Undergraduate Students' Attitudes Towards British English and American English

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Abstract
The main purpose of this study is to provide reliable data concerning attitudes towards speech, specifically focusing on two national varieties of English: American English (GA) and British English (RP). The study also aims to assess the students' ability to identify British English (GA) and American English (RP), as well as to determine which national variety of English they use in everyday conversations and academic performance, with a particular focus on how these patterns may vary based on gender.
The research sample comprises twenty-four first-year students from the English Language and Literature Department (BA) at the University "Ukshin Hoti" in Prizren, Kosovo.
Regarding the research findings, 44% of the participants were able to recognize the difference between the two varieties of English, while 16% could not differentiate between them. Furthermore, the respondents showed a preference for British English over American English. However, 68% of respondents admitted to using American English in everyday conversations and academic performance, with only 16% claiming fluency in British English.
Moreover, 92% of female participants preferred British English over American English, whereas 75% of male participants favored American English. Nonetheless, 68% of all respondents acknowledged using American English in daily conversations and academic contexts, with only 16% considering themselves fluent in British English.
Key words: varieties, grammar, lexicology, pronunciation

Introduction

When identifying and reflecting on the way different words have been incorporated into British English and American English sentences and their influence in shaping the way we express our thoughts, the choice of any of the existing national standards of English is crucial in this aspect. It is a widely known fact that differences between British and American English are primarily associated with pronunciation, spelling, grammar as well as lexical choice. The main focus of this paper is to come up with a conclusion in regard to Kosovan speakers' attitudes towards British and American English. As far as the theoretical background of British and American English is concerned, this paper aims to determine these two terms based on the foregoing published materials of many scholars who dealt with this field of expertise. A detailed analysis of research findings taking into account Kosovan students' opinions as well as their choice based on their gender between these two national varieties of English is going to be shown in charts and tabular form.
From a historical point of view, British and American English have faced many changes along the way in order to have the present form. English officially starts when the Germanic tribes and their languages reach the British Isles, in 449, what started as a Germanic dialect spoken in a small part of England is now a language spoken by over a billion people in many parts of the world (as a first or second language) (Gelderen, 2006: 2-3). Following Baugh & Cable (2002), English is one of the most important languages spoken in the world regarding the number of speakers as well as its international communication uses since it is spoken by more than 380 million people in the United Kingdom, the United States, and the former British

Empire. According to Baugh & Cable (2002), the English language was introduced to America in the seventeenth century by settlers from England who established colonies along the Atlantic coast. Algeo (2001) further states that the gap between American and British usage grew wider because the colonists in the new land had to adapt to new surroundings—different landscapes, plants, animals, as well as new economic and social conditions which influenced their language, more specifically their vocabulary. American English is used as a lingua franca or a second language by people in many parts of the world, including East Asia (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and China); the Americas (excluding the former British colonies Canada, Jamaica, and the Bahamas), and Liberia, in Africa (Carlo, 2013: 61-75). Moreover, Pyle & Algeo (1992) argue that the national varieties of English spoken in the world are quite similar, there is a number of differences between national varieties, but the differences are of minor importance in juxtaposition to similarities.

Theoretical Framework

English language is generally recognized as 'lingua franca'- the world's most important language. Nowadays, there are thousands of different languages spoken all around the world, and each of them has unique grammatical patterns and significant importance for native speakers of that particular language. Huddleston et al. (2005) argue that the English language is the most widely used language spoken by 400 milion native speakers, as well as a similar number of bilingual speakers in many English-speaking countries and hundreds of millions of speakers in other countries around the world.

Quirk et al. (1985) point out the fact that to be a dominant language it must fulfill some standards, such as: the number of speakers of the language, the geographical expansion, how extensive is the range of purposes for which is used, and the economic and political influence of the native speakers of the language.

Furthermore, according to Huddleston et al. (2002) world's regional dialects of Standard English can be divided into two large families with regional and historical affinities, the first one contains standard educated Southern British English, henceforth abbreviated BrE, and other varieties of related dialects, such as varieties of English in Great Britain. The second dialect family is American English, hence AmE- it contains the dialects of the USA, Canada, and associated territories.

