

Lecture N 11 . THE AMERICAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Read the following words and word combinations:

Landmark - веха ; to assert - утверждать ; to set about - начинать; a coat of arms-герб; to fascinate – очаровывать; frontier men-переселенцы ; to lay the grounds-заложить основы; a high pitch-высота тона royalties-гонорар; retain- сохранять; a coinage-создание нового слова; mortgage – заложить, взять залог; to pan out-намыывать золото; to be nasalized-произносить в нос; to take a claim-«застолбить» участок; cluster reduction-сокращение группы звуков; compendium-краткое руководство; bonanza-богатая золотonosная жила.

The linguistic history of the American English Language is quite complicated. Having acquired numerous component elements of American culture the American English language can be rightly called “a linguistic melting pot”. Which linguistic processes have occurred in American English language to make it different from its British origin? As words are often called “windows into our past” we can say that American vocabulary reflects all events of American history.

One of the main features of the American language is **derivation**. The migration of the English colonists to North America created the needed vocabulary added to the 17-century British English that the earliest immigrants brought with them. In the formation of American English a lot of words were derived from the languages of the different peoples with whom the English got into contact.

First in importance came the words derived from the languages of various Indian tribes. The English immigrants met in America with the nature, plants and animals unlike anything they had seen before in Europe. The landscape was completely different from the neatly tailored English countryside. Words had to be provided for all aspects of their new life: names of rivers, mountains, lakes, plants and animal world, for implements and food .The Indian languages gave the colonists a lot of such words and thousands of geographical names all over the USA. The names Palmyra, Washington, Alabama, Alaska, Chicago, Idaho, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Manhattan (island of hills) and many others are of the Indian origin. Such words as *canoe*, *moccasin*, *wigwam*, *toboggan*, *tomahawk*,

squaw, raccoon, opossum, skunk, moose, caribou, totem, etc. were also borrowed from the Indians.

Besides the Indian influences, American English reflects the other non-English cultures, which the colonists and frontier men met in their conquest of the continent. As we know, in the expansion of their territory, the English-speaking colonists came into contact with the French and Spanish. Some of the borrowings from these languages proved to be very productive in American English. Words like *liaison, rendezvous, silhouette, prairie, chowder* and *rapids* came from French. *Creole, mulatto, canyon, ranch, sombrero, rodeo, mosquito, lasso cafeteria, hammock, stampede, vigilantes* were acquired from Spanish. *Opera, pizza, dominoes* are of Italian origin.

The Dutch settlers also contributed some words to American English. Among the widely used words of the Dutch origin are *Yankee, boss, roster, cookie, Santa Claus*.

The words of German origin found their way into the American vocabulary as well: *frankfurter, hamburger, semester, and seminar* are among them.

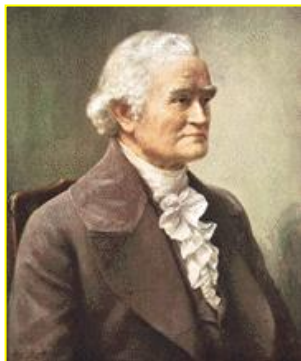
The black slaves from Africa brought to North America not only their culture, songs and music but also words: *jazz, hippies* are probably African in origin.

Linguistic Nationalism

The American Revolution marked the turning point in the creation of new, American variant of the English language. For Jefferson, Franklin, John Adams, and the other leaders of the American Revolution, American English was one of the weapons for independence, for forming national consciousness. After the Revolution the problem of having a national language acquired great political significance. The extent to which the English language became a political problem is illustrated by the curious procession, in New York on July 23, 1788, which coincided with the ratification of the new American Constitution. An association of young men, called the Philological Society, carried the coat of arms and a book

inscribed “Federal Language”, emphasizing the strong desire of many Americans to break with the classical British English.

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson made the first attempts to renovate the English language. Jefferson was fascinated by words and liked to invent the new ones. “Belittle” was one of his most famous, much laughed at in London at his time. Benjamin Franklin, who founded the first free public library in the USA, was also interested in the reform of the English language. In 1768, he published a paper entitled “A Scheme for a New Alphabet and a Reformed Mode of Spelling”. His ideas were not adopted, but made a profound influence on further US linguists. One of the first to publish the Grammar book in New York was Lindley Murray (1745-1826), the author of “*English Grammar, Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners*” (1795).



All revolutionary ideas of Jefferson, Adams, Franklin and Murray were implemented in the works of the greatest America’s lexicographer **Noah Webster (1758-1843)**. The most famous of all American dictionary-makers; Noah Webster was as influential in the history of American English as George Washington in the American Revolution. From his *Dissertations on the English Language* in 1789 to his great monument of 1828, an *American Dictionary of the English Language* (referred to simply as » *Webster’s*”), his work was the real landmark in American language history.

