

British English or American English vocabulary?

A sociolinguistic study of Swedish upper secondary school pupils' choice of vocabulary and their attitude towards the two language varieties

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Abstract

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Title:	British English or American English vocabulary? A sociolinguistic study of Swedish upper secondary school pupils' choice of vocabulary and their attitude towards the two language varieties.
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Purpose:	To examine Swedish upper secondary pupils' use of American and British lexemes and their attitudes towards the two language varieties.
Method:	A quantitative study of pupils' use of American and British lexemes in a questionnaire and a qualitative study of their attitude and reasons for choosing one of the two varieties.
Material:	70 pupils' answers to a questionnaire.
Main results:	A majority (70-80%) of the pupils preferred American English. Boys favored American English slightly more than girls did. A difference between the two school areas was that more pupils from the affluent school chose AmE words than the pupils at the less affluent school. The pupils were generally more positive towards the variety they had chosen.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Aims	4
3. Background	5
3.1 British English and American English	5
3.2 The situation in Sweden	6
3.3 The National Agency for Education's goals	7
4. Previous research	8
4.1 Standard English	9
4.2 Overt and covert prestige	10
4.3 Active and passive vocabulary	11
5. Method and materials	11
6. Results and discussion	14
6.1 Choice of variety in Part 1	14
6.2 Choice of variety in Part 2.....	16
6.3 A comparison between the girls' and the boys' answers	17
6.4 A comparison between the two schools	19
6.5 Attitudes towards the two varieties	21
7. Conclusion	22
8. References	24
9. Appendix	25
9.1 Questionnaire	25

1. Introduction

English is spoken as a mother tongue by more than 300 million people. It is also spoken every day as a second language in education, science, business, aviation, entertainment, diplomacy and on the Internet. Modern English is sometimes described as the world lingua franca and is considered by many to become the world's first universal language.

Traditionally, European pupils have learnt Received Pronunciation and British English vocabulary, Preisler (1999:239) argues. Until 1945, Standard British English was the teaching norm at European Universities and the teaching of English is still to a large extent based on Received Pronunciation and Standard British English although other varieties, especially American English has become more popular since then. Today's Swedish television has a great number of American movies and TV-shows and the pupils are surrounded by English music, TV, computer games etc after they have finished their school day. As a result, Swedish pupils are considered to speak English very well compared to pupils from other nationalities.

2. Aims

The purpose of this study is to find out whether Swedish upper secondary school pupils prefer to use British English vocabulary (BrE) or American English vocabulary (AmE) and to what extent they favor to do so. Can we claim that although the pupils are influenced by American English in their spare-time, they speak British English since they are more influenced by the teaching in school and its vocabulary and homework than television and music? Is there any difference between the boys and girls in the likelihood of speaking British or American English? How do the pupils perceive the status of the two varieties and what are their attitudes towards them?

The results are analyzed and compared as regards: 1) number of pupils who choose either of the two varieties, 2) gender, 3) school area and 4) attitudes towards British and American English. Varieties that were included in the study were British English and American English which is due to the fact that my

experience from teacher's practice in schools is that the majority of the pupils speak either American or British English. This is also the impression my fellow teacher trainees have as well as the pupils' teachers where the study was conducted.

The following questions are examined in this essay.

- Do Swedish upper secondary school pupils prefer to use British English or American English and to what extent?
- Is there any gender difference that can be related to the extent to which either of the two English varieties is used?
- Is there any social class difference that can be related to the extent of which either of the two varieties is used?
- What are the pupils' attitudes towards the two language varieties?

3. Background

3.1 British English and American English

English is spoken as a mother tongue by more than 300 million people but it is also spoken every day as a second language in education and business. English pronunciation varies a great deal, as noted by Svartvik and Sager (2005:2), and is perhaps what differs mostly whereas English grammar is very consistent and homogenous, something that might be surprising since so many people worldwide speak English. The lexicon of the language is fairly similar as well although people from the two geographic areas use diverse vocabulary and slang. David Crystal (2005:308) points out how the lexemes from the two regions can be classified into different categories. To begin with there are examples of two words that have a single meaning, e.g. *sweets* which is called *candy* in America. There are also cases in which the same word is used in both countries but with different meanings, for instance the word *caravan* which is used in both AmE and BrE but with different meanings, that is to say that the word *caravan* means "a vehicle towed by a car" in Britain whereas a *caravan* is "a group of people that travel

through a desert” in AmE. Another category of words are the words that are used more frequently in BrE than in AmE and vice versa although they have the same meaning, for example *shop* versus *store*. Since word classes like “nouns” are open, new vocabulary is coined all the time, whenever a new word or expression is needed.

3.2 The situation in Sweden

Swedes live in an information society and the media is an important part of everybody’s lives and especially youngsters’ lives. Nordicom-Sverige (2005:25) has conducted research on how many minutes Swedish youngsters spend using the media everyday. The average Swedish youngster aged 15-24 spent 341 minutes everyday, using the media in some way or the other. (The media in this case is TV, DVDs, Radio, CDs, books, the Internet.) It turned out that the typical teenager watched television for 102 minutes and listened to the radio for 81 minutes. We can therefore state that the average upper secondary school pupil is in contact with the media more than five hours a day and that the media is an integrated part of youngsters’ everyday lives.