British and American English

Quirk et al. (1985) argue that in nations where the English language is not a native language, standard varieties of British English and American English are preferred to be used in writing and in speech based on the fact whether the country has been a former British or US colony; the countries' geographical closeness to Britain or the United States; and the extent to which Britain or the United States has an impact on its economic, cultural, or scientific progress. Following Algeo (2006), when a usage is described as British, it doesn't mean that the common form is used in Britain or that it's not used in American English, but it means that the usage more frequently occurs in British English than in American English.

Algeo (2006) further states that the main difference between these two varieties of English relies on the 'tune' of the language which includes the intonation of a sentence and that's how a Briton and an American are identified by the tunes of their corresponding varieties. As far as differences between these national varieties are concerned, the main differences rely on grammar, lexicology, spelling, and pronunciation.

Differences in grammar

Taking into consideration differences in grammar of these two forms of standard English, Huddleston et al. (2005) claim that there are minor points of differences in

grammar, for example, *She may have done* (BrE), whereas an AmE speaker would say: *She may have*. According to Quirk et al. (1985) in BrE, either a singular or a plural verb may be used with a singular collective noun, whereas in AmE a singular verb is required here:

The government {is/are} in favor of economic sanctions. (Quirk et al., 1985: 19)

AmE may use the simple past in informal style in contexts where BrE normally requires the present perfective, as in:

Sue just/ Sue's just finished her homework. (Quirk et al., 1985: 19).

Moreover, BrE tends to use the construction with should whereas AmE generally uses the present subjective:

I insisted that he {should take/take} the documents with him. (Quirk, et al., 1985: 19)

There are few verbs in EngEng and USEng which differ in the prepositions or prepositional adverbs they collate with (Trudgill and Hannah, 2013: 71):

British English	**American English**
to battle with/against (the enemy)	*to battle*
to check up on	*to check out*
to fill in (a form)	*to fill out*
to meet (an official = have a meeting)	*to meet with*
to prevent (something becoming …)	*to prevent from*
to protest at/against/over (a decision)	*to protest*
to stop (someone doing …)	*to stop from*
to talk to	*to talk with/to*
to visit	*to visit with*

As far as grammatical differences between these varieties are concerned, prepositions can also be used differently in British and American English, for instance:

British English	**American English**	
behind	*in back of*	as in *I put it* { *behind* / *in back of* } *the shed*
out of	*out*	as in *He threw it* { *out of* / *out* } *the window*
round	*around*	as in *She lives just* { *round* / *around* } *the corner*

(Trudgill and Hannah, 2013: 80)

Janicki (1977) claims that the future forms shall and should in American English have been substituted by will and would, hence, will and would are used not only in affirmative sentences, but also to negate and ask questions. For instance:

AmE: I will do it if only I can;
BreE: I shall do it if only I can;
AmE: Will I see you tomorrow?
BreE: Shall I see you tomorrow? Or **Will I** see you tomorrow?

Differences in lexicology

The most usual and easily identified differences between these national varieties of English are vocabulary differences. Trudgill and Hannah (2013) state that vocabulary differences have come as a result of a number of factors which include the need to name new objects and experiences in North America, technological and cultural developments, the influence of languages as well as the independent linguistic change within each variety. Following Quirk et al. (1985) lexical examples of differences between British and American English are far more numerous: for example, railway (BrE), railroad (AmE); tin (BrE), can (AmE), boot (BrE), trunk (AmE), rubber (BrE), eraser (AmE). Quirk et al. (1985) claim that in American English, the word school in phrases like *I'm going to school* can refer to colleges and universities, whereas in

British English it does not, floor numbering also differs: in American English, the first floor is at ground level, while in British English, the first floor is one level above the ground floor.
Ling (2015) states that in British English, the term biscuit refers to a small, crisp, flat, sweet, whereas in American English, this is usually called a cracker, which in British English instead refers to a type of firework that makes a loud bang.
However, Ling (2015) admits that the phrase 'wash up' means washing the plates, knives and forks, and so on in the UK, on the other hand, when American people say 'wash up' means washing one's body. Ling (2015) also claims that the word 'pavement' refers to the road itself in which vehicles drive, the British people call the path alongside the road where pedestrians walk 'pavement' and American people call the path 'sidewalk'.