Webster was born in Hartford, Connecticut, and, like many other American revolutionaries, started teaching as a means of living. During the war for independence, schoolbooks, traditionally imported from London, were in short supply. Besides, in Webster’s view, they were unsatisfactory for American children. He complained that the English language used in such books had been corrupted by the British aristocracy, who set its own standards for proper spelling and pronunciation. He claimed to “save our native tongue from the clamor of pedantry” surrounding the English language and provide a specific American

approach to training children. So, still in his twenties, Webster set about filling the gap and published three-volume compendium "A Grammatical Institute of the English Language", consisting of *a Speller*(1783), *a Grammar* (1784) and *Reader*(1785).

The "Speller" had the greatest success and sold more than 80 million copies, turning out to be a runaway bestseller. It was written so that it could be easily taught to elementary pupils, and it progressed by age. Most people called it the "Blue-Backed Speller" because of its blue cover, and for many years it was the main textbook in American elementary school.

The royalties gave Webster the money to continue working on his political activity and linguistic reforms. Webster toured the United States, convincing that "America must be as independent in *literature* as she is in *politics*, as famous for *arts* as for *arms*", and to accomplish this she must protect the literary products of her countrymen by copyright. Webster also wrote his vigorous Federalist work *Sketches of American Policy* (1785). In Philadelphia, where he paused briefly he published his politically effective *An Examination into the Leading Principles of the Federal Constitution* (1787).

In 1806, Webster published his first *Dictionary*, the next step in his program to standardize the American language. The following year, at the age of 43, Webster began writing an expanded and comprehensive dictionary, "*An American Dictionary of the English Language*", which took him twenty-seven years to complete. To supplement the etymology of the words, Webster learned twenty-six languages, including old Anglo-Saxon and Sanskrit.

He completed his two-volume Dictionary after returning from European tour and published it in 1828, when he was already 70. His book contained seventy thousand words and became the culmination of Webster's efforts on Americanization of the English language.

The dictionary was not sold well at Webster's lifetime and to bring out his second edition Webster had to mortgage his house. On May 28, 1843, a few days

after he had completed revising an appendix to the second edition, Noah Webster died in debt and poverty.

Though not all Webster's ventures were recognized at his time, his contribution in the creation of American language is hard to overestimate. His name became synonymous with the word "dictionary", and his works on linguistics had an enormous influence on American standards of spelling and writing. By including thousands of technical and scientific terms, Webster laid the groundwork for modern lexicography and very many dictionaries published in the USA still bear his name.

Two Nations separated by the same language

Once a famous Irish playwright Bernard Shaw said that America and England were two nations separated by the language. What are the main differences between British and American English now?

There are a few **grammatical** differences. To begin with, some British irregular verbs (e.g. *burn*, *learn*, etc.) turned into regular ones in America. Past participle of *get* became *gotten*.

Americans say "Do you have a car?" where British people would prefer to say: "Have you got a car? The auxiliary word *shall* is used more seldom, and modal verb *may* in the meaning "permission" has been changed for *can*.

So-called "bare infinitive" (without *to*) is used after *help*, *insist*, *suggest*, etc.: The doctor insisted / suggested that the injured man *be* taken to hospital.

Past Simple (not Present Perfect) is often used with modifiers *just*, *already*, *yet*: "I'm not hungry. I just had lunch". "Don't forget to mail the letter. I already mailed it".

One may say that Americans tend to use articles more loosely than Englishmen. The definite article is often omitted in America after "all" in cases where it would be considered necessary in English. So Americans say "*all day*", "*all night*", "*all morning*", "*all week*," "*all summer*". A difference in the order of words may be noted in the use of the indefinite article. An American might say "*a half dozen*» or

“*a half hour*”, whereas an Englishman would say “*half a dozen*”, “*a half of an hour*”.

On the matter of prepositions there is some difference between English and American usage, too. Thus Americans say: “*the worst accident in (not for) years*”, “*five minutes after (not past) three*”, *a quarter of three*, *the man on (not in) the street*, *on the train*, *(not in it)*. He is the best player *on the team (not in the team)*; *to write someone (without to)*.

American English also tends to coin and use more freely nouns compounded from a verb and a preposition, such as *blowout*, *checkup*, *fallout*, *feedback*, etc. New words are frequently created by shifting the function of an existing word. Nouns are used as verbs: *to park*, *to package*, *to program*, *to vacation*, adjectives can become nouns: *briefs*, *comics*, *reds*, *musts*.

