“It is not important whether one speaks British English or American English”

A Questionnaire-Based Study of English Teachers’ Attitudes in Sweden

Leila Amdaouech
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Abstract
Although there have been some studies conducted in Sweden about the language attitudes towards different varieties of English, most of these studies have focused on the language attitudes found amongst students. There have not, however, been many studies conducted that examines teachers’ language attitudes. The focus of the present study is to investigate which attitudes are found towards two varieties of English, American English and British English, amongst English teachers in Sweden. The study also aims to explore whether the teachers’ age and language backgrounds have an impact on the teachers’ attitudes. The hypothesis was that older teachers would be more positively inclined towards British English while younger teachers would prefer American English. Furthermore, it was also hypothesized that teachers who grew up monolingual would prefer British English and those who grew up bilingual would favour American English. The data collection method that was used in the study was a questionnaire which was distributed online to English teachers in Sweden. 115 teachers participated in the study and answered the questionnaire, which provided both quantitative and qualitative data. The results of the study show that the teachers seem to display equally positive attitudes towards both varieties. For example, American English is favoured in terms of being most familiar, easiest to understand and easiest to teach. British English, on the other hand, is favoured in terms of pleasantness and is in many ways seen as more respected. The findings of the study did confirm the hypotheses to a certain degree. The results showed a tendency amongst younger teachers and teachers who have grown up bilingual to prefer American English. In contrast, the tendency amongst older teachers and teachers who have grown up monolingual was to prefer British English. Overall, the results of the study raise the question of how these attitudes affect the teachers’ teaching of English.

Keywords
American English, British English, language attitudes, teaching, variety.
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1. Introduction

It is commonly known that British English used to be the most popular and established variety of English in Sweden. It also used to be the only English variety that was used in the Swedish educational system until at least the 1990s (Modiano, 2005). Today, however, the situation, both in Sweden generally and in the Swedish educational system in particular, is much more complicated. In fact, there is not only one dominant variety of English in Sweden, but rather there are two: British English and American English (Modiano, 1993). With time, American English has become more common in Sweden, mainly because of the influence of American popular culture, the media and the internet (Modiano, 2005). Hence, the English that most students in Sweden encounter in their lives outside of school is mostly American and not British. The question of which variety the students can expect to encounter in school, however, is not answered as easily. The current syllabus for English in compulsory school and upper secondary school does not state which varieties should or should not be used in education (Skolverket, 2011a; Skolverket, 2011b). The choice of which varieties are used in the classroom is therefore entirely the teachers’ and is probably influenced by the teachers’ attitudes towards different varieties of English. As was stated by Baker (1992), “the status, value and importance of a language is most often and most easily (though imperfectly) measured by attitudes to that language” (p. 10). Although Baker (1992) discusses whole languages, the same could be stated for different varieties of a language.

In contrast with the attitudes of Swedish school students towards different varieties and accents of English, which is an area that has been studied to some extent (e.g. Mobårg, 1998, 2002; Söderlund & Modiano, 2002), not much research exists on English teachers in Sweden and the attitudes found amongst them towards different varieties. Based on personal experience, there seems to be a common idea amongst Swedish people in general that English teachers in Sweden prefer British English. If this idea is based on the old tradition of British English being the standard for Swedish education or reflects the reality of the situation remains largely unstudied. According to Modiano (2005), the trend in Sweden is that most English teachers speak with a British accent, although this is mixed with a Swedish accent in some cases. Modiano (2005) also states that most English teachers in Sweden perceive British English as superior, but presents no research to support this statement. Furthermore, according to a study by Axelsson (2002) on Swedish university students, about a third of the participants claimed to have experience with teachers expressing negative attitudes towards American English. All these ideas, statements and claims emphasise the need for research on what the teachers themselves think and feel in this regard and what their attitudes are. Consequently, this is what the present study aims to investigate, in that it explores the attitudes that are found amongst English teachers in Sweden towards American English and British English respectively. Moreover, another reason for investigating teacher attitudes is that it has been shown that teacher attitudes tend to affect the students’ attitudes (Ulug, Ozden & Eryilmaz, 2011). Hence, it is of interest to investigate which attitudes towards American English and British English are expressed in classrooms in Sweden since this will affect what the students will feel and think towards the two varieties. Lastly, it could be argued that there are more varieties than these two that can be found in the teaching of English in Sweden.
However, as stated before, these two varieties are by far the most popular and established varieties in Sweden and therefore were chosen for this study.

1.1 Research questions and hypothesis

As mentioned above, this study examines English teachers’ attitudes towards American English and British English. Furthermore, the study intends to examine whether the teachers’ age influences the teachers’ attitudes. Age was chosen as a factor in order to investigate whether there is a difference between the attitudes of older teachers and younger teachers towards the two varieties. The study also aims to investigate how language background as a factor may influence the teachers’ attitudes. More specifically, language background has been operationalized here in terms of whether the teachers have grown up monolingual or bilingual. In the present study, by *bilingual informants* is meant ‘informants who grew up in Sweden with another first language than Swedish at home’. Language background was chosen as a factor because of personal experience. In fact, during my time as both a student in the Swedish school system and as a teacher student, I have observed a tendency for American English to be favoured by teachers with bilingual backgrounds while monolingual Swedish teachers have always seemed to favour British English. Therefore, the study also intends to investigate whether this is true or has simply been coincidental.

The three research questions that this study intends to answer are the following:

1. Which attitudes are found amongst English teachers in Swedish schools towards British English and American English, respectively?
2. Does age have an impact on the teachers’ attitudes? If so, how?
3. Does language background have an impact on the teachers’ attitudes? If so, how?

The hypothesised result for the first research question is that British English will be slightly more favoured than American English, but not to the degree that most people in Sweden seem to believe. The hypothesis for the second research question is that older teachers will display more positive attitudes towards British English than American English since British English has traditionally been the variety taught in Swedish schools (Modiano, 2005). It is also hypothesised that younger teachers will be more positive towards American English since many of these teachers probably have grown up being more exposed to American English than the older generation. Finally, the hypothesis for the third research question is that teachers who have grown up bilingual will prefer American English to a higher degree than teachers who have grown up monolingual, and vice versa.

2. Background

In this section, firstly the notions of American English and British English will be explained and defined for the study. Secondly, a brief historic outline of the role of English in the Swedish school will be given together with a description of what the
situation is today. Lastly, the term *attitude* will be defined for the study and previous research on language attitudes will be reviewed.

### 2.1 American English and British English

Prior to investigating which attitudes are found towards the two varieties of English, it must be defined what is entailed by these two terms for the purposes of the present study. Furthermore, in this study American English and British English are claimed to be two varieties of English. The reason that the neutral term *variety* is used rather than dialect or language is simply to “avoid the notoriously difficult dialect/language distinction” (Melchers & Shaw, 2011, p. 13). Also, it should be noted that the terms American English and British English are used rather than American accent and British accent. The reason for this is primarily because this study does not limit itself to pronunciation and accent only concerns pronunciation (Melchers & Shaw, 2011, p. 13).