Foreign films and TV-shows are showed with subtitles in Sweden compared to many other countries where the speech is dubbed. Due to the increased interest in computers and the fact that it is so easy to download movies and TV-shows, many pupils are likely to watch plenty of movies and TV-shows in English, even without Swedish subtitles. Pupils who have cable TV or satellite TV might also watch English TV-programs without subtitles. Music that is played on the radio is predominantly in English and Swedish singers often sing in English instead of Swedish. Depending on the interests of the pupil, he or she can be in contact with English to a great extent after school. The spare-time interests of the pupil are therefore likely to influence his or her English.

3.3 The National Agency for Education's goals

According to recent goals set by the National Agency of Education (Skolverket:2007)¹, pupils should be able to understand the content of speech or a text when they listen to, and read BrE and AmE as well as other regional dialects. The National Agency for Education states the goals pupils in Swedish upper secondary school should attain on the A-level course and the B-level course. The A-level course is a broad compulsory course for all pupils and is followed by the B-course which is obligatory as well. According to these goals the pupils should be able to understand speech from different regions and depending on how well they understand the message of the speech, the better the grade. Here is a goal that pupils should have attained on completion of the A-course.

The pupil should:

- "...understand clearly enunciated speech from different regions, on subjects which are not entirely unfamiliar".

In order to pass the pupil must, among other things:

- "...understand the contents of regional English where the language is spoken at a relaxed tempo in everyday situations."

But to pass with distinction they must:

- "...understand the main features and most of the details of clearly spoken regional speech."

The same goals go for the B-level as well where the pupils should be able to understand regional speech when it is spoken clearly. To pass with distinction he or she must understand regional speech when it is spoken rapidly.

The objective of the courses is that the pupils should be able to understand people speaking with a regional dialect but they do not have to be able to distinguish between the two varieties or only use one of them (Skolverket 2007).

¹ In Swedish *The National Agency of Education* is called *Skolverket* and henceforward it will occasionally be referred to as *Skolverket*.

4. Previous research

The Danish Professor of English, Bent Preisler (1999:244-245) has conducted extensive research on the Danish population where he studied their attitudes and knowledge of English as a foreign language. His results confirmed earlier studies, that the ability to use and understand English is important in subcultural groups and, in fact, a status symbol. One example of a cultural group can be those youths that are interested in computers or hip-hop dancing. The activities pupils take part in during their spare-time can influence the importance of knowing English and what kind of English they learn. Preisler's study showed among other things that pupils who were interested in classical music, horseback riding or played golf were more likely to speak BrE whereas those who liked hip-hop music and played computer games were more likely to speak AmE. In the present study an attempt is made to find out whether those results are valid for the informants of this investigation. Classical music, horseback riding and golf are traditionally considered to be upper-middle class or upper-class activities. Tricia Hedge (2000:22-23) points out that there are several reasons why a pupil wants to learn English and these motivations are crucial for how the pupil acquires the English language. Their motivations will affect their willingness and attitudes when it comes to learning the new language.

The French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu studied how children are formed into and adapt to one part of the class system (see, for example, Bourdieu 1977, 1984 and 1990). He believes that social and economic conditions are basic means that form the individual's *habitus* which is like a mental map from which the person understands and interprets the world. Thus, habitus influences the way a person acts in everyday situations but also her language, carriage and taste. We can claim that the perception about us or our habitus is dependent on our position in the social hierarchy. Bourdieu's definition of capital is much vaster than the usual economic definition of capital and according to him, there are four important kinds of capital. To begin with, economic capital (money, property) which makes it possible for a family to move to an affluent area where the school has a good reputation. The status from economic capital will by implication raise the status of the nearby school but furthermore, the children in school will

internalize values that belong to the cultural capital, for example, “legitimate” knowledge and “legitimate” taste related to art, education and language etc. The education system encourages some ways of speaking and interests that the dominant society considers desirable according to Bourdieu. In school, the children make friends with other kids from privileged families. These contacts can in the future be a springboard for the child’s career and these social connections therefore belong to the third type of capital, social capital. When some positions associated with honour, prestige and status have been reached in society we can say that the fourth capital, which is called the symbolic capital, has been reached. Symbolic capital is prestige, status and honour in relation to the acquirement of one or more of the previous capitals. In order to gain symbolic capital, other people must accept and acknowledge your capital and find it legitimate. The different forms of capital influence the family members and the children are, as a result, raised into the same social class as their parents (see Bourdieu 1990:111-115).

4.1 Standard English

There is a notion in people’s mind that a way of speaking English is prestigious and correct, Bex and Watts argue in their introduction to *Standard English: the widening debate* (1999:7). In the same volume Preisler (1999:264) states that the two dominating standard forms that are taught in schools are Standard British English and, in recent years, Standard American English. The form that is being taught in schools depends on the country’s previous relationship with Britain or the USA. In Sweden, Standard British English has been dominant although AmE is increasing and is very influential in the media. Preisler (1999:264) thinks that it is important that pupils learn to distinguish between AmE and BrE which are the two varieties most Swedish pupils come in contact with, particularly when it comes to lexis and the cultural characteristics associated with it.