Punctuation

- Use of commas and periods inside quotation marks;
- Word order in date writing;
- Business letter salutations, colons vs. commas

Though British and American **spelling** is the same in most cases, it differs in a few details owing to N. Webster’s reforms. The British word *reflection* is written in America as *reflexion*,

Centre	as	center,
Catalogue	as	catalog,
Programme	as	program,
Organisation, analyse	as	organization, analyze,
Defence, licence	as	defense, license,
Travelling, cancelling	as	traveling, canceling,
Practise	as	practice.

There are differences in the **intonation** and **pronunciation** in two languages. as well.

American English intonation does not rise or fall as much as that of British English, it sounds more monotonous. American voices usually have a higher pitch.

That is why American English often seems too emphatic and American voices seem louder than those of British speakers.

American pronunciation is more nasalized than English. There are certain differences in the pronunciation of both consonants and vowels: AE [æ] – BE [a:] in class, last, bath; [ju:] is pronounced like [u:] in such words as «tube», «duty», «new» that are after the initial t, d, n, s, and z. ^ instead of [O] e.g. “hot” [h^t], “body” [b^di], “college” [k^lidʒ]. American [r] unlike the British [r] is pronounced with no friction and the tip of the tongue is curled backward.

- American [L] is always dark (твердое)
- [t] is often omitted after [n]: “twenty” [ˈtweni]
- Voiceless consonants become voiced in the intervocalic position, e.g. “better” [ˈbedə]

Here are some other examples of these differences:

Pronunciation in B.E.	Pronunciation in A.E.
Chance, last, past [ˈtʃa:ns, ˈla:st, ˈpa:st]	[ˈchains, ˈlaest, ˈpaest]
Duke, suit [ˈdju:k, ˈsju:t }	[ˈdu:k, ˈsu:t]
Doctor, stop, pot [ˈdɒktə,]	[ˈd^kt , ˈst^p , ˈp^t]
Butter, atom [ˈbʌtə, ˈætəm]	[ˈ b^ də , ˈaedə m]
Plenty, twenty [ˈplenti, ˈtwenti]	[ˈpleni, ˈtweni]
Clerk [ˈ klə: k]	[kˈla:k]

Either, neither (A.E.- [i:], B.E.- [ai]), advertisement (A.E.-[ai], B.E.-[ə:]tomato-B.E.{a:},A.E.{ei}; process-B.E.{əu}, A.E.{a}; candidate(, A.E.[ei] B.E.[I]).

It is necessary to keep in mind, that pronunciation and intonation may be different in **different American dialects**. The major dialect areas, recognized in American English are Eastern New England, Western or Middle American, and Southern Americans can easily identify a man as a New Englander or a Southerner after hearing him say a few words. There are people who believe that the New England variety is a truly cultural form of speech, and there are many Southerners who are sure that their way of speaking is the American best.

The speech of New England (Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont) is characterized by the retention of rounded vowel in words like "hot" and "path" and flat *a*. The Connecticut River is an important regional dialect boundary, separating the *r-less* dialect of Boston from the other regions. Southern dialect is characterized by the loss of *r* finally before the consonants and by the unrounded vowel (as in *father, grass, dance, path*). Instead of diphthong [aw] southerners pronounce sound [a] *house, South, out*. Many speakers insert glide in *Tuesday* [tyua-] and make no distinction between vowels in **pin/pen**. Final consonant cluster reduction occurs in words like *last* and *kept* (these are pronounced something like *lass* and *kep*). People in the southern states speak with a drawl - they tend to speak slowly and lengthen the last sound of each word. They use contracted *Y'all* for *You all*, expressions like "Howdy, y'all" for "Hello, everybody". President Clinton, from Arkansas, had a southern accent.

In New York City, especially in the boroughs outside Manhattan, many people speak so-called New Yorkese. Speakers of New Yorkese often speak very fast and tend not to pronounce "r" in words that end in "er". A word like "water" sounds like "wata". The presence or absence of "r" has become class marker. The pronunciation of *curl* as *coil* and *bird* as *boird* is characteristic of working-class speech.

The language which teenagers often like to use is strongly influenced by popular music and fashion. The immediate examples: Yinz, yunz, you'uns (plural you): Hey yoy, gues; My peoples = my parents; I were = I was; I didn' have no money; there ain't no sense = there is no sense; got'em = got them; gimme = give me; I ain't got = I haven't got; oughtta = ought to; nigger gal = black girl; Whaddaya think she's talkin' about? (What do you think she's talking about?), wysi-wyg (what you see is what you get)

Black American or Afro-American Speech has also some peculiarities. One theory holds that this variety of American English developed from so-called **Pidgin English** – the language first used by black slaves of different African

languages forced to communicate with each other and their owners. Another view holds that Black English results from the retention of British English features that have not been retained in other varieties of American English.

