FORM 4 – Culture Page 1

A. How well do you know American and British English differences? Complete the table below. Then rean the text and check your answers.

British English	American English	British English	American English
rubbish		chips	
	gas		trunk

B.

Which English do you speak?

Over 1 billion people speak English worldwide, either as a first or second language. It is the international language of communications, science, information technology, business, entertainment, radio and politics. This makes some people imagine that it is a single language, spoken in the same way throughout the world. However, there are many variations not only in pronunciation but also in spelling and vocabulary. Let's see what happens with British and American English.

From the 17th century people began travelling from Great Britain to North America to live, which is how the first form of American English began. Some English pronunciations and words have stayed the same in the US since their arrival, but in England they have changed over the years. This explains differences in English such as the word for the season 'fall' (AmE*) or 'autumn' (BrE*). The word 'fall' is in fact Old English and not a new 'Americanism'. The same is the case with the word 'trash' (the AmE word for 'rubbish'). The English of North America has also been influenced by the different European settlers that arrived from the 1600s. For example, the word 'boss' comes from Dutch.

Nowadays almost everyone has heard American English, through music on the radio and films or 'movies' at the cinema. This means that even if there are differences, most people are familiar with them. However, if you are not aware of these differences, some misunderstandings can occur. For example when it comes to cars and driving, British English speakers call the space for bags at the back of the car, the 'boot', and Americans call it the 'trunk'. A car that is driven with gears is called 'manual' (BrE) and 'stick' in the US. A British English speaker may find it funny to think of someone 'driving a stick'. In the UK, you fill a car with 'petrol' but in the US it's called 'gas'. A 'crosswalk' in the US is known as a 'zebra crossing' in the UK. Regarding food there are also several differences. For example a 'cookie' in the US is a 'biscuit' in the UK. Fried potatoes are 'chips' in British English and 'fries' in America. If you are British and you ask for 'chips' in the US, you'll get some 'crisps'.

So these differences may seem serious at first, but in actual fact they are unlikely to cause problems and are more amusing than confusing. The reality is that whatever English you speak you will be able to get by throughout the world because English is an international language and international English is replacing both American and British English.

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B. Read the text again and write T for True or F for False.

1. There are over 1 billion non-native speakers of English. ○
2. The pronunciation and vocabulary are not the only differences which exist between American and British English. ○
3. There are certain words which have changed in England but not in the US. ○
4. The word 'trash' comes from Dutch. ○
5. An American would laugh if someone told him that he drives a stick. ○
6. The word 'chips' exists in both British and American English, but has a different meaning. ○
7. It is difficult to communicate in the UK if you do not speak British English. ○

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