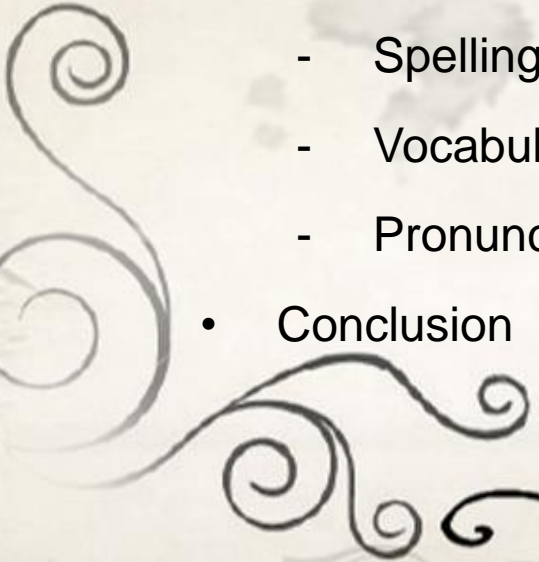




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Overview



- The Story of American English
 - Two views of British English and American English
 - British-American Differences
 - Grammar
 - Spelling
 - Vocabulary
 - Pronunciation
 - Conclusion
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The Story of AE: - History of colonization

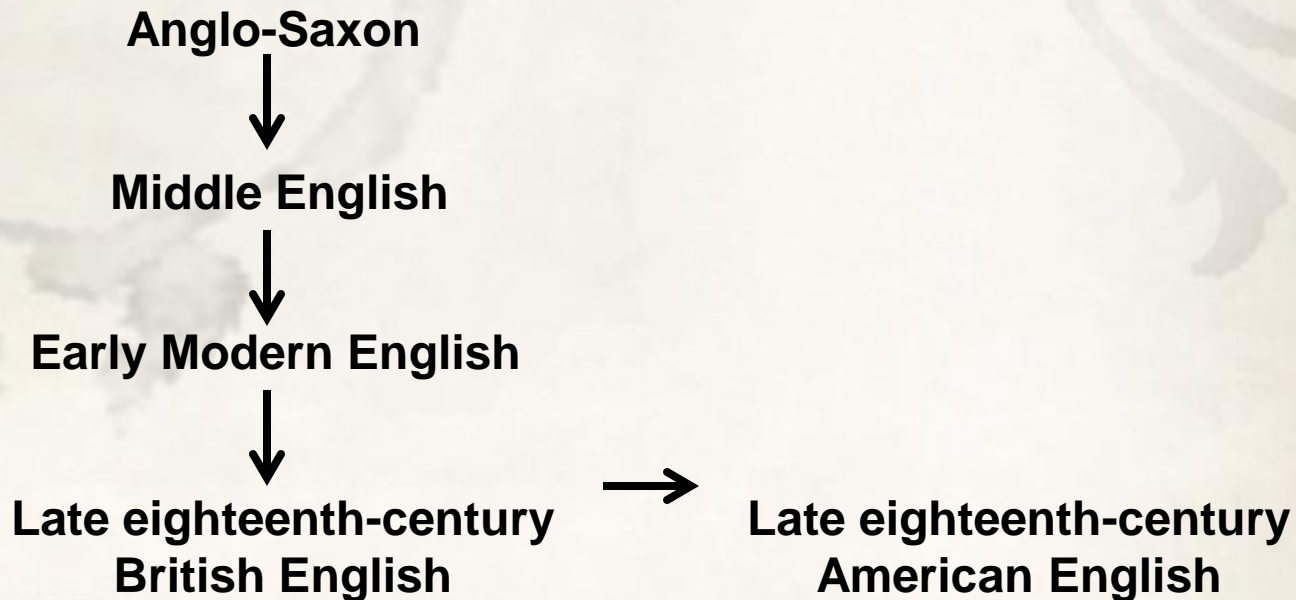
- **1607** - First permanent settlement in North America: **Jamestown** (James I) in the area of **Virginia** (Elizabeth I, “The Virgin Queen”)
- **1620** – First group of Puritans arrived on the Mayflower. Landed at Cape Cod Bay prevented by the storms from reaching Virginia.
New settlement: **Plimoth** (now Plymouth, Massachusetts)
- **By 1640** – 15,000 immigrants (Massachusetts area)





