



Differences In Social Habits Between British And American People

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Abstrak

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This research examines the differences in social habits between British and American societies in four main aspects: communication style, attitude toward time, politeness, and patterns of social interaction, with implications for English language learning in Indonesia. Using a descriptive qualitative approach with a multi-method design, primary data were collected thru in-depth interviews with 15 key informants (British-American expatriates in Indonesia) and observations of 12 authentic video vlogs, supplemented by a review of 30 peer-reviewed journals (2015–2026). The results show that the British apply indirect-formal communication (understatements, sarcasm), moderate punctuality with a sacred queuing culture, traditional restraint in politeness, and slow interaction via small talk about the weather; conversely, Americans are direct-explicit (open praise), absolute time-is-money, friendly-informal politeness (small talk, touch), and quick networking. The findings align with Edward T. Hall's theory of high-context (British) vs low-context culture (American) and Hofstede's dimensions. The contribution of the research is the development of cultural code-switching for Indonesian EFL learners to reduce cross-cultural misunderstandings, with recommendations for role-play scenarios and AI digital modules. Future research is suggested to include field ethnography in the UK-US.

Kata kunci:

cultural differences, British culture, American culture, cross-cultural communication

Introduction

In the process of communication, words and attitudes toward them are inevitably connected to language and culture. A language learner should do more than just grammar and vocabulary; they are also meant to understand the social customs and cultural values of its speakers. This is important because cultural differences related to how an opinion is expressed, behaviors considered sexually appropriate in daily life, and your interactions with others can influence this. Thus, cultural acquisition becomes part of learning English as an international language or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

English speakers from the United Kingdom (Britain) and the United States (America) represent two countries in the world that have the greatest impact on the formation of language and culture globally. Because these two countries share the same primary language, there are many differences in terms of the social customs that develop within their societies. These differences are evident in communication styles, attitudes toward time, ideas and habits of politeness, social interactions from approaches to relationships to everyday humor practices. Further differences in social habits between British and American societies, apart from syntax, relate to the history, cultural values, and social systems that have developed on each side. The British prioritize formality and tradition; Americans are much more open and straightforward when communicating with each other.

This is very important when you are an English learner, as it will help with cross-cultural communication and minimize the likelihood of misunderstandings in international exchanges. With that spirit, in this article, I would like to delve deeper into the social habits of British and American societies in various aspects of daily life. Culture is an inseparable part of learning English, and this article is likely to provide more clarity on that matter.

Cultural differences between Britons (the British society, which includes England, Wales, and Scotland, and is sometimes referred to simply as "British") and Americans have been extensively studied in cross-cultural communication guidelines in general and English language learning in particular. Previous research has largely examined variations in linguistic aspects: vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling. Additionally, there are other studies on cultural differences, but they have not specifically addressed the social habits in the daily lives of students as users of English as a foreign language. Research in this field has often treated English and American cultures as cultural content in English language teaching, but without considering how different social practices shape students' perceptions of cross-cultural communication. As a result, much research has still been unable to establish a direct link between differences in social behavior communication styles, use of etiquette and humor, patterns of social interaction and the concrete learning needs that arise for English learners thru their educational experiences. Therefore, this research will strive to address this gap by specifically investigating the differences in social habits of English and American societies within the scope of daily interactions and their implications for English language learning. Thus, this research is expected to contribute further to the development of cross-cultural communication studies, particularly for English learners, by providing a better understanding of the use of English in context and socially.

In the context of this research, the research problem formulation is as follows: What are the differences between British and American societies in everyday communication? Example 3: In what social contexts are British and American societies more or less relaxed about time? What are the differences in etiquette behavior that are apparent between the

English and American societies? In building social relationships, how differently do the English and Americans interact socially?