Differences in spelling
Besides other differences, British and American English share differences in regard to spelling as well. According to Ling (2015), in British English, a number of words end with -ogue, while in American English the same words typically drop the -ue, ending in –og; for example, analogue vs. analog, and prologue vs. prolog.
In addition, Ling (2015) also points out that in American English, words usually end with the suffix '-able' rather than '-cable', for instance, lovable and loveable, sizable and sizeable, etc. When endorsing a very generalized view, it is also possible to assert that, as far as the examples are considered, the alternatives stated first are British as are the spellings including the letters in round brackets (Marak, 2006: 11):

1. The colo(u)r group: *arbo(u)r, armo(u)r, endeavo(u)r, favo(u)r, flavo(u)r, hono(u)r, humo(u)r, labo(u)r, odo(u)r, rigo(u)r, savo(u)r, tumo(u)r, valo(u)r, vigo(u)r.*
2. The centre/center group: *centre/center, fibre/fiber, goitre/goiter, litre/liter, meagre/meager, mitre/miter, sombre/somber, spectre/specter, theatre/theater.*
3. The (o)estrogen group: *am(o)eba, diarrh(o)ea, hom(o)eopathy, (o)esophagus, (o)estrogen, (o)estrous.*
4. The (a)esthete group: *(a)eon, arch(a)eology, gyn(a)ecology, (a)esthetics, an(a)emia, encyclop(a)edia, h(a)emophilia, h(a)emorrhage, medi(a)eval.*
5. The final –l(l) group: *travelled – traveled, traveller – traveler*.
6. The –ize and –ise group: *civilise/civilize, organise/organize, civilisation/civilization*.
7. The –lyse and –lyze group: *analyse/analyze, paralyse/paralyze*.
8. The –og(ue) group: *catalog(ue), dialog(ue), monolog(ue), pedagog(ue), prolog(ue).*

Differences in pronunciation
As a matter of fact, British and American English count many differences as far as pronunciation is concerned. These differences rely on the pronunciation of vowels, pronunciation of diphthongs as well as differences in the pronunciation of consonants. For the sake of simplicity, a clear view of mentioned differences is going to be revealed in the following tables:

Table 1. IPA Vowels (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2015: 649)

British English	American English
/ɒ/	/ɑ:/
/ɑ:/	/æ/
/ɔ:/	/ɑ:/
/ju:/	/u:/
/ɑ:/	/æ̃/
/ə/	/ɑ:/

British English has a pronunciation of each of the following words differing from that usual in American English: ate [ɛt], been [bin], evolution [ivəlušən], fragile [fræǰaıl], medicine [mɛdsın], nephew [nɛvyu], process [prosɛs], trait [tre], valet [vælıt]; but the Shorter Oxford records the following "American" pronunciations without a national label: ate [et], been [bın], evolution [ɛvəlušən], medicine [mɛdəsən], nephew [nɛfyu], trait [tret], valet [væle] (Algeo, 2010: 188).

Table 2. IPA Diphthongs (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2015: 651)

British English	American English
/ıə/	/ır/
/əʊ/ /ɑ:/	/oʊ/ /eı/
/eı/ /ı/	/æ/ /aı/

One of the most noticeable differences between English and American pronunciation is the treatment of the 'r'. Darragh (2000) states that in Received Pronunciation (RP), the r sound is generally silent except when it comes before a vowel. On the other hand, in American English, the r is pronounced not only before vowels but also before consonants and at the end of words, as in air, are, arm, hear, beer, more, care, deer, fear, hair, or, peer, pure, wear, and work.

Table 3. IPA Consonants (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2015: 652)

British English	American English
/(r)/ /t/	/r/ /ɾ/
/ʃ/ /z/	/ʒ/ /s/
/s/ /ð/	/ʃ/ /θ/

Following Janicki (1977), there are no significant differences between British and American English concerning the consonantal system, the stops p, t, k, b, d, g can be found in both varieties in the same place of articulation, whereas the consonant t is an exception since it may have the same value in both varieties or it may be voiced and become acoustically about alike with the intervocalic flapped sound of British English in such words as: worry, hurry, very.