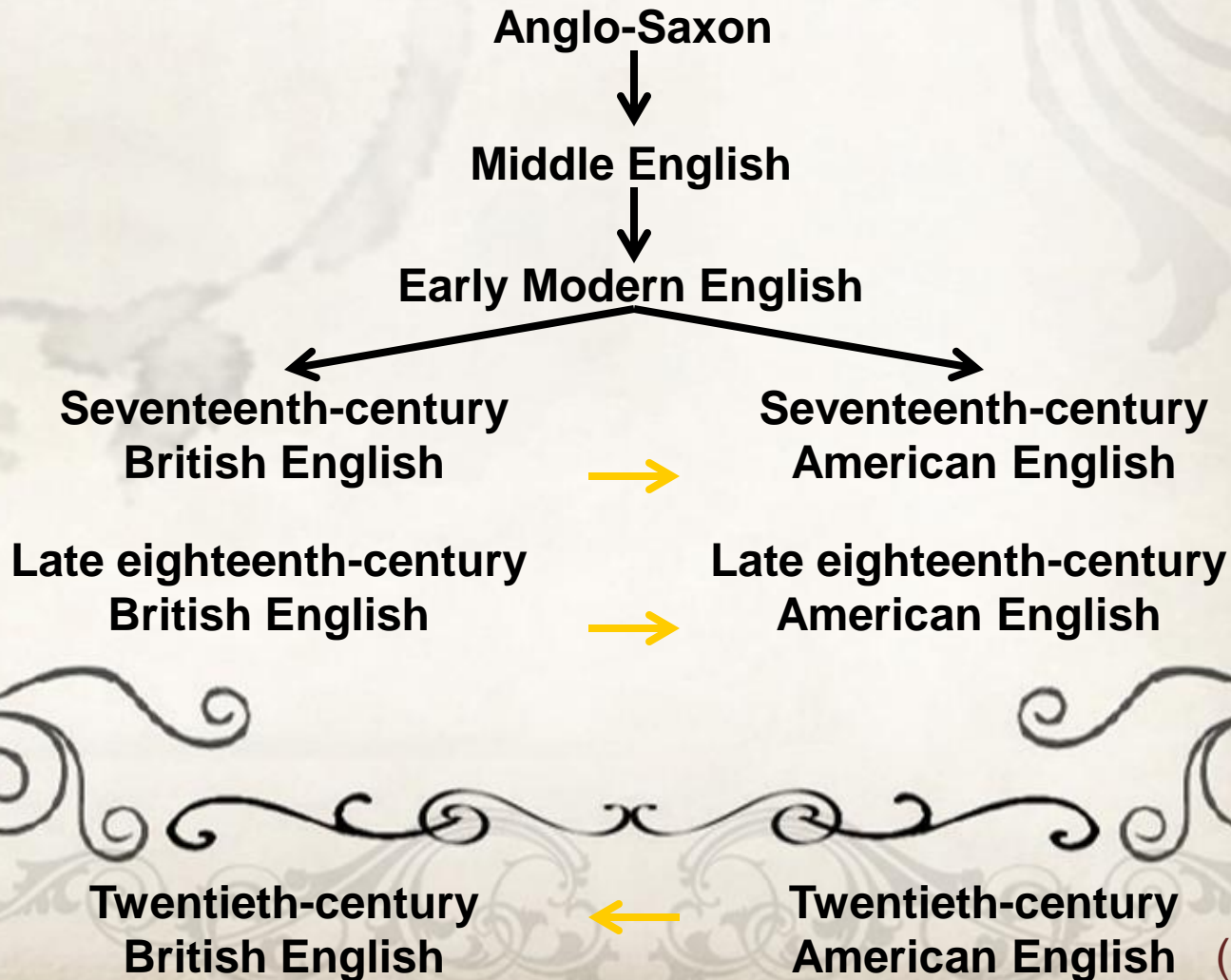
Two views of BE & AE

- Late eighteenth century:



Two views of BE & AE

- A more accurate view...

