

Brits and Americans

The Transcript

Ever been on vacation maybe chatting with someone and a simple word like “router” just sounds totally off. It's like wait a minute... are we even speaking the same language?

It's so strange, right?

It is strange. It's English, but it's not quite right and that's what we're diving into today this whole American versus British English thing Why are there so many differences? It's fascinating.

Absolutely, yeah.

And to help us navigate this linguistic maze, we have the amazing language coach Christine Burgmer with us. She hears these transatlantic tongue twisters all the time and she had a really interesting social media post that kind of highlighted some of the words that really make us stop and think, “Am I saying that right?”

It makes you question everything you thought you knew.

It really does. So whether you are a complete language nerd, love travelling and picking up on these little differences or you just you know you're curious about why we can't agree on how to say “herb” right, this one's for you. So let's jump in. What I found so interesting, and you touched on this a little bit, is that it's not really about right or wrong is it?

No, no, absolutely not. And this is what I think is so cool about it.

Yeah.

It's almost like, I think the term is like divergent evolution.

Okay.

Where it's like, you know, we had this one common linguistic ancestor.

Like Darwin's finches, but with accents.

Exactly. Yeah, exactly. And over time because they've been geographically separated. They've had different influences They've kind of branched off and they've evolved in different ways. So that's why we get these different pronunciations today.

That makes so much sense. Okay, so when Christine points out, you know the difference between how Americans and Brits say "router", it's not just some random quirk. It's actually like a signpost of this linguistic journey that we've been on.

Yeah, exactly, and the other thing to remember as well is it's not even just as simple as these two big branches, right? I mean even within the US right, you've got southern accents. You've got New England accents and then you come to Britain and you've got the Queen's English. You've got Scottish. It's just it creates this massive tapestry of different sounds.

It's mind-blowing when you actually stop and think about it.

It is.

Another one that Christine mentioned, and I've always been curious about this one, is the word "herb".

What is going on there?

Well, so "herb" is particularly interesting particularly if any of our listeners are, you know interested in food and cooking. Because often with culinary traditions, they really hold on to you know, older forms of language and pronunciations. So when you hear, you know, our British friends saying "herb" with that "H," that's actually closer to how it would be pronounced, you know centuries ago.

Oh, so I'm hearing like echoes of history every time someone says "herb" with the "H."

It's like a little time capsule like a linguistic time capsule.

It's fascinating So I think the takeaway here is that language is alive. It's constantly evolving and changing. It's not this fixed thing It's always reflecting the people who are speaking it, their history, their journeys. It's pretty amazing when you think about it. So next time you are chatting with someone, maybe they have a different accent. Really listen to how they say things because you might just hear a little echo of the past in there.

I love that.

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