Other differences

One more difference lies in the use of the preposition after the verb 'different'. In American English, 'than' is used but in British English, 'from' or 'to' is used, e.g.
American English: Their house is different than ours.
British English: Their house is different from ours. (Najmiddinov, 2015: 76)

British and American English also differ in the way they use punctuation marks and writing symbols in general, a more detailed view is going to be described as follows:

US TERMS	UK EQUIVALENT
[ ] brackets +	square brackets
{ } curly brackets	braces
( ) parentheses	brackets
/ slash+	stroke, oblique
√ check mark	tick
! exclamation point	exclamation mark+
. period	full stop
“ ” quotation marks +	inverted commas

Figure 1. Punctuation Terms (Davies, 2005: 94)

When discussing differences between previously mentioned standards of English, when telling time these two standards share a number of differences that are mostly concerned with preposition usage. Here are some examples: an American will say either it’s three after twelve or it’s three past twelve, whereas an Englishman only it’s three past twelve; an American may say it’s ten to seven, ten of seven, ten before seven, an Englishman uses only the last variant, for instance (Janicki, 1977: 99):

AmE: It’s ten thirty

BrE: It’s half past ten

AmE: I go to bed around (about) 11 o’clock

BrE: I go to bed at about 11 o’clock.

Methodology

Research design

A descriptive, survey research design was employed in order to investigate students’ attitudes towards speech, more specifically, their attitudes towards British and American English.

Participants

In aiming to come up with reliable data related to the conducted research, the research took place at the University of Prizren ‘Ukshin Hoti’, Prizren, on the third Tuesday of December (2024) during an ordinary day of the teaching process.

Participants of this study were twenty-four first-year students of the English Language and Literature Department (Bachelor-BA) whose age was between eighteen and nineteen years old and half of the previously mentioned participants were male (12 participants) and half of them (12 participants) female.

Data collection tools

For this study, two recordings were selected, the focal point of the first one is an American English speaker, hence, Steve Jobs speech from his documentary film ‘Secrets of life’ containing 1 minute and 29 seconds was chosen. It is worth mentioning the fact that at the time when the documentary film was produced Steve Jobs was 39 years old. Furthermore, the second recording’s main focus was British English, the chosen one was Emma Watson’s speech at the UN proclaiming women’s rights, containing 3 minutes and 32 seconds, the video was published in 2016 and the age of its protagonist was 26 years old. It is important to note the fact that only the voice was played to the students, as a means of playing the recordings was used my personal computer and loudspeakers, and as a means of collecting the data a questionnaire to write down their answers was provided as well. The questionnaires were returned at hand on the same day of their distribution.

The questionnaire consisted of six questions, the questions were: What is your opinion in regard to the first speaker? (Clues: age, gender, education, marital status, social

class, etc.), What is your opinion in regard to the second speaker? (Clues: age, gender, education, marital status, social class, etc.), What is the difference in speech (pronunciation) between the first and the second speaker?. Which speaker's variety of English do you like the most? Why?, In which English language variety (accent) would you like to be fluent? Why?, and In which English language variety are you actually fluent?.

Data analysis

As far as data analysis is concerned, descriptive analysis was performed in order to determine students' attitudes towards these main national varieties of English. However, the student's t test was used to compare students' attitudes towards British and American English between male and female students who participated in the research. In aiming to come up with reliable data related to the conducted research, the research took place at the University of Prizren 'Ukshin Hoti', Prizren, on the third Tuesday of December (2022) during an ordinary day of the teaching process. The environment used was a well-lighted classroom with medium heat. Participants of this study were twenty-four first-year students of the English Language and Literature Department (Bachelor-BA) whose age was between eighteen and nineteen years old and half of the previously mentioned participants were male (12 participants) and half of them (12 participants) female.

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Research findings

When discussing attitudes towards two national standards of English, the objective of this paper is to present the collected data in order to come up with reliable findings related to the topic at hand. The form of data collection used is the questionnaire, therefore, all questionnaires were analyzed in detail and the results of them are presented in this section of the paper.