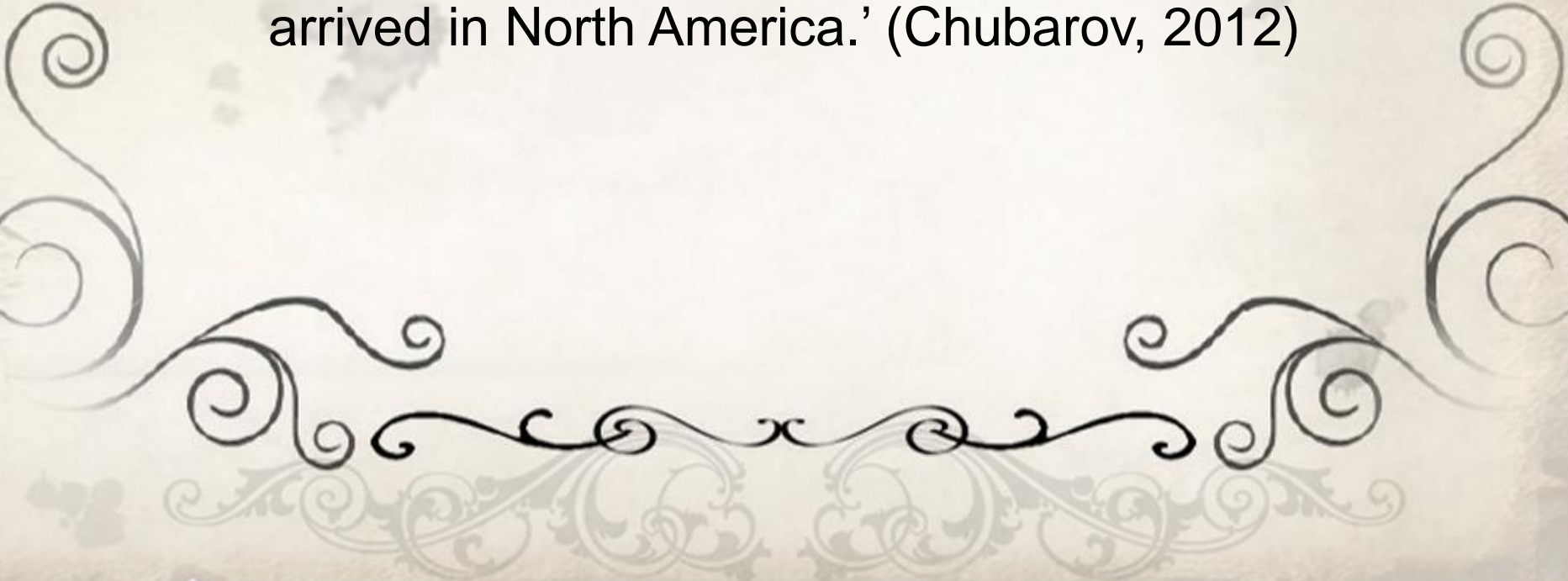


(Crystal, 2005)



British-American Differences

‘American and British [English] had been diverging from the moment the first English-speaking settlers arrived in North America.’ (Chubarov, 2012)



BE vs. AE: - Grammar

British English	American English
<i>He's just gone home.</i>	<i>He just went home (OR He's just gone home.)</i>
<i>It looks as if / like it's going to rain.</i>	<i>It looks like it's going to rain.</i>
<i>I've never really got to know her.</i>	<i>I've never really gotten to know her.</i>
<i>I can see a car coming.</i>	<i>I (can) see a car coming.</i>
<i>(on the phone) Hello, is that Susan?</i>	<i>Hello, is this Susan?</i>
<i>He looked at me really strangely.</i>	<i>He looked at me real strange. (very informal) OR He looked at me really strangely.</i>

- Other irregular verbs have different forms in both varieties.
- Southern US 2nd person plural pronoun *you all*.

