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## AMERICAN ENGLISH IN ITS HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC CONTEXTS

*The article focuses on some aspects of the functioning of the English language in North America and the evolution of its social functions in connection with the formation and the development of the North American variant of English. The article brings into focus the genetic and functional status of American English and states its main distinctive features as a language variant of the English language. The article adopts a historical approach to the development of morphological divergences of North American English usage. The article provides historical evidence supported by illustrations taken from Shakespeare's works to a peculiar character of the North American usage of adverbs without the adverbial suffix -ly and their counterparts with the adverbial suffix. The article also touches upon the problem of American English and British English interrelationship in the contemporary sociolinguistic contexts, on the process of divergent and convergent developments of the transplanted variety and its mainland source. The article points out three possible forms of North American influences on British English: introduction of new forms, reintroduction of old forms and a supporting effect on the process underway. The article states that the North American English distinctive features seen in the usage of adverbs without the adverbial suffix -ly in literary oral and written types of discourse are not innovations but factually optional realizations revealed in usage. They show regional language variation determined by common linguistic and different sociolinguistic factors of the evolution of the same language system.*

**Key words:** North American English, the functional status, the historical and sociolinguistic contexts, morphological divergences, adverbs without the adverbial suffix -ly.

The **aim** of the article is to look into the problem of the functional status of North American English of today and to provide some views on its characteristic features in morphology from the historical perspective of the general evolution of the English language.

The English language is known to have dispersed far beyond the borders of England in its history. It has widely extended areas and spheres of its functioning because of different kinds of colonial expansion made for economic purposes and political ambitions. English has become a common language of international and intercultural communication in some professional spheres, for example, in business activities, in academic, scholarly and political debates, in sea navigation and air flights, and in pop music entertainment.

The most spread variety of English overseas is North American English, the social functions of which have widened as its functioning has expanded beyond the borders of the United States. North American English is steadily becoming one of the mostly used varieties of the English language supported by communication. Nowadays it influences the mode of English speech behaviour not only in other English-speaking countries but also in different social, business and cultural spheres of international communication all round the world. It has spread globally through different channels of communication: mass media, the Hollywood productions, public relations and educational programmes, political and scientific discourse, different types of business communication and intercultural contacts.

A wide extension of social functions of North American English not only on the nationwide but also on the worldwide scale sets it apart from other overseas varieties of English and makes it a major and important rival to British English in the contemporary world. Another significant feature of the functional status of North American English is the existence of literary standard fixed in text writing in a considerable bulk of American literature and in written and oral official discourse. Still, the difference between the written and spoken modes of language is essential and easily marked in North American English [1: 49]. The conservation of territorial dialects and the creation of the American English dialects, both regional and social, the development of language social stratification (professional, social slang, Black English) are other peculiar features of its development.

The scholarly dispute about the reasons for the deviation and shift of North American English usage from the British variant of English has a long-time story of linguistic tradition. In this long-running and time-honoured discussion, the topical issue has often been the extent of this shift and the inventory of phonetic, lexical and grammatical divergences. The historical explanation for some separately considered points of difference, especially in phonetics, later added by the consideration of sociolinguistic factors viewed historically, appeared in scholarly papers already in the second half of the previous century [2; 3; 1].

In the long history of the separate development of North American English and British English variants, the focus has traditionally been on the description of the North American English divergences. This one-sided approach has ignored the fact that processes of language evolution have been taking place in each of the varieties of English, sometimes coinciding, sometimes making them drift apart. The development of the language in the

USA and Great Britain has been going on along the same lines but in different sociolinguistic contexts. The actualization of these processes has made mutual influences of both of the varieties possible and more effective [4: 29–43; 5: 234]. The changing sociolinguistic contexts of today have formed a new more complicated pattern of relationship between North American English and British English in which both national variants of English show two tendencies in the evolution of their relations. The first of them is the process of divergence, the development of vivid distinctive features that arose in different historically determined sociolinguistic conditions and are the result of the separate development of both varieties of English since the seventeenth – eighteenth centuries. The second process seems to be the tendency towards convergence that has recently come into view with an increasing power of North American English influences on British English. The process of convergence has become more intensive with the extension of social functions of North American English from the variety of English spoken on a definite territory and limited by the speakers of the English speech community in the USA to the variety of English that is becoming a prestigious mode of communication on the global scale. The North American English influences are vivid not only in the Canadian or Australian national variants of English, but at present, we also see an increasing impact of North American English on the British English national variant.

