

British or American English: Bosnian learners' preferences

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Abstract

Exonormatively oriented EFL speakers are well-disposed towards native varieties, particularly British and American English. Due to the varieties' overlapping domains of influence, the question of consistency and preferences for one of the varieties comes into focus. Hence, this study explores Bosnian respondents' preference for British or American English in pronunciation, orthography, lexis and grammar and their ability to recognise language units as characteristic of one variety or the other. Additionally, the study investigates whether students maintain consistency or whether they are inclined to use both varieties interchangeably. The obtained results confirm that Bosnian respondents have a solid knowledge of varietal differences but are highly inconsistent. Still, they prefer the American variety in all domains of language use, to a differing extent though.

Keywords: consistency; English in Bosnia and Herzegovina; standardised British English; standardised American English; the System of World Englishes.

1. Introduction

English has strengthened its position across the globe and is now employed instrumentally as a link language, a *lingua franca* (Trudgill & Hannah, 2013) or a globalised language (Crystal, 2003), as well as symbolically and integratively as a status marker and identity constructor (Berns et al., 2007). Due to its massive spread across EFL and ESL contexts, English started to emerge in many different forms, and distinctive varieties have evolved. Still, native varieties continue to be the most prominent across EFL and ESL contexts, and the most prominent of all still seem to be Standardised American English and Standardised British English, two varieties classified as a hyper-central and most prominent super-central variety respectively in the taxonomy of World Englishes proposed by Mair (2013, 2016). According to Mair

(2013), American English is supported by social factors, has great demographic weight, and has a larger impact on the development of all the other World Englishes, while British English has lighter demographic weight but larger institutional support, particularly through English language teaching (ELT).

This seems to be confirmed across Europe. Standardised British English is dominant in ELT, where books published by British publishing companies and listening recordings of Received Pronunciation (RP) speech are employed (Trudgill & Hannah, 2013), while American English is, without any doubt, the leading variety used in the media and on social networks and is still highly influential, especially among younger generations. This means that EFL learners in Europe and Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) in particular tend to be exposed to both varieties in two different spheres, which makes their consistency in the usage of one variety rather unlikely. Since consistency is still considered important in Europe and particularly in B&H (Dubravac, Brdarević-Čeljo & Bećirović, 2018; Trudgill & Hannah, 2013), we wanted to research whether Bosnian high-school students are aware of varietal differences, whether they tend to use only one variety consistently and which variety they prefer in actual usage in the domain of orthography, pronunciation, lexis, and grammar.

2. Theoretical background

With the global spread of English and the existence of a large number of its varieties, different theoretical taxonomies of these varieties started to emerge (Kachru, 1985; McArthur, 1987; Strevens, 1992; Mair, 2013). Besides the most widespread Kachruvian model of World Englishes (Kachru, 1985), the World System of Englishes developed by Mair (2013) also emerges as a model described as being better equipped to handle such widespread uses of English. This model groups all English varieties into four hierarchical layers. Standardised American, a hyper-central variety, can be found at the hub of all English varieties, and, according to Mair (2016), its influence spreads across all the remaining circles, particularly in the domain of lexis. Around the hub, ten super-central varieties cluster (Standardised British English, Australian English, Indian English, South African English, Nigerian English, etc.), with Standardised British English (and the RP accent) being the most prominent one. Scottish, Irish, New Zealand Standardised English, and others, are classified as central varieties, while the remaining varieties, e.g. Cameroonian English, Maltese English, and others, belong to the peripheral layer and they are “inherently dependent on external support of some kind” (Mair 2013: 10). According to this model, Standardised American English, the hub variety, impacts the development of the other standard

and non-standard super-central, central and peripheral varieties in the domain of lexis. Thus, Mair (2013: 10) maintains that lexical borrowing is a downward movement process and Americanisms spread across all the other varieties. Mair (2013) also specified that Standardised American and Standardised British English are the two most prominent English language varieties, which can be attributed to two different social measures, institutional support and demographic weight. American English has a heavy demographic weight but does not enjoy sufficient institutional support, while British English receives massive institutional support, particularly through ELT, but has little demographic impact (Mair, 2013: 258-259). The split along these lines is also reflected in the context in question. In B&H, American English, as a variety globally present through movies, music, social networks, and other domains, prevails among young Bosnians, while, at the same time, British English is more widely present in English language courses as the textbooks used for that purpose are mainly published by British publishers. Mair's World System of Englishes proves to be well-resourced to capture the present stratification of English in this sociocultural context and will be used as the theoretical basis in the current research.