#### 2.1.1 American English

American English in this study is simply defined as English spoken in the United States of America (USA). This definition naturally entails that a wide range of different dialects is included. According to Melchers and Shaw (2011, pp. 82-83), the USA consists of three main dialect areas. The first area is “The North”, which geographically comprises New England and New York. The second area is “The Midland”, but there is no clear consensus as to what exactly is denoted by this area. The most common notion is that it includes areas such as Philadelphia, some parts of North and South Carolina and the area from Tennessee to Arkansas. The third and final area is “The South”, which includes states like Florida, Mississippi and Texas. The dialects spoken in these three areas differ from each other but are all included in the notion of American English.

#### 2.1.2 British English

British English, in the present study, is defined as the English used by speakers of Standard English. This definition is derived from the following statement that the linguist Abercrombie made in 1965:

> English people are divided, by the way they talk, into three groups; first, R.P. speakers of Standard English—those without an accent; second, non-R.P. speakers of Standard English—those with an accent; and third, dialect speakers. (p. 12)

The definition of British English that is adopted in the present study entail the English used by speakers of the two firstly-mentioned groups: RP speakers of Standard English and non-RP speakers of Standard English. Received Pronunciation (RP) is a British accent that is described as not belonging to any particular region but as an accent that “is never, however, described as a ‘classless’ accent, because it identifies the speaker as a member of the middle or upper classes” (McArthur, 1992, p. 851). In previous research, British English has traditionally been associated with RP (see McArthur, 1998). The reason for this lies in the common misconception that RP is the accent that is used by
most people in England (McArthur, 1998). This is far from being true; in fact, it is claimed
that the percentage of British people that speak RP is around 3-4% at the most (McArthur,
1998).

As with American English in the section above, the simplest way to define what British
English is would be to claim that it is English that is used in Great Britain. This way of
defining it could, however, be seen as problematic. For example, most people hearing a
Scottish person speak would not necessarily classify this as British but rather it would be
labelled as Scottish. In this sense, what some would describe as regional dialects of British
English, others would label varieties of English in their own right. This could further be
exemplified by the argument that most people would probably claim that Australian
English sounds more like the English spoken in England than what Scottish English does.
Some researchers, such as Görlach (1991), therefore prefer to use the label English
English to describe this variety of English. In the present study, however, the term used
will still be British English since this is the most commonly used term to describe the
variety in previous research.

2.2 English in Swedish schools

The standard variety for the whole Swedish school system until the beginning of the
1990s was British English (Modiano, 2005). Specifically, it was recommended to all
students to aim at acquiring an accent that was as close to RP as possible (Modiano, 2005).
Furthermore, when it comes to the teaching of culture, the focus was mainly on British
studies and, only marginally, on American culture (Modiano, 2005). As can be expected,
the consequences of this were that, before the 1990s, most people in Sweden spoke with
an accent that would be labelled as British and conformed to British English language
conventions (Modiano, 2005). However, after this period the presence of American
English has increased dramatically in Sweden (Modiano, 2005). This increase is caused
by a variety of factors ranging from the use of the internet to the increased presence of
American media (Modiano, 2005). As a result, most Swedes do not conform to one single
variety but rather use English in a more diverse way (Modiano, 2005). This variation and
diversity can be found both within single individual speakers and also across speakers.

Mobär (2002) conducted a study that focused on the pronunciation of Swedish school
students. By recording the students’ speech, Mobär (2002) aimed to examine whether a
British RP accent or a General American (GA) accent was used by the students. GA refers
to “American accents without a great deal of regional colouring” (Melchers & Shaw,
2011, p. 85). It was hypothesized that RP is associated with formality while GA is used
with more informal styles (Mobär, 2002). The results showed that RP was used the most,
in 64% of the cases, while GA was used only in 29% of the cases; moreover, the initial
hypothesis concerning formal and informal styles was confirmed. Finally, Mobär (2002)
suggested that the pronunciation (RP vs GA) used for specific words might simply be due
to the accent in which the words were learnt. Words that are commonly found in media,
such as dance, were pronounced more frequently in GA. On the other hand, words that
were seen as belonging “to a core set of basic school words” (Mobär, 2002, p. 127), such
as half, were pronounced in RP. This would suggest that the accent and the variety that
teachers use to teach their students, in this case RP and British English, directly impacts the accent and variety that the students will use.

2.3 Language attitudes

The definition of attitudes that is applied in this study is derived from Edwards (2011). According to Edwards (2011, p. 47), language attitudes consist of three parts. The first component is affective; that is, attitudes can be influenced by personal feelings. The second component is cognitive and concerns thoughts and/or beliefs. The third and last component is behavioural, meaning that attitudes may include “predispositions to act in a certain way” (Edwards, 2011, p. 47). In other words, according to this definition, one’s attitudes have to do with how a person reacts emotionally to something that s/he either believes or knows, and this in turn impacts the actions of this person (Edwards, 2011, p. 47). Furthermore, a common misconception is that belief and attitude are perceived as having equivalent meanings. As mentioned above, however, in research at least, belief is perceived as only one component of an attitude (Edwards, 2011, p. 48).

According to Garrett (2010, p. 1), language attitudes impact our lives every day. Sometimes it is difficult to explicitly express or even be conscious of the language attitudes we hold (Garrett, 2010, p.1). In other occasions, though, our attitudes are more apparent, especially when the language attitudes are negative or have to be explained or argued for (Garrett, 2010, p. 2). Moreover, Garrett (2010, p. 7) explains that while most people are not aware of what influences their language attitudes, some even believe that the attitudes they possess are simply common sense. The language attitudes that people have target all levels of a language, everything from words and spelling to pronunciation and accents (Garrett, 2010, p. 2). For example, many studies have been conducted on the attitudes towards RP (Garrett, 2010, p. 15).

2.3.1 Previous studies on language attitudes

There have been many studies that focus on the attitudes of students and teachers in the past decades (Jenkins, 2007, p. 95). All these studies have added to the existing research on the attitudes towards both non-native varieties and native varieties such as British English and American English. In this section, some of these previous studies about language attitudes will be presented, all of which are focused on students and teachers except for Ladegaard (1998), whose study will be presented next.

A pronunciation study conducted in Denmark by Ladegaard (1998) examined the attitudes towards five different native varieties of English: American, Australian, Cockney, RP and Scottish. The participants listened to a male speaker of each variety and had to make associations between the spoken variety and certain personality traits, for example kindness and helpfulness. The study found that the respondents perceived the American speaker as humorous and the Australian as reliable. The Cockney speaker was associated with working-class undertones and the Scottish was perceived as helpful and friendly (Ladegaard, 1998). Finally, the RP speaker scored the highest percentage for many personality traits. For example, he was perceived as the most intelligent, educated,
correct and as having a higher social status. However, the RP speaker scored poorly on traits such as being helpful, reliable and friendly (Ladegaard, 1998).