A peculiar nature of new relations between North American English and British English that has recently come into focus of researchers poses a set of problems connected with the genetic and functional status of North American English. One of the problems may be to what extent North American English has really deviated from British English. It raises questions how many innovations and new forms not found in British English and not connected with the shared history the North American English variant shows and how independently its development has been going on. As the emphasis of language influence has seemingly shifted from the direction from British English to North American English towards the reverse, a deeper insight into the historical background of the North American English distinctive features may help to throw more light on the nature of these influences. There are three sets of factors that can help to explain the existing differences that appear to make North American English distinctive from British English: historical, sociolinguistic and linguistic.

By general assumption, the basis of American English is the speech of the English-speaking settlers who spoke Early Modern English of the seventeenth century with the dominant speech of southeastern England richly flavoured with other English dialects and maritime varieties [1: 133]. Consequently, differences between the North American English usage and the British English usage can mainly be due to different language and social characteristics of the original local and social accents of English-speaking migrants and settlers. North American English usage also shows the preservation of some old forms and words, or the lexical meanings of the words that were in current usage in earlier periods of the English language history. Some of these linguistic units became archaic, obsolete or came out of use in British English. The development of different sociolinguistic conditions in which the speakers of English found themselves on a new continent and the separate existence of North American English and British English speech communities divided by space have also led to the appearance of divergences between these two forms of English. On the American continent, English has experienced multicultural influence from languages of different ethnic minorities with whom speakers of English came into contact. New sociolinguistic contexts triggered the appearance of modern concepts and notions that arose in a new social, political, cultural and historical environment of the formation and development of a state organization on different social and political foundations. New words appeared or old ones acquired new meanings to denote the peculiarities of a new political system and a new social order. The language peculiarities of North American English can also be due to the separate development of science, technology and culture. Separate and sometimes different ways of scientific and technological progress have promoted the formation of new lexical units of technical register and the development of individual modified terminological systems.

Still, the basic linguistic factor that can promote the appearance of divergences in both varieties of English is the uninterrupted evolution of English as a language system that may actualize at a different pace, not simultaneously, various realizations of potential options in the speech of communities divided by space. These factual realizations can show different stages in the process of the language evolution in both of the varieties.

The confluence of these factors sometimes makes it difficult to assess the North American English impact on the British English and to differentiate between innovations and the cases of parallel actualization of processes inherent in the English language regardless of space, time and place [5: 235]. North American English influences can take different forms. It can be the process of bringing in new speech habits and new usages, or the introduction of new lexical units in the process of internal borrowing [6: 35]. Another form of North American English influences can be the reintroduction of old forms or old meanings that once came out of use in British English usage. North American English influences can also have a strengthening or encouraging effect on the realization of possible options and be the cause of variation within the British literary norm in cases of the parallel development of some elements. Easier and more clearly, the influence of North American English on British English reveals itself in lexis with the reappearance of old meanings or dialectal words that shifted their register, or when new lexemes infiltrate into British usage.

The North American English and British English use of adverbs may give a good illustration to the nature of deviations in grammar usage that can show a comparatively small regional variation within the common

grammatical system regardless of the separate development of English-speaking communities since the seventeenth century. In North American English usage, this variation in usage is most vividly seen in informal oral discourse and is mainly confined to functional, communicative or pragmatic restriction.

One of the distinctive features of North American English usage often commented on is the use of adverbs without the adverbial suffix *-ly*. Giving commentaries on that usage some scholars admit the possibility of adverbs to drop the adverbial suffix in North American colloquial, sometimes literary, speech and, thus, to coincide in the morphological form with the corresponding adjectives: *He drives slow. You did it nice* [7: 40]. Another approach to the problem is to recognize that adjectives can function as adverbs: *Stop him quickly and Stop him quick* [8: 83]. These assumptions give rise to a problem whether adverbs without the adverbial suffix have become an innovation of North American English, or this is a functionally possible way of the use of adjectives adverbially in North American English usage. In the first case, the further question may concern the appearance of new adverbial formations and the productivity of this word-formation pattern, the regularity of their occurrence, and the existence of the corresponding counterparts with the adverbial suffix. The historical approach can provide an alternative solution to the problem of North American English usage of adverbial forms without the suffix *-ly*.

It is commonly believed that changes in the system of the adverb led to the appearance of a new dominant regular adverb-forming suffix in Middle English when the Old English suffix *-e* was gradually superseded by the suffix *-ly*. Throughout the Middle English and Early Modern English periods both forms of the adverbs: with a reduced Old English adverbial suffix and with the suffix *-ly* were functionally in free variation, though adverbial forms with the suffix *-ly* were given preference in usage. In the eighteenth century the adverbial word-formation with the suffix *-ly* became dominant and productive. It was accepted as a norm in the British English literary standard. As a general tendency of the development, the forms with a reduced old suffix have acquired a peripheral status in the language system. Processes of levelling to the advantage of the adverbs with the suffix *-ly* have been going on up to the present day and the results are generally to the advantage of the forms with the suffix. It is evident enough that the parallel functioning of some adverbial forms without the suffix *-ly* and their counterparts with the adverbial suffix in present-day English usage is a general grammatical feature of the Modern English grammatical system that reflects the historical changes in the system of the adverb.

The North American English literary standard prescribes the same basic rules of regular formation and regular usage of adverbs as the British literary standard does, with a few minor exceptions. The inventories of adverbs without the adverbial suffix, that are homonymous with the corresponding adjectives, almost coincide in both varieties. The groups of the adverbial forms without the suffix *-ly* are restricted in number and their usage covers a limited list of possible options in both varieties. The actual realizations of these options may differ in communicative and functional characteristics. They may be perceived as different ways of the preservation of earlier forms and as cases of regional variation. This actual realization with functional specification has led to the rise of some divergences seen in North American English and British English usages, especially in oral discourse. The communicative and pragmatic potential of adverbial forms with a reduced suffix in North American English usage seems to be larger than in British English, though confined either to informal discourse or to the use in stereotyped phrases in literary speech. The common North American English usage of adverbs with a reduced suffix is usually marked socially and functionally. The Webster's Dictionary of 1968 publication marks adverbs, such *easy, mighty, real* as colloquial, whereas the adverbs *quick, slow, sweet, true* are not treated as such [9].

In North American English usage, adverbial forms with a historically reduced suffix fall into some groups depending on their communicative, pragmatic and functional characteristics. Firstly, adverbs that are restricted in British English usage to idiomatic use are more freely used in North American English oral or written discourse (*slow, quick, easy*). Secondly, adverbs that have become outdated in British English usage can occasionally be found in North American English usage (*tender, true*) or can regularly function in oral discourse in North American English (*mighty, real*). Thirdly, adverbs that are North American innovations (*awful*).

Almost all adverbs treated as specifically North American English formations are old forms by origin and are outdated in contemporary British English, as, for example: *nice* (1540), *true* (1303), *sweet* (1250), *tender* (1424) [10]. A characteristic feature of the North American usage is the preservation of the sets with both adverbial forms that may differ in frequency or in the register of usage. None of the isolated adverbial forms with a reduced suffix seems to have survived without its counterpart with the suffix *-ly* in the Modern English grammatical system. Some adverbs, such as *low*, do not have correlative forms with the suffix in current British English. In contrast, the adverbial formations with a reduced suffix have preserved their historical counterparts with the suffix *-ly* in North American English literary usage: *low* (EME) – *lowly* (ME) humbly, *dead* (1393) – *deadly* (OE), *bloody* (1400) – *bloodily* (1565), *sweet* (1250) – *sweetly* (1530), *mighty* (OE) – *mightily* (OE), *real* (1658) – *really* (ME), *quick* (ME) – *quickly* (OE) [9; 10; 11; 12]. The adverbial form *lowly*, not accepted by the British English literary standard, is a norm in North American English usage: It was said *lowly*, but with such condensation of rapidity, that the long, slow words in Spanish, which had preceded and followed, almost operated as covers to the brief English between [13: 143].

North American English usage of adverbs generally shows more diachronic stability and often reflects the usage of adverbial forms in free variation that was characteristic of the earlier periods of the history of English. Compare the use of adverbs in a famous song written by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller and sung by Elvis Presley: Love me *tender* / Love me *true* ... / Love me *tender* / love me *sweet*. Another example of North American English usage: If you ever feel like practicing on me I might consider it, only I don't charm very *easy* [14: 151]. Some examples from Shakespeare's works can provide convincing evidence to support this view.

*True – truly*: Countess: Therefore *tell me true*; / But tell me then, 'tis so; for look, thy cheeks / Confess it, .....; howe'er, I charge thee, / As heaven shall work in me for thine avail, / *To tell me truly*. (All's Well That Ends Well, Act I, Sc. 3, ll. 165 – 176) [15: 321].

*Easy – easily*: Macbeth: To show an unfelt sorrow is an office / Which the false man does *easy*. (Macbeth, Act II, Sc. 3, ll. 135 – 136) [15: 1009]. Hamlet: "By and by" is *easily* said. Leave me, friends. (Hamlet, Act III, Sc. 2, l. 377) [15: 1052].

*Low – lowly*: Clown: I will show myself highly fed and *lowly* taught. (All's Well That Ends Well, Act 2, Sc. 2, ll. 3 – 4) [15: 325]. Clown: O, stay and hear; your true love's coming, / That can sing both high and *low*. (Twelfth Night; or, What You Will, Act II, Sc. 3, l. 42) [15: 356].

*Sweet – sweetly*: Friar Lawrence: What early tongue so *sweet* saluteth me? (Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Sc. 3, l. 32) [15: 914]. Friar Francis: Th' idea of her life shall *sweetly* creep / Into his study of imagination (Much Ado About Nothing, Act 4, Sc. 1, l. 226) [15: 156].

*Quick – quickly*: Lady Anne: Or, earth, gape open wide and eat him *quick*, / As thou dost swallow up this good king's blood (King Richard the Third, Act I, Sc. 2, ll. 65 – 66) [15: 704]. Gaunt: What is six winters? They are *quickly* gone (Richard the Second, Act I, Sc. 3, l. 260) [15: 452].

The history of individual adverbial forms with a reduced suffix and of their correlative counterparts may show different ways of their development depending on the communicative and functional characteristics. For example, the adverbial form with a reduced suffix *sweet* was still in use in the British standard in the nineteenth century: (1851) Then low and *sweet* I whistle thrice (Alfred Tennyson, Edwin Morris, or The Lake, l. 113) [10]. In British English the adverb *bloody* regarded as slang, taboo or, recently, spoken, had no counterpart with the suffix -ly. Under the North American English usage the adverb *bloodily* that has been preserved there (Webster, 1968) seems to have been reintroduced into the British lexis [9; 17]. The adverb *bloodily* is found, for example, in Shakespeare's play Richard III, Act III, Scene IV, l. 92: Lord Hastings: I now repent I told the pursuivant, / As too triumphing, how mine enemies / Today at Pomfret *bloodily* were butcher'd, / And I myself secure in grace and favour [15: 725]. The adverb *overly* (ME), earlier obsolete, or dialectal, in British English, but often found in North American English usage, has been reintroduced into the British literary standard and has shifted into the neutral register: Your views on economics are *overly* simplistic. I'm not *overly* fond of cats [12; 16; 17]. Sometimes American influences can have a strengthening effect on usages that have been functionally or pragmatically peripheral in British English, for example, the use of the adverbial form *deadly* in such cases as, *deadly* extremely (*deadly* serious) – *deadly* deathly: (*deadly* pale) [17].

The only adverbial form without the suffix -ly *awful*, marked as North American and registered by Modern English dictionaries of recent years of publication, seems to be an innovation of North American English informal usage: That kid's *awful* cute with her red curls. Clint is *awful* smart. [16; 17]. This usage of the adverb *awful* is evidently of recent origin according to the data found in the Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the second edition printed in 1968 that does not register this form as adverbial [9]. The adverb *awfully* historically has no counterpart without the suffix -ly. The rise of this adverbial form, to my mind, has become possible in oral informal discourse due to the action of analogy stimulated by the use of such adverbs as *pretty*, *dead* in spoken English with intensifying or emphatic effect in the meaning of *very*, for example, in British English: You were *dead* lucky to get that job [17]. This usage also seems to be supported by a regular use of *mighty*, *real* with the same pragmatic force in North American English usage: You seem *mighty* sure of your facts. He is a *real* nice guy [16; 17].

Our study shows that the divergences of both of the national variants in the usage of adverbial forms without the adverbial suffix -ly and of their counterparts with the suffix demonstrate the same processes with different actual realizations, sometimes coinciding, sometimes with divergent results. A peculiar character of usage of adverbial forms in North American and British English concerns a definite, restricted group of adverbs and does not violate the general tendency of the development. North American usage shows not a productive way of forming new adverbial forms from adjectives, but a wider use of ready forms that existed in the language earlier, or those that became functionally or communicatively peripheral in British usage because of the process of levelling when the dominant forms established themselves. The usage of adverbs without the adverbial suffix -ly, such as *slow*, *quick*, is not a North American English innovation. It shows, in some cases, the increase in the functional and communicative load of the historical forms. North American English influences can probably be seen in the extension of the functioning of some adverbial forms without the suffix -ly in British English.

To sum up, it seems possible to state that American English is steadily becoming a functional rival to British English on the global scale in the sociolinguistic contexts of the modern world development. The levelling of

some distinctive grammatical features between the North American English usage and British English usage can be the result of them drawing nearer in new sociolinguistic contexts of today. It can reflect the common tendency of the language evolution based on the shared historical past. This makes easier the process of convergence that is speeding up. The North American English distinctive features of grammar usage in literary discourse, in contrast to the North American English lexis, for example, are not innovations, but optional realizations revealed in usage. They show regional language variation determined by common linguistic and different sociolinguistic factors of the evolution of the same language system.

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**Евченко В. В. Американский вариант английского языка в историческом и социолингвистическом контексте.**

*В статье рассматриваются некоторые аспекты функционирования английского языка в Северной Америке. Устанавливаются основные факторы развития английского языка в Северной Америке в рамках проблемы о генетическом и функциональном статусе американского варианта. В исторической перспективе описывается формирование морфологических отличий американского варианта английского языка на примере функционирования наречий без адвербиального суффикса и соотнесенных*

с ними наречий с адвербиальным суффиксом. Рассматривается процесс взаимодействия американского и британского вариантов в современном социолингвистическом контексте.

**Ключевые слова:** американский вариант английского языка, функциональный статус, морфологические отличия, наречия без адвербиального суффиксу, социолингвистический контекст.

**Євченко В. В. Американський варіант англійської мови в історичному і соціолінгвістичному контексті.**

У статті розглянуто деякі аспекти функціонування англійської мови в Північній Америці. Визначено основні фактори розвитку англійської мови в Північній Америці у рамках проблеми про генетичний та функціональний статус американського варіанту. В історичній перспективі описано формування морфологічних відмінностей американського варіанту англійської мови на прикладі функціонування прислівників без адвербіального суфіксу та співвідносних з ними прислівників з адвербіальним суфіксом.

Розглянуто процес взаємодії американського та британського варіантів в сучасному соціолінгвістичному контексті.

**Ключові слова:** американський варіант англійської мови, функціональний статус, морфологічні відмінності, прислівники без адвербіального суфіксу, соціолінгвістичний контекст.