(Swan, 2005)

BE vs. AE: *- Spelling*

- AE **-or** vs. BE **-our** (e.g. *color* / *colour*)
- AE **-er** vs. BE **-re** (e.g. *center* / *centre*)
- Verbs: AE **-ize** vs. BE **-ize** or **-ise**
(e.g. *realize* / *realize*, *realise*; *baptize* / *baptize*, *baptise*)
- AE and BE:
 - *surprise*, *advise*, *compromise*, *exercise*, *improvise*, *advertise*
 - *Capsize*
- *Analyse* (AE *analyse* / *analyze*) and *paralyse* (AE *paralyze*)
BE **-ise** almost always acceptable.

BE vs. AE: - Vocabulary

British English	American English
<i>Biscuit</i>	<i>Cookie, cracker</i>
<i>Car park</i>	<i>Parking lot</i>
<i>Cot</i>	<i>Crib</i>
<i>CV</i>	<i>Resumé</i>
<i>Rubbish</i>	<i>Garbage, trash</i>
<i>Underground</i>	<i>Subway</i>
<i>Sweets</i>	<i>Candy</i>
<i>Trainers</i>	<i>Sneakers</i>

- Same word, different meaning (BE *mad* = crazy; AE *mad* = angry)
- Different word, same idea (BE *lorry* = AE *truck*)

(Swan, 2005)

BE vs. AE: *- Vocabulary (cont.)*

- Expressions with prepositions and participles:

British English	American English
<i>Live in X street</i>	<i>Live on X street</i>
<i>Look (a)round the church</i>	<i>Look around the church</i>
<i>Meet somebody</i>	<i>Meet somebody (by chance) / Meet with somebody (planned)</i>
<i>On a course</i>	<i>In a course</i>
<i>Ten past four Ten to four</i>	<i>Ten after / past four Ten to / of / before / till four</i>



BE vs. AE: - Pronunciation

- BE has one more vowel than AE: **Rounded short o** (/ɒ/) e.g. cot, dog, got, gone, off, stop, lost.

In AE pronounced with /ɑː/ like *father*, or with /ɔː/ like *caught*

- Some words with **a + consonant** (e.g. *fast, after*) pronounced with:
/ɑː/ in standard southern British English, and
/æ/ in AE and some other varieties of English
- SSBE /əʊ/ vs. AE /oʊ/ (e.g. *home, go, open*)
- *Borough* vs. *Thorough*: AE /'bɜːr.əʊ/ and /'θɜːr.-əʊ/
BE /'bɒr.ə/ and /'θɒr.ə/

BE vs. AE: - Pronunciation

- In SSBE **r** only pronounced before a vowel sound whilst in AE it's always pronounced (e.g. *car, turn, offer*)
- AE light voiced **t** and **d** (between vowels) vs. BE /'raɪ.tə^r/ and /'raɪ.də^r/
- AE /uː/ vs. BE /juː/ in words in which **th, d, t** or **n** (and sometimes **s** or **l**) are followed by **u** or **ew** in writing:

enthusiastic AE /ɪn,θuː.zi'æs.tɪk/ BE /ɪn,θjuː.zi'æs.tɪk/

duty AE /'duː.tɪ/ BE /'djuː.tɪ/

tune AE /tuːn/ BE /tjuːn/

BE vs. AE: - Pronunciation

- BE /aɪl/ vs. AE /l/ in words ending in unstressed **-ile** (e.g. Fertile, reptile, missile, senile)

fertile /'fɜː.t̩.əl/ (rhyming with *turtle*)