3. Literature review

Two varieties given the greatest though unequal prominence in Mair's classification (2013), Standardised British and Standardised American English, are widespread across different EFL and ESL contexts and still observed as idealised production goals that many non-native speakers strive to achieve (Mollin, 2006: 30). They are also widely employed in ELT in these contexts with a special focus on consistency and preference for only one of these varieties in language production (Trudgill & Hannah, 2013). Still, preference for one of the two varieties and consistency in its use in different aspects of language production have not attracted particular research interest and there are a few such studies conducted in different EFL contexts. Although some studies point out that American English was less prominent than British English in studies conducted earlier (Axelsson, 2000) but that a gradual shift towards American English occurred at the far end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century (Söderlund & Modiano, 2002), the presence of both has been observed but in different aspects of language use. Thus, even in this recent period, British English seems to be firmly present in the domain of spelling in different EFL contexts (Džadarević, 2007; Dubravac, Brdarević-Čeljo & Bećirović, 2018; Dubravac, Brdarević-Čeljo & Begagić, 2018; Grubor et al., 2008; Larsson, 2012), while American English prevails in the domain of lexis (Alftberg, 2009; Grubor et al., 2008; Söderlund & Modiano, 2002; Solmaz, 2021). Still, all the aforementioned studies show that re-

spondents are highly but also unconsciously inconsistent and that few of them maintain consistency in the use of one variety in different aspects of language use.

One of the studies conducted in Denmark tested the respondents' pronunciation using a reading test and compared their preference in pronunciation to their attitudes (Ladegaard, 1998). The two mainly matched as most of the respondents read the text with the RP accent and at the same time marked the same accent as prestigious in the attitudinal part of the questionnaire. Still, there were some respondents (27%) who read the text with British pronunciation, but stated that they would like to have the General American accent. Yaman (2015) also pointed to a mismatch between Turkish respondents' actual usage and the variety they believe they use. Despite their beliefs that they predominantly use British English, the findings showed that they mixed both varieties and used British and American pronunciations equally frequently.

The discrepancy between respondents' actual use and beliefs was also noted among university-level students and teachers in Serbia who mixed British and American English varieties in all aspects of language use despite their beliefs that they are consistent in the use of one or the other (Dazdarević, 2007). In Grubor et al. (2008), a large percentage of respondents were aware of their inconsistency in the use of solely one variety (60%), but the results demonstrated that a much larger percentage of them (90.8%) mixed them. Solmaz (2021) also showed that prospective English teachers from Turkey lack consistency in the use of one variety as they prefer American English in lexis and pronunciation and British English in grammar, while they use both varieties in spelling to a similar extent. The pre-eminence of American English in pronunciation and vocabulary was also observed among some Swedish high-school students (Alftberg, 2009), who tended to select American vocabulary and pronunciation more frequently, particularly in non-school-related vocabulary. Students from Dazdarević's study (2007) selected the British spelling of words more frequently than the American spelling of words, but they preferred American English to British English in pronunciation. A stronger inclination towards British English in the domain of spelling and American English in the domain of pronunciation and vocabulary was also observed in Grubor et al. (2008).

Similar findings emerged from some studies conducted in the Bosnian context (Brdarević-Čeljo & Dubravac, 2022; Dubravac, Brdarević-Čeljo & Bećirović, 2018; Dubravac, Brdarević-Čeljo & Begagić, 2018) as well. Thus, Dubravac, Brdarević-Čeljo and Bećirović (2018) concluded that the differences in the usage of British and American varieties were significant in grammar and pronunciation and insignificant in lexis and spelling and that American English was dominant in grammar and pronunciation, while Brit-

ish English slightly, though insignificantly, prevails in vocabulary and spelling. These findings also point to a widespread lack of consistency as there were only five students who were consistent in the usage of American English but only in pronunciation. Using a modified questionnaire among a different group of university-level students in a more recent study, Brdarević-Čeljo and Dubravac (2022) further corroborated previous findings and showed a larger presence of American English in pronunciation and grammar, a greater representation of British English in the domain of spelling and almost an equal representation of both varieties in the domain of lexis. Moreover, the participants also confirmed a greater presence of British English in schools and a larger exposure to American English outside school through music, TV, Internet, etc. A large number of respondents (64.3%) also stated that they wanted to use American rather than British English, though they admitted that they believed they mixed the two varieties and only around 42% of them said they could differentiate between the two. However, even these respondents were generally unable to do so and were largely inconsistent in the usage of one variety in all aspects of language use. Rather interestingly, English language instructors who were interviewed for this study were also largely inconsistent and unaware of these varietal differences. They claimed to use American English more, but they considered British English more elegant, more correct and easier to understand.