The notion of a Standard Language is based on the idea that language is invariable and that has been criticized by many linguists according to Preisler (1999:239) who himself believes that Standard English is a myth since there are so many varieties of English. Milroy (1999:27) points out that uniformity is

valued so highly in standard languages that the consequence turns out to be that nobody actually speaks a standard language but instead a vernacular that is either close to or distant from the standard norms.

European teaching is still based upon Received Pronunciation and Standard British English although there have been some changes since the influx of American English according to Preisler (1999:239,246). BrE still remains dominant in teaching but it is no longer the case that pupils learn English exclusively from education in school. It is most likely the case that the Southern English accent is used by a majority of English teachers in Sweden (Skolverket 2001:14). RP remains the model accent but whether it is still the most prestigious accent among the pupils remains to be seen.

4.2 Overt and covert prestige

According to classical sociolinguistics, Standard English has overt prestige and is the English that people who speak non-standard English try to accommodate to in formal situations or in situations when they consider it to be suitable. Hudson (1996:240,210-211) points out that Standard English is a dialect that is associated with the rich and powerful people and naturally, the very fact that it is spoken by the powerful has influenced its becoming a standard language.

According to Hudson (1996:209-211) a language or dialect can be evaluated, and people evaluate other people's characteristics according to their experiences of the dialect a person is speaking. That is to say, the characteristics of a dialect inherit the evaluation of the stereotype. A person who speaks an overtly prestigious dialect is often perceived as cold, unfriendly and unreliable by local people in lower social classes who speak a covert prestige dialect but, he/she is also often perceived as more educated and intelligent and economic benefits often accrue to those who speak an overtly prestigious dialect. Those who speak a local dialect, on the other hand, may be perceived as uneducated, unintelligent and rough by the higher social classes but in addition to this, more relaxed and friendly.

Many studies have shown that women use an overtly prestigious dialect more often than men do. Since the same results have come up in so many different studies, it is considered to be one of the most robust findings of sociolinguistics

according to Hudson (1996:194). Many scholars have tried to explain this fact, but no one has succeeded fully. It seems that women are more attracted to “the sophisticated”, which is associated with a standard dialect, than men are. They try to speak a standard prestige form and they believe that they speak a standard prestige form. Men, on the other hand, seem to be more attracted to “the rough”, which is associated with a non-standard dialect as noted by Hudson (1996:193-199). They believe that they speak a non-standard dialect and try to speak a non-standard dialect. This corresponds, to various degrees, to men and women in all social classes. According to Aitchison (2001:71-73), Trudgill has suggested a possible reason for this phenomenon. The reason is that women are more conscious of status than men are and that they are more aware of the status of speech. A non-standard dialect that has covert prestige is often associated with toughness and roughness, which are masculine attributes. Most women are not striving to speak in this non-standard masculine way, but are instead trying to *speak better*, which is associated with a standard prestige form.

4.3 Active and passive vocabulary

According to Hedge (2000:116-117), learners of a second language know vocabulary actively or passively. The knowledge of vocabulary ranges from recognition of a word to automatic production of words. Passive vocabulary is vocabulary that the learners recognise when they encounter it but cannot produce themselves in speaking or writing. Some words will never become part of the active use but remain passive. Another difficulty with vocabulary acquisition is that we tend to forget words that are not encountered or used frequently.

5. Method and materials

The classes that were chosen for this investigation studied the English A-course or the B-course at the Esthetic program which focuses on dance, music, theater or they studied at the Social Science program. Classes from two upper secondary schools in socially and economically different neighborhoods took part in the study. The first school is situated in a wealthy residential area of terraced houses

and many of its pupils come from native Swedish middle and upper-class families with a relatively good economy. This school, henceforth called School A, is considered by many to be prestigious.

The second school, School B, is situated in a suburb which is regarded as less prestigious in the outskirts of Göteborg. A majority of the pupils live in apartment buildings. The school has had troubles enrolling pupils and has therefore made some pedagogical changes, that is to say, the school now uses Problem Based Learning. PBL is a pedagogical method where the pupils pose their own questions and find the answers to those questions by working together as a group with support from a teacher.

After material concerning the research had been studied, a questionnaire was put together with questions related to the material. First, a pilot study was carried out with 8 pupils in one school. Their answers were checked and some questions changed. In the pilot study, all the questions were posed in English but this was changed since not all pupils felt comfortable about reading and answering the final questions in English. The aim of the study was not to study the pupils' knowledge of English, but rather their choice and attitude to the two varieties and because of this, the questions at the end of the questionnaire were posed in Swedish. After those changes, the empirical material consisted of 70 pupils' answers to the questionnaire. The pupils answered the questions anonymously but were asked to write down if they were a boy or a girl. The number of pupils that took part is shown in the table below:

Table 5a: Number of participants that took part in the study

	School A:	School B:	Total:
Number of boys:	28	2	30
Number of girls:	14	26	40
Total:	42	28	70

In the questionnaire the pupils were asked to choose between two synonymous words, one American and one British and out of those two, circle the word they found that they recognized the most and would use themselves when speaking or writing.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts where the first part was a short story where some nouns had been left out and replaced by two synonymous nouns (one AmE and one BrE) that the pupil could choose from. They were, for example, asked to choose either AmE *gas station* or BrE *petrol station*. Two of the words left out were replaced with nouns spelt in the typically British or American fashion e.g. BrE *theatre* or AmE *theater*. The *-er* versus *-re* ending is one common difference in spelling between BrE and AmE.