/'fɜː.taɪl/ (rhyming with *her tile*)

- Some long words ending in **-ary**, **-ery** or **-ory** pronounced differently in AE (with one more syllable)

secretary AE /'sek.rə.tri/ BE /'sek.rə.ter.i/

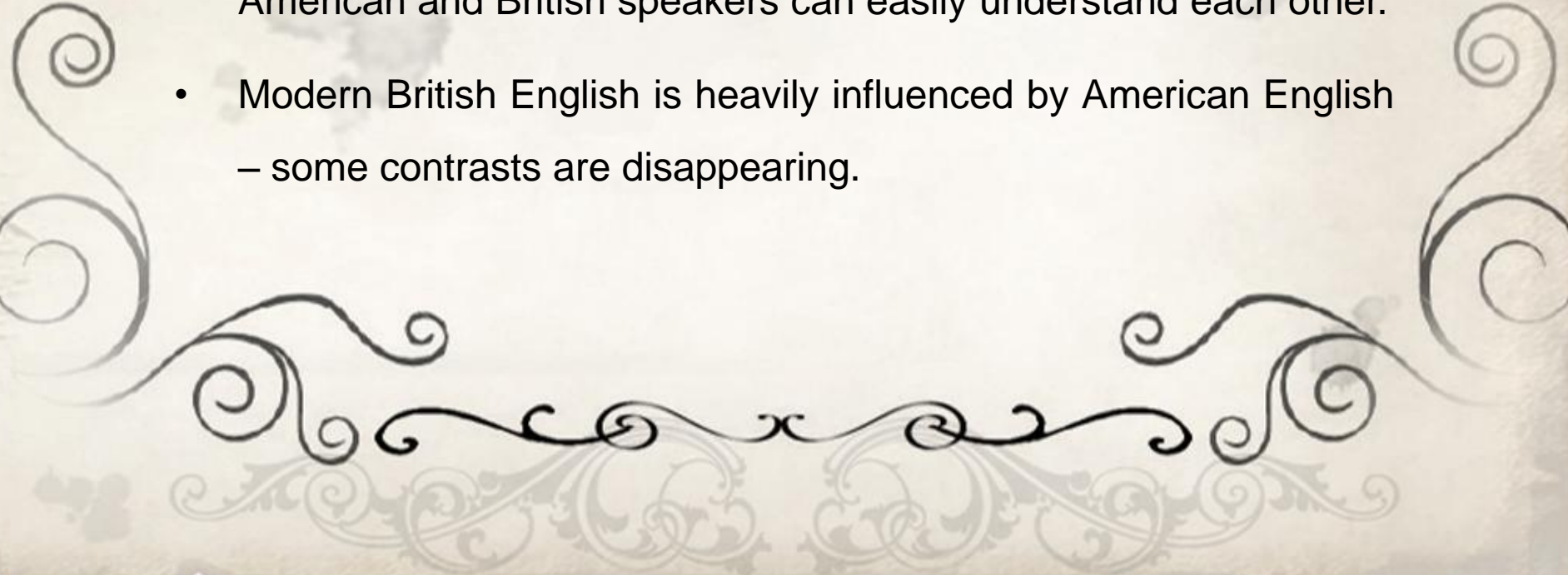
- French borrowings:

paté AE /pæ'teɪ/ BE /'pæ.teɪ/

ballet AE /bæ'leɪ/ BE /'bæ.leɪ/



Conclusion

- Few differences in grammar and spelling between both varieties of English, and rather more differences of vocabulary and idiom.
 - Pronunciation is sometimes very different. However, most American and British speakers can easily understand each other.
 - Modern British English is heavily influenced by American English – some contrasts are disappearing.
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Thank you for listening!