All the studies mentioned previously seem to reveal that there is an increase in the use of American English in different aspects of language use, particularly in the domain of pronunciation and lexis, which is aligned with Mair's claim that American English is the 'hub' variety impacting all other varieties, especially through widespread Americanisms. Such an increasing trend is expected to continue (Brdarević-Čeljo & Dubravac, 2022) as American English is expected to retain the "global cultural hegemony" (Rindal, 2010: 242) it has had for a few decades. The question then arises whether a more pronounced shift towards American English in different aspects of language use can also be detected among young people in B&H, who are exposed to English daily through their English language education but also, to a much larger extent, through the Internet, social media and movie and music industry (Brdarević-Čeljo et al., 2018; Brdarević-Čeljo et al., 2021; Kovačević et al., 2018; Dubravac & Skopljak, 2020). Thus, the following research questions have been asked:

RQ1: What are the respondents' perceptions of the presence of British and American English in English language teaching in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

RQ2: Which variety do the respondents believe they use and which one do they want to use?

RQ3: Which variety do the respondents prefer in pronunciation?

RQ4: Can the respondents group correctly typically British and American lexis?

RQ5: Are the respondents consistent in the use of solely one variety in orthography, lexis, and grammar?

RQ6: Can the respondents differentiate between typically British and American English constructions?

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

A convenience sampling method was employed in the process of participant selection and 130 Bosnian high school students were selected. The respondents' age ranged from 16 to 20 ($M=18.02$, $SD=.68$) and there were 82 (63.1%) female respondents and 48 (36.9%) male respondents. The respondents were in the third ($N=35$, 26.9%) or the fourth year ($N=95$, 73.1%) of high school education in two public high schools, namely the First ($N=40$, 30.8%) and Second Gymnasiums ($N=40$, 30.8%), and one private international school ($N=50$, 38.5%). They had all been learning English for over ten years at the time ($M=10.39$, $SD=2.1$) and their English language grade point average was 4.3 ($M=4.3$, $SD=.832$). In addition to English language classes at school, some respondents also took additional English classes with private tutors ($N=39$, 30%). Besides formal exposure in the educational milieu, the respondents were also exposed to English informally, through cartoons, music and videos daily (through cartoons $N=49$, 37.7%, music $N=61$, 46.9%, videos $N=86$, 66.2%) or very frequently (through cartoons $N=30$, 23.1%, music $N=39$, 30.0%, videos $N=25$, 19.2%) and only some of them claimed that they had never been exposed to English through cartoons ($N=5$, 3.8%), music ($N=3$, 2.3%), and videos ($N=2$, 1.5%).

4.2. Measures

The questionnaire developed and validated by Dubravac, Brdarević-Čeljo and Bećirović (2018) and Brdarević-Čeljo and Dubravac (2022) was used in the current study and was expanded and modified to be adapted to high-school respondents. The first part of the questionnaire comprised nineteen questions providing information on the respondents' demographics as well as their previous language learning experiences. The second part included four tasks. The first task contained twenty words for which two possible pronunciations, i.e. American and British, were provided and the respondents needed to select the pronunciation they preferred and use in their actual speech. Since high-school respondents are not familiar with the International

Phonetic Alphabet, the respondents first listened to both pronunciations and then circled the pronunciation they tended to use. All the main pronunciation differences between RP and General American accents were represented in the questionnaire.

The second task researched the consistency in the domain of orthography, lexis, and grammar and it contained nine sentences in the respondents' native language for which four possible English translations were provided (S1 *My favourite colour is grey*; S2 *I've got trainers, jumper, and pyjamas*; S3 *I like chips, biscuits, and sweets*; S4 *My mum goes to the theatre once a month*; S5 *There is a chemist's in the town centre*; S6 *My neighbour drives a lorry at the weekend*; S7 *I've just lost my rubber*; S8 *Have you got many holidays?*; S9 *Today is 22 April 2021.*). Two translated sentences complied with British and American English respectively in all domains of language use, while the remaining two sentences exhibited characteristics of both varieties and were grouped as 'mixed sentences.' If the respondents were not satisfied with any of the given options, they were allowed to add their own translations using the target words. The spelling differences included *-ou/-o* and *-re/-er* differences, as in *neighbour/neighbor* and *theatre/theater*, as well as some other individual words, such as *grey* vs. *gray*; *pyjamas* vs. *pajamas* and *mum* vs. *mom*. Some common lexical items from both varieties were also included in the questionnaire, such as *biscuits/cookies*, *jumper/sweater*, *lorry/truck*, *chips/fries*, *trainers/sneakers*, and some others, as well as some specific grammatical units *Have you got?/Do you have?* and *'ve lost/lost*.

The third and fourth tasks measured the respondents' actual knowledge of the differences between the two varieties in the domain of orthography and lexis. In the third task, the respondents were asked to group 21 words as either British or American. These words were either orthographically different in two varieties (nine words), such as *organize*, *gray*, *theater*, *centre*, *analyse*, *tyre*, *encyclopaedia*, *skilful*, and *pyjamas*, or lexically different (twelve words), such as *yard*, *chemist's shop*, *vacation*, *parking lot*, *elevator*, *full stop*, *truck*, *biscuit*, *bill*, *trash can*, *French fries* and *airplane*. In the fourth task, the respondents needed to determine whether two given texts were predominantly British or American and what helped them to determine that.