The second part consisted of six pictures that showed different things, and below the pictures two synonymous words were written for the pupil to choose from, for example, one picture showed Sw. *godis* and the pupil could choose to circle which word they would use, thus either *candy* (AmE) or *sweets* (BrE).

The third part consisted of questions that were put together in order to investigate possible reasons for differences in their answers. The questions asked were for instance about their spare time interests and their experiences of learning English. This last part of the questionnaire was therefore analyzed qualitatively and the pupils' answers were compared to the results in the quantitative study. The results and answers were evaluated according to previous theories (see section 4).

The words that the pupils got to choose from in this study are likely to be part of the passive use of many pupils. Some of the pupils recognise the words while others know more precisely their meaning and are able to use them actively when they speak or read. This was a reason for showing the words and letting the pupils choose one of them instead of only letting them look at a picture and say, without any help, what was shown in the picture. It is possible to argue that the questionnaire gives away too much and leads the pupils to answer in some way or the other, but the intention of the questionnaire was not to check how much English upper secondary Swedish pupils have in their active vocabulary but whether they prefer American or British words that they encounter.

This study is quite small compared to many other studies, something that must be kept in mind. The number of pupils is too low for the results to be counted as statistically secure, but nevertheless, the results might give a clue to the reality of the situation. There are other aspects that could be investigated further, for instance the correlation between pronunciation and choice of vocabulary or the choice of grammar. Due to the limited scope of the present study, grammar and partially pronunciation were left out from the research.

6. Results and discussion

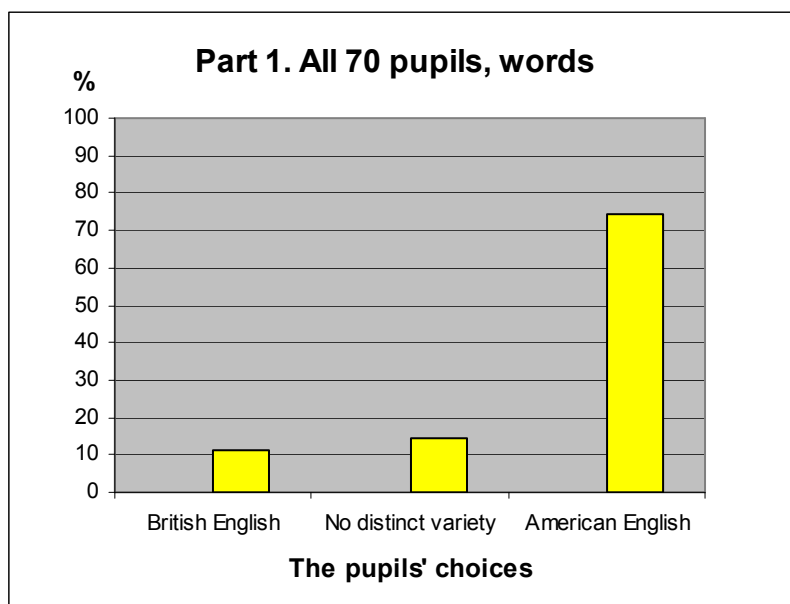
Seventy pupils from two upper secondary schools in different areas filled in the questionnaire. The first two parts of the questionnaire were put into bar charts, compared and analyzed. In this section, the results are presented and discussed according to gender, school area and attitudes towards the two English varieties. First of all, the main result is presented to answer the question of which variety Swedish upper secondary school pupils prefer.

6.1 Choice of variety in Part 1

The statistics showed that the majority of the pupils chose AmE words to a greater extent than BrE words. Only a minority of the pupils, 11% (or 8 pupils)², chose more BrE words than AmE ones. It was found when the questionnaires were studied more closely that those who chose AmE words did so more distinctly, that is, they chose a higher percentage of AmE words than those who chose BrE words. As many as 19 pupils had chosen eight AmE words or more out of the ten possible in Part 1, whereas only one pupil had chosen eight British words out of ten possible. In other words, those pupils who chose AmE words were more consistent in their choice.

² **Pupils** will henceforth be abbreviated to **p**.