American Vocabulary. One of the peculiarities of American English is *the usage of a number of medieval English* words, which are no longer used in Britain today. When the earliest English colonists came to America they were speaking English of the 17-th century. The words *fall* (autumn), used by Shakespeare, and *corn* (which means in England any grain, e.g. wheat) are immediate examples. Some old English words have developed new meanings. The very popular word *sheriff*, which meant in England or Wales a person appointed by the King to carry out ceremonial duties, and in Scotland the senior judge, in America is applied to the person who observes the law in the state. The word *guy* (*a boy, or a man in A.E. in informal use*) came from the name of one of the most popular villains in England Guy Fawkes who organized Gunpowder Plot against King James 1 in 1605.

Here are a few examples of British and American words, meaning the same phenomena or people:

B.E.	A.E.	B.E.	A. E.
Government	Administration	Goods train	freight train
Securities	bonds	label	tag
Banknote	bank bill	some time ago	a way back
Chairman	president	children	kids
Manager	executive	post	mail
Minister	secretary	form (at school)	grade
Milliard	billion	tram	street car
Leader	editorial	a tin	a can
Offer	tender	a bill	a check
Guarantee	warranty	a carpet	a rug
To run a business	to operate business	a car	a automobile
Goods train	freight train	a lorry	a truck

Label	tag	timetable	schedule
Biscuits	cookies	interval	intermission
Secondary school	high school	tap	faucet
Barrister/solicitor	attorney	sweets	candy

When your *flight deplanes* (B.E.-disembarks) in America, you take *carry-on* (hand baggage), get a *cart* (trolley), stand *in a line* (queue) to receive your *baggage* (*luggage*) in the airport. If you want to continue your journey by *railroad* (not *railway*- B.E.), you won't buy your ticket at the *booking-office* but at the *ticket-window*, and the man who sells it to you is not the *booking-clerk*, but the *ticket-agent*. The train is already waiting and you get into *a car or a sleeper* (B.E. - a sleeping carriage). After your journey you get out on the *track* (platform) and take *a cab* (a taxi) or go *by subway* (tube, underground) to the hotel or American friend's of yours. If you want to *fix a meeting* (to arrange a meeting) with the friend, it will be best to call *him up* (not to *ring up*). If you don't have enough change you may use a *collect call* (B.E. - charge transferred).

If your friend has *an apartment* (a flat) on the *second floor* (B.E.-first floor) or over, you take an *elevator* (lift) to come to him. If he lives in a house, he may have *a yard* (a garden). In the house there is *a living room with a dining area*, a bedroom and a bathroom. There is a *closet* (B.E. "wardrobe") in the bedroom; there are *draperies* (curtains) on the windows, *rugs* (carpets) in all rooms. In the bathroom there is *a tub* (a bath) and *a faucet* (taps).

When an American goes out he may walk along *a sidewalk*, (pavement) to *the downtown* (to the center). He uses *the crosswalk* (pedestrian crossing) to cross the street. He puts *gas* (petrol) at *a kitty-corner* (diagonally opposite) *gas filling station* into his *automobile*, then drives along *a freeway* (motorway), *takes left* (turns left) and after about three miles he comes to *the Interstate* (the main motorway in the US connecting different states). The story can be continued on and on.



The origin of many common American words and phrases is very interesting and peculiar. Here are some of them:

Uncle Sam. That name used to belong to an American man Samuel Wilson who marched in a parade in the style of dress that had been copied for the picture in newspaper drawings. Later this name became national personification of the USA, and sometimes more specifically of the American Government.

Yankee This term was at first applied to the inhabitants of the Dutch colonies in North America, especially to those who lived in New Amsterdam, i.e. New York. Dutch name Jan corresponds to English John and Kee may be the pet form of another typical Dutch name. *Yankee* became the designation of any inhabitant of New England, and sometimes of the whole United States.

OK. The origin of the American word “okay” generally abbreviated to two letters OK, is quite obscure. One of the versions is that O.K. represents the initial letters of “*all correct*”. The establishment of the new word was reinforced by the use of the letters “O.K.” for signing official documents during the Presidential term of general Andrew Jackson (1829-1837), who could not be called a well-educated person. *OK* seems to occur more frequently nowadays in England than in the land of its origin and may be found in quite formal situations, such as on legal documents and computers to indicate the correctness of details.