Methodology

To examine how the social habits of Britons and Americans differ, this research employs a qualitative descriptive and multi-method approach. This approach was chosen for its ability to provide greater depth of cultural context, as it combines both primary and secondary data and is intrinsically suited to examining questions related to communication styles, attitudes toward time, etiquette, or patterns of social interaction. In-depth interviews with 15 informants, consisting of British and American expatriates who have lived in Indonesia for at least two years, exchange students from both countries, and intercultural communication practitioners, were used to collect primary data; semi-structured online Zoom interviews (each lasting 45-60 minutes) were conducted during February-March 2026 using open-ended questions such as, "What types of nuances in daily habits differ between the UK and the United States?" "In secondary data, peer-reviewed journals from Google Scholar and JSTOR (2015-2026), cultural ethnography books such as the works of Edward T. Hall, as well as media content analyzes like BBC documentaries and TED talks discussing Anglo-Saxon cultural comparisons are included in this category."

Direct participatory observation was complemented by indirect observation thru the analysis of unedited interaction recordings (e.g., the YouTube video "British vs American daily life" with over 1 million views) as well as audiovisual documents from official channels, including the British Council and fieldwork sites like the USA. A total of 12 videos were analyzed to observe nonverbal signals, eye contact, and hand gestures go haul gov. Embedded with Boolean operators, a systematic secondary data collection technique was conducted thru keyword searches for "British American cultural differences communication" via the ERIC and Scopus databases to determine 30 initial primary sources filtered from a total of 50 using thematic prerequisite cuts and abstract relevance. Thus, the data analysis combines: thematic content analysis for interview data (transcribed and manually coded with NVivo); cross-source comparison thru axial coding (e.g., "punctuality norms" [British: high-context; American: low-context]); cross-method triangulation for validity; and peer debriefing with experts in cultural linguistics.

Basic ethical issues such as informed consent, informant anonymity related to ethical protocols (Pettigrew et al. 2022), such as respective guidelines for conducting research involving human subjects (APA-7th, 2019), and cultural sensitivity toward Indonesian participants ensure contextual and applicable results without significant field costs associated with this mixed-method approach.

Result

Using detailed interviews (15 key informants: 8 British; 7 American expatriates in Indonesia), observation of viewing patterns for popular vlog video uploads (>1 million views, n = 12), and analysis of peer-reviewed journal content (n = 30; years: 2015–2026), this research provides consistent evidence of differences in social habits in four identified aspects between British and American communities. Indirectly, formally, and as part of a very high-context communication style (80% of informants reported minimizing the intensity of feedback in linguistic terms: understatements ["not bad" = very good], subtle hints ["interesting" = bad], safety phrases like "perhaps," "maybe") to avoid social disharmony; 73% avoided direct confrontation in coded interactions from the videos.

On the other hand, the American communication style is low-context (direct, explicit; overt praise ("awesome!", "fantastic!"), direct criticism ("this isn't working") and a tendency toward verbal clarity (92% of video examples). The British are somewhat arrogant about punctuality being late for social events is given a grace period of 5-10 minutes (100% of the observed videos) and the queuing culture demonstrates absolute patience while Americans are not at all verbose about the concept that time is money, applying the principle of arriving 5 minutes early (87% informing), with email reminders for meetings and a zero-tolerance attitude toward lateness.

While the politeness habits of the English use restraint that has been ingrained over time through (in 65% of cases) avoiding eye contact in overly familiar moments, knocking on the door 2-3 times before entering, and respecting The Holy Queue as a national identity; Americans step forward with friendly informal politeness, a wide smile that is easily produced and always ready, opening both arms wide for light small talk ("how's your day?", "nice weather, isn't it?"), and light physical touch (like a handshake (grip and release), a pat on the shoulder).

In contrast, while the slow evolution of English social interactions essentially consists of two people chatting about the weather/sports small talk: "lovely weather," "great match yesterday," before starting to touch on things like world politics or the alleged sexual preferences of Freddie Mercury, perhaps while enjoying some chips with mayonnaise during the weekly meeting at the pub (the same people every week from what he could see), Americans instead reveal their identities very quickly and directly launch into explicit self-promotion ("let me tell you all about my job") through LinkedIn, business cards, and professional events.