Table 6a: The pupils' choices in Part 1



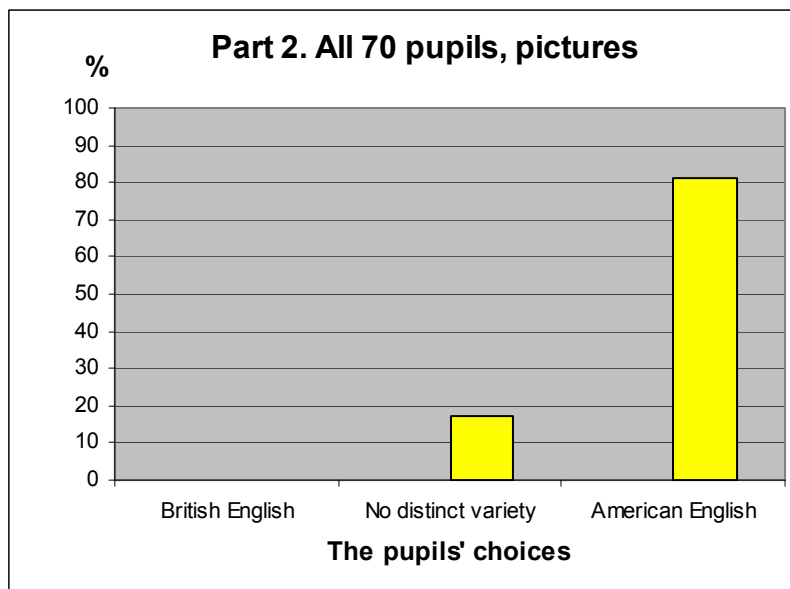
The results above show that only 11% (8 p) of the pupils had more BrE words than AmE words in the first part of the questionnaire compared to 74% (52 p) who had a majority of AmE words. 14% (10 p) had chosen five BrE words and five AmE words. These pupils are shown in the column with *No distinct variety*. We can see clearly from these results that the pupils have been more influenced by American English than they have been influenced by British English. One reason is that they are more exposed to AmE from the media, TV-shows and movies than they are from BrE, which is only taught in school to many pupils. Another possible reason is that they find AmE more cool or powerful i.e., AmE might have a higher status in these classes than BrE does.

Preisler's studies showed that English is a status symbol in many sub-cultural groups and that the pupils will learn a way of speaking depending on what sub-cultural groups they take part in and what interests they have in their spare-time. Many pupils are included in sub-cultural groups and it is most likely the case that AmE is a prestigious variety in many of these groups. For example, many pupils are interested in computer games and are therefore included in a sub-cultural group, and their English is influenced by the American English that is used in those games apart from the AmE in the media.

6.2 Choice of variety in Part 2

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of pictures showing different things. Beneath the pictures were two synonymous words, one British and one American. One picture, for instance, showed *candy* or *sweets* and the pupils were to circle the word they would use or recognized mostly (see the questionnaire in the appendix). Table 6b shows the result from all the pupils that filled in the second part.

Table 6b: The pupils' choices in Part 2



The majority of the pupils preferred AmE words and circled these. Out of the 70 pupils, only one person favored BrE words whereas 81% (57 p) preferred American words. For 17% (12 p) of the pupils, half of the words were British and half American ones, as can be seen in the column *No distinct variety*.

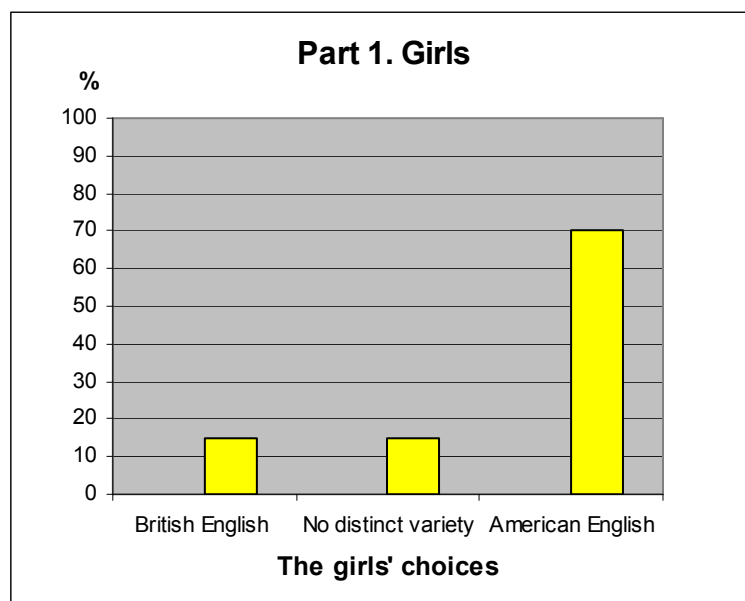
The results in Part 2 varied slightly from the results in Part 1. 74% (52 p) preferred American words in Part 1 whereas 81% (57 p) preferred American words in Part 2. 11% (8 p) preferred British words in Part 1 but only one pupil (less than one percent) preferred British words in Part 2. From conversations with the pupils it became clear that they found Part 1 more difficult than Part 2 and it was also clear that some of them did not completely understand the two words

they should choose from in Part 1. On the other hand, nobody seemed to have problems with Part 2 since every pair of words had a picture, which made it easier for them to answer, but most likely also because they had been more exposed to those words. Certainly, the words in the first part of the questionnaire belonged to the pupils' passive vocabulary (see Hedge 2000). They had not been exposed enough to those words to have a clear understanding of its meanings. The second part had more common words that most likely belonged to the pupils' active vocabulary. This is a possible explanation to the fact that the number of pupils who preferred AmE increased in Part 2 whereas those who preferred BrE decreased.