Timmis (2002) conducted an attitudinal study that focuses on the attitudes of students and teachers towards native and non-native Englishes. Around 400 students from 14 different countries and 180 teachers from 45 different countries participated in the study (Timmis, 2002, p. 241). Timmis (2002, p. 241) administered two questionnaires, one to students and one to teachers. The questionnaires focused on three different aspects: pronunciation, written grammar and spoken grammar. Because of the relevance to the present study, only the results for the teachers will be reviewed. The results of the pronunciation part showed that there were mixed attitudes amongst the teachers (Timmis, 2002, p. 243). That is, some teachers believed it was positive to speak with a non-native accent for reasons such as it representing the speaker’s personality. Other teachers were more inclined to perceive native-like speech as the ideal that should be aspired for. There were also some teachers that stated that it depends on the individual student and on the student’s purpose for acquiring English (Timmis, 2002, p. 243). In the written grammar part of the questionnaire, many teachers expressed that, with regards to both informal and formal grammar, native-like competence is optimal (Timmis, 2002, p. 245). Finally, with regards to spoken grammar, most teachers agreed that the students need to be exposed to informal spoken grammar for reasons such as it being authentic and to show that “language is culturally influenced” (Timmis, 2002, p. 248). However, even though many teachers felt that the students should be exposed to informal spoken grammar, most of them did not feel that the students themselves needed to learn to use it (Timmis, 2002, p. 248). Even though these results shed some light on how teachers think about native-speaker norms, they cannot be used to draw absolute and universal conclusions on all teachers’ attitudes. As stated by Timmis (2002) in the conclusion, “it would be absurd to suggest that this survey provides a statistically accurate picture of the state of opinion among students and teachers: the sample is but a tiny fraction of the English language learning and teaching population, and questionnaires are not precision instruments” (p. 248).

Another study was conducted by Mobärg (1998) with the aim of investigating which language attitudes were found amongst Swedish school students towards American and British English. At the time of the study, the curriculum stated that “cultivated British or American English” (Mobärg, 1998, p. 250) is the model for pronunciation. Nevertheless, Mobärg (1998) does assume that RP is still perceived as more formal but that the situation is not as rigid as before. The purpose of the study was to investigate how the students’ exposure to the media and the students’ media preferences impact the students’ attitudes towards the two varieties. In the study, media exposure is associated with American English and GA, and formal teaching is associated with British English and RP (Mobärg, 1998). The data for the study were collected through a questionnaire and separate listening sessions. A total of 760 Swedish school students participated in the study; the students were of various ages and went from upper primary school to upper secondary school (Mobärg, 1998). The questionnaire contained questions on the students’ media use (in order to determine to what extent the students had been exposed to American media) and questions on American and British culture. During the listening sessions, the students had to listen to recordings of speakers of the two varieties and then had to answer questions about them. The results of the study showed that, generally, Swedish school
students hold more positive attitudes towards American English than towards British English. Moreover, the results showed that a high degree of exposure to American culture and media tends to generate more positive attitudes and a preference for American English (Mobärg, 1998). Finally, the results also showed that the younger the students were, the more positive were their attitudes towards American English. Mobärg (1998) speculates that this could mean that at early ages, media influence is the most important factor in shaping the students’ attitudes. As the students grow older, however, it could be that other factors such as education could be more powerful in determining the students’ attitudes (Mobärg, 1998). Given these findings, Mobärg (1998) concludes that the educational system in Sweden needs to take into account the students’ favourable attitude towards American English. Since the traditional preference for British English and the RP accent does not seem to hold amongst students, the traditional educational focus on British English needs to be reviewed.

A similar study was conducted by Modiano and Söderlund (2002); this study aimed to investigate the language use of Swedish upper secondary school students and which attitudes were found amongst them towards American English, British English and Mid-Atlantic English. Mid-Atlantic English is defined as a mix of American English and British English, and the results of the study show that most Swedish school students mix the American and British varieties to some extent (Modiano & Söderlund, 2002). Moreover, it is suggested that this mix of varieties could be due to the fact that both varieties are taught in school. Modiano and Söderlund (2002) also claim that teachers in Sweden impact the expansion of Mid-Atlantic English negatively by demanding that students should be consistent in the variety (usually American or British English) that the students choose to conform to (Modiano & Söderlund, 2002). The study also showed that the majority of the upper secondary school students preferred American English (61%), while only 33% preferred British English (Modiano & Söderlund, 2002).

3. Method

It has become increasingly common in recent linguistics studies to use a mixed methods approach (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 42); that is, an approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The purpose of using mixed methods is to make optimal use of the strengths of each of the methodologies; moreover, in many cases, one methodology’s strength can compensate for the other one’s weakness (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 45). For example, one limitation of quantitative studies is the lack of depth and dimension to the results (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 35). This limitation, however, is the strength of qualitative research. Thus, by combining quantitative research with a qualitative methodology, this limitation is removed. One very common choice of a mixed methods approach is to combine a questionnaire for quantitative data and interviews for qualitative data (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 24). This was initially the methodology deemed most suitable for this study. The purpose of the questionnaire had been to discover common trends amongst the attitudes of the teachers, and the purpose of the interview questions had been to add depth to the quantitative data of the questionnaire and “thereby putting flesh on the bones” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 45). However, after distributing the questionnaire (Appendix A) and
analysing the collected data, it was decided that the interviews were not necessary. The primary reason for this was that enough quantitative and qualitative data had already been collected in the questionnaire. Indeed, the questionnaire had been designed in such a way that all closed-ended questions had a corresponding comment section; this gave a qualitative component to the questionnaire, a data collection tool which - as mentioned above - is usually not associated with qualitative data. The purpose of the comment section was to provide those teachers who wanted to elaborate their answers with the opportunity to offer more insight as to why a certain answer was chosen. The result of having this comment section was that, for each closed-ended question, between 10-20 participants out of 115 also provided a comment to complement their answers. This, in turn, resulted in a wide range of qualitative data that complemented the quantitative data collected through the answers to the close-ended questions. Lastly, the high number of respondents was also a contributing factor to why the interview studies were deemed unnecessary for the study.

3.1 Designing the questionnaire

The questionnaire, which was created online using Google Forms, consisted of 34 questions. Half of these questions were “factual questions” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 102) that provided background information about the respondents. The other half of the questions were “attitudinal questions” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 102) and aimed at investigating the teachers’ attitudes. These attitudinal questions consisted of two questions that targeted the affective component of attitudes and twelve questions that targeted the cognitive component. There were also two questions that targeted both the affective and the cognitive component, and two questions that targeted the behavioural component of the language attitudes. In accordance to what is stated by Dörnyei (2007, p. 108), all items in the questionnaire were formulated in a way that was supposed to be perceived as short, simple and unbiased. The actual wording in each question also underwent several stages of revision, since, according to Dörnyei (2007), in attitudinal questions “the actual wording of the items can assume an unexpected importance” (p. 103). Moreover, like most questionnaires (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 105), this questionnaire consisted of mainly close-ended questions. There was one open-ended attitudinal question and eleven open-ended questions about the teachers’ background. The reason why these questions were open-ended was because open-ended questions do not demand that the participants compromise or alter their answers and allow them to answer elaborately. Lastly, there were also two questions where a Likert scale was used. The Likert scale used here is a 5-interval scale where the respondent is to agree or disagree with a statement on a scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 105).