4.3. Procedures

When formal consent was obtained from three participating schools, the questionnaire was distributed to the students at the school premises. The researchers thoroughly explained the given tasks to all groups of students and the students were informed that they were expected to choose the option that they found the most convenient. The survey lasted approximately twenty minutes and all the respondents contributed to the research anony-

mously and voluntarily and they signed the consent form. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23. Descriptive statistical analyses, including means, standard deviation, frequencies, and Chi-Square tests were performed.

5. Results

5.1. *British and American English in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their status*

When the respondents were asked about the presence of American or British English in ELT, they said that they believed they were more exposed to British ($N=60$, 46.2%) than to American English ($N=48$, 36.9%) and some of them were not even sure to which variety they were exposed more ($N=22$, 16.9%). Still, a large number of respondents claimed that textbooks were predominantly British ($N=97$, 74.6%) and that their elementary and high-school English language teachers preferred and employed British (elementary school $N=70$, 53.8%, high school $N=84$, 64.6%) over American English (elementary school $N=38$, 29.2%, high school $N=27$, 20.8%), but accepted both ($N=111$, 85.4%). A large number of respondents also confirmed that the differences between the two varieties were explicitly taught in English classes ($N=80$, 61.5%) and they could thus easily notice them ($N=99$, 76.2%). Still, there were seven participants (5.4%) who claimed that they could not differentiate between the two varieties and twenty-four of them (18.5%) were indecisive. When asked which variety they use, a large number of respondents said that they used both varieties ($N=74$, 56.9%) or only American English ($N=47$, 36.2%), while nine respondents (6.9%) mentioned British English as their reference variety. Rather interestingly, their goal variety was American English, as around 63.8% of respondents ($N=83$) stated that they wanted to use American English while 36.2% of them ($N=47$) wanted to use British English.

5.2. *British and American English in the domain of pronunciation*

We further measured the respondents' use of British and American accents in pronunciation and the results revealed that the respondents preferred the British accent in only 4 words, i.e. *half*, *patronize*, *new*, and *associate*. However, their preference was significant only in two words, i.e. *patronize* $X^2(1, N = 130) = 6.03$, $p = .014$ ($p < .05$) and *new* $X^2(1, N = 130) = 56.90$, $p = .000$ ($p < .001$), which indicates that the only two words for which the preference was insignificant were *half* and *associate*. On the other hand, the students preferred American accent significantly more frequently in 16 words, *door* $X^2(1, N = 130) = 89.72$, $p = .000$, *answer* $X^2(1, N = 130) = 80.03$, $p = .000$, *tomato* $X^2(1, N = 130) = 59.57$, $p = .000$, *either* $X^2(1, N = 130) = 35.57$, $p = .000$, *schedule*

X^2 (1, N = 130) = 83.20, $p = .000$, *leisure* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 13.57, $p = .000$, *wasp* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 39.88, $p = .000$, *yoghurt* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 89.72, $p = .000$, *paedophile* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 65.11, $p = .000$, *vitamin* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 31.51, $p = .000$, *organisation* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 49.23, $p = .000$, *squirrel* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 33.51, $p = .000$, *advertisement* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 67.97, $p = .000$, *pasta* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 4.43, $p = .035$ ($p < .05$), *tattoo* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 89.72, $p = .000$, *opportunity* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 6.03, $p = .014$ ($p < .05$). The highest preference for American accent (> 90%) was noticed in the words *tattoo*, *yoghurt*, *schedule* and *door* (Table 1).

Table 1: The representation of British and American variety in the domain of pronunciation

Word	RP	GenAm	X^2	<i>P</i>
	pronunciation	pronunciation		
	N (%)	N (%)		
half	73 (56.1)	57 (43.8)	1.97	.161
door	11 (8.4)	119 (91.5)	89.72	.000
answer	14 (10.7)	116 (89.2)	80.03	.000
tomato	21 (16.1)	109 (83.8)	59.57	.000
either	31 (23.8)	99 (76.1)	35.57	.000
schedule	13 (10)	117 (90)	83.20	.000
leisure	44 (33.8)	86 (66.1)	13.37	.000
wasp	29 (22.3)	101 (77.6)	39.88	.000
yoghurt	11 (8.4)	119 (91.5)	89.72	.000
patronize	79 (60.7)	51 (39.2)	6.03	.014
paedophile	19 (14.6)	111 (85.3)	65.11	.000
vitamin	33 (25.3)	97 (74.6)	31.51	.000
new	108 (83.07)	22 (16.9)	56.90	.000
organisation	25 (19.2)	105 (80.7)	49.23	.000
squirrel	32 (24.6)	98 (75.3)	33.51	.000
associate	73 (56.1)	57 (43.8)	1.97	.161
advertise- ment	18 (13.8)	112 (86.1)	67.97	.000
pasta	53 (40.7)	77 (59.2)	4.43	.035
opportunity	51 (39.2)	79 (60.7)	6.03	.014
tattoo	11 (8.4)	119 (91.5)	89.72	.000