6:3 A comparison between the girls' and the boys' answers

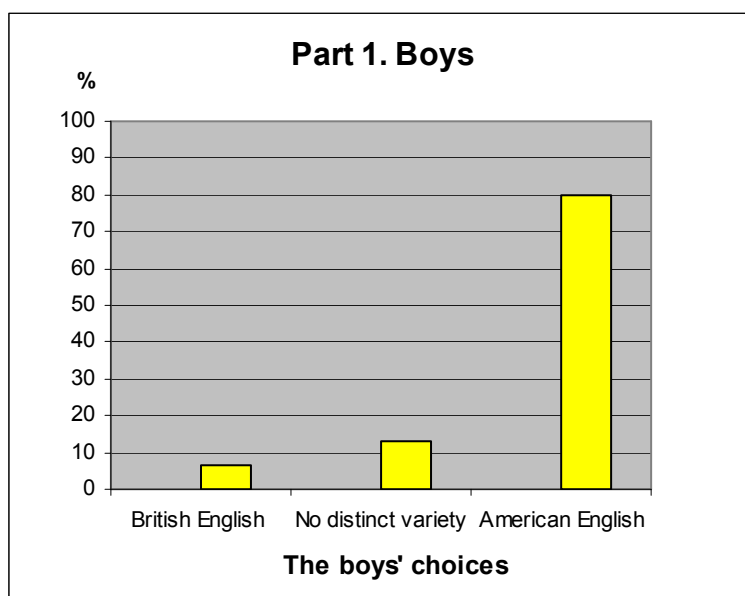
One of the aims of the study was to research whether there would be any differences in the answers according to gender. 70 pupils filled in the first part of the questionnaire. Of those 70 pupils, 40 pupils were girls and 30 boys. Here are the results from the comparison that was made between the sexes, shown in separate bar charts.

Table 6c: The girls' choices in Part 1



15% (6 p) of the girls selected BrE synonyms and 15% (6 p) selected equal numbers of BrE and AmE words. 70% (28 p) of the girls favored AmE. Table 6d below shows the boys' choices in Part 1.

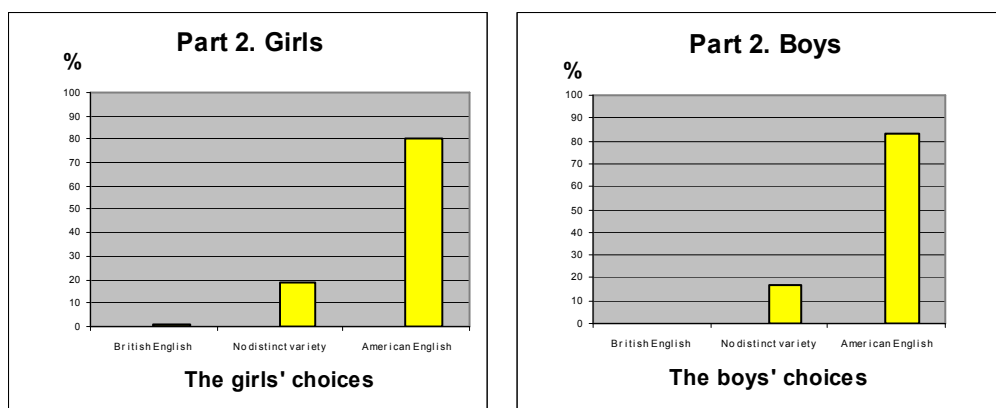
Table 6d: The boys' choices in Part 1



The statistics from the boys show that 7% (2 p) chose BrE, 13% (4 p) no distinct variety whereas 80% (24 p) chose AmE synonyms. The results show that the two groups preferred AmE but that the boys did so to a greater extent. The boys who had chosen more BrE words had done so less distinctly than the girls, which means that they had chosen fewer British words than the girls who also favored British vocabulary. The result also showed that six of the eight pupils who preferred BrE vocabulary were girls. The pupil who had picked eight British words out of ten possible was a girl from a Social Studies class.

There were only minor differences between the girls' and the boys' choices in Part 2 compared to the answers in Part 1. One small difference was that the boys preferred AmE vocabulary somewhat more. Table 6e and 6f below show the results from Part 2.

Table 6e and 6f: The girls' choices and the boys' choices in Part 2

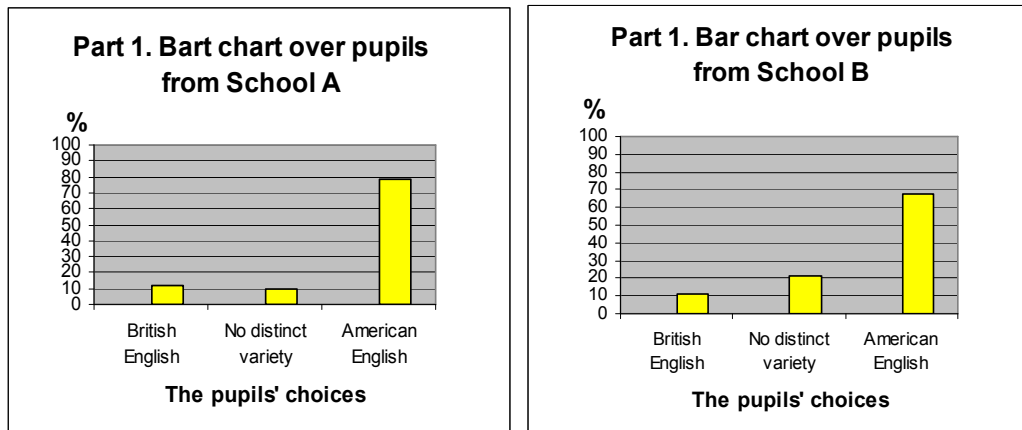


It is likely that BrE still, to some extent, has an impression of being more formal and therefore has an overt prestige. Previous sociolinguistic studies have proved that most women wish to speak an overtly prestigious dialect. The results in the present study show that girls may be more appealed by the overt prestige that BrE is associated with. AmE, on the other hand, seems less formal, or as many pupils explained it, more natural and cooler. AmE is associated with modernity, but American action movies has also given AmE the image of being cool, rough and tough, characteristics that according to previous sociolinguistic theories are associated with men and masculinity. Very few boys chose BrE words and those who did, did so more irregularly than the girls.

6.4 A comparison between the two schools

The results from all pupils' in Part 1 were compiled and put into two separate bar charts, shown in table 6g and 6h, in order to compare the two different schools. The results showed that 79% (33p) of the pupils from School A preferred AmE compared to School B where 68% (19p) favored AmE. Almost the same percentage of pupils from the two schools chose BrE, (12% (5p) in School A compared to 11% (3p) in School B). 10% (4p) chose *no distinct variety* of words in School A whereas 21% (6p) did so in School B. The results are shown in the two bar charts below.

Table 6g and 6h: The pupils' choices at School A and at School B



According to Preisler's study of Danish students, pupils from more affluent areas with more prestigious spare-time interests are more likely to speak BrE. Pierre Bourdieu's theories which include the concept of habitus (a mental map that influences the way a person acts in everyday situations, her language, carriage and taste) and the notion that people adapt to and are raised into a social class with certain values would also suggest this result. In this study however, a higher percentage chose AmE in affluent School A than in School B. Therefore, Preisler's result did not correspond to the results in this study. This result was quite unexpected, especially since School B has Problem Based Teaching, which means that they are freer in their learning of the English language. One possible reason for this result could be that AmE has become more associated with career, money, power, etc, than BrE. Many pupils seem to find British English to sound more educated and polite, and this is perhaps not as desirable any longer for many upper-class pupils.

The study also showed that a lower percentage, 10% (4p), from School A chose no distinct variety of English compared to 21% (6p) on School B. A possible reason is that the pupils from School A have perhaps made a conscious decision of how they wish to speak and how they want to be perceived by others, since they are more consistent in their choice of variety.

6.5 Attitudes towards the two varieties

Near the end of the questionnaire, some questions were asked in order to investigate the pupils' perceptions and attitudes towards the two English varieties.

Most pupils wrote that they preferred to speak AmE, since it sounded more natural to them and flowed more easily. Many of them said explicitly that they preferred the American way of speaking and that they liked the pronunciation better. The reason they gave was that since they watch American movies, it is easier to relate to and understand AmE. A few pupils thought that BrE sounded uglier than AmE, corny or somehow unnatural. One pupil wrote: "I think the Britain people are boring. The USA is just more modern in a childish way". In general, those who had chosen American vocabulary in the texts were more positive to AmE.

Many of the pupils who chose BrE had family or friends from another English speaking country than the US, for example Britain or Canada. Some of them also said explicitly that they wanted to speak BrE since they thought it sounded nicer and more gentlemanly. One girl thought that BrE had a beautiful tone, something she was very fond of.

The 38% of the pupils (3p of 8p) who preferred British vocabulary answered that they had had teachers that did not accept AmE words or pronunciation during their teaching. In contrast, only 17% (9p of 52p) of those who preferred AmE words had had a teacher that did not accept American vocabulary or pronunciation.

According to Preisler's study, the spare-time interests that the pupils take part in after school affect which variety of English they learn. This small study corresponded to his results, in that those who played computer games, downloaded movies and material from the Internet or enjoyed watching TV, in general preferred AmE. Another noticeable result from this study was that those who wrote that they enjoyed shopping (a considerable number of girls) were well represented among the AmE vocabulary users.

The stereotypical pupil who preferred BrE had some connection to another English speaking country than the USA. Three of them enjoyed listening to classical music and another three played one or two instruments. None of the pupils who preferred BrE enjoyed shopping.

7. Conclusion

The results from the study confirmed that a vast majority of the pupils would choose and felt most familiar with AmE vocabulary since 74% chose AmE words in Part 1 and 81% did so in Part 2. The variety that seemed to have the higher status was AmE and most pupils thought that this variety sounded most natural and was the easiest to understand. Swedish pupils are influenced by and exposed to the language in the media, principally AmE, and this is one possible explanation to the result.

The comparison between the genders showed that both boys and girls preferred AmE but it also showed that boys did so to a greater extent than girls. 70% of the girls favored AmE words in contrast to the boys where 80% favored AmE words. According to previous theories, BrE has an overt prestige which is something that appeals to girls; whereas boys are attracted to the roughness associated with a covert prestige, in this case AmE which is associated with masculinity.

A comparison was also made between the two socially different school areas in which the study was conducted. It quite surprisingly turned out that the pupils from School A chose AmE words slightly more often than the pupils at School B. According to previous research (see Preisler 1999), BrE has more of an overt prestige and is therefore coveted by the upper-class society. This study did not correspond to that theory, but instead AmE seemed to have become a more sought-after variety among upper-class pupils. The pupils' answers indicated that they associate AmE with money, power and modernity whereas BrE is associated with education and manners, qualities that only a handful of the pupils coveted. The average pupils who chose BrE had family or friends from another English speaking country than the USA. They also shared other interests than those who chose AmE, something that corresponded to Preisler's earlier studies. Many of these pupils listened to classical music or played one or two instruments.

Hedge (2000) points out that the pupils' motivation is crucial for the learning of a new language. The motivation comes from the reasons for why a pupil wants to learn the language and these reasons influence what the pupil picks up during a lesson and in the spare-time. Teachers can have an influence on the motivation, for example by making the pupils more aware of their reasons for

learning English or by making the lessons interesting and fun. How much the teachers of the classes in the present study had made an influence on the pupils' learning of either English variety will remain unsaid, nevertheless, when the answers to the questions were compared to the results of the study in Part 1 and 2, it gave the impression that many of the pupils had made a choice in which variety they wanted to speak since they thought that that variety sounded nicer, more natural, and found it easier to understand.

This study is small, and the results are therefore not statistically secure, but nevertheless, they might give a hint at which variety Swedish upper secondary pupils prefer to use as well as their attitudes towards BrE and AmE. The status of a variety is dependent on many small influences in the society, and the variety that Swedish pupils prefer to use today might not be the one they choose tomorrow.

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9. Appendix

9.1 Questionnaire

Hej! Jag heter Charlotte och skriver C-uppsats i engelska. Ämnet för uppsatsen är om ni gymnasieelever helst använder brittiskengelska ord eller amerikanska ord. Därför kommer ni nu att få **stryka under** det ordet som ni tycker att ni känner igen mest och helst använder. Det ena alternativet är amerikansk engelska och det andra är brittisk engelska. På slutet kommer lite övriga frågor. Undersökningen är anonym men jag vill gärna veta om du är:

Kille eller Tjej (stryk under)

Tack på förhand!

1.

Last week I went to London by car. As there was an accident on the M25 I had to take the **detour/ diversion**. I stopped in front of a **theatre /theater** to ask for the way. A young man told me to turn right at the **intersection** and ask again at the **gas station/petrol station**. There a friendly **shop assistant /salesclerk** told me to take the second exit of the **traffic circle/roundabout**. After I had passed a **crosswalk /zebra crossing** I saw a **bookstore/ bookshop** and a large **car park /parking lot**. I parked my car there and walked to the **subway/ underground** to get to the **center/centre** of London.

2.

What is shown in the pictures and which word would you use? Underline your choice.



Nail varnish or nail polish?



Autumn or fall?



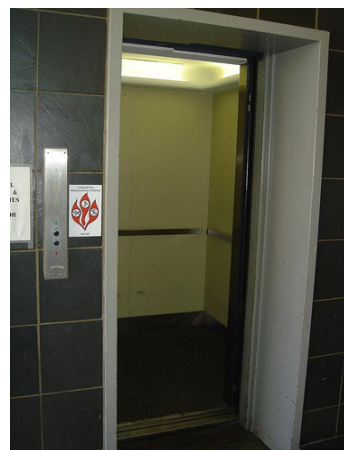
Sidewalk or pavement?



Notice board or bulletin board?



Sweets or candy?



Elevator or lift?

Stryk under eller skriv in ditt svar på följande frågor:

1. Hör du skillnad på brittisk engelska och amerikansk engelska?

Ja Nej Vet inte

2. Har du någon gång rest eller bott i ett engelsktalande land? Ja

Nej

a) Om du har det, vilket land då och hur länge?

3. Var skulle du kunna tänka dig att bo under en tid? Varför?

a) Storbritannien

b) USA

c) Annat engelskspråkigt land

d) Inget

Ange vilket:

4. Har du någonsin haft en engelsklärare som inte accepterat amerikanska ord eller amerikansk uttal?

Ja Nej Vet inte

5. Har du någon gång haft en engelsklärare som pratat amerikansk engelska?

Ja Nej Vet inte

6. Vilka tycker du bäst om? Varför?

Engelsmän

Amerikanare

Vet

inte

7. Vad tycker du om att göra på fritiden? (t.ex. spela fotboll, vara med kompisar, dansa, chatta på datorn) Ange minst tre grejer.

8. Vilken musik lyssnar du helst på? Kryssa för ditt/dina val

Klassisk musik

R N B

Rock

Popmusik på engelska

Rap/ hip-hop musik

Country

Svensk popmusik

Annat:

9. Hur ofta ser du på engelskspråkiga TV-program och filmer utan svensk text?

(T.ex. via kabel-TV/ satellit-TV eller nerladdat på dator eller TV)

- a) Varje dag b) Några gånger i veckan c) Någon gång i månaden
d) Väldigt sällan/aldrig

10. Pratar du brittisk engelska eller amerikansk engelska? Varför tror du att du gör det?

Thank you!