3.2 Data collection, participants and data analysis

After the questionnaire had been designed and published on Google Forms, it was distributed online via a Facebook group for English teachers in Sweden. The group is called “Nätverk för lärare i engelska” (Network for teachers of English) and it is a public group, meaning that anyone can see and access the posts there. A total of 115 respondents chose to participate in the study and answer the questionnaire. This was more responses
than had been anticipated and the high number of participants adds to the strength of the results. As mentioned before, this number of responses also was a determining factor when deciding to only focus on the questionnaire data and not to conduct the interviews.

All of the respondents are actively working teachers. The youngest teacher is 23 years old and the oldest teacher is 63 years old. All of the participants are raised in Sweden, and a majority of 78 teachers were also born in Sweden. All of the teachers learnt English before the age of 10, and most of them learnt English either in school or by watching television. 66 the teachers have lived and studied abroad, and 15 teachers have also taught English in another country than Sweden.

The potential problem with conducting an online questionnaire and posting it on a public page on Facebook is that it cannot be guaranteed that all participants are in fact teachers. However, it should be somewhat safe to assume that most people would not be motivated to offer time and energy in answering questions that are not even relevant to them. It will therefore be assumed in this study that all 115 participants in the study meet the requirements of being English teachers in Sweden. Furthermore, it was also a concern prior to distributing the questionnaire on Facebook that the respondents would not be evenly represented in terms of age and language background (see research questions 2 and 3). This concern proved to be unnecessary in terms of age, since about half the respondents are under the age of 40 and the other half is older than 40. In terms of language background, however, the representation is not as even: around 70% of the respondents claimed to have grown up monolingual and only around 30% bilingual.

As mentioned before, Google Forms was used to design and publish the questionnaire. The benefit of using Google Forms is that all responses are recorded and summarized in charts. When analysing the data and compiling the results, these charts were used as a base. However, in order to answer the second and third research questions, each questionnaire had to be reviewed individually in order to note the age and language background of the participants and link these variables to the answers to the attitudinal questions.

3.3 Limitations of the study

After conducting the study, some limitations became apparent. Firstly, as was described in the background, the terms American English and British English are wide notions that can have different meanings for different people. This study assumes a specific definition for these terms; however, this was not communicated to the participants of the study. Rather, the respondents’ answers are based on their own interpretation of what American English and British English are. It could be argued though that, since this study aims to compare the attitudes towards American English with the attitudes towards British English, the most important factor is that these two are distinguished from each other, even though the terms in which such distinction plays out are not specified. Furthermore, it was also mentioned in the Background section that the labels American English and British English were used instead of American accent and British accent in order to refer to all aspects of these language varieties, without limiting the study to attitudes concerning differences in pronunciation. However, some of the comments offered by the
teachers indicated that there was a tendency amongst the participants to assume that most questions concerned spoken English and pronunciation.

Other limitations of the study include that no statistical significance was calculated and that the number of monolingual and bilingual respondents was not even; the two different groups were therefore not equally represented. The latter could influence the strength of the results concerning the third research question. Lastly, as with all self-reporting methodologies, there is always the risk that the participants provide the answers that they believe the researcher wants as opposed to what they truly believe, feel and think.

4. Results

The results of the study are presented in the sections below. In the first section, the results for the first research question are presented. The second and third sections focus on the results of the second and third research question respectively.

4.1 The attitudes found amongst the English teachers

The teachers were asked what they believe to be the most common variety of English in Sweden and what variety they personally are most familiar with. The recorded answers for these questions in the questionnaire are presented in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which variety…</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>BrE</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… do you think is most common in Sweden generally?</td>
<td>70.2% (80)</td>
<td>11.4% (13)</td>
<td>14.9% (17)</td>
<td>3.5% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… are you most familiar with?</td>
<td>40% (46)</td>
<td>28.7% (33)</td>
<td>31.3% (36)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the question concerning which variety is most common in Sweden generally, four teachers (3.5% of the respondents) chose to answer “other”; more specifically, two respondents mentioned Mid-Atlantic English, one Swenglish and one Indian English. As can be observed in Table 1, the majority of the responding teachers (70.2%, 80 participants) believe that American English is the most common variety in Sweden generally. In the corresponding comments to this question, many teachers stated that their answer was based on the fact that American English is so present in today’s popular culture and media. There were also three teachers who stated that, even though American English is most common generally, British English is more common in an educational setting. Furthermore, the majority of the teachers (40%, 46 teachers) report to be most familiar with American English, while 28.7% of the respondents (33 teachers) reported that they are most familiar with British English. Finally, around a third (31.3%) of the respondents (36 teachers) claims to be equally familiar with both varieties.

The questionnaire also required the teachers to state which of the two varieties they believe is most respected in Sweden generally, most respected by teachers in Sweden and
most respected by students in Sweden. The responses to these questions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Responses to which variety the teachers think is most respected in Sweden generally, by other teachers and by their students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which variety do you think is…</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>BrE</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… most respected in Sweden generally?</td>
<td>13.9% (16)</td>
<td>38.3% (44)</td>
<td>41.7% (48)</td>
<td>6.1% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… most respected by teachers?</td>
<td>0.9% (1)</td>
<td>50% (57)</td>
<td>43.9% (50)</td>
<td>5.2% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… most respected by your students?</td>
<td>38.9% (44)</td>
<td>15% (17)</td>
<td>42.5% (48)</td>
<td>3.6% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that the majority of the respondents (41.7%, 48 teachers) believe that both varieties are equally respected in Sweden generally. However, almost an equal percentage of teachers, 38.3% (44 teachers), believes that British English is most respected in Sweden generally. This would indicate that there seems to be a common belief amongst these teachers that Swedish society is biased in favour of British English. Moreover, 50% of the teachers (57 participants) believe that British English is most respected by teachers in Sweden. Only 0.9% of the teachers (1 participant) reports to believe that American English is most respected by other teachers. Concerning which variety the teachers believed was most respected by their students, 42.5% (48 teachers) responded that both varieties are equally respected by their students. However, the percentage of teachers believing American English is most respected by the students is almost as high, 38.9% (44 teachers). Only 15%, which corresponds to 17 teachers, believe that the students view British English as more respected than American English.