5.3. Preferences for British or American English in the domain of spelling, grammar, and lexis and the consistency in the use of one variety

We also measured the respondents' consistency in the use of one of the two varieties in the domain of spelling, grammar, and lexis. The most frequently selected translated sentence was the one with solely American spelling, lexis, and/or grammar in five sentences (sentences 1, 2, 5, 6, and 9), with sentences 2, 5, and 6 being significantly more frequently selected than either British or mixed translations. The translated sentence mixing both British and American varieties was significantly more frequently preferred over either sole British or American translations in the remaining four sentences (sentences 3, 4, 7, and 8). Table 2 clearly demonstrates that, surprisingly, the translated sentence did not predominantly adopt British spelling or orthography in any of the examples.

Table 2: Consistency in the use of British and American English in spelling, lexis, and/or grammar

S	British		American		British and American / mixed		X ²	P
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
S1	40	30.8	51	39.2	39	30	2.34	.310
S2	16	12.3	68	52.3	46	35.4	31.63	.000
S3	18	13.7	42	32.1	71	54.2	30.48	.000
S4	10	7.6	49	37.4	72	55	43.24	.000
S5	4	3	89	68.5	37	28.5	85.99	.000
S6	8	6.25	64	50	56	43.8	42.54	.000
S7	39	29.8	19	14.5	73	55.7	34.77	.000
S8	24	18.3	7	5.3	100	76.4	114.75	.000
S9	60	46.2	70	53.8	-	-	0.77	.380

Through the second task, we also measured the overall number of selections of different word spellings, different words, or grammatical constructions and noticed that American English was preferred in fifteen words or constructions and British English only in five words or constructions, i.e. *favourite*, *chips*, *sweets*, *holiday* and *'ve lost*. With the exception of *favourite* (N=66, 55.7%), whose selection is not significantly higher than the selection of its equivalent *favorite* (N=64, 49.2%) in American English, the remaining four British English words were selected significantly more frequently than their American variants, i.e. *chips* X² (1, N = 131) = 12.83, p = .000 (p < .05), *sweets* X² (1, N = 131) = 6.42, p = .011 (p < .05), *holiday* X² (1, N = 131) = 87.40,

$p = .000$ ($p < .05$), 've lost X^2 (1, N = 130) = 31.51, $p = .000$. ($p < .05$). Among fifteen words and constructions which are typical Americanisms, nine words were selected significantly more frequently than the equivalent British words and constructions, and the most prominent among those were *cookies* X^2 (1, N = 131) = 45.26, $p = .000$. ($p < .05$); *truck* X^2 (1, N = 128) = 87.78, $p = .000$. ($p < .05$), *sweater* X^2 (1, N = 128) = 30.03, $p = .000$. ($p < .05$), *pharmacy* X^2 (1, N = 130) = 150.10, $p = .000$. ($p < .05$). The construction *Do you have...?* X^2 (1, N = 131) = 0.684, $p = .000$. ($p < .05$) was also preferred over the construction *Have you got...?*. Such findings are rather interesting particularly taking into consideration that some British English words, particularly *biscuit*, *lorry*, *jumper*, etc. and constructions *Have you got...?* were explicitly taught in the school milieu. It is also important to mention that the Present Perfect Tense 've lost, characteristic of British English, was significantly more frequently selected than the Past Simple Tense expression *lost*, particularly when this finding is compared to the finding related to *have got/have* distinction (Table 3).

Table 3: Preferences in the domain of spelling and lexis

British English	N (%)	American English	N (%)	X^2	P
favourite	66 (50.8)	favorite	64 (49.2)	0.03	.860
colour	54 (41.5)	color	76 (58.5)	3.72	.054
grey	62 (47.7)	gray	68 (52.3)	0.28	.599
trainers	57 (43.8)	sneakers	73 (56.2)	1.97	.161
jumper	33 (25.8)	sweater	95 (74.2)	30.03	.000
pyjamas	43 (33.6)	pajamas	85 (66.4)	13.78	.000
chips	86 (65.6)	French fries	45 (34.4)	12.83	.000
biscuits	27 (20.6)	cookies	104 (79.4)	45.26	.000
sweets	80 (61.1)	candies	51 (38.9)	6.42	.011
mum	43 (32.8)	mom	88 (67.2)	15.46	.000
theatre	49 (37.4)	theatre	82 (62.6)	8.31	.004
the chemist's shop	4 (3.1)	drugstore	16 (12.3)	150.10	.000
		pharmacy	110 (84.6)		
centre	41 (31.5)	center	89 (68.5)	17.72	.000
neighbour	61 (47.7)	neighbor	67 (52.3)	0.28	.596
lorry	11 (8.6)	truck	117 (91.4)	87.78	.000
at the weekend	61 (47.7)	on the week-end	67 (52.3)	0.28	.596
rubber	54 (41.5)	eraser	76 (58.5)	3.72	.054
've lost	97 (74.6)	lost	33 (25.4)	31.51	.000
Have you got ...?	29 (22.1)	Do you have ...?	102 (77.9)	0.684	.000
holiday	119 (90.8)	vacation	12 (9.2)	87.40	.000