The first research question

As far as the first question is concerned, it aimed to perceive participants' opinions of the first question about the first speaker's age, gender, and education, etc., they had to write down their answers related to the American speaker of English (GA).

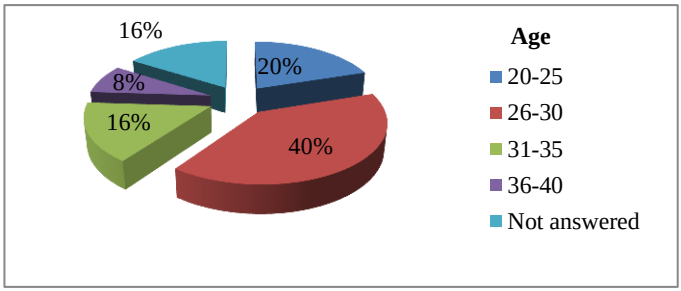
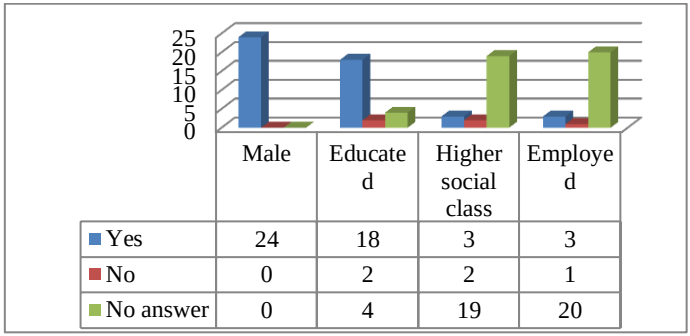


Figure 2. Students' Responses to the first speaker's age



	Male	Educated	Higher social class	Employed
Yes	24	18	3	3
No	0	2	2	1
No answer	0	4	19	20

Figure 3. Statistics related to the first research question

The second research question

The first and the second question share common ground, since the purpose of both of them is to analyze participants' opinions regarding two speakers of English. It's worth to emphasizing the fact that the answers to this question are related to the second speaker (British English- RP).

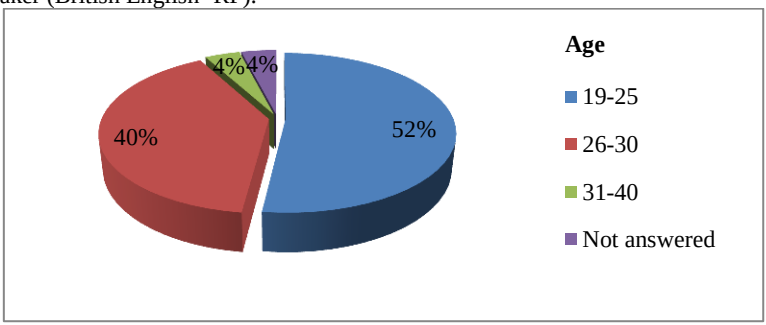
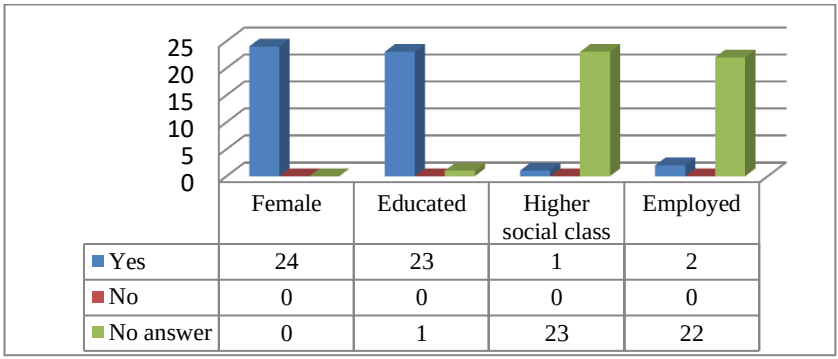