The teachers were also asked attitudinal questions that were related to their personal feelings and therefore targeted the affective component of attitudes. The questions specifically asked about which variety the respondents preferred and which is most pleasant, and which is more correct. The responses are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Responses to which variety the teachers prefer and find most pleasant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which variety do you…</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>BrE</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… prefer?</td>
<td>30.4% (35)</td>
<td>29.6% (34)</td>
<td>39.1% (45)</td>
<td>0.9% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… find most pleasant?</td>
<td>14.9% (17)</td>
<td>40.4% (46)</td>
<td>43% (49)</td>
<td>1.7% (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that, although the majority of the teachers claim to like both varieties equally (39.1%, 45 teachers), quite high percentages of teachers prefer American English (30.4%, 35 teachers) and British English (29.6%, 34 teachers) respectively. Also, one respondent answered that the preferred variety is Indian English. 19 respondents commented on this question, mostly by stating that the teachers’ preference is influenced by which variety comes naturally to them, which variety they are more exposed to and which variety they learnt first. Life experiences such as living in the USA or Great Britain, and personal relationships to native speakers of the varieties were also mentioned as reasons for preferring one variety over the other.
The teachers were asked which variety they perceived as more pleasant and the comments to the question indicated that the teachers understood “pleasantness” as sounding charming or appealing, which was also the intended meaning. 43% of the participants (49 teachers) responded that both varieties are equally pleasant, while 46 teachers (40.4%) responded that British English is most pleasant. Only 14.9%, which represents 17 teachers, answered that American English is most pleasant. Two of the respondents did not agree with any of the given options; instead, the respective answers of these teachers were that Australian English was most pleasant and that the answer of which variety is most pleasant depends on the regional dialect.

There were also some questions that targeted the cognitive component of the language attitudes and concerned the teachers’ attitudes in relation to their profession. These questions concerned which variety the teachers think is more correct, most suitable in a school context, easiest to teach and most difficult to learn. The results for the question of which variety the teachers think is easiest to understand is also reported in this section. The reason for this is that the comments to this section displayed a tendency amongst the teachers to assume that the question was about which variety is easiest to understand in a school environment and therefore is relevant to the other results reported in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Responses to which variety the teachers think is most suitable in a school context, easiest to understand, easiest to teach and most difficult to learn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>BrE</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… more correct?</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>78.3% (90)</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… most suitable in a school context?</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>79% (90)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… easiest to understand?</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>42.6% (49)</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… easiest to teach?</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>38.1% (43)</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… most difficult to learn?</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
<td>57% (64)</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primarily, Table 4 shows which variety the teachers feel is more correct. The comments provided by the teachers to this question showed that the tendency was for the teachers to consider the aspect of accuracy of the variety altogether, and not for example only the accuracy of pronunciation when answering this question. The absolute majority, 78.3% (90 teachers), answered that both varieties are equally correct. However, 14.8%, which represents 17 teachers, claimed that British English is more correct. Only 1.7% (two teachers) answered American English. Lastly, six teachers chose to answer “other” and out of these, five teachers claimed that all varieties (emphasising that this included more varieties than American and British English) are equally correct. One teacher answered that Norwegian English is the more correct variety but did not motivate such answer. Furthermore, many teachers also commented on the word choice in this question, finding it strange to claim that one variety could be more correct than another. The question was supposed to be interpreted as which variety is more prestigious and more “standard”, which most teachers seemed to understand although they found the choice of word to be strange.
Table 4 also shows that most teachers (90 teachers, 79% of the respondents) believe that both varieties are equally suitable in a school context. The percentages for British English and American English are fairly low in this question, with only 14% (16 teachers) and 7% (8 teachers) respectively. Thus, the reported answers for which variety is more correct and most suitable in a school context are very similar. For the question concerning which variety is easiest to understand, a majority of 47%, which represented 54 teachers, answered American English. The percentage for British English in this question was only 9.6% (11 teachers); at the same time, five teachers emphasised in their comments that their students have a difficult time understanding British English generally. There was also one teacher who answered “other”, and instead stated that Swedish English is easiest to understand. This teacher also answered Swedish English for the question of which variety is easiest to teach. Furthermore, when asked which variety is easiest to teach, 50 teachers (44.2%) answered American English, 43 teachers (38.1%) answered that both varieties are equally easy to teach and only 19 teachers (16.8%) answered British English. Seven teachers commented that it was easier for them to teach in British solely based on the fact that it was the variety that they use. One teacher who thought that American English was easier to teach, and also was one of the teachers who claimed that their students had a difficult time understanding British English generally, wrote:

I started out speaking BrEng, but students had a hard time understanding me, so I switched to AmEng and experienced a huge difference, which is why I’ve stuck with AmEng and have no intention of changing that.

This statement is further supported by the results for which variety the teachers believe is most difficult to learn. Only 2% (3 respondents) believe that American English is the most difficult to learn, while 40.4% (46 respondents) think that British English is the most difficult. The majority (57%, 64 teachers), however, believes that the two varieties are equally difficult to learn. There was also one respondent who reported that Indian English is the variety that is most difficult to learn.

Two of the questions in the questionnaire were statements, targeting the cognitive component of the teachers’ attitudes, with which the respondents had answer using the Likert scale. The statements and the teacher’s responses to these statements are shown in the two figures below.
Figure 1. The teacher’s responses to the statement of whether it would be assumed that Swedish people speaking American English are better at English than those who speak British English.

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses to the statement: 38.1% (43) strongly disagree, 20.4% (23) disagree, 28.3% (32) neutral, 7.9% (9) agree, and 5.3% (6) strongly agree.]

Figure 2. The teacher’s responses to the statement of whether it would be assumed that Swedish people speaking British English are better at English than those who speak American English.

Figure 1 shows that a majority of 46.5% (53 teachers) strongly disagree with the statement that Swedish people who speak American English are better at English than those who speak British English. 20.2% (23 teachers) also disagree with the statement and 27.2% (31 teachers) are neutral. Only 3.5% (4 teachers) agree, and 2.6%, 3 teachers, strongly agree with the statement. Figure 2, which shows the respondents’ answer to the statement that Swedish people who speak British English are better at English than those who speak American English, displays similar results. The majority, 38.1% (43 teachers), strongly disagree and 20.4% (23 teachers) disagree with the statement. 28.3% (32 teachers) are neutral, 7.9% (9 teachers) agree and 5.3% (6 teachers) strongly agree.

The overall results of these diagrams do show that there seems to be a tendency amongst the teachers not to assess a person’s level of English proficiency based on the person’s spoken variety of English. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that the majority of the respondents, 67.3% in Figure 1 and 58.4% in Figure 2, either strongly disagree or disagree with the statements. This is further supported by the comments provided by the teachers to these questions. For example, one teacher stated that “it does not matter as long as the person can manage the language and accent correctly”. This thought was also expressed by other teachers. No comments were given by the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to either statement. Furthermore, there does, however, seem to be a slight tendency amongst the teachers to assume that a Swedish person speaking British English is better at English than one who speaks American English. As can be observed when comparing the results from Figures 1 and 2, there are ten less people who strongly disagree with the second statement compared to the first. Furthermore, one more person is neutral in the second statement, four more agree with it and three more strongly agree.