5.4. Correct grouping of British and American English lexis

In the third task, the respondents were asked to mark twenty-one words as either characteristically British or American. The selected words differed orthographically or lexically in two varieties and only one item from each pair was provided. The respondents found this task to be rather challenging and they failed to group some words, which explains an unequal number of responses for each word. The number of correct responses for almost all words (twenty words) was over 50%, while for some of them, such as *encyclopaedia*, *truck*, and *biscuit*, the number of correct responses exceeded 100 (>80%). The only exception was the word *skilful*, for which the number of correct responses was below 50% and only 49 respondents correctly guessed that it follows the norms of British spelling (38.9%). Correct responses were selected significantly more frequently for all words except for *gray*, *analyse*, *pyjamas*, and *full stop*, for which the number of correct and incorrect responses was rather similar (Table 4).

Table 4: Correct grouping of words into British or American variety

Word	Correct response		Incorrect response		X ²	p
	Variety	%	Variety	%		
organize	AmE	65.1	BrE	34.9	11.79	.000
gray	AmE	53.9	BrE	46.1	0.78	.377
theatre	AmE	60.6	BrE	39.4	5.74	.017
centre	BrE	64.6	AmE	35.4	10.78	.001
analyse	BrE	55.5	AmE	44.5	1.53	.216
tyre	BrE	63.2	AmE	36.8	8.71	.003
encyclopaedia	BrE	82.2	AmE	17.8	53.40	.000
skilful	BrE	38.9	AmE	61.1	6.22	.013
pyjamas	BrE	51.2	AmE	48.8	0.07	.792
yard	AmE	60.6	BrE	39.4	5.74	.017
chemist's shop	BrE	78.1	AmE	21.9	40.5	.000
vacation	AmE	65.9	BrE	34.1	13.03	.000
elevator	AmE	73.4	BrE	26.6	28.13	.000
parking lot	AmE	63.3	BrE	36.7	9.03	.003
full stop	BrE	57.5	AmE	42.5	2.84	.092
truck	AmE	87.5	BrE	12.5	72	.000
biscuit	BrE	85.9	AmE	14.1	66.13	.000
bill	AmE	71	BrE	29	21.81	.000
trashcan	AmE	70.3	BrE	29.7	21.13	.000
French fries	AmE	62.8	BrE	37.2	8.44	.004
airplane	AmE	68	BrE	32	16.53	.000

In the fourth task, the respondents were given two different texts and both texts displayed some properties of one variety. Thus, 84 respondents (70.6%) correctly guessed which variety was used in each text, while 35 respondents (29.4) did not determine the variety the text follows. They gave significantly more correct than incorrect responses $X^2(1, N = 129) = 20.18, p = .000. (p < .05)$. When the respondents were asked what helped them determine the variety, they stated that they were either led by the word's orthography or its form. Thus, the words that led the respondents to respond correctly and group the first text as following American English were *color, apartment, elevator, squad car, odor, etc.*, while those that helped them correctly group the text as British were *autumn, grey, neighbour, garden, fulfil, realised, holiday, etc.* In addition to these words, the respondents also added some other words which are used in both varieties as such and are not solely related to one variety or the other but to them, they sounded too British (*package, yearn, dull, frowned, luxury* and others) or too American (*chatting, siren, joyless, town* and others).

6. Discussion

6.1. British and American English in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their status

The current research aimed to explore which of the two most prominent English varieties Bosnian high-school students prefer and which variety they tend to use more frequently in the domain of pronunciation, orthography, lexis, and grammar. It can be noticed that the respondents are aware of the fact that English language textbooks are predominantly British and that British English is the most frequently employed variety by their teachers. This shows that they are more exposed to British than to American English through their education, which has also been observed earlier (Bieswanger, 2008; Dalton-Puffer et al., 1997; Proshina, 2006; Syrbe & Rose, 2016; Trudgill & Hannah, 2013). However, a significant number of respondents emphasized the influence of American English in education. This suggests that American English is gradually making its way into Europe, which aligns with previous studies that have also observed a noticeable presence of American English in ELT in the context of B&H (Brdarević-Čeljo & Dubravac, 2022). The respondents were also quite confident that they could differentiate between the two varieties, a belief that was supported by the findings of this study. A large number of respondents accurately identified whether a word was British or American, with over 80% of responses being correct, far surpassing the number of incorrect responses. Still, over half of the respondents claimed to use both varieties to the same extent and more respondents claimed to use American rather than British English. This is also reflected in