Figure 4. Students' responses to the second speaker's age

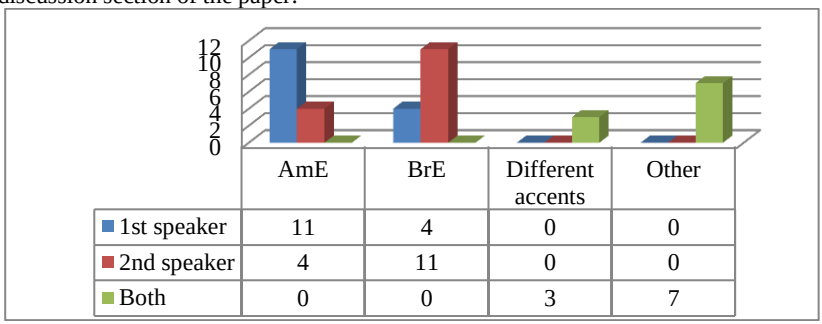


	Female	Educated	Higher social class	Employed
Yes	24	23	1	2
No	0	0	0	0
No answer	0	1	23	22

Figure 5. Statistics related to the second research question

The third research question

The main purpose of this question was to determine students' capabilities to identify national Standards of English of both speakers, American English (GA) and British English (RP). A more elaborate examination of responses is going to be given in the discussion section of the paper.



	AmE	BrE	Different accents	Other
1st speaker	11	4	0	0
2nd speaker	4	11	0	0
Both	0	0	3	7

Figure 6. Pronunciation differences between the first and the second speaker

The fourth research question

Taking into account the fact that attitudes towards national standards of English is the main aim of the study in hand, this question tried to come up with data in regard to participants' preference for each of them, there were asked to choose between two speakers variations used for the purpose of this research. Social attractiveness regarding their gender is provided, too.

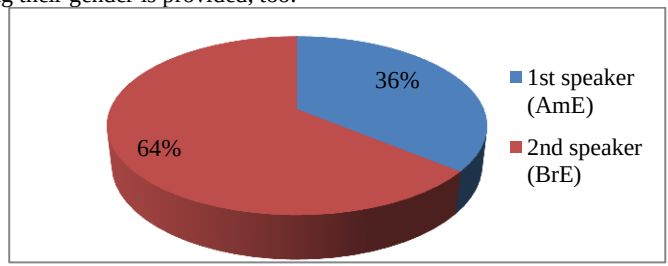


Figure 7. The statistical description of respondents' favorite speaker

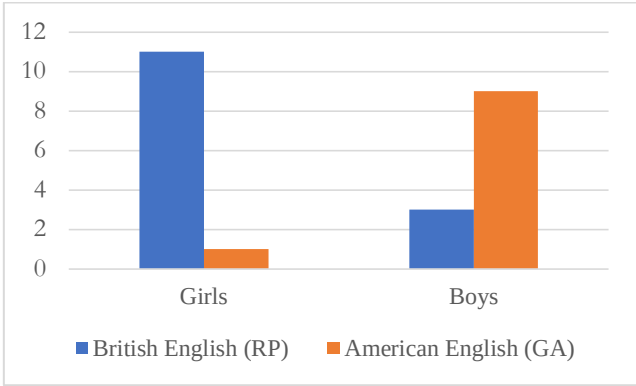


Figure 8. Gender differences regarding respondents' favorite speaker

The fifth research question

When presenting the results of the fifth question, the aim of it was to find out in which national standard of English would the respondents like to be fluent. Respondents' preferences based on their gender are shown as well. A more detailed analysis including the percentage of respondents' answers is provided in the figures below:

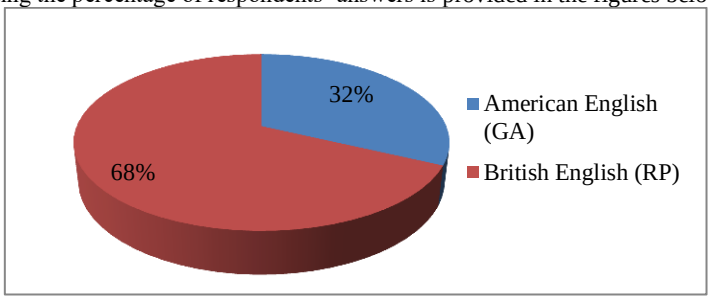


Figure 9. Statistical data of the fifth research question

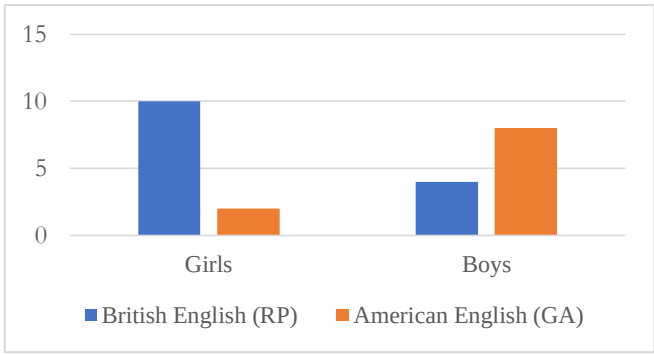


Figure 10. Gender differences in British English and American English preferences

The sixth research question

The sixth question was conducted to find out students' actual usage of the two previously mentioned national standards (varieties) of English. The last two questions required personal responses, and the answers to the sixth one were analyzed and are displayed in the chart below:

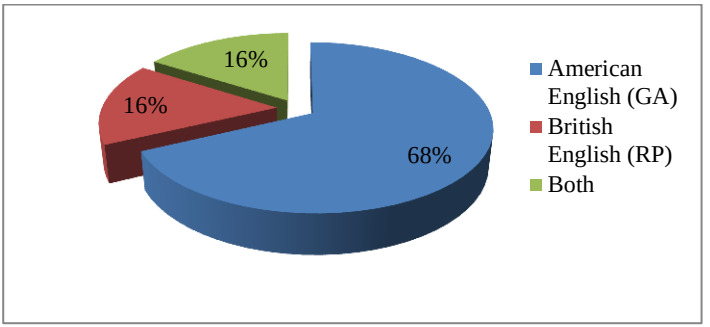


Figure 11. Statistical data concerning the sixth research question

Discussion of research findings

In aiming to discuss research findings, this section tends to give a plain view of attitudes concerning British and American speech, speakers' choice of any of the given standards of English as well as their own personal acknowledgment of British or American utilization.

The information the first question aspired to acquire was mainly associated with respondents' viewpoint with reference to the first speaker's speech, incorporating his pronunciation, too. Based on the fact that the language we use, more specifically our expanded vocabulary and articulation, manifests more information about the person, students were asked to answer this question taking into account the first speaker's gender, age, education, social class, employment, etc.

The research sample population encompasses twenty-four participants, all of them were correct regarding the first speaker's gender, but when it came to his age only a small percentage were correct, only 8%. Moreover, 40% thought that his age was between 26-30, 20% believed he was 20-25, 16% viewed him as 31-35 years old, and the rest of the respondents 16% did not provide any response. In addition, 76% thought he was educated, 8% assumed he was uneducated, and the rest of them, about 16%, did not answer. 12% believed he had a higher social status, 8 percent assumed that he was part of the middle class, 4% believed he had a lower-class status, on the other hand, 76% did not respond to the question at hand. Eighty percent of the respondents taking part in the research did not have any opinion regarding his employment, 8% believed he was unemployed and only 12% believed he had employment.

Similar to the first question, the information conveyed in the second question is almost the same except for the speaker Emma Watson whose variety of English was British. When asked about her gender, all respondents were able to identify it correctly, but it wasn't the same when the question about her age arose. For instance, 40% were correct about her age, 52% supposed she was 19-25 years old, 4% supposed she was 31-40 years old, whereas only a small minority, and 4% of the sample did not respond. Furthermore, the shared viewpoints regarding her education are as follows: based on her expanded vocabulary, 92% believed she was educated, and only 8% believed she was uneducated. Ninety-two percent of them did not have any idea whether she was part of a higher level of society or not, or whether she had a job or not.

When it comes to analyzing and discussing the data collected concerning the third question, it's important to emphasize the fact that the main reason for making this inquiry was to find out whether first-year students were able to identify different varieties of English to which they were exposed after playing the recordings. As far as the first speaker is concerned, 44% of the participants recognized it to be American English, and 16 % of them supposed that the spoken variety of English was British.

Nevertheless, the same percentage of participants 44% recognized that the variety of English spoken by the second speaker was British, and again only 16% of them could not identify it, but they supposed the second speaker's variety of English is American. However, a small percentage of them (12%) did not give any response to the fact that the two English speakers differ in different varieties of usage. As a matter of fact, 28% of participants in the study provided different inquiries concerning this question, such as: two speakers' differences are in gender, education, age, life experience, etc.

To start with, the fourth question's purpose was to find out who is respondents' favorite speaker based on his/her usage of each variety of English. After conducting the research and analyzing the data, the results are as follows: only 36% of them were fond of the first speaker mainly because it was easier to be understood, whereas 64% of them affirmed that they prefer more the second's speaker variety of English, the British one. Hence, the participants in this study preferred the female speaker over the male one. Taking into account their gender, 92% of girls preferred the second speaker (British English RP), and 8% of them preferred the first speaker (American English GA). On the other hand, 75% of boys preferred the first speaker (American English GA) and only 25% were fond of the second speaker (British English RP).

The last questions of the conducted research were not directly related to the played recordings, but to their own personal choice of the varieties of English. Therefore, the fifth question aimed to determine participants' desire to have competence and performance of any of the previously mentioned national standards of English and the reason behind it. The vast majority of them preferred the British variety of English (68%), the reasons specified are because you sound smarter-intelligent, sounds better, more academic, more interesting form of English, sounds sweeter and different, clearly understood, a royal language, it's so classy, etc. On the contrary, only 32% of participants were fond of American English, the given reasons for their choice are listed below: it sounds better for the ears, it is easy to understand others, clearly understood, when using it we are more fluent in English, more people use it, it is cooler, etc. As far as the gender differences regarding respondents' choices are concerned, 83% of girls were fond of British English (RP) and 17% of them chose American English (GA), whereas 67% of boys chose American English (GA) and only 33% were fond of British English (RP).

The last question to be discussed but not less important was the sixth question, the aim of it was to find out the present usage of any of the discussed varieties of English from respondents being part of this research sample. From twenty-four respondents, 68% of them admitted that they personally use American English in everyday conversations and academic performance, only 16% claimed that they are fluent in British English no matter whether the occasion is formal or informal, and 16% pointed out the fact that they tend to have equal competence and performance of both varieties of English.

Conclusion

As a matter of fact, the students who took part in this research were familiar with both national varieties of English based on the fact that they were actual students of the English Language and Literature Department at the University "Ukshin Hoti", Prizren. Taking into account their attitudes towards speakers' gender, they were able to identify their gender easily, however, speakers' age wasn't easily identified by them. Since language usage reflects so much information about the person who utilizes it, respondents were able to have an idea about speakers' social status, education, and employment. The second speaker's expanded vocabulary and articulation made the respondents believe that she was educated. The study also shows that Kosovan students (participants of the study) are socially attracted to the female speaker more than the male one.

Furthermore, British English (RP) is preferred over American English (GA). Different from boys, girls prefer British English more than American English and they would like to have competence and performance of British English (RP) rather than American English (GA). They would like to have competence and performance in British variety of English because you sound smarter-intelligent, sounds better, more academic, more interesting form of English, sounds sweeter and different, it's a classy and royal language. American English sounds better for the ears, is easy to understand others, clearly understood, when using it we are more fluent in English, more people use it and it is cooler in comparison to British English. On the other hand, American English (GA) is used more than British English (RP) in everyday conversations and academic performance. The Kosovan students who took part in the research are native speakers of Albanian, the Albanian language has the same sound system as English which makes language learning and pronunciation acquisition easier for them. Thus, most of the students' accents of English are native-like. American English is more used by them because they are more exposed to it through music, movies, the Internet, YouTube, TV shows, and on-line games and they helped them to have native-like pronunciation since they started learning it from a very young age.

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