One of the questions in the questionnaire, which targeted the behavioural component of the teachers’ attitudes, concerned which of the two varieties the teachers would choose to speak if given the choice. The answers are summarised in the pie chart below.
Only 109 teachers out of the 115 respondents chose to answer this question. As can be observed in Figure 3, the majority (57.8%, 63 respondents) of the teachers do report that the chosen variety would be British English. The six teachers that did not answer stated that the reason for not responding was either because they did not want to choose one of the given options or because they wanted to choose both options equally. Furthermore, since only 42.2% (46 teachers) of the respondents reported that they would choose American English, there was a difference of 15.6% (representing 17 teachers) in favour of British English. The teachers who answered that American English would be the variety that would be chosen in this scenario explained the choice by referring to the fact that more people are used to hearing American English because the variety has more speakers and because the variety is more familiar or preferred by them. The teachers who answered British English, however, justified the choice by referring to the fact that British English sounds more educated, quirkier and more elegant. One respondent stated that he or she (the teachers never had to state their gender) would wish to “have a really thick Glasgow accent”.

There was only one completely open-ended question in the attitudinal questions of the questionnaire, and this question targeted the behavioural component of the teachers’ attitudes. The question was: “One of your students asks you if you would recommend that they try to learn British English or American English, what do you answer? Why?”. The summary of the participants’ answers is found in Figure 4 below.

![Figure 3. The summary of which variety the respondents would choose to speak if given the choice.](image)

![Figure 4. The summary of the answers to the question of which of the two varieties the teachers would recommend to their students if asked.](image)
Figure 4 shows that a majority of 42.3% (41 respondents) claimed that the students should choose for themselves the variety they want to learn. These teachers motivated their answer by stating that the students should choose whatever feels most comfortable, most familiar, and most natural to them, so that they can be more motivated to learn and more confident. It is also worth noting that 15 of 41 teachers who took this view emphasised that it is of major importance that the students be consistent and use only one variety. Moreover, 25.8% (25 respondents) answered that it does not matter what the students choose since both varieties are equally good. Almost all these teachers also claimed that what matters is that the students learn good English and that the students can be understood by others.

As can also be seen in Figure 4, almost the same number of respondents would recommend British English (12.3%, 12 respondents) and American English (13.4%, 13 respondents) respectively. The justification for their answers differed a lot though. The teachers that claimed that the students would be recommended American English explained that American English is easier to pronounce and learn. Four of these respondents claimed that they would recommend American English because the students are more exposed to this variety due to its presence in the media, which would make it easier for them to learn. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents who claimed that British English would be the variety that the students would be recommended justified the choice by referring to the fact that British English is regarded as “better”, “more proper” and “more correct”. One teacher claimed that it will probably never be a disadvantage to know British English because of its association with a high level of education and how it is commonly perceived as more respected. Lastly, two teachers also claimed that they would recommend British English because British English is the “real” and “original” English.

There were also six teachers whose responses do not conform to any of the other categories. The first teacher claimed that this question is impossible to answer since the students cannot choose a particular type of English. Instead, the teacher stated that “the exposure to one or several accents determines what your accent will be”. The second teacher answered that which variety would be more appropriate to learn depends on what the student’s future plans are. This teacher gave the example that if the student is planning to move to London, then probably s/he should focus on learning British English. Furthermore, the third teacher stated that the student would be recommended to learn English as a lingua franca. The fourth teacher claimed that it depends on the student’s native language; that is, the recommended variety would be the one that is closer to the phonetic structure of the student’s native language. The fifth teacher was rather upset by this question and answered that the student should “learn the difference between sheep and cheap before they get such pretentious ideas”. This answer was interpreted as the teacher stating that the student should focus on learning how to speak English correctly in a more general sense before asking which variety they should conform to. Lastly, the sixth teacher said that it depends on how much work the student is planning to put in. This teacher stated: “I would probably recommend American English because it is a bit easier, I would recommend British English as a more challenging task.” The teacher did not specify why s/he regarded American English as being easier, and neither did any of the other teachers who made similar claims.
In the last attitudinal question in the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to choose which thoughts, feelings and beliefs they had about a person speaking with an American or British accent in Sweden. A number of options were given, but the respondents could also add their own options. Some of the given options had to do with assumptions concerning language and education; for example, if they assumed the person was a native speaker of English or had learnt English from watching TV. These options targeted the cognitive component of the teachers’ attitudes and the results is presented below.

Figure 5. Results of what the teachers believe and assume about a person speaking with an American/British accent in Sweden in terms of education and language.

What can be observed in the diagram in Figure 5 is that 72.6% (82 respondents), the majority, would assume that a person speaking with an American accent has learnt English from watching TV; in contrast, only 15% (17 respondents) indicated this assumption about people who speak with a British accent. On the other hand, 61.1% (69 respondents) would assume that a person speaking with a British accent has lived in an English-speaking country and 47% (53 respondents) would assume the person to be a native speaker of English. These numbers for the American accent are much lower. Lastly, only one out of four respondents would assume a person speaking with an American accent to be well-educated while three out of four respondents would assume this for someone speaking with a British accent.

Furthermore, there were also five other options in the same set of questions that had more to do with which personality traits the respondents would assume for a person speaking with an American or a British accent in Sweden. These options were formulated to target the affective component of the attitudes and the results are presented in Figure 6.
Figure 6. Results of what the teachers believe and assume about a person speaking with an American/British accent in Sweden in terms of personality traits.

Not as many teachers choose the options presented in Figure 6 as the options that are presented in Figure 5. Also, the difference between the assumptions concerning the two accents is not as prominent in this case as for the options presented in Figure 5. This could be interpreted as the teachers not having a tendency to associate the different accents of English with certain personality traits. This interpretation is supported by the fact that 15 teachers added their own option in this question stating that they do not make any assumptions about people based on accent. What is most noteworthy about the results presented in Figure 6 is that a total of 13 respondents report to believe that people who speak in a British accent are pretentious while only one respondent chose this option for American English. Furthermore, 11 teachers assumed that a person speaking with a British accent is intelligent, while only three teachers thought this for the person speaking with an American accent.

4.2 The impact of age on the attitudes

The second research question was whether the teachers’ age had an impact on their attitudes and, if so, how it impacted their attitudes. The teachers were divided into five different age groups and Table 5 below illustrates the results for which variety the teachers preferred on the basis of their age group. The youngest age group starts at the age of 19 even though the youngest participating teacher was 23 years old, this was decided simply in order to be able to create even ten-year brackets.

Table 5. The raw frequency and percentage of which variety was preferred in relation to the respondents’ age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>BrE</th>
<th>Equally</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-29</td>
<td>50 % (16)</td>
<td>28 % (7)</td>
<td>22 % (9)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>36 % (12)</td>
<td>21 % (7)</td>
<td>43 % (14)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>10 % (3)</td>
<td>52 % (15)</td>
<td>38 % (11)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>18 % (3)</td>
<td>24 % (4)</td>
<td>59 % (10)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>33 % (1)</td>
<td>33 % (1)</td>
<td>33 % (1)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be noted, in the youngest age group (19-29 years), the majority (in this case, half of the respondents) answered that they prefer American English. Teachers who are in the 30-39 age group like both varieties equally (43%, 14 respondents) while American English (36%, 12 respondents) is preferred over British English (21%, 7 respondents). In the 40-49 age group, however, the majority (52%, 15 respondents) prefers British English. In the 50-59 age group, most teachers like both varieties equally (59%, 10 respondents). Lastly, in the 60+ age group, with only three respondents, all options have equal representation.
4.3 The impact of language background on the attitudes

The third, and final research question, concerned whether the teachers’ language backgrounds had any impact on their attitudes and if so, how it impacted their attitudes. In the questionnaire the teachers were explicitly asked whether they had grown up monolingual (before learning English in school) or bilingual. The teachers’ answers concerning their preferred variety were analysed in relation to their language background. The results are given in Table 6 below.