their responses about the desired variety, which seems to be American English for around 63% of respondents. Positioning American English as a desired variety was also observed in Brdarević-Čeljo and Dubravac (2022), Chang (2016), Xiaoqiong (2005) and some other studies and is a result of the global impact of American English (Mair, 2013) and its “global cultural hegemony” (Rindal, 2010: 242). This contradicts some earlier studies across Europe in which British English was positioned as a predominant reference variety which non-native speakers aimed to emulate (Bernaisch & Koch, 2016; Carrie, 2017; Ladegaard & Sachdev, 2006). This finding is also rather interesting from the perspective of language attitude research. The question about the desired variety was asked using the direct elicitation method and American English was explicitly selected by a large number of respondents. The discrepancy between directly and indirectly elicited attitudes was taken as an indication of a language attitude change in progress (McKenzie & Carrie, 2018), the matter worth researching further in the Bosnian context.

6.2. *British and American English in the domain of pronunciation*

An increased prevalence of American English pronunciation was noted, with this particular variety being chosen significantly more often in a sample of sixteen words. For some words, i.e. *advertisement*, *yoghurt*, *door*, *answer*, and *tattoo*, the American variety was selected by over 85% of respondents, which clearly shows that most young people are more prone to use words characteristic of American than British English. This is not surprising, taking into consideration that American English has great demographic weight and that it is dominant on the Internet and in the movie and music industry (Crystal, 2003: 100-115) whose greatest consumers are young generations. British English pronunciation was selected only in four words *half*, *patronize*, *new*, and *associate*, but the preference was significant only for *patronize* and *new*. *New* /'nju:/ is the word highly used in the school milieu, while predominantly British pronunciation of *patronize* could be either assigned to the respondents' unfamiliarity with the word or the most common pronunciation of the letter 'a' in the first syllable as the sound /æ/, which led the respondents to pronounce it as /'pæt.rə.naɪz/ rather than /'peɪt.rə.naɪz/. Previous research by Brdarević-Čeljo & Dubravac (2022) suggested a notable increase in the use of British English in words like *half*, *opportunity*, and *leisure*. However, the findings of the current study did not support this claim. Instead, it was found that while British English was still present in these words, the American pronunciation of *opportunity* and *leisure* was chosen more frequently. This shift towards American English aligns with the concept of 'Americanization' previously identified in Europe by Söderlund & Modiano (2002). Rather interestingly, there was also one respondent who consistently selected American pronunciation throughout the pronunciation

task. Still, even this respondent did not remain consistent in the usage of American English in all tasks and tended to choose British vocabulary in some of the remaining tasks. This shows that all respondents use two varieties interchangeably despite their beliefs that they follow only one variety.

6.3. Preferences for British and American English in the domain of spelling, grammar, and lexis and the consistency in the use of one variety

A larger presence of American English among Bosnian respondents was also noticeable in lexis and spelling. Thus, the translation in American English was most frequently selected in five sentences and the translation having the properties of both varieties in the remaining four sentences. Still, the American English translation was not selected significantly more frequently than the British or mixed translation in sentence 1 (containing *favourite/favorite, colour/color, grey/gray*), sentence 6 (*neighbour/neighbor, lorry/truck, at the weekend/on the weekend*) and sentence 9 and the number of respondents who selected all three options was rather similar. The translation following solely British English was not the most frequently selected example in any of the given sentences. This confirms that Bosnian respondents also lack consistency in the use of one variety as was the case with the respondents from some previous studies (Alftberg, 2009; Brdarević-Čeljo & Dubravac, 2022; Dazdarević, 2007; Dubravac, Brdarević-Čeljo & Bećirović, 2018; Grubor et al., 2008). When individual words from those sentences were analysed, a marked shift toward American English was observed. Thus, out of eight words which orthographically differ in two varieties, British English was insignificantly preferred only in one, i.e. *favourite*, and American English was significantly preferred in four words, i.e. *pajamas, mom, theater, and center*. American spellings of three words, i.e. *color, gray, and neighbor* were selected insignificantly more frequently than British spellings. This is not aligned with Brdarević-Čeljo and Dubravac (2022) where the British spellings of the words *favourite, grey, theatre, neighbour, and pyjamas* were significantly prevalent, which also points to a marked and progressive shift towards American English particularly among the younger population. The selection of words that are more commonly used in British English was a bit more frequent in the domain of lexis and the words *chips, sweets, and holiday* were selected significantly more frequently than Americanisms *French fries, candies, and vacation*. On the other hand, four American lexical items were selected significantly more frequently than their British equivalents, such as *sweater, cookies, pharmacy, and truck*. American English was also slightly but insignificantly preferred in *sneakers* and *eraser*. The results point to a more frequent selection of the American lexis even for words that are commonly acquired in the school milieu, as in *jumper/sweater, biscuits/cookies, lorry/truck, etc.* and the use of Americanisms

in ELT is expected to rise. Although the current findings largely converge with the previous studies by Dubravac et al. (2018) and Brdarević-Čeljo and Dubravac (2022) conducted in the same context, a gradual shift towards American English in the domains of lexis is more noticeable in this than in the previous two studies, which might be explained by the fact that the current study respondents are younger. Namely, in the previous two studies, the British variants *trainers* and *rubber* were selected significantly more frequently than the American variants *sneakers* and *eraser*, which was not the case in the present study where the preference for the latter pair was observed. As for the domain of grammar, American English significantly prevails in the use of *Do you have...?* and British English in the use of *'ve lost*. American English variant *on the weekend* was also more frequently but insignificantly selected. The preference for Present Perfect over Past Simple might be because Present Perfect Tense is widely present in ELT and explicitly taught due to its complexity. On the other hand, the preference for *Do you have?* is rather surprising since *Have you got..?* construction denoting possession is extensively practiced in ELT. The reason for such results might be found in the mismatch between the form and meaning in the *have got* construction. The results for grammar point to a balanced use of British and American English. Still, the selection of *'ve lost* over *lost* is not concurrent with the previous findings (Brdarević-Čeljo & Dubravac, 2022), wherein all three Present Perfect-Past Simple options, the respondents more frequently chose the Past Simple Tense typical for American English. Since the current study respondents are high school students, they have been more exposed to Present Perfect Tense more recently than the respondents from the other studies conducted in this sociocultural context.

6.4. Correct grouping of British and American English lexis

In the last two exercises, we measured the respondents' knowledge of two varieties by asking them to group some words correctly as British or American. More than 50% of respondents correctly grouped all words except the word *skilful* typically used in British English and for some words, such as *truck* and *biscuit*, the number of correct responses exceeded 85%. The number of correct responses was significantly higher for eleven words characteristic of American English, and insignificant only for *gray*, while the number of correct responses for words characteristic of British English was significant in six out of nine words and insignificant for *analyse*, *pyjamas*, and *full stop*. The two texts were also correctly grouped as either British or American by a large number of respondents (70%), which further strengthens the idea that high school students from B&H are quite good at recognising these two central English varieties, but they are not consistent in the usage of one. Still, the question arises as to whether we should insist upon consistency in the

use of one variety, which was earlier a common practice in ELT in B&H and further (Dubravac, Brdarević-Čeljo & Bećirović, 2018; Trudgill & Hannah, 2013) or whether this should be only insisted upon in the educational milieu or writing. Still, the results of Brdarević-Čeljo and Dubravac (2022) showed that even teachers do not insist upon consistency and if they do, that does not have an impact on language learners because of their continued exposure to both.

7. Conclusion

The present study examined the representation of two most prominent native English varieties, i.e. Standardised British and Standardised American English, in the exonormatively oriented Bosnian society, with a special focus on the domain of ELT. As a hyper-central variety with heavy demographic weight and the potential to impact all English varieties, particularly in the domain of lexis (Mair, 2013), American English was expected to extend its influence over this sociocultural context as well. On the other hand, British English was also expected to play an important part in this context due to the solid institutional support it received through ELT. The findings show that both varieties are represented in this context and English used here exhibits the characteristics of both. Still, American English seems to have a stronger impact on English employed in the sociocultural context of B&H as it was shown to be dominant in different aspects of language use (pronunciation, orthography, and lexis), while it was used to the same extent as British English in grammar. A large number of current study respondents also demonstrated a sound knowledge of varietal differences but lacked consistency in using only one variety even though consistency is still largely insisted upon in this sociocultural context.

The study raises some important questions regarding the status of the English language in B&H, the domains of its use, and the issue of consistency in the use of only one variety in these different domains. Despite its restrictive nature (Cameron, 1995), consistency is still considered significant in Europe (Trudgill & Hannah, 2013). Thus, the current study results might be used to raise awareness of the inconsistency that characterises EFL learners in these and similar contexts. For that purpose, workshops for teachers and students could be organised. These workshops would aim towards raising awareness of the diversity English language learners encounter when using English as a link language and would focus on the importance of consistency in the use of one variety particularly in the EFL context of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The current study is also important for understanding the status of English as a global language and different varieties of English in this context and it might prompt further discussion on the global status of English as

well as the prevalence and status of its different varieties. As such, it might also serve as an impetus for any other future studies on language attitudes conducted in this sociolinguistic context.

The study might be limited in several ways. Firstly, a sample including a larger population would enrich the study and make the findings more generalisable. Secondly, the current study only contained some questions eliciting respondents' attitudes towards these two English language varieties. It could be useful to insert more questions eliciting both direct and indirect attitudes and investigate whether this attitudinal component impacts their actual usage of one variety or the other.

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