

6 Reasons American English Actually Makes Sense

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z89nVdfGw3s>

Transcript: <https://dontveter.com/ec/lostinthepond.americanenglish.pdf>

(A pond is a small, shallow lake. The “pond” here is the Atlantic Ocean between Britain and America. People who go back and forth a lot sometimes like to be cute and call it “the pond”).

(The English language has been changing in both Britain and America. People don't pay attention to the changes taking place in the other country. So, now, imagine that each country tries to send it's changes to English to the other country via messages (memos) on ships. And then the ships sink. So the messages (memos) are “Lost in the Pond”).

Hello, I'm Laurence, and I'm on a quest to uncover all of the memos that Britain and America lost in the pond and one of those memos pertains to English. (Also could be spelled Lawrence but check name on birth certificate.)

If you can understand the words that I'm saying now that means you have at least a decent grasp of English and Lawrence speak.

But one person's English, whether that be vocabulary, spelling or pronunciation might not be the same as your English and often differences like this lead people to be suspicious of the other person's English to somehow think, if only in a jovial manner, that their brand of English is inferior to mine.

A common example of this I have to concede is when some of my fellow Brits like to criticize or poke fun at American English and I have to admit when I was younger I was one of those Brits, but then I went to university and two things happened.

One, I interacted with American students and two, I did a useless degree in linguistics and took a module on English varieties, and after that my mind was open.

American English wasn't wrong, it was fascinating.

It's a variety of English whose story has often been lost to time because just as there are countless fascinating histories behind the words we use in Britain, the same is also true of the United States.

And so without further ado, here are six reasons that American English isn't wrong.

Definition of *ado* 1: heightened fuss or concern : TO-DOmuch *ado* about the need for reform

2: time-wasting bother over trivial details *wrote the paper without further ado*

3: TROUBLE, DIFFICULTYThe journey itself is not described; our heroes disembark *without ado* at Philadelphia. The longer that I do this channel, the more examples I discover of words or language concepts that we perceive to be American but actually originated in Britain

(There is a famous play by Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing.)

And on this subject I've talked extensively about soccer and aluminum but I think my favorite example is the word herb.

To us Brits, hearing Americans drop the h on the word herb can often feel weird but here's the thing, back in the day we used to do it, there was a slew of words that entered the English language via old French that incorporated a silent h. (was a slew of words → there were a lot of words)

This included honor, hour, hors d'oeuvre, and yes herb.

Hors d'oeuvre definition, a small bit of appetizing food, as spicy meat, fish, cheese, or a preparation of chopped or creamed foods, often served on crackers or small pieces of toast, for eating at cocktail parties or other gatherings where drinks are served with no other food.

But Brits just stopped pronouncing it herb in, I want to say the 19th century, because it was soon considered the way commoners spoke and the upper classes can't be having that, and so eventually in Britain it was dropped altogether.

And America, on the other side of the ocean, didn't get the memo and when it comes to this, there are actually two other things that make us Brits a little bit hypocritical when judging the American pronunciation of herb.

Firstly we're forever dropping h's, I mean. I don't know if you've noticed but recently, I've had an haircut that's northern for haircut.

And secondly, before we start handing out dictats on how to pronounce the letter h, some would suggest we might want to learn how to pronounce the word h. (dictats = orders about, from dictate, to order by a high government official, a dictator is the top guy)

Some, not me, I'm open to multiple interpretations, but the fact remains that in a dictionary the word h ends in an h but it doesn't start with one (aitch = a spelling of the letter, h).

Oh, and while we're on the subject of pronunciation, that brings us on to this.

You know in Britain, we're sometimes very quick to judge the way in which Americans pronounce words, maybe because it's so markedly different from the way we do.

But this hasn't always been the case now has it?

Because as many of my subscribers have asked me over the years "Lawrence is it true that features of American English are similar to the way in which people spoke in England in the 1600s?"

To some degree, yes. A good example of this is that back then most of Britain would have pronounced the r in words like card.

That linguistic phenomenon is known as rhoticity and is a large feature, of course, of American English today.

In Britain it still survives in pockets like in the southwest of England and also Scotland but it ceased to be a feature of British English in most other parts.

Obviously one of the big differences between our two forms of English is the way in which we spell words and maybe because most of American English derive from its British equivalent we in Britain feel almost duty-bound to voice our disapproval of how Americans spell words.

But I feel like we have to be careful about that, because there is in fact quite an orderly nature to a lot of American English spelling rules.

You know, I used this example the other day.

If you're ever confused as to why Americans use the suffix i-z-e as opposed to i-s-e then two things, that's not always the case, because secondly American English likes to distinguish between words that came from Greek and have the suffix i-z-e and words that came from old French that have the suffix i-s-e.

So in American English for every internalize you also have exercise.

In Britain, we tend to not make this distinction whether the word came from old French or Greek, it usually ends in ise and to me I'm perfectly fine with this as well.

Additionally, we like to be puzzled as to why Americans drop the u in words like colour and honour, but the truth is we actually did the initial change because in old French from which words like this derive, the words colour and honour were spelled just as they are now in an American dictionary (now color and honor in America).

One charge that I often hear get leveled at American English is that it doesn't have many kind of fantastical words like Britain does.

But having lived here for as long as I have, and crucially having done this channel, I've learned that America has coined some absolutely gorgeous words, some of which are used only in the United States, some of which are now archaic, and some of which actually made it to the rest of the English-speaking world.

So these words include snollygoster, cattywampus, fuddy-duddy, whangdoodle, pulchritudinous, honding, a doohickey, humdinger, valedictorian, lollapalooza, ornery, poppycock (not a British word), malarkey, cahoots, discombobulate, panhandle, conniption, and highfalutin.

Definition of *snollygoster*

US dialect

: a shrewd, unprincipled person Truman and Acheson seasoned their correspondence with perceptive comments about the major figures of the day. Truman lamented that Dwight Eisenhower had given in to congressional "snollygosters"—unprincipled politicians.

Catawampus

adjective: **askew; awry, positioned diagonally; cater-cornered.**

Adverb: diagonally; obliquely: *We took a shortcut and walked catawampus across the field.*

Definition of *fuddy-duddy*

: one that is old-fashioned, unimaginative, or conservative

Definition of whangdoodle

1a: an imaginary creature of undefined character

b: one that whangs especially : a person who loudly and angrily complains about things : RANTER

pulchritudinous

Even though it looks (and sounds) like it would describe a disease or a bad attitude, *pulchritudinous* actually describes a person of breathtaking, heartbreaking...beauty.

Doohickey *noun, plural doo·hick·eys. Informal.*

a gadget; dingus; thingamajig. (whatchamacallit)

Definition Of Humdinger:

- A striking or extraordinary person or thing. Example: That was one humdinger of a storm.
- Something striking or extraordinary.

Definition Of Valedictorian

- The student usually having the highest rank in a graduating class who delivers the valedictory address at the commencement exercises.
- A student usually of the highest standing in a class who gives the farewell speech at the graduation ceremonies.

Definition of lollapalooza

: one that is extraordinarily impressive; also : an outstanding example

Definition Of Ornery /Meaning

- Difficult to deal with or control. Example: An ornery mule.
- Becoming angry or annoyed easily.

Definition of poppycock

: empty talk or writing : NONSENSE

Definition of malarkey

: insincere or foolish talk : BUNKUM He thinks that everything politicians say is a bunch of malarkey.

Definition Of In Cahoots /Define

- Working together or making plans together in secret. Examples: I think those two are in cahoots . — usually + with. || He was robbed by a man who was in cahoots with the bartender

Definition of discombobulate

transitive verb

informal

: to cause to be in a state of confusion : UPSET, DISORIENT... inventing cool new ways to discombobulate the old order.— Kurt Andersen Executives of other NHL clubs are hopping mad

at St. Louis president Jack Quinn and general manager Ron Caron for once again discombobulating the NHL's salary structure.— Austin Murphy... his determination to discombobulate the bourgeoisie was not regarded as a joke.— George Levine

Definition Of Panhandle /Define

- A narrow projection of a larger territory (such as a state) Example: The Oklahoma Panhandle.
- To accost on the street and beg from.
- To get by panhandling.

Definition Of Conniption /Meaning

•A fit of rage, hysteria, or alarm. Examples: Went into conniptions. || He had a conniption when his favorite TV program was preempted by a political speech.

Definition of *highfalutin*

1: PRETENTIOUS, FANCYhighfalutin people

2: expressed in or marked by the use of language that is elaborated or heightened by artificial or empty means : POMPOUSgiving a highfalutin speech

Now sometimes, every now and again, I'll be on twitter (which was my first mistake) and someone will gain a lot of traction simply by saying "I hate the way Americans say soccer, it's football".

Now I'm not going to go over the fact again that the word soccer was in fact coined in Britain.

Instead I'm going to highlight a fact that many people just seem to forget, and that is that soccer isn't unique to American English.

The word is used in Canada, South Africa, Australia, Ireland and occasionally, England.

Between you and me, it's time we stop caring about this, especially since us Brits have been using American English all our lives.

You see, the thing is, the English language has a plethora of words that were coined in the United States, sadly plethora wasn't one of them.

In addition to the hundreds, if not thousands of technological words that the country has given us, it's also added gimmick, hangover, hassle, fudge, hindsight, lengthy, belittle, okay, and hello to name a few.

Definition Of Gimmick /Define

- A mechanical device for secretly and dishonestly controlling gambling apparatus.
- An ingenious and usually new scheme or angle. Example: Even in professional careers, mere competence and craftsmanship is no substitute for a gimmick .
- A trick or device used to attract business or attention. Example: A marketing gimmick.
- To alter or influence by means of a gimmick.
- To provide with a gimmick — often used with up

Definition Of Hassle /Define

- An annoying or troublesome concern. Examples: Avoid the hassle of filling out paperwork. || Flight delays and other hassles of holiday travel. || Too much of a hassle to bother with.
- Something that annoys or bothers Filling out these forms is a hassle .

- An argument or fight

Definition Of Fudge /Meaning

- To fail to perform as expected.
- Foolish nonsense — often used interjectionally to express annoyance, disappointment, or disbelief.
- A soft creamy candy made typically of sugar, milk, butter, and flavoring.
- Something that is fudged especially a bending of rules or a compromise.
- A soft creamy candy. Example: Chocolate fudge.

Definition Of Belittle /Define

- To cause (a person or thing) to seem little or less. Example: A curiosity so vast that it almost belittled the main matter.
- To make (a person or a thing) seem small or unimportant She belittled his efforts.

Language is ever evolving and whether we're talking about British, American, Australian, Canadian or New Zealand English, so long as we understand each other, that's all that matters.

Could you understand me throughout that? Right, we'll we'll do some retakes.

That's it for this episode, let me know in the comments below if this video was useful for you.

I'm Laurence Brown, you can follow me on twitter at [lostinthepondus](#) and don't forget to subscribe to my channel so that my videos don't get lost in the pond.

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Until the next video, goodbye.