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Which Variety Conforms More? A Haugen-Based Comparative Study of American and British English

Muhammad Bilal

MS in English, Department of English, Kohat University of Science and Technology, KUST, Kohat, KP, Pakistan, Email: muhammdbilal20019@gmail.com

Tabassum Iqbal

MS in English, Department of English, Kohat University of Science and Technology, KUST, Kohat, KP, Pakistan, Email: shazainktk02@gmail.com

Dr. Akbar Ali (Corresponding Author)

Head of the Department of English/Assistant Professor, Department of English, FATA University, Darra Adam Khel, FR Kohat, KP, Pakistan, Email: akbar@fu.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This study presents a comparative analysis of British and American English through the lens of **Haugen's (1966) four-stage model of language standardization**, which includes selection, codification, implementation, and elaboration. The research investigates the extent to which each dialect conforms to the model and examines the functional roles of each stage in establishing a standardized variety. Adopting an observational research design, the study traces the historical development of both dialects, including their codification in dictionaries and grammar manuals, institutional implementation in educational and administrative systems, and functional elaboration across literary, legal, scientific, and technical domains. The findings reveal that **British English demonstrates higher conformity** to Haugen's model, with the selection of the London dialect driven by socio-political prestige, codification reinforced through prescriptive works such as Johnson's dictionary (1755) and Lowth's grammar (1762), implementation achieved via centralized institutions, and elaboration extending the standard while maintaining historical continuity. In contrast, **American English**, while functionally standardized, follows a more pragmatic and decentralized approach; selection emphasized communication efficiency and national identity rather than prestige, codification relied on Webster's dictionaries (1828) with less central authority, implementation was dispersed across regional schools and print media, and elaboration prioritized adaptability and innovation to meet the practical needs of a diverse and growing population. Each stage of standardization serves distinct functions: selection legitimizes the dialect, codification stabilizes norms, implementation ensures widespread adoption, and elaboration maintains relevance across social and professional domains. Overall, while both dialects successfully achieve standardization, British English aligns more rigorously with Haugen's model, reflecting a centralized, historically continuous process, whereas American English demonstrates functional flexibility and context-driven innovation. The study underscores that language standardization is not solely a linguistic process but also a **sociocultural mechanism** shaped by historical, political, and practical considerations and offers a framework for analyzing other language varieties through Haugen's model.



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Introduction

Language standardization is a complex sociolinguistic process shaped by historical, political, and cultural forces. No language emerges as “standard” purely on linguistic grounds; rather, standardization reflects deliberate selection, codification, elaboration of function, and eventual community acceptance. Among the most influential frameworks for understanding this process is the model proposed by **Einar Haugen (1966)**, who conceptualized standardization as a four-stage development involving selection of a norm, codification of form, elaboration of function, and acceptance by the speech community. Haugen's model has since become foundational in studies of language planning, standard languages, and sociolinguistic development (Milroy & Milroy, 1999; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Within the context of English, standardization presents a particularly compelling case. English today exists as a global language with multiple standardized varieties, most prominently British English and American English. While both varieties share a common historical origin, their trajectories of development diverged significantly following the political separation of Britain and the United States in the late eighteenth century. The standardization of British English is traditionally associated with earlier institutional developments, including the influence of printing, the rise of London as a political and economic center, and the publication of authoritative dictionaries such as Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) (Baugh & Cable, 2013). In contrast, American English underwent its own codification process, strongly shaped by Noah Webster's lexicographic reforms in the early nineteenth century, which aimed to establish linguistic independence from British norms (Algeo, 2006).

Scholars have long debated the relationship between these two major varieties. While British English historically functioned as the primary reference model for “Standard English,” the global expansion of American political, economic, and cultural influence during the twentieth century significantly elevated the prestige and acceptance of American English worldwide (Crystal, 2019). As a result, the contemporary linguistic landscape reflects not a single standard but competing and coexisting norms. This situation raises important theoretical questions regarding standardization: If both varieties are standardized, do they conform equally to Haugen's four-stage model? Or does one exhibit a more systematic or complete realization of these stages? Haugen (1966) emphasized that standardization is not merely about codifying grammar or orthography but involves broader sociopolitical acceptance. Selection entails choosing a particular dialect as the basis for the standard; codification requires the development of dictionaries, grammars, and orthographic conventions; elaboration involves expanding the variety's functional domains; and acceptance ensures legitimacy and prestige within the community. These stages, though conceptually sequential, often overlap and interact dynamically. Later scholars have noted that standardization is an ongoing rather than completed process, influenced by ideological, institutional, and global forces (Milroy & Milroy, 1999).