Dollar. The word “dollar” comes from the name of coin used 400 years ago .In 1516 silver coins began to be minted in a mine near a small village, called Joachimstal, in Bohemia. The coin was called a “joachimstaler”, after the village name, or “taler” for short. When the talers were brought to the Netherlands they were used as “daler”. The English borrowed the Dutch form “daler” and began to spell it “dollar”. The dollar had been the currency of Germany and Spain for over two centuries before it became American. Thomas Jefferson proposed that the Spanish dollar would be the unit of currency, thus helping America to become independent of the British pound sterling after the war for independence.

The California Gold Rush in the late 19th century gave rise to many new words, transforming the meanings of the original ones.

Bonanza The modern usage of the word “bonanza” is a figurative extension of its original one as “a very productive mine”, which is itself a direct borrowing from Spanish (meaning “prosperity” or “success”). Nowadays, it denotes something that is prospering quickly, bringing good luck and wealth. One of the long-running American TV series *Bonanza* portrayed a family of men working on their enormous Nevada ranch. The film reminded the viewers of the farms and ranches in the late 19th century, testifying to the figurative usage of the original word.

To Pan out. This expression meant a method for obtaining the gold by filling a pan with the ore and gently washing away the soil and gravel, leaving the heavier gold at the bottom of the pan. The expression was figuratively broadened to the meaning “*to get success*”.

The new ways of life and characters of 20-21 centuries brought a lot of new words and coinages “*Disk jockey*”, “*natural*” (something very suitable), “*show business*”, “*star*” (popular performer), *baby-sitter*, *basketball*, *chewing gum*, *credit card*, *home-made*, *know-how* and so on are all originally from the American usage of the world of business, entertainment and technology. Many of the new American words are based on old grammar processes of compounding existing words, as in “*boyfriend*, *bookstore*, *brainstorm* *ballfrog*, *supermarket*, *heliport* (*helicopter* + *airport*), *motel* (*motor*+ *hotel*), *docusoap* (*documentary* + *soap opera*), *breathalyzer* (*breath* + *analyze*), *fly-drive holiday* (to travel by plane and a car”). American English also tends to coin and use more freely nouns compounded from a verb and a preposition, such as “*blowout*, *checkup*, *fallout*, *etc.* Nouns are used as verbs: *to park*, *to package*, *to program*, *to vacation*. Adjectives can become nouns: *briefs*, *comics*, *etc.*..

Globalization of American English. The American vocabulary during the 19th and especially 20th and 21 centuries began to be exported abroad due to its

economic, political and technological prominence in the world. American movies, radio, television, pop culture have certainly hastened the process.

In recent years Americanisms have been introduced into international usage. *Know-how, a cafeteria, a supermarket, a filmstar, Coca/Pepsi-cola, a skyscraper, chewing gum, a credit card, a baby sitter, electrocute, etc.* firmly established not only in Standard English, but in many other countries as well.. Most words and usages are frequently borrowed from American English quite unconsciously.

American dictionaries give a fascinating glimpse of the vast changes in American and, inevitably, global English by the electronic age. Some fifty years ago no one walked on the Moon, bought a sun blocker or running shoes. VCRs were unknown. Heavy metal, punk rock music, post-modernism, yuppies and soft contact lenses didn't exist. Hundreds of new business buzz-words are used, reflecting the birth of global markets and the take-over boom. Americans invented a lot of new words connected with new technology, computers and internet: *state-of-the-art (very latest technology), artificial intelligence, a notebook, a laptop computer, download, upload, online, offline, website, to hack, software, know-how, the dotcom economy, screensaver, trackpad, thumbnail, footprint, gridlocked, cyber pet, a techno-wizard, a cybercafé* and many others of computer-related terms are increasingly invading the daily life.

A lot of **politically correct terminology** also appeared: people of color, coloreds, organized crime (mafia), Hispanic culture, stay-at-home mom (housewife). Among such words there are **euphemistic references**: senior citizens or older adults (pensioners), the loved one (death and funeral references), to rehire employees (to fire them), a restroom, powder room (ladies' toilet), etc.

Vocabulary of equality: *Fireman-firefighter; policeman-police (security) officer; mailman- mail carrier; salesman-sales person; manmade-artificial; synthetic-manufactured; stewardess-flight attendant, chairman-chairperson; chair-presiding officer.*

A lot of **abbreviations** and **acronyms** appeared, especially often used in media and ads (advertisements): NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) , UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), IMF (International Monetary Fund), CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), Call (Computer Assisted Language Learning), ZIP code (for Zone Improvement Plan), SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty), INF (Intermediate Range Nuclear Force), AAAAA (American Association for the Abolition of Abbreviations and Acronyms), all mod cons (all modern conveniences), ch.(central heating), d/g (double garage), etc.