Table 6. The raw frequency and percentage of which variety was preferred in relation to the respondent’s language background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language background</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>BrE</th>
<th>Equally</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monolingual</td>
<td>23.2% (19)</td>
<td>35.4% (29)</td>
<td>40.2% (33)</td>
<td>1.2% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>46.9% (15)</td>
<td>15.6% (5)</td>
<td>37.5% (12)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 6, although the majority of the monolingual respondents (40.2%, 33 teachers) claim to like both varieties equally, a slightly higher percentage prefers British English (35.4%, 29 teachers) over American English (23.2%, 19 teachers). In contrast, the bilingual respondents report to prefer American English (46.9%, 15 teachers) over British English (15.6%, 5 teachers).

4.4 Factors with no clear impact on the attitudes

In the final part of the questionnaire, the participants provided answers regarding their experiences of studying abroad, teaching English abroad and residing in English-speaking countries. The participants also answered questions on when and how they first learnt English. The only attitudinal question where these factors seemed to have an impact was regarding which variety the participants claimed to prefer. Except for this, no correlation could be observed regarding any of the above mentioned factors and the attitudes.

5. Discussion

The first research question aimed to investigate which attitudes were found amongst English teachers in Sweden towards American English and British English. The hypothesis for this research question was that British English would be slightly favoured over American English by the teachers. This was supported by the results when discussing attitudinal aspects such as which variety is most pleasant and most respected. However, there were also aspects where American English was favoured and the results of the study show that in many aspects, the attitudes reported by the teachers are fairly similar towards both varieties. For example, when asked which variety the teachers prefer, the majority (39.1%) answered that both varieties are preferred, while 30.4% answered American English and 29.6% British English. Moreover, the teachers reported more positive attitudes towards American English in the cognitive components of the attitudes. For
example, the majority of the teachers reported that American English is most familiar to
them (40%), most common in Sweden (70.2%), easiest to teach (44.2%) and easiest to
understand (47.0%). British English, on the other hand, was reported to be the most
pleasant variety by 40.4% of the teachers. The majority of the teachers also reported that
they believe British English is perceived as more respected than American English both
generally in Sweden (38.3% for British English and 13.9% for American English) and
especially by teachers in Sweden (50.0% for British English and 0.9% for American
English). In conclusion, it seems fair to conclude that the teachers possess equally positive
attitudes towards the two varieties but that, for certain aspects, one variety is favoured
over the other.

The second research question aimed to investigate if the teachers’ age had an impact on
the teachers’ attitudes. This was investigated by analysing the answers to the question of
which variety the teachers preferred in relation to the teachers’ age. The original
hypothesis was that older teachers would prefer British English and younger teachers
would prefer American English. This hypothesis has been confirmed to some degree. In
the youngest age group (teachers who are 19-29 years old), half of the respondents
reported that they preferred American English, while only 28% preferred British English.
American English was also preferred over British English by the teachers in the 30-39
age group, although the majority claimed to prefer both varieties equally. In the 40-49
age group, however, half the respondents claimed to prefer British English and only 10%
report to prefer American English. Furthermore, British English is still preferred over
American English in the 50-59 age group but not by a large margin (6% which represents
one respondent). The majority in this age group reports to like both varieties equally. In
the oldest age group, 60+ years, both varieties are equally liked. The summary is that
although the findings do not fully confirm the initial hypothesis, the findings do not
contradict it. This is based on the fact that there is such a difference in the preferred variety
of the 19-29 age group and the 40-49 age group. Moreover, one possible explanation for
the younger teachers preferring American English could be that the younger teachers
probably have grown up exposed to American English to a higher degree than older
teachers. As was shown in Mobärg (1998), a higher degree of exposure to a variety seems
to cause a preference for that variety.

The third research question aimed to investigate if the teachers’ language background had
an impact on the attitudes towards American English and British English. The hypothesis
was that teachers who had grown up monolingual would be more positive towards British
English and those who had grown up bilingual would be more positive towards American
English. The results of the study show that, similarly to the second research question, the
hypothesis was true to a certain extent. 40.2% of the monolingual teachers reported to
like both varieties equally. However, British English was still favoured over American
English since 35.4% preferred British English and only 23.2% preferred American
English. For the bilingual teachers, on the other hand, a majority of 46.9% preferred
American English while only 15.6% preferred British English. Hence, the conclusion is
that the hypothesis was true in that teachers who have grown up bilingual report to prefer
American English, and the results for the monolingual teachers at least point to the
direction of the hypothesis. There was nothing in the comment section to this question
that suggested a possible explanation for the monolingual and bilingual informants to
prefer one variety over the other. Factors such as the geographical and cultural closeness to the UK compared to the US did not seem to affect the informants’ preference. Instead, it could be found in both groups that travelling and/or living in the UK or the US generated a preference for the respective variety. It could also be that, as stated in Mobärg (1998), the fact that British English is associated with formal education influences the monolingual informants’ choice of variety and preference more than the bilinguals’.

As mentioned above, a clear majority (70.2%) of the teachers seem to believe that American English is the most common variety of English in Sweden generally. ‘Most common in Sweden generally’ in this question referred to the variety that the teachers believed people in Sweden are generally most exposed to. Many teachers supported their answer to this question by commenting what was also stated by Modiano (2005), that this is because of American media and its influence. It is noteworthy that a clear majority believes that American English is most common generally, but only 40% report to be most familiar with this variety. This seems to indicate that many of the teachers are not influenced by what generally is most common in Sweden. It could be, as was commented by one of the teachers, that although American English is more common generally, British English is more common in educational settings and therefore more teachers would feel that it is more familiar to them. Furthermore, it is also noteworthy that most teachers believe American English to be most common generally in Sweden, but only a minority (13.9%) believe it to be the most respected variety generally in Sweden. Finally, the reported answers to which variety the teachers believe is most respected by their students is in accordance with what was showed in Mobärg (1998) and Söderlund and Modiano (2002), that Swedish school students are more positive towards American English.