British English provides a classic illustration of early selection and codification. The London dialect, particularly the variety associated with the educated upper classes, gradually became institutionalized through printing, education, and government administration (Baugh & Cable, 2013). The codification efforts of Johnson and later grammarians contributed to a prescriptive tradition that shaped perceptions of



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correctness. Acceptance was reinforced through colonial expansion and the educational systems of the British Empire, which disseminated British norms internationally. American English, however, demonstrates a different yet equally structured trajectory. Following independence, linguistic distinctiveness became intertwined with national identity. Webster's reforms in spelling such as color instead of colour were not arbitrary innovations but deliberate attempts to simplify orthography and assert cultural autonomy (Algeo, 2006). Over time, American English expanded its functional domains through technological innovation, mass media, and global entertainment industries. In the contemporary era, the international influence of American media and digital communication has significantly enhanced the acceptance of American norms, particularly in domains such as technology, business, and popular culture (Crystal, 2019). Despite extensive scholarship on World Englishes and language variation, comparatively fewer studies systematically evaluate British and American English within a unified theoretical model of standardization. Much of the literature treats them descriptively, focusing on phonological, lexical, or orthographic differences (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017), rather than examining the extent to which each variety fulfills the sociolinguistic criteria outlined by Haugen. Applying Haugen's framework comparatively allows for a structured evaluation that moves beyond surface differences and instead considers institutional authority, functional range, and sociopolitical legitimacy. Moreover, in an era of globalization and digital communication, the concept of a single, stable standard has become increasingly complex. English now operates as a pluricentric language, with multiple recognized centers of norm development (Schneider, 2007). Within this pluricentric model, British and American English may be understood as parallel standard varieties rather than hierarchical forms. Nevertheless, assessing their conformity to Haugen's stages remains analytically valuable, particularly in determining whether historical precedence, institutional codification, or global acceptance plays a greater role in defining standardization. This study therefore, undertakes a comparative analysis of American and British English through the lens of Haugen's model of standardization. By examining evidence of selection, codification, elaboration, and acceptance in each variety, the research seeks not only to highlight structural and historical differences but also to evaluate which variety more fully conforms to the theoretical stages proposed by Haugen. Such an analysis contributes to ongoing debates about linguistic authority, global English, and the evolving nature of standardization in the twenty-first century.

Statement of the Problem

Despite English being one of the most widely studied and used languages globally, the concept of what constitutes a standard form of English remains contested and dynamic. British English and American English, as two major varieties with deep historical roots and global reach, have long been studied for their lexical, grammatical, and orthographic distinctions (Akan, 2025). Yet, research has shown that the influence and acceptance of these varieties continue to shift in the context of globalization, media proliferation, and sociolinguistic change (Rauf et al., 2025). The ongoing dominance of American cultural and technological output has, in many parts of the world, elevated the functional presence of American English, even in regions traditionally aligned with British norms (Rauf et al., 2025).

However, while descriptive studies document surface differences between British and American English, such as spelling, vocabulary, and pronunciation, there is notably **less consensus on how these varieties compare when analyzed through a robust sociolinguistic model of standardization**. Specifically, limited research has systematically evaluated the two varieties in relation to the stages of selection,



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codification, elaboration, and acceptance as outlined in Haugen's (1966) framework. Without such an evaluative comparison, it is unclear which variety more fully embodies the theoretical constructs of a standard language, and what sociolinguistic factors contribute to this conformity or divergence.

This gap in current research raises persisting questions about linguistic prestige, ideology, and functional dominance: is the perceived prominence of American English a result of its structural conformity to standardization processes, or rather the outcome of geopolitical and cultural influence? And do British English's historical institutions of codification still render it more fully "standardized" despite changing global trends? These unresolved issues point to the need for an analytical approach that moves beyond descriptive variation and towards a comparative assessment grounded in established theory. Such an assessment can contribute critical insight into ongoing debates about **standard language status, educational practices, and global linguistic norms in the 21st century** (Akan, 2025; Rauf et al., 2025).

Rationale of the Study

The notion of a standard language is not merely a linguistic construct but a sociopolitical achievement shaped by historical authority, institutional regulation, and ideological acceptance. As Milroy and Milroy (1999) argue, standardization is fundamentally an ideological process that elevates certain linguistic forms to a position of prestige while marginalizing others. In the context of English, this process has produced multiple codified centers of authority rather than a single uniform standard. Schneider (2007) describes English as a pluricentric language, characterized by the coexistence of several norm-developing centers, among which British English and American English remain the most influential. Although numerous comparative studies have examined lexical, grammatical, and phonological distinctions between British and American English (Algeo, 2006; Trudgill & Hannah, 2017), such investigations have largely remained descriptive in orientation. There is comparatively limited research that systematically evaluates these two varieties within a unified theoretical framework of language standardization. Haugen's (1966) model, which conceptualizes standardization through the interrelated processes of selection, codification, elaboration, and acceptance, provides a comprehensive analytical structure for such evaluation. Applying this model comparatively enables a deeper understanding of how each variety established its authority, expanded its functional domains, and achieved sociolinguistic legitimacy.

Furthermore, the global expansion of English in the twenty-first century has intensified debates concerning linguistic norms and standard language authority. Crystal (2019) observes that American English has gained considerable international prominence due to its association with technological innovation, global media, and economic influence. At the same time, British English retains historical prestige grounded in earlier codification efforts and institutional reinforcement (Baugh & Cable, 2013). This evolving dynamic raises important questions about whether historical precedence or contemporary global influence more strongly determines conformity to standardization processes. Therefore, this study is justified both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to sociolinguistic scholarship by applying Haugen's (1966) model in a structured comparative analysis of two dominant English varieties. Practically, it offers insights relevant to language policy, educational standards, and global English pedagogy, where implicit or explicit alignment with either British or American norms continues to shape curriculum development and communicative practices. By evaluating British and



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American English through the same analytical framework, this research seeks to clarify their respective positions within the broader discourse on language standardization.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it reframes the comparison between American and British English within a principled theoretical structure rather than limiting the discussion to observable linguistic differences. Instead of focusing solely on spelling, pronunciation, or vocabulary contrasts, the research evaluates how each variety has developed institutional authority and social legitimacy. Such an approach deepens the discussion by examining the mechanisms through which linguistic forms attain recognition as “standard.” The study also addresses a practical gap in educational and academic contexts. Across many countries, language curricula, examination systems, and academic publishing practices often align implicitly with either British or American norms. These choices are frequently based on tradition or perceived prestige rather than systematic evaluation. By assessing both varieties through a shared framework of standardization, this research provides a more reasoned basis for understanding the foundations behind these preferences.

The research carries theoretical importance for sociolinguistics as well. English functions today as a pluricentric language with multiple norm-developing centers. A structured comparison of two dominant varieties highlights how standardization can operate in parallel within the same language system. This contributes to ongoing discussions about linguistic authority, norm formation, and the relationship between historical codification and contemporary global influence. The study also sheds light on issues of linguistic identity and symbolic power. Standards are not neutral; they shape perceptions of correctness, prestige, and educational value. Examining which variety more closely aligns with recognized stages of standardization helps clarify how historical institutions and present-day global dynamics interact in constructing linguistic legitimacy. Such insight is valuable for scholars, educators, and policymakers concerned with language planning and academic standards. The methodological contribution of the study lies in its model-based comparative design. Applying a clear theoretical framework to two established varieties demonstrates an analytical strategy that can be replicated in the study of other English varieties or languages undergoing processes of standardization. In this way, the research strengthens both the empirical understanding of American and British English and the broader analytical practice of studying language standardization.

Research Objectives

To examine American and British English in light of Haugen’s four stages of language standardization.

To determine which variety more fully conforms to Haugen’s model of standardization.

Research Questions

How do American and British English differ in their development across Haugen’s stages of selection, codification, elaboration, and acceptance?

Which variety of American or British English demonstrates greater conformity to Haugen’s model of standardization?

Literature Review

What Is Standardization? Standardization refers to the process through which a particular linguistic variety is selected, shaped, and promoted as a recognized norm within a given



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community or institution. In the context of international business (IB), language standardization has been defined as the deliberate efforts of top management to establish a common corporate language and to harmonize internal and external communication through formal rules and policies (Piekkari & Tietze, 2011). Within this perspective, standardization is not merely a linguistic matter but an organizational strategy designed to facilitate coordination, efficiency, and shared understanding across multilingual environments. Debates in IB research have often framed language standardization as a tension between two opposing approaches: the adoption of a single lingua franca versus the maintenance of multilingual practices. Janssens and Steyaert (2014) observe that this discussion is frequently presented in binary terms, positioning multilingualism and standardization as mutually exclusive alternatives. Such a polarized view leaves little room for intermediate or hybrid practices, despite the fact that real-world language use in global organizations tends to be fluid and context-dependent.

In sociolinguistics, the concept of standardization has traditionally been associated with the historical development of national languages. Ferguson (2006) characterizes it as the construction and dissemination of a uniform supradialectal normative variety. This definition emphasizes two core elements: the creation of a linguistic norm that rises above regional dialects and the spread of that norm through institutions such as education, administration, and print culture. Earlier accounts of standardization often described it as a linear or goal-oriented process, moving from unstructured spoken variation toward a stabilized written standard (Deumert & Vandebussche, 2003; McLelland & Linn, 2002). Such interpretations tend to portray standardization as a completed historical achievement rather than an evolving sociolinguistic process. Contemporary scholarship, however, increasingly recognizes that standardization is neither fixed nor final. Language practices are shaped by continuous negotiation among speakers, institutions, and social contexts (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Pennycook, 2010). In this sense, standardization does not eliminate variation but coexists with it. Even the adoption of a common corporate language or a national standard does not mark the endpoint of policy or practice; instead, it represents a stage within an ongoing process subject to change and reinterpretation (Steyaert et al., 2011).

David Crystal (2019) defines a standard language as a variety that has achieved a special status within a community, typically codified in dictionaries and grammars and widely accepted for public, formal, and institutional use. Crystal's definition highlights three central dimensions: codification, prestige, and functional range. A standard variety is not inherently superior linguistically; rather, its authority derives from social recognition and institutional endorsement. This understanding aligns with the broader sociolinguistic view that standards are socially constructed norms rather than purely linguistic outcomes. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that standardization is best understood as an ongoing, socially embedded process involving the selection of norms, their institutional codification, and their negotiation within changing sociocultural contexts. Whether examined in the sphere of international business or in the historical development of national languages, standardization reflects the interplay between authority, communication needs, and evolving patterns of language use.

Models of Language Standardization

Language standardization has been conceptualized through different theoretical models within sociolinguistics and language policy studies. Although these models vary in emphasis, they generally attempt to explain how a linguistic norm is selected, developed,



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institutionalized, and maintained within a community. The most influential frameworks are outlined below.

Haugen's Four-Stage Model

One of the earliest and most widely recognized models of language standardization is proposed by Haugen (1966). His framework presents standardization as a four-stage process: **selection, codification, implementation, and elaboration**. The first stage, selection, involves choosing a particular variety or language to serve as the norm in a given society. This choice is rarely neutral. It may be influenced by political dominance, economic power, cultural prestige, or communicative efficiency. Often, the selected variety already holds symbolic authority within society. The second stage, codification, focuses on stabilizing the selected norm. Haugen (1983) later refined this stage into three processes: graphization (developing a writing system), grammatication (describing grammatical rules), and lexication (standardizing vocabulary). Codification typically results in dictionaries, grammars, and orthographic conventions that formalize the standard. The third stage, implementation, concerns the institutional promotion of the norm. This often occurs through education systems, government administration, publishing industries, and media. Implementation transforms the selected and codified variety into a socially recognized standard by embedding it in public life. The fourth stage, elaboration, refers to the expansion of the standard into new functional domains. As societies evolve, the language must develop terminology and stylistic resources suitable for science, technology, law, literature, and global communication. Elaboration ensures that the standard remains adaptable and relevant over time. Haugen's model remains foundational because it integrates both **status planning** (selection and implementation) and **corpus planning** (codification and elaboration), offering a comprehensive explanation of how norms emerge and stabilize.

Garvin's Functional Model

Earlier contributions collected in Garvin (1964, 1993) emphasize the **functional characteristics** of a standard language rather than a strictly sequential process. In this view, a standard language typically exhibits qualities such as intellectualization (capacity to express complex ideas), stability (consistency of norms), autonomy (recognition as a distinct system), and vitality (continued active use). Garvin's perspective shifts attention from procedural stages to the outcomes and properties that define a successful standard. Instead of asking how a norm develops, this approach asks what features make a variety capable of serving modern communicative needs.

Language Planning Perspective (Cooper's Model)

Standardization is frequently treated as a component of broader **language planning**. Cooper (1989) defines language planning as deliberate efforts to influence language acquisition, structure, or functional allocation. Within this framework, standardization becomes a strategic objective rather than an isolated linguistic process. From this perspective, authorities whether governments or organizations, actively shape language use to achieve social, political, or economic goals. Standardization, therefore, is not merely about linguistic clarity but about regulation and coordination. The emphasis lies on intentional intervention rather than organic evolution.



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Hornberger's Integrative View

Hornberger (2006) broadens the concept by arguing that language standardization encompasses both **process and product**, as well as both **status and corpus dimensions**. She highlights that standardization may involve recognizing an existing norm, selecting one among alternatives, or even imposing a new standard. This view resists oversimplification. It acknowledges that standardization can occur gradually or abruptly, democratically or hierarchically, and may vary depending on historical and political circumstances.

Standardization in Organizational and International Contexts

In international business contexts, standardization often takes the form of adopting a common corporate language (Piekkari & Tietze, 2011). Here, the focus shifts from national identity to organizational efficiency. Implementation commonly occurs through internal communication policies, recruitment practices, and performance assessments. Such organizational standardization is typically motivated by pragmatic goals, improving collaboration, reducing misunderstanding, and enhancing coordination rather than purely linguistic concerns. It illustrates how standardization operates not only at national levels but also within institutional environments.

Destandardization and Contemporary Perspectives

Modern sociolinguistic thought challenges the idea that standardization is permanent or absolute. Scholars argue that language practices are continuously negotiated and that norms may weaken in contexts of globalization and digital communication. The rise of hybrid forms, translanguaging practices, and localized English varieties demonstrates that standardization coexists with variation rather than eliminating it. This contemporary perspective views standardization as dynamic rather than teleological. Instead of a completed endpoint, it is understood as an ongoing negotiation between authority and diversity.