Discussion

These results are very consistent with Edward T. Hall's theory of high-context culture (Britain) (a theory that highlights contextual implications, nonverbal cues, and personal relationships) and low-context culture (America) that focuses on explicit information and efficient communication. This is supported by Hofstede Insights 2025 data: both countries have high individualism (UK: 89, US: 91), but the American uncertainty avoidance score is higher to reduce ambiguity (46 vs UK; 35). Americans are much less restrained than Britons in terms of indulgence (US Indulgence 68 vs UK with high restraint and low Indulgence 69), because Britons often keep their emotional matters private. History also explains these trends: British restraint, Victorian values, and etiquette established by the class system; the culture of queuing its very name refers to a time when wartime solidarity softened defeat in everyone's eyes as a polite legacy; while America remains honest and open as a melting pot of immigrants, with a dynamic frontier spirit and a Protestant work ethic that criminalizes inefficiency. The British queuing culture expresses a paradoxical social collectivism in one of the most individualistic societies, compared to the American ethos of "first-come, first-served," which prioritizes personal efficiency.

The core educational implications for Indonesian EFL students are: that cultural code-switching is relevant (indirectness + hedging when interacting with Britons [to avoid being perceived as "rude"], assertiveness + small talk with Americans [efficiency]), which is then replaced by nonverbal modification instructions (limited eye contact for Britons, abundant smiling for Americans). Curriculum Recommendations: incorporate role-play scenarios to

compare British pubs and American networking events, video analysis tasks on authentic vlogs from the target culture, and cultural etiquette modules into EFL textbooks for the Indonesian context. Limitations: small number of informants (n=15), online context (Zoom), and no direct fieldwork observation; future research should follow as immersive ethnography for 6 months in London and New York with shadowing of native speakers to verify more "authentic" interactions.

Conclusion

In accordance with the research problem formulation, this study satisfactorily demonstrates at four basic levels that there are significant differences in social habits between British and American societies regarding communication style (indirect-formal with hints vs direct-explicit with open praise), attitude toward time (moderate punctuality and patience in queues vs the absolute "time is money" ethos), manners and etiquette (traditional restraint light eye contact vs friendly-informal small talk), and finally social interaction patterns (slow small talk and pub meetings vs fast networking and self-promotion). Interviews with 15 expatriate informants, accompanied by the analysis of 12 authentic vlogs and a literature review of 30 peer-reviewed journals (2015–2026), confirm that English speakers are characterized by a high-context culture, which relies on contextual implications and social harmony, whereas Americans reflect a low-context culture oriented toward efficiency and individualism consistent with Edward T. Hall's theory and Hofstede's cultural dimensions (UK individualism: 89 vs. US: 91; UK uncertainty avoidance: 35 vs. US: 46). The significance of this study primarily lies in its effort to bridge the gap in intercultural communication research by directly linking these differences in social habits to the practical needs of English learners in Indonesia the desire to maintain contextual communicative competence, not merely linguistic competence, and most importantly, to reduce international misunderstandings thru cultural code-switching.

Suggestion

Based on the study's findings and limitations, there are four specific recommendations for further work related to housing outcomes. Development of field immersion ethnography for 6 months using shadowing techniques with native speakers in London and New York to validate actual usage patterns thru nonverbal behavior observation. Second, a large-scale quantitative survey a1415 of 500 Indonesian EFL students to measure cultural etiquette before and after the British-American role-play intervention. Third, the results were adapted into an AI algorithm-based digital EFL module that adjusts cultural code-switching exercises according to learner profiles (i.e., frequency of contact with native British vs. American speakers). Fourth, a regional comparative study comparing British-American and Southeast Asian (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand) cultural differences to examine the theme of local curriculum relevance while triangulating cultures in the context of ASEAN globalization. A practical educational recommendation is to integrate mandatory cultural etiquette modules in high schools using role-play scenario activities (British pub conversations vs. American networking events), authentic video vlog analysis thru YouTube, and the Metodic e-learning platform to train adaptation to the different nonverbal behaviors between the two cultures.

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