The spreading of American English is also supported by the international examination TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) which all foreign students and immigrants are obliged to pass to study or live in the USA.

1. Answer the questions:

1. What kind of words did the English settlers borrow from other languages? 2. What importance did the founders of American nation attach to the power of the language? 3. When was the phrase “the American language” used for the first time? 4. Who was the first to think of reforming the chaotic English spelling? 5. What measures were suggested to promote American English? 6. What was the aim of this political action? 7. Why is Webster called the champion of American English? 8. What did Webster do to develop American English?

2. Can you explain what American and British people mean when they say: a bill, a purse, subway, pants, vest, and wash up? Can you give the British equivalents to the American words: gasoline, truck, sidewalk, line, vacation, trunk (of a car), hood (of a car), a cab, freeway, round trip, a railway car, an engineer(on train), an eraser, a closet, drapers, faucet, a yard, cookie, candy, garbage, intersection, a living room, a long-distance bus, blue-chip investments, call loan, stocks, an express man, to fix a meeting, government bonds?

3. Discussion problems:

1. Describe the differences between British and American English in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Give examples. 2. List the major dialects of American English. 3. Why can American English be called as “a linguistic melting pot”? 4. What are the reasons of the influence of American English on its mother tongue and many other languages of the world? .

LIFESTYLES

It is very difficult to make generalizations about American characters or lifestyles, as the diversity of patterns of American life is really great. Very many things account for this: ethnic and social background, immigration date of their forbears, religion and other factors. **77% of the USA population lives in urban areas, 23% - in rural areas.** The population of the USA represents cultures from around the world. The largest minority group consists of **Afro-Americans who make up about 12% of the population. Spanish-speaking people** from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba and other Hispanic countries form another group, which **equals 6%** of the population. **Native Americans are less than one half of 1% of the total.** Minorities of Asian descent include Chinese, Japanese, Indochinese and others. It is now estimated that by the year 2050 half of Americans will be Hispanic, Black, or Asian by ethnic background. For many immigrants America seemed to be the only place to fulfill their dreams. Before the late 1960s, immigrants were expected to become part of the mainstream of American culture – the idea of “the melting pot”.

Trying to make some general observations on the American character one should again remember the history of the USA.

What is the American Frontier?

The frontier experience began when the first colonists settled on the east coast of the continent in the 1600s and ended about 1890 when the last western lands were settled. Americans have always tended to view the frontier as the purest examples of hard work of the people, who turned the wilderness into towns, and towns into cities. **The need for self - reliance on the frontier**

encouraged a spirit of inventiveness. Frontier men and women not only had to provide most of their daily essentials of living, but they were constantly facing new problems and situations, which demanded new solutions. The willingness to experiment and invent led to another American trait, a **“can-do” spirit**, and a sense of optimism that **“every problem has a solution”**. Americans take pride in overcoming challenges and obstacles. As American historian Frederick Jackson Turner wrote, Americans see themselves as ground - breakers in all areas of industry, science, and technology. They consider it natural that they should constantly create new ways of life, new means of constructing houses, new appliances, new cars, etc.

The frontier provided conditions for strengthening the **American ideals of individual freedom, self-reliance and equality of opportunity**. Later many of the frontier values became national values. **Emphasis on individual personality** rather than collective identity or responsibility is one of the most important features of the American character.

Another distinctive American characteristic is **pragmatism**. **This means that emphasis on achievement and success** is understood first of all as material prosperity. Americans are fond of common sense; they are not particularly interested in theory, abstract reasoning, or philosophy. If something works, do it; if it does not, try to do something else.

Generally speaking, Americans are open and friendly people. The public behavior of Americans is less reserved than that of English, e.g. It is normal for Americans to speak loudly, joke and laugh in public. Americans tend to be informal and unceremonious in both their public or private lives, although they are not absolutely uniform in their outward behavior. It seems that people from the Northeast are more reserved than Midwesterners, who are very direct and especially famous for their friendliness. The South has long been renowned for the value it places on hospitality, gentility, and manners. Westerners are probably more informal than all the rest. The rules, which parallel this

informality are generally established and understood. There are topics –**wages, income, religion, politics**, – which many Americans try to avoid in casual conversation. Those who insist on formal address or titles or take themselves too seriously are often targets for humor.

Like the British, Americans have love for the intricate practical joke, the pun, and the understated quip (clever remark). Newspapers headlines bear witness to the second, and the very subtle humor of “The New Yorker” is an example of the third. There is also a tradition of **“slapstick”, the pie-in-the face, and the banana peel on the floor**. A different type of the American humor is called “kidding around”. It is part of the daily life of many Americans, and often serves as background to normal conversations. In many cases if something is conveyed indirectly, through joking or other “light” humor, face can be saved or arguments prevented.

Marriage and Dating

Marriage in the U.SA is considered a matter of individual responsibility and decision. Marriage is preceded by **dating – one of the most prominent cultural rituals** in America. Casual dating usually begins in the early teens. It is quite respectable for a young man to call up a young girl, introduce himself by telephone, and arrange a date. Usually they have a friend in common. It is equally acceptable for a friend to arrange a **“blind date”** that is a date between two young people who have not met before. Steady dating is sometimes followed by marriage.

.After marriage the young couple is free to decide where to live. Most newlyweds try to set up their own household immediately. The familiar structure in present-day America is the so-called **“nuclear family”**. It is unusual for members of the family other than the husband, wife, and children to live together. But the forgotten term **“extended family”** is coming back again. The marriage age is rising. A high divorce rate and a declining remarriage rate are sending economically pressured young people to parental shelters. For some, the

expense of an away-home college education has become too exorbitant and many students now prefer to attend local universities. Even after graduation some young people find “their wings Clipped” by the housing costs. **According to the US Census Bureau, today 59% of men and 47 % of women between 18 and 24 depend on their parents despite all traditional patterns of behavior, at least for housing**

The lives of most Americans revolve around their homes and houses. Home ownership is one of the definitions of success in the USA. Generally people are judged by the house they live in, not only by its size and architecture but also the type of neighborhood and the distance from different amenities. The percentage of Americans owning houses (and apartments) they live in is the highest among western nations. Most Americans still live in “single-family dwellings”, that is houses that usually have a front and backyard. Contrary to a common belief, only about 5 % of all Americans **live in mobile homes**. For all practical purposes, most of these homes are not actually mobile but function as prefabricated housing units in stationary settings.

Most of North America has a more or less four-season climate, and the rhythms of life around the house tend to follow the seasons. There is always something that needs to be done around the house, and most American homeowners do it by themselves. In many American families children are expected to help around the house and perform the home “chores”.

Americans have always been concerned with making the chores of everyday life less tiresome and distasteful. Inventors, businessmen, designers, neighborhood initiatives and interest groups, public officials and private citizens – all try to make things better, more efficient, more readily available, more convenient. **From mail order shopping to drive-in banking, from durable-press materials for clothes to computerized services and take-out food, Americans have shown their preference for a convenient lifestyle.**

In the average American home, there is a great amount of activity, of coming and going, all happening at once. For the parents, there are perhaps courses at the local evening school or college. There are bridge and bowling clubs and golf leagues. There are PTA (Parent Teacher Association) meetings. The church is having a bake sale, a car wash, or a “**potluck**” dinner (everyone contributes a dish). The social life of American children is often hectic as well. One child is off to a party, another to the music or sport classes.

One of the features of American life is **volunteer work**. According to the statistical Gallup polls, **about 84 million Americans** both adults and teenagers donated part of their time as volunteers. Some of this work is done through volunteer organizations and clubs; some is on a personal basis. Teenagers, for example, often volunteer to work in hospitals – so-called “candy- stripers”, from their striped uniforms.

At the same time, many American middle-class families expect their children to find part-time jobs, especially as they enter their teens. This might be work in the local supermarket or service station, mowing lawns, delivering newspapers, or babysitting. The idea seems to be that **the work experience is “good for the kids»**. One effect on American society is that middle-class children can do menial work without losing face. This also effects customer-employee relations: the kid who just packed your groceries or filled your tank could be your neighbor’s son or daughter. In general, **Americans feel that young people should appreciate the value of work and learn how to stand on their own feet.**

It is necessary to mark that since the 1960s there has appeared a great and drastic shift in seemingly ideal “puritan” moral behavior of the middle class young people in the USA. the “new morality., characterized by violence, sexual permissiveness and cheating, drug and alcohol abuse. According to a federal finding of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism a minimum of 10 million Americans have alcoholic-connected problems, more than 1.1

million youths between the ages 12 and 17 have “serious drug-abuse problems”. According to the Police Foundation there are some 40 million handguns in America and according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation the chance of being victimized by violent crime has increased 24% since 1980 and more than 50% during the last 10 years. One of the trends of the “new morality” among young Americans is close relationships and living together before marriage. A study by the National Foundation released in 1995 shows that between 1970 and 1993 birth to mothers under 16 rose by 80%.

The Car in American Life

The fact that the Americans can't do without a car is well known to everybody. One primary reason for having cars is that the public transportation in the USA is not so well developed as in Europe. Bus lines in the US suburbs are unprofitable, bus routes are scarce and the scheduling is very unstable. So, willy-nilly people have to use their own cars.

The car is such an important part of American life that for many people it would be impossible to manage without it. The car is inherently built into the tissue of American life. Today only really poor families and those too old to drive do not own a motor vehicle. But for **the 87 %** who do have cars, there is hardly any need to leave them. **There are banks, fast-food restaurants, and movie theaters, where you can withdraw money, eat a meal, or see a film** without ever getting out of your car. There are **even drive-in churches**. It's surprising that some people remember how to walk at all. Taking a job or entering a college leads to an immediate follow-up of buying a car. The car is also an absolute necessity for the rural or suburban parent, often the mother, who goes shopping for the family and takes the children to after-school activities. Some people wind up driving many miles a day doing errands and taking their children from one place to another. When it comes to vacation time, many American families prefer to drive, sometimes very long distances. Even if they go by plane, when they arrive, they often rent a car (**fly-drive**).

American society's dependence on automobiles creates a lot of serious problems, such as air-pollution, the growing accident rates, traffic jams. Cities, towns and states spend tremendous resources constantly repairing and expanding their streets, roads, and highways. As some roads have been expanded to their limit, there is nowhere to go but up, so in some places "double-decker" appeared, that is, two-tiered highways.

As the automobile plays such a large part in American life, it has a great impact on American economy. Now the manufacture of automobiles in America is becoming more and more international. Japanese companies like Honda and Toyota do not just sell cars in America; they have their own plants where they build them. The major American automobile companies, such as Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler have also formed various kinds of partnerships with Japanese and German manufacturers. In addition to the traditional sedans, station wagons, and sports cars, different kinds of jeeps and vans have become especially popular in recent years. Some Americans take special pride in their cars. They give them special names (John, Marietta, etc.), wash and wax them regularly. Others constantly trade and buy them.

National Symbols

One feature of American life that some European observers often comment on is the frequent display of flags and other national symbols in the U.S. The pride of Americans of their country is perhaps not much different from that in other nations, but it seems more apparent. The "Star-Spangled Banner" and the flags of the states are found in many places and displayed on many occasions, including even demonstrations against the government. Advertisements, too, sometimes cater to a shared sense of national pride. To Americans, patriotism is largely a natural response to the nation's history and its ideas. Immigrants who apply after five years of residence to be naturalized and become American citizens must prove that they know the national symbols and support the Constitution of the USA.

1. Answer the questions.

- 1 .Why is it so difficult to make generalizations about American character?
2. What is the main idea of the “Melting pot”?
3. What are the most distinctive American characteristics from your point of view?
4. What can you say about American social life?
5. Why are Americans so much involved in volunteer work?
6. Why do so many American parents think that part-time jobs are “good for their kids”?
7. What is the impact of cars on the US economics?
8. What are the main demands for an immigrant to be naturalized and become an American citizen?

2. Speak about recent changes in American lifestyle according to the models:

Now that VCRs have come in drive-ins are getting out; Now that compact discs have come in records have gone out; Economy cars-big cars; push-button-telephones-dial telephones; aerobics-jogging; canned and frozen food-traditional cooking; wash and wear clothes-ironing; credit cards-checkbooks; checkbooks-cash.

3 .Match the names in the left part with the definitions in the right one:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Car park | 1) a window that you drive up to and get your banking problems done; |
| Parking meter | 2) a special area for parking cars; |
| Parking lot | 3) a multi-stored building for parking cars; |
| Parking ticket | 4) a place where people can watch movies staying in the cars; |
| Drive-in theater | 5) a metal box on a stick to drop the money for parking; |
| Drive-in bank | 6) a document for paying a parking penalty; |
| Drive-in food stand | 7) a window that you drive up to and buy some food. |

4. Discussion problems:

1. The American Frontier and American character;
2. Compare typical English and American characters. Which traits are in common and which are different?
3. American houses and homes;
4. American society and cars

CULTURAL LIFE



Read and translate the following words and word combinations:

to set the problem

to degenerate

to steer boats

expatriate

to defer (deferred)

to enchant

ensuing

to be nourished

to pull the leg

progenitor

gospel music

romantic crooning

at large

spiritualism

unconventional

to shuttle back and forth

Although it is a generalization, it is useful to divide the US cultural history into three broad stages.

The first stage stretches from colonial times until about the Civil war. In this period, American art, architecture, music and literature were strongly influenced by European ideas and traditions. What was fashionable or popular in London, Paris, Rome or Vienna us