Concluding Perspective on the Models

Taken together, these models show that language standardization can be understood from multiple angles: as a staged developmental process (Haugen), as a set of functional characteristics (Garvin), as a strategic intervention within language planning (Cooper), or as a flexible integration of status and corpus dimensions (Hornberger). In organizational settings, it may serve pragmatic coordination goals, while in national contexts, it often reflects ideological and sociopolitical agendas. The diversity of these models demonstrates that standardization is neither a single event nor a uniform process. It is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by historical forces, institutional structures, and communicative needs.

Empirical Studies

Research on the comparative study of American and British English has traditionally concentrated on linguistic variation in vocabulary, pronunciation, and usage patterns rather than explicit evaluation through formal models of standardization. Sembiring's (2023) study offers a detailed examination of similarities and differences between American and British English across domains such as vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and pronunciation, highlighting how these differences reflect divergent historical developments and sociocultural identities. Saadawi (2025) further explored lexical and



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phonetic disparities between the two varieties, demonstrating that differences in structure and use can influence communicative practices in international contexts. These descriptive studies underscore the richness of English variation and set the foundation for understanding why standardization models might be important for systematic comparison. In studies that move beyond simple description toward attitudes and preferences, research among English learners in Pakistan revealed that American English is often perceived as more globally accessible due to media influence, while British English tends to be associated with traditional academic norms. Anwar and Malik (2024) reported flexible language repertoires among learners who navigate between both varieties depending on cultural and educational contexts. Such attitudinal research points to sociolinguistic processes shaping how standards are internalized by users, suggesting that evaluative frameworks are needed to interpret these perceptions. While many comparative literature efforts focus on variation and preference, there are notable studies that directly engage with **Haugen's model of language standardization** in other languages. Ali (2024) applied Haugen's four-stage model to investigate the sociolinguistic standardization of Egyptian Arabic and its literary codification through translation practices, demonstrating how the functions of selection, codification, elaboration, and community acceptance operate in non-European contexts and interact with cultural movements. This use of Haugen's model illustrates its methodological utility in analyzing standardized norms beyond traditional European languages. Similarly, research on the **selection and standardization of German relativisers** investigated factors of selection, the first component of Haugen's model, showing how linguistic features combine with social attitudes and codification practices in the evolution of German standard norms, thus offering empirical evidence of how standardization unfolds in a system other than English (2019).

The enduring influence of Haugen's framework is evident in historical sociolinguistic reviews that revisit his original theory and its impact on later models of standardization. Joseph, Rutten, and Vosters (2020) reflected on Haugen's four-stage matrix, noting how it shaped subsequent research on standard languages such as French, Dutch, and German while also inspiring extended models that incorporate additional dimensions such as prescription and ideology. Other scholars have refined components of Haugen's model; for example, some have distinguished between codification and prescription, which were conflated in the original formulation, to account for deeper ideological and purist influences in the establishment of a standard norm. Despite these applications, literature that systematically applies the standardization model to American and British English comparatively remains limited. Most existing studies emphasize descriptive variation, linguistic preference, or learner attitudes but stop short of evaluating these two major varieties through a unified theoretical lens like Haugen's. This gap highlights the need for a model-based analysis that can account for **norm selection, institutional codification, elaboration of functions, and sociolinguistic acceptance** in order to determine which variety exhibits stronger conformity to recognized stages of standardization. Such research would not only extend the theoretical reach of standardization models but also enhance our understanding of English as a pluricentric language with multiple coexisting standards.

Research Methodology

This study adopts an **observational and historical-comparative research design** to examine the development and standardization of American and British English. Using **Haugen's (1966) four-stage model of language standardization** as the analytical



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framework, the research investigates the historical evolution, codification processes, institutional implementation, and functional elaboration of both varieties. Data are drawn from historical texts, dictionaries, linguistic corpora, and scholarly descriptions of both dialects, enabling a detailed observation of how each variety has evolved over time and established standardized norms. **Comparative observation and document analysis** are employed to identify patterns in spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and usage, as well as to trace the social, cultural, and institutional factors influencing standardization. This approach is justified because it allows for a nuanced understanding of the **historical trajectories and sociolinguistic mechanisms** that shaped American and British English, providing a rigorous means to determine which variety more closely conforms to the stages of standardization in practice. By combining observational data with a model-driven analysis, the study captures both the diachronic evolution and the functional outcomes of language standardization in two major English varieties.

Analysis and Discussion

Analysis of British English Using Haugen's Standardization Model

Selection

The first stage of Haugen's (1966) model involves the **selection of a language variety to serve as the standard**. In the case of British English, the selection process was historically influenced by socio-political, educational, and cultural factors. Early in the 15th and 16th centuries, Middle English had several regional dialects, including Northern, Midland, and Southern varieties. The dialect of London and the Southeast gradually became prestigious due to its association with political power, commerce, and the emerging printing industry. Scholars such as Crystal (2019) and Ferguson (2006) note that prestige played a decisive role: the dialect linked to the administrative and cultural elite became the preferred standard. The choice of London English as the foundation for Standard British English reflects a deliberate social and functional selection rather than purely linguistic criteria. This selection aligns with Haugen's model, where a community consciously recognizes one variety as normative over others.

Evidence of selection can be observed in early dictionaries and grammar texts. Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) codified the London-based dialect and established lexical norms that differentiated it from regional variations. Johnson's work illustrates that selection was both a social and intellectual process, aiming to provide a reference for "correct" usage and unify English in education, literature, and administration.

Codification

The **codification stage** refers to **stabilizing the selected variety through rules and written standards**, which in British English involved orthography, grammar, and lexicon. Codification began in earnest with the advent of print culture. Johnson's dictionary (1755) provided authoritative guidance on spelling, pronunciation, and usage. It was soon complemented by prescriptive grammar manuals, such as Robert Lowth's *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762), which outlined rules for syntax and sentence structure. Haugen (1983) emphasizes that codification often involves three elements: graphization, grammatication, and lexication. British English codification clearly demonstrates all three:

Graphization: Establishment of standardized spelling conventions, e.g., colour vs. American color, honour vs. honor.



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Grammatication: Standardized rules of subject-verb agreement, sentence construction, and tense usage as prescribed by early grammarians.

Lexication: Compilation of standard vocabulary through dictionaries and style manuals, selecting words considered correct for formal writing and discourse.

Codification was not purely linguistic but intertwined with social authority and education. The spread of the public school system and the university curricula reinforced these norms, ensuring that the codified variety became the dominant form taught and expected in formal contexts. The British English codification process exemplifies Haugen's model, showing deliberate intervention to create an authoritative written standard that could be disseminated widely.

Implementation

Implementation refers to the practical adoption of the codified standard in society. For British English, implementation occurred through **educational institutions, government administration, media, and literary practice**. By the 18th and 19th centuries, schools required students to learn Standard English, with spelling, grammar, and usage closely monitored through assessments. This mirrors Haugen's claim that education is one of the most effective mechanisms for institutionalizing a standard language.

Implementation extended beyond classrooms into administrative and literary spheres. The British civil service adopted the London-based standard as the official language of correspondence and policy, while newspapers, periodicals, and literature further reinforced the standard form. The global expansion of the British Empire also served as a vehicle for the implementation of British English norms in colonies, creating international exposure and adoption. Evidence from historical documents shows consistent use of the codified norms in official and literary texts, demonstrating successful implementation of the standard across multiple societal domains.

Elaboration

The final stage, **elaboration**, involves extending the standard language to cover new functional and social domains. British English elaboration is evident in its adaptation to scientific, technical, literary, legal, and administrative registers. Haugen (1966) notes that a fully standardized language must function across domains beyond everyday communication, which British English exemplifies.

For example, legal and parliamentary language developed highly specialized vocabulary and syntax, while scientific English introduced neologisms and terminologies codified in technical dictionaries. Literature and journalism further elaborated stylistic norms, enabling expressive and formal functions. The expansion of British English in international diplomacy, trade, and education demonstrates its capacity to adapt to emerging domains while maintaining a recognized standard. This elaboration ensures that British English remains functional, authoritative, and relevant across centuries, fulfilling Haugen's criteria for a fully developed standardized language.

Justification of British English as a Standard

Analyzing British English through Haugen's model demonstrates that it successfully meets all four stages of standardization. The **selection of the London dialect**, the **codification through dictionaries and grammars**, the **implementation via education and administration**, and the **elaboration into technical and literary domains** collectively justify its status as a fully standardized variety. Historical and textual evidence support this conclusion, showing that British English was deliberately shaped to function as the norm within both domestic and international contexts. The systematic



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application of Haugen's framework provides a robust methodology to evaluate the historical standardization process and allows for comparison with American English, which will be analyzed in the subsequent section. British English exemplifies a model standard in which socio-political, educational, and literary mechanisms converge to produce a stable, authoritative, and widely accepted variety.

Analysis of American English Using Haugen's Standardization Model

Selection

The selection stage in American English involved choosing a **variety that would function as the standard across the emerging United States**. Unlike British English, where the London dialect dominated, American English evolved from **diverse colonial English varieties**, influenced by settlers from England, Scotland, Ireland, and other European nations. Early linguistic diversity included regional dialects such as New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern English. Scholars such as Labov (2006) and Schneider (2011) note that the selection of a standard was largely pragmatic, reflecting the need for **communication efficiency, education, and national cohesion** in a geographically vast and culturally diverse country.

No single city dialect achieved the same symbolic prestige as London did for British English. Instead, a combination of **Eastern seaboard speech patterns**, emerging print conventions, and educational reforms gradually coalesced into a national norm. Noah Webster's works, especially his *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), exemplify this selection stage by deliberately choosing spellings, vocabulary, and usage conventions that differentiated American English from British English. Webster's choices, such as color instead of colour and center instead of centre, were motivated by nationalist ideals as well as practicality, reflecting a conscious effort to establish an **autonomous American standard**.

Codification

Codification in American English involved **systematically establishing orthography, grammar, and vocabulary** to create a recognizable standard. Webster's dictionaries and grammar manuals played a central role in codification, providing prescriptive guidance for correct usage. As Haugen (1983) outlines, codification includes graphization, grammatication, and lexication:

Graphization: Webster introduced American spelling conventions, simplifying certain English forms to reflect pronunciation and clarity.

Grammatication: Grammar manuals codified syntax rules, often diverging from British norms to suit American speech patterns.

Lexication: Webster and other lexicographers curated vocabulary, incorporating indigenous, French, and other loanwords, creating a lexicon distinctive to American English.

This codification process was also institutionalized through schools, textbooks, and newspapers, ensuring that the American English standard was widely taught and recognized. The process reflected not just linguistic concerns but also **national identity**, aligning with Haugen's principle that standardization is influenced by social and functional goals.



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Implementation

Implementation of American English was largely **institutional and educational**, mirroring Haugen's model. Public education in the 19th century incorporated standardized spelling, grammar, and usage through textbooks and classroom instruction. Federal and state governments, as well as printing houses, adopted Webster's conventions, further reinforcing the norm. Unlike British English, which benefited from centralized cultural and political institutions, American English had to **navigate a decentralized system**. Nevertheless, implementation succeeded through a combination of **textbook standardization, media dissemination, and literary practice**, enabling the newly codified norms to reach a geographically dispersed population. Newspapers, periodicals, and formal writing in legal and governmental contexts consistently applied American English norms, demonstrating widespread institutional acceptance.

Elaboration

Elaboration in American English involved expanding its functional capacity to serve **diverse social, scientific, legal, and cultural domains**. The standard variety evolved to accommodate technical, scientific, legal, and literary registers. American English developed new terms for governance, law, commerce, and innovation, reflecting the functional needs of a growing and technologically advancing society.

For example, American scientific writing in the 19th and 20th centuries introduced standardized terminology distinct from British usage. Literary and journalistic practices also elaborated the standard, creating stylistic conventions recognized nationally. As Haugen (1966) notes, elaboration ensures that a standard language remains dynamic and functional; American English demonstrates this by maintaining internal consistency while adapting to social, cultural, and technological change.

Justification of American English as a Standard

Applying Haugen's model to American English confirms that it **meets all four stages of standardization**. The deliberate selection of a national dialect, codification through Webster's dictionaries and grammar manuals, systematic implementation via schools, government, and media, and elaboration into technical, literary, and administrative domains collectively establish American English as a standardized variety. While its evolution was shaped by pragmatic and nationalist considerations rather than centralized prestige, American English has achieved functional and social legitimacy comparable to British English. This provides a robust foundation for comparative evaluation of the two dialects using the same analytical model.

Comparative Analysis of British and American English Using Haugen's Standardization Model

The historical and functional analysis of British and American English demonstrates that both varieties have undergone processes of standardization that conform to **Haugen's (1966) four-stage model**, though **the social contexts, driving forces, and functional outcomes** differ.

Selection

In **British English**, the selection of the London dialect as the standard was primarily **prestige-driven**, linked to political power, commerce, and literary influence (Crystal, 2019; Ferguson, 2006). Selection served the functional purpose of unifying diverse regional dialects under a common form, enabling clearer communication in administration, education, and literature. In **American English**, selection was more **pragmatic and identity-driven**, responding to the need for a unifying national dialect in



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a linguistically diverse settler population. Noah Webster's choices in spelling, vocabulary, and usage reflected functional considerations for **efficiency, clarity, and national identity** (Labov, 2006; Schneider, 2011).

Functional comparison: Both dialects used selection to establish authority and communicative consistency, but British English relied on historical prestige, whereas American English emphasized **practical utility and symbolic independence**.

Codification

Codification in British English involved **prescriptive dictionaries, grammar manuals, and standardized orthography**, including works by Johnson (1755) and Lowth (1762). This stage functioned to stabilize the language, enforce norms, and provide authoritative references, ensuring that speakers and writers could rely on **clear, standardized forms**.

American English codification, led by Webster (1828), systematically modified spelling, grammar, and vocabulary to create a distinctive national standard. Codification served multiple functions: **distinguishing American English from British norms**, promoting educational consistency, and supporting national identity.

Functional comparison: In both dialects, codification facilitated teaching, writing, and institutional standardization. However, American English codification additionally served a **symbolic function** of national autonomy, illustrating that standardization can achieve social, ideological, and communicative purposes simultaneously.

Implementation

British English implementation relied on **centralized institutions**, including schools, universities, the civil service, and literary circles. Implementation ensured widespread adoption of the standard across education, administration, and public communication (Haugen, 1983). American English implementation relied on **decentralized educational systems, print media, and federal/state institutions**, reinforcing standards across a large and heterogeneous population. Newspapers, textbooks, and public documents played a crucial role in disseminating the codified norms (Schneider, 2011).

Functional comparison: Implementation in both varieties ensured conformity and consistency in language use. British English emphasized **formal authority and prestige**, whereas American English emphasized **practical adoption across a geographically dispersed population**. Both illustrate Haugen's claim that institutional reinforcement is critical for establishing a functional standard.

Elaboration

Elaboration extends the standard to **specialized functional domains**. British English elaboration involved expanding the standard to literary, legal, scientific, and administrative registers, ensuring that the selected norm could handle formal and expressive functions across society (Crystal, 2019). American English elaboration similarly extended the standard into technical, scientific, legal, and literary domains. However, its elaboration often involved **innovations in terminology and lexical expansion** to meet the practical needs of a rapidly industrializing and modernizing society (Labov, 2006).

Functional comparison: In both cases, elaboration ensured the **adaptability and sustainability** of the standard. British English preserved authority and historical continuity, while American English emphasized flexibility, innovation, and functional efficiency.



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Evaluating Standardization Conformity in British and American English

A comparison of British and American English using Haugen's (1966) four-stage standardization model indicates that **British English exhibits stronger conformity** to the model than its American counterpart. During the **selection stage**, British English relied on the London dialect, chosen for its socio-political prestige and centralized authority, establishing a clear standard, while American English emerged from diverse colonial dialects, selected pragmatically to support communication and national identity rather than social prestige. In terms of **codification**, British English benefited from prescriptive works such as Johnson's dictionary (1755) and Lowth's grammar (1762), providing a systematic stabilization of spelling, grammar, and lexicon, whereas American English relied on Webster's dictionaries and manuals, influential but operating within a more decentralized framework. **Implementation** in Britain was reinforced through educational institutions, governmental use, and literary practices, ensuring uniform adoption, whereas American English relied on decentralized schools, media, and local practices, achieving functional conformity but with regional variation. In the **elaboration stage**, both varieties extended to technical, literary, and administrative domains; however, British English maintained a historically continuous and controlled standard, while American English exhibited flexibility and innovation, prioritizing practical utility over centralized authority. Collectively, this evaluation demonstrates that although both dialects achieved standardization, **British English aligns more fully with Haugen's model**, reflecting the advantages of centralized selection, codification, and implementation, whereas American English represents a functional yet more variable realization of the model.

Findings

The comparative analysis of British and American English using Haugen's (1966) four-stage standardization model reveals distinct patterns of conformity and functional outcomes for each dialect. Regarding conformity to the model, British English demonstrates a **higher degree of alignment** with all four stages. The selection of the London dialect was driven by socio-political prestige and centralized authority, establishing a clear and widely recognized standard. In contrast, American English emerged from a variety of colonial dialects, selected pragmatically to meet communication needs and foster national identity rather than prestige. Codification in British English was systematic and prescriptive, guided by works such as Johnson's dictionary (1755) and Lowth's grammar (1762), which stabilized orthography, grammar, and lexicon. American English codification, while effective through Webster's dictionaries (1828), was less centralized and relied on decentralized educational and print mechanisms. Implementation in British English was reinforced through structured institutions, including schools, universities, government offices, and literary practices, ensuring consistent adoption across society. American English, on the other hand, relied on decentralized mechanisms such as regional schools, print media, and local practices, achieving functional adoption but allowing more regional variation. Elaboration extended the standard into specialized domains in both dialects; British English preserved historical continuity and authoritative control, while American English prioritized adaptability, innovation, and functional efficiency.

In terms of the functional outcomes of standardization, each stage serves a distinct but interconnected purpose. Selection functions to determine legitimacy and unify variation, codification stabilizes norms for teaching, writing, and institutional communication, implementation ensures widespread conformity, and elaboration enables the standard to remain relevant across social, professional, and technical domains. In British English,



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these stages reinforced prestige, authority, and historical continuity, whereas in American English, they facilitated practical communication, national identity, and innovation.

The comparative observation highlights that while both dialects successfully achieved functional standardization, they differ in approach and context. British English represents a **centralized, prestige-driven, and historically continuous standard**, closely conforming to Haugen's model, whereas American English reflects a **pragmatic, decentralized, and innovative standard**, aligning with the model in principle but exhibiting greater sociolinguistic variability. These findings indicate that standardization is not merely a linguistic process but a **sociocultural mechanism**, shaped by historical, political, and functional considerations, which regulates communication, identity, and efficiency in society. Overall, the study concludes that British English exhibits stronger conformity to Haugen's stages, while American English demonstrates flexibility and functional adaptation, offering a complementary but less centralized approach to language standardization.

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