When asked which variety is most respected by teachers in Sweden, only 0.9% answered American English, while half of the respondents answered British English. This seems to indicate that Modiano (2005) was correct when stating that most English teachers in Sweden perceive British English as superior, at least in terms of respect. However, it could also just be that English teachers believe their colleagues to favour British English and perceive it as more respected. Since there was no question in the questionnaire regarding which variety the participating teachers respect the most, this cannot be fully confirmed. However, examining the responses to which variety the teachers think is most correct and most suitable in a school context could be an indication. This, of course, assumes the fact that accuracy and suitability in a formal context such as education could be considered to be related to respect. The results for the questions of which is most correct and most suitable in a school context are very similar. A clear majority of the teachers, 78.3%, report to think that the two varieties are equally correct, and 79% report the varieties to be equally suitable. This suggests the conclusion that the teachers report both varieties to be equally accurate and suitable in a school context, thus respecting both equally, but many of them still believe that other teachers do not share this view and instead view British English as more respected.

The results of Ladegaard (1998) showed that out of all the accents that were examined in the study, the British accent RP was perceived as most correct. In this study, when asked which of the two varieties the teachers believed was most correct, a majority of 78.3% reported that both varieties were equally correct. However, there was quite a high difference in percentage between the responses for British English and American English.
14.8% stated that British English is most correct, while only 1.7% answered American English. This could suggest that there was a small tendency amongst the English teachers, as in the study by Ladegaard (1998) of RP, to perceive British English as more correct. This is further supported by the fact that 11 informants reported to assume that a person speaking British English is intelligent while the corresponding number for American English only was three respondents.

As illustrated in Figure 1 and Figure 2, the teachers were asked if they would assume that a person speaking one of the varieties is better at English than another person speaking the other variety. The reported answers indicated that a person’s level of proficiency in English would not be assessed based on this person’s variety of spoken English. However, when asked which variety was most difficult to learn, 40.4% reported that British English is most difficult to learn and only 2% answered American English. This could suggest that there could still be a tendency amongst the teachers to assume that a person speaking British English is better at English since managing to learn a more difficult variety could be claimed to indicate a higher proficiency. Additionally, this suggested interpretation is further supported by the results from Figure 5 where 72.6% (82 respondents) reported that they would assume that a person speaking with an American accent had learnt English from watching TV. This could indicate that the assumption is that American English is “so easy” that it can be acquired by just watching TV. In contrast, 47.0% (53 respondents) would assume that a person speaking British English is a native speaker of English, and 61.1% (69 respondents) would assume that the person has lived in an English-speaking country. This could be interpreted as British English being “so difficult” to acquire that one would either have to be a native speaker or live in a country where the variety is spoken in order to acquire it.

6. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to fill the existing research gap about English teachers in Sweden and their attitudes towards American English and British English. The study also intended to investigate whether the common idea amongst people in Sweden about English teachers preferring British English was something of the past or if this was a reflection of the current reality. Furthermore, as was stated in the introduction, the choice of which variety is encountered by Swedish students in the classroom would probably be influenced by the teachers’ attitudes towards different varieties. The overall results of this study show that the common idea that British English is favoured by teachers is not fully representative of the current situation today. The results also show that Swedish students can expect to encounter any of the varieties to an equal extent since the overall picture is that the teachers possess positive attitudes towards both the varieties.

As was stated in the introduction, it has been proven by previous research that teacher attitudes affect students’ attitudes. The results of the study in terms of which variety is most respected, however, show that this may not be the case. The majority of the teachers reported that British English was most respected by teachers while American English was most respected by students. This seems to indicate that the students’ attitudes are not influenced by the teachers’. The focus for future research could be to investigate students’
attitudes towards the varieties in relation to their respective teachers’. Also, in order to add to the limited research that exists on teachers’ language attitudes in Sweden towards varieties of English, future research should focus on investigating other varieties than those in this study. Lastly, the methodology for this study was a questionnaire which provide self-report data. Future research should include other methodologies in order to investigate to what extent the reported attitudes of the teachers influence actual language use and pedagogical practices in the classroom.
References


Appendix A

1. In your opinion, which variety is more common in Sweden generally?
   - American English
   - British English
   - They are equally common
   - Other:
   
   Comments:

2. Which variety do you personally prefer?
   - American English
   - British English
   - I prefer them equally
   - Other:
   
   Comments:

3. Which variety are you most familiar with?
   - American English
   - British English
   - I am equally familiar with both
   - Other:
   
   Comments:

4. Which variety do you find to be most pleasant?
   - American English
   - British English
   - I find them equally pleasant
   - Other:
   
   Comments:

5. Which variety do you think is easiest to understand?
   - American English
   - British English
6. Which variety do you think is easiest to teach?
   - American English
   - British English
   - They are equally easy to teach
   - Other:

   Comments:

7. Which variety do you think is most suitable in a school context?
   - American English
   - British English
   - They are equally appropriate in school contexts
   - Other:

   Comments:

8. Which variety do you feel is more correct?
   - American English
   - British English
   - They are equally correct
   - Other:

   Comments:

9. Which variety do you feel is most respected by your students?
   - American English
   - British English
   - They are equally respected
   - Other:

   Comments:

10. Which variety do you feel is most respected by teachers?
11. Which variety do you feel is generally seen as most respected in Sweden?
   - American English
   - British English
   - They are equally respected
   - Other:

Comments:

12. "I assume that Swedish people who speak American English are better at English than those who speak British English"

   Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly agree

Comments:

13. "I assume that Swedish people who speak British English are better at English than those who speak American English"

   Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly agree

Comments:

14. Which variety do you think is most difficult to learn?
   - American English
   - British English
   - They are equally difficult to learn
   - Other:

Comments:

15. If you could choose to either speak British English or American English fluently, I would choose:
16. One of your students asks you if you would recommend that they try to learn British English or American English, what do you answer? Why?

In this section, choose as many options as you feel fit. You can also add your own options.

16. I often assume that people who speak with an American accent in Sweden:
   o are native speakers of English
   o are pretentious
   o are intelligent
   o are kind
   o are annoying
   o have learnt English from watching TV
   o have lived in an English speaking country
   o are well-educated
   o are friendly
   o Other:

17. I often assume that people who speak with a British accent in Sweden:
   o are native speakers of English
   o are pretentious
   o are intelligent
   o are kind
   o are annoying
   o have learnt English from watching TV
   o have lived in an English speaking country
   o are well-educated
   o are friendly
   o Other:

18. How old are you?
19. Where were you born? (Country)

20. Where were you raised? (Country)

21. At what age did you first start to learn English?

22. How did you first start to learn English? (For example in school, from watching TV etc.)

23. For how long have you been teaching English?

24. Have you studied abroad?
   o Yes
   o No

25. If yes, where and for how long?

26. Have you taught English in any other country than Sweden?
   o Yes
   o No

27. If yes, where and for how long?

28. Have you lived in an English speaking country?
   o Yes
   o No

29. If yes, where and for how long?

30. Did you grow up monolingual or bilingual?
   o Monolingual
   o Bilingual
   o Other:
31. What is/are your first language(s)?

32. Which languages would you consider yourself knowing?

33. How would you rate your English proficiency?

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34. Would you say that your own spoken variety of English resembles any of the discussed varieties?
   - Yes, American English
   - Yes, British English
   - No, none of them
   - Other: