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Swedish upper secondary school teachers and their
attitudes towards AmE, BrE, and Mid-Atlantic
English.

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Abstract

The aim of this essay is to investigate what English teachers' attitudes are towards British English, American English and Mid-Atlantic English. What variety of English do teachers use in Swedish upper secondary schools today and what are their reasons for using that variety? Do upper secondary school teachers think it is important to expose students to several varieties of English and do they teach differences (e.g. vocabulary and spelling) between varieties? The material is based on a questionnaire, which 20 participating teachers from five different upper secondary schools in Gävleborg answered. The study showed that there is an even distribution between the varieties used and taught. British English was preferred by teachers working the longest time while both AmE and MAE seemed to be growing in popularity among the younger teachers. Of the 20 teachers, 18 considered teaching differences to students since it gives them a chance to communicate effectively with people from other English speaking countries.

Keywords: Upper secondary school, American English, AmE, British English, BrE, Mid-Atlantic English, MAE, attitudes, consistency, English as an International Language, EIL, English language teaching, ELT

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1. Introduction

English is increasingly becoming the world's lingua franca. There are hundreds of millions of people who speak English to some level of competence. It is the main language of books, newspapers, airports, international business, academic conferences, sport and advertising (Melcher and Shaw, 2003: 8). English functions as an international language for communication with speakers of other languages from different countries; consequently an ability to use English gives you many advantages.

After the post-war period the English language became a core subject in Swedish schools. British English (will, to some extent, be referred to in the text as BrE) with Received Pronunciation (RP), which was spoken by educated speakers in England, became the standard variety used and taught by teachers. Due to the increase of Americanization in Europe the last 50 years the latest Swedish national curriculum (Lpf 94) officially approved both American English (will, to some extent, be referred to in the text as AmE) and British English as the two predominant varieties of the English language in Swedish upper secondary schools. Today a mixture of the two varieties is expanding in Europe; Mid-Atlantic English (will, to some extent, be referred to in the text as MAE), which is spoken by both native and non-native speakers (Modiano, 1996: 5). This distinctive variety is also emerging in Sweden and is challenging the concept of having to solely respect British English or American English norms. This makes both teachers and students forced to take a stand to use either BrE or AmE or possibly a mixture. Since the Swedish schools have at least two varieties to choose from it is interesting to investigate how this influences the classroom teaching and what teachers' attitudes and prejudice are towards these varieties.

1.1. Aim and purpose

The main aim of this paper is to find out what variety of English teachers use in Swedish upper secondary schools today and what their reasons for using that variety are. A test with lexical and spelling choices in the questionnaire will indicate to what extent they are aware of what English variety they use. The questionnaire also includes independent variables: age, years working as an English teacher and if the teachers have spent any time abroad (further explained in section 3.1), that would perhaps reveal changes in the Swedish school system. Furthermore, I want to investigate if the Swedish school system prefers teachers to use a specific English variety in upper secondary school. Do teachers perhaps feel they can use a mixture of the two core English varieties; British English and American English? In addition,

I hope to find out if the teachers make the students aware of the different varieties and if they find it important to teach differences (e.g. vocabulary and spelling) between varieties. As a student, who will soon become a qualified English teacher, I find the subject extremely interesting. The purpose is to investigate and analyze the topic in order for English teachers to be better equipped to handle the matter in their own teaching, but also for others interested to have a better understanding of the subject.

2. Background and previous research

In this section there will be descriptions of three English varieties; AmE, BrE and MAE, which are the varieties that will be brought up in this paper. The old and the present National Curriculums as well as the English Syllabus are taken in consideration regarding what English variety should be used in Swedish schools. In addition, previous research relevant to the topic of this paper is presented.

2.1. Standard English – accent and dialect

In this paper I will use Melchers and Shaw's definition of *dialect* and *accent* – “accent refers to the pronunciation of a variety and dialect to its grammar and vocabulary” (2003: 12).

During the eighteenth and nineteenth century educated people defined a set of grammatical and lexical features which they considered as correct and appropriate for most types of public discourse. The variety characterized by these features came to be known as *Standard English*. Melcher and Shaw state: “Standard English is a dialect, not an accent, and no particular accent is attached to it. A variety of Standard English can have almost any accent, but only have a small range of grammatical differences from others” (2003: 31). Standard English is considered to be more appropriate in formal contexts and it has greater prestige than other regional dialects. It is often spoken by a minority of people within a society, generally by people with power (Jenkins, 2003: 29).

Since English had two centres, during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, it came to exist in two national varieties: American and British. These standard varieties, AmE and BrE, exhibit various differences in pronunciation but are very close in grammar. They are also characterized by obvious differences in spelling and vocabulary (Melcher and Shaw, 2003: 31). In England, the accent *Received Pronunciation* (referred to in the text as RP) is considered “standard” and the most prestigious variety whereas in United States, *General American* is considered to be “standard” and more “proper”. Second language learners often adopt one of these accents. According to Melcher and Shaw (2003: 47) RP is the most frequent accent used in EFL because it is considered to be more “widely understood”.

2.2. British English

The English language used in the United Kingdom is called British English. It should actually be called “English English” because there are many different varieties of English used on the British Isles, especially if we consider all the dissimilar accents. British English actually refers to the standard language that is used in all public writing but the term has also been retained because it has long been known and accepted around the whole world (Svartvik, 1999: 180). As many other languages British English exhibits both local and social variations. One regional variety is London *Cockney*, which is an accent strikingly different from RP. Another regional variety is *Estuary* English in the southeast corner of England, which has been gaining prominence in recent decades. Estuary English has some features of RP and some of Cockney (ibid: 186); other well known British English accents are *Scottish*, *Northern*, *Welsh* and *Irish*.

The most prestigious variety, as already mentioned, is RP, which has been considered to be better than other accents. Nowadays the tolerance towards other local accents has increased. Generally speaking the divergence from the standard language becomes bigger the lower down you go on the social scale (Melcher and Shaw, 2003: 31-34).

It is important to remember that the dialect we call Standard British English does not necessarily have to be used with an RP accent. About 12 per cent of the population in England are speakers of Standard English and about three per cent of these actually speak Standard English with RP (Melchers and Shaw, 2003: 47).

In the past few decades AmE has had strong influences on BrE, especially through films and television, and this has made AmE vocabulary more frequently used by people in Great Britain, at least among younger people. On the other hand, BrE is not unfamiliar to Americans. British TV programs and films are also common in America, but it has not yet made the same impact (Crystal, 2003b: 306).

2.3. American English

In the early seventeenth century the Pilgrim Fathers brought English to America and now “[a]s many as 250 million people speak English as their first language in America” (Modiano, 1996: 9). Standard American English is the most common variety in the country and most notably spoken in the west parts. Accents and dialects are not that common compared to accents and dialect in Britain (ibid: 10). The *General American* accent (also called *Network English*) is the most widespread in America, often used in Radio and TV programs. In the South there is a distinctive accent, popularly known as the *Southern drawl*, which is

distinguished by characteristic intonation patterns. It sounds as if it is spoken more slowly than other accents. In New England they have the *Boston* variety, which is recognized by its resemblance to British English. There are also several ethnic dialects in America. The most important one is *African American Vernacular English* (AAVE, also called Black English) with features from dialects in the South. It has been combined with elements consisting of obvious African ancestries. AAVE is typically used by the black population in the American inner cities and is characterized as a social as well as a regional variety. On the whole, *General American* is more and more taking the dominating position as the standard accent in America (Melcher and Shaw, 2003:82-88).

2.4. Mid –Atlantic English

References to *Mid-Atlantic* as a linguistic concept are not that customary in the literature and there is no particular definition of what *Mid-Atlantic English* actually is. Therefore I will present five similar but also somewhat different ideas of what MAE is.

According to Gunnel Melchers “*Mid-Atlantic* - in its general sense - refers to something which has both British and American characteristics, or is designed to appeal to both the British and the Americans... a term for kinds of English, especially accents, that have features drawn from both North AmE and BrE” (1998: 263).

David Crystal mentions ‘World Standard English’, a variety that can be heard at international conferences. “It is the variety in which Americans, British, and other English speaking nationals avoid the idiosyncratic features of their mother-dialect... and move towards a neutral variety intelligible to all” (1996: 40).

Jenkins mentions ‘Euro-English’ - English as Europe’s primary *lingua franca* - which she describes as an emerging distinctive variety with its own identity challenging “the concept of having to respect British English or American English norms” (2003: 38). But she says “it is too soon to say with any certainty whether it will remain so, how it will develop, and whether it will expand to become fully capable of expressing social identity as well as performing a more transactional role in politics, business and the like” (2003: 42).

Modiano has written extensively on this subject and says that “[r]ecent findings suggest... that an increasing number of native speakers are mixing features of AmE and BrE, and furthermore, many, if not most second language speakers in Europe and elsewhere have begun to speak a mixture, sometimes called Mid-Atlantic English” (1996: 5). When discussing MAE in this essay the term is first and foremost based on this description by

Modiano. In addition, Modiano mentions EIL (English as an international language) as a *lingua franca*. He says that EIL could be more useful and a better “cross-cultural communicative tool” than BrE and AmE. He states that “globalization and the vision of cultural pluralism are more in tune with a lingua franca perspective as opposed to ELT platforms based on culture-specific varieties of English” (2001:159).

2.5. English varieties in Swedish schools

In the curriculum from 1970's (Läroplan för gymnasieskolan, Lgy 70) the only norm for English language was Received Pronunciation (RP) but also any other proper British accent, that any student could have learned was acceptable. Students should be given the characteristics of ‘General American’ and its intonation and accent, but they should not use it. However, if students already fluently spoke American English they were not required to use a British accent. The same condition applied to those who spoke Canadian, Australian or any other variety (Lgy 70, 1970:127). In the latest curriculum, Curriculum for the Non-Compulsory School System (Läroplan för de frivilliga skolformerna, Lpf 94), there are no guidelines as to what variety the students should learn or speak but internationalization is strongly emphasized. In the syllabus for the English language at the upper secondary level the aim is to develop: “...an all-round communicative ability and the language skills necessary for international contacts...as well as for further studies. The subject has, in addition, the aim of broadening perspectives on an expanding English-speaking world with its multiplicity of varying cultures” (Skolverket, 2009).

2.6. Previous research

There have not been a lot of studies conducted on Swedish teachers' use and attitudes towards British and American English but one study on the subject is made by Marie Söderlund in 2004. In her essay she surveyed 48 English teachers' attitudes and preferences for BrE, AmE and MAE and which of these varieties they are using in their teaching. In her survey she also compared students' and teachers' preferences for a specific variety and it showed that they differ considerably. Over 60% of the participating students but none of the teachers preferred AmE. She speculates that “Americanization” through media could be behind the result and that there is a historical shift going on. Further results suggested that, even if most of the teachers preferred BrE, 80% of the teachers did not consciously teach one specific variety.

They found it important to teach the students the different varieties so the students themselves could be able to choose which variety they wanted to use.

In contrast to studies on Swedish teachers' use and attitudes towards British and American English a lot has been written about the attitudes towards the emergence of Mid-Atlantic English in Europe, including Sweden. Since Sweden is exposed to a great amount of American English through media and Standard British English is no longer the only variety accepted in schools, the students become exposed to the two varieties at the same time and it becomes difficult for them to always keep them apart. It is still emphasized that students should speak either a British or an American variety of English, but Gunnel Melchers's investigation of teachers' attitudes to varieties of English, shows that many Swedish teachers have started to use and accept Mid-Atlantic English. Melchers claims that "most teachers of English in Sweden... still speak with – and propagate – an accent that, disregarding a varying degree of localized features, is predominant English English, 'educated southern English'". She continues: "'educated American English' is declared to be equally acceptable in the official school curricula, but the consistency rule strictly applies" (1998: 265). However, Melchers points out that even if English-language curricula in most European countries emphasize students to be consistent, to either use "educated southern British English" or "educated American English", it is well known that EFL speakers increasingly use a mixture of the two varieties (1998: 263).

3. Method

In this section there will be a presentation of the material used in this study as well as the procedure and the participants. In addition, a discussion regarding reliability will be presented.

3.1. Material

To be able to determine what teachers' attitudes are towards the two major English varieties and what variety they themselves use I put together a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) with mostly open-ended questions. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. In the first part I wanted to establish independent variables¹ (*age, years working as an English teacher and if the teachers had spent any time abroad*) about the teachers that would help analyzing the results from part two in order to see if there are some kinds of relationships between part one and two (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007: 269). Could, for example, *time spent abroad* affect their usage of English variety. The second part consisted of both open-ended and closed questions to answer my research questions. By using open-ended questions teachers would be encouraged to write whatever they wanted, as I did not want to steer them into answering what I perhaps had in mind as the right answer. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison open-ended questions serve well for smaller scale studies and you also get sincere and personal comments from the respondents. The answers given may contain information that answers to closed questions would not have eventuated (2007: 329-331). The questions in part two were formulated with the main purpose of finding out what attitudes teachers have towards British and American English and what variety they use, but also what variety they think their students should use. The third and fourth parts of the questionnaire would show what variety they actually used by answering which form (for instance *spilled* or *spilt*) they would use in a specific context and what word (for instance *trash can* or *dustbin*) they would teach their students as their first choice. Both forms and words were selected from Modiano's book *A Mid-Atlantic handbook: American and British English*.

The choice of questionnaires as the empirical basis is based on the assumption that it would be easy for the participants to answer questions and it would not be too time consuming for them. From my experience teachers do not have much time to spare between

¹ Values of the independent variable are controlled with the values of the dependent variable to see if there is any strong relationship between them (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007: 256-266).

planning and teaching and therefore I thought they would appreciate me giving them a questionnaire instead of, for instance, interviewing them. During the time I wanted to do my research I also knew, through personal connections, that upper secondary teachers had a lot on their mind due to the correcting of national tests. My goal was to have at least 50 English teachers who answered my questionnaire and to include that amount of teachers, and due to the limited time I had to do my research, the easiest way of collecting data was by sending e-mails to them.

3.2. Procedure

After formulating the questionnaire I made a small pilot study by having some of my classmates look at it. Questions that contingently could be misunderstood were corrected. Then the principal at the schools, where I wanted to do my research, was contacted and asked for permission to do my research. When I had their permission I sent e-mails to the upper secondary teachers I knew taught English at the schools. As already mentioned, my goal was to have at least 50 English teachers who answered my questionnaires. A total of 80 e-mails with questionnaires was sent since I knew the chance that all teachers would answer at this time of the year was small. Also a reminder was sent to those who did not answer before my due date. Out of 80 e-mails I got 20 answers. After the due date I collected all the answers from the teachers. I started going through the answers trying to categorize them in different themes, which was a good way of finding similarities and dissimilarities. Since the questionnaire consisted of many open-ended questions I got many different explanatory answers and therefore my results also will be presented in an explanatory manner.

3.3. Participants

The 20 participants who answered are from five different schools in Gävleborg, teaching at either A, B and C level or several of them. 16 participants are females and four males. In agreement with the schools and with deference to research ethics neither the name of the schools or the participants will be mentioned. I was at first thinking of having gender as one independent variable, but due to the highly skewed distribution, gender is not a variable that will be used in the analysis.

3.4. Reliability

When using open-ended questions in a questionnaire there is a possibility for misinterpretations (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). A few answers from the teachers were not considered relevant for this research and have therefore been excluded. The irrelevant answers were due to misinterpretations of the questions, even with the pilot study carried out. For a reliable result I wanted at least 50 teachers to participate in my investigation but due to 20 answers the result only stand for a small scale. However, the answers were obvious and descriptive and thus give a good reliability.

4. Results and discussion

In this section the results of the questionnaire will be presented together with an analysis. The results and the questions will not be presented in the exact order as they appear in the questionnaire. The dropout rate for certain questions will not be discussed. As I explained in section 3.4 I have chosen to exclude answers that are not relevant for the research, but also several questions some teachers did not answer. The percentages and numbers in the results concern answers given.

4.1. Teachers' attitudes towards British English

There were many different answers regarding English teachers' attitudes towards British English. The intention of using the term "British English" was that it would stand for all accents and dialects in England in general, but two of the teachers probably misunderstood the term. Their comments were: "British English could be anything from Cockney to RP" and "[d]o you mean RP? British English: there are so many accents and dialects."

Overall, all 20 teachers seemed to like British English; no one said they did not like it, but the feelings towards British English varied. Five teachers thought British English sounds nice - "I like the fact that there are many different accents and I think it sounds nicer than both American and Australian English." It was however written by a teacher that used American English herself. One teacher, being a native speaker of American English, wrote that it "sounds strange". The same teacher said that she also feels inferior when she meets a native British speaker. Why she felt inferior I can only speculate; could it be because native British speakers have a prestigious attitude against American speakers and that is what she can sense when she meets them. Two teachers mentioned that British English sounds proper and snobbish compared to American English while another teacher pointed out that she does not feel that it is "better" in any way.

Seven teachers considered British English to be difficult to understand and to write. Two teachers added that they thought it was difficult for the students. But on the other hand, two teachers hinted that BrE is much easier to understand. One of them wrote: "probably because I was taught British English at school". A possible explanation could be that for a second language learner, often exposed to AmE, British English may seem more difficult to learn but for those teachers who were taught British English during their school years it is an easier variety to use because that is what they always have been familiar with.

One teacher wrote that “I still see British English as the basis of English language. However, language changes over time and it is important to keep up to date with the differences”. Another teacher agreed that language changes and added that British English “probably changes more than American”.

According to three teachers’ views, British English is not that common among Swedish upper secondary students. Several teachers highlighted the fact that British English has many more dialects than American English, which has dialects that are, as one teacher wrote: “probably more similar at least in pronunciation”. The assertion that AmE would have dialects that are more similar in pronunciation could be one of the reasons for students not using BrE as much as AmE, as they are more exposed to similar American pronunciations and thereby find it easier to speak AmE than BrE, which, according to the teachers but also Modiano (1996: 10), consists of several dialects and accents.

Even if it was decided in Lpf 94 that BrE would no longer be the only variety taught in Swedish schools many teachers seem to persist in viewing BrE as the definitive form for students in Europe. However, while there is a growing number in Europe that speak what is perceived to be either American English or Mid-Atlantic English, it seems as if teachers actually are broadening their perspectives (Modiano, 1998:241).

4.2. Teachers’ attitudes towards American English

The upper secondary teachers’ attitudes towards American English were as varied as their attitudes towards British English. Most of the teachers liked AmE and many of the teachers claim they use AmE since it is the variety that both they and the students are most frequently exposed to through the big amount of “American media” in Sweden. Seven out of 19 teachers claimed that it is the variety favored by most of the students. Two teachers thought students use American English because “they have a much harder time understanding British accents”. Two teachers added that it is “easier in spelling” while one teacher indicated that it is “harder” to understand.

As with ‘British English’, ‘American English’ is used as a collective term for all the American variations. The same two teachers that thought British English was a bad term to use also thought American English was a bad term because it has so “many different variants”. At the same time one of these teachers stated that the “un educated American generally speaks very well, and I enjoy listening to eloquent Americans” while another teacher stated: “I like American English; it is what I try to speak myself. When I went to the

Upper Secondary School, 30 years ago, there was a lot of prejudice against AmE. RP was the preferred accent. I try to have an open mind to varieties of English.” Another comment about American English was that it is: “coherent, more archaic since it ‘moved out’ and evolved separately”. One teacher commented:

...not my favourite. Swedish TV-stations spew out American sitcoms and films day and night. Therefore we are fed and overfed with American catchphrases, idioms and, last but not least, American pronunciation. I also find that Americans have a higher predilection for ‘uptalk’ (or ‘Aussie question intonation’) than do Brits. And uptalk is, to my ears, an abomination.

This comment was somewhat divergent from the rest. The comment was written by a 49 year old male teacher who has been working as an English teacher for 22 years. The quote above indicates that he dislikes everything that has to do with American English and a rationalization is that he still is hanging on to the old idea that BrE is the only correct variety to use, or he actually just is ‘fed up’. An important question is whether this attitude can and is affecting his students? Modiano suggests that “regardless of the variety which is preferred, instructors need orientation in AmE so that they can accommodate the needs of their students” (1998: 247). Of course, the same thing applies to those who speak AmE; they need to gain knowledge in BrE. I understand that teachers often seem to consider the variety they themselves use to be more valid than the variety used by their students. Solely encouraging AmE, or BrE in this case, at the expense of the other is a lack of careful deliberation. I agree with Modiano when he claims that “[p]luralism is a must. Whatever one may think of AmE, it is the majority of native speakers use...AmE is the norm in a large part of the world” (1998: 247). I believe language teachers should be open to all varieties. Since English lessons in schools often are the only English some students are exposed to teachers should provide students the chance to choose what variety they themselves want to learn.

4.3. The variety/varieties teachers use

In question 3.1 the teachers were asked: *What variety of English do you use when you teach?* The question seems to have been somewhat misleading because although some teachers answered what variety they use in the classroom, others mentioned what they generally use and some answered what they use in both situations. However, analyzing the answers to the other questions in the questionnaire there were indications on what variety the teachers use in general and what variety they use in the classroom. The results are shown in Table 1. The

variety teachers use in general are presented in the second column from the left (“both” stands for a mixture of AmE and BrE). The varieties teachers teach are presented in the third column. In order for the teachers to be classified as using either BrE or AmE, the percentage of the answers has to be 62% or above. If the teachers scored between 37% and 62% their variety is classified as “both”. The right-hand column shows the actual variety that the teachers prefer and use (results from questions nine and ten). The results on what variety teachers actually use are however limited to only show if the teacher use American, British or a mixture of both varieties. Other varieties, such as Australian or Canadian English, as some of the teachers reported to be speaking or writing, are not included since this paper focuses on BrE, AmE and a mixture of those two (Mid-Atlantic English).

Table 1. English varieties used by the teachers (Questions 3.1, 9 and 10)

Teacher	Use of variety in general	Use of variety when teaching	BrE %	AmE %	Variety actually used
T 1	Both	Both	48%	52%	Both
T 2	BrE	BrE	81%	19%	BrE
T 3	AmE	AmE	21%	79%	AmE
T 4	AmE	AmE	54%	46%	Both
T 5		Both	25%	75%	AmE
T 6	BrE	BrE	96%	4%	BrE
T 7	AmE	AmE	46%	54%	Both
T 8	Australian	Both+Australian	56%	44%	Both
T 9	BrE	Both	68%	32%	BrE
T 10	Both	Both	43%	57%	Both
T 11	BrE	BrE	50%	50%	Both
T 12	BrE	BrE	62%	38%	BrE
T 13	AmE	AmE	32%	68%	AmE
T 14	AmE	AmE	32%	68%	AmE
T 15	Speak AmE/ Write Both ²	Both	36%	64%	AmE
T 16	Both	Both	48%	52%	Both
T 17	AmE	AmE			no answers
T 18	Speak Mid-Atl.	BrE	65%	35%	BrE
T 19	AmE	AmE	20%	80%	AmE
T 20	BrE	BrE	77%	23%	BrE

² The teacher considered herself to be using a Canadian variety in general: speaking AmE and writing both AmE and BrE.

Out of 20 teachers, seven teachers use American English in general and when teaching. Six teachers wrote that, most of the time, they use British English when teaching. Five of these teachers also use British English in general whereas one stated she uses Mid-Atlantic English in general. Six teachers reported they use both varieties when teaching whereas three of them also use that variety in general. One teacher stated she had an Australian accent in general but when teaching she tries to teach the students Australian, British and American English.

In questions nine and ten, teachers were supposed to choose what forms (*spilled* or *spilt*, *behavior* or *behaviour*) and words (*apartment* or *flat*, *soccer* or *football*) they would teach their students first. Results showed that out of 19 teachers, 13 teachers actually prefer to speak and write the variety they claim they are teaching, while six teachers do not. This would indicate that six teachers are not aware of the differences between AmE and BrE or that they are users of MAE. Further, 13 teachers actually prefer to speak and write what they do in general, while five teachers do not. It is not possible to tell whether there was a variety more popular than the other. The results showed that six teachers seem to be using British English and six teachers use American English. The remaining seven teachers use a mixture of the two main varieties (one teacher did not answer questions nine and ten).

4.4. The reasons for using and teaching a specific variety

In question 3.2 the teachers were asked to explain what their reasons are for using a specific variety. Seven teachers reported they use British English because that was what they were taught during their school years. Some even stated that it was the only variety they could use as American English was not allowed. Eight teachers reported they use a specific variety because they had spent time in a country where that variety was used.

Six teachers use a particular variety because of their students. Four of these teachers thought that the students should be exposed to both American and British English and consequently they use both varieties during their teaching. Out of these six teachers, only three of them scored between 37% and 62% which would indicate that they use both varieties to the same extent when teaching.

One teacher had lived in Australia for 14 years and even if she had a prevailing Australian accent she thought it was important to get the students exposed to British and American English. Her ambition was to teach all three varieties.

Three teachers mentioned American influences (movies, music, computer games, novels etc.) as a reason for them using American English when speaking and writing.

Another teacher wrote she speaks Mid-Atlantic English but tries to use British English as much as possible when teaching. Her assertion was that students are influenced by American English to a much greater extent than British English, so “listening to British accents now and then won’t hurt”.

One teacher wrote; “I don’t think of it as using a variety, I speak ‘world-english’!” and another teacher using both varieties points out that: “[t]his is what the world looks like today. International English/Midatlantic English”. To a great extent it seems as if the teachers are very aware of what the English speaking world looks like today. It is of course still emphasized that students should speak either a British or an American variety of English, but an informal investigation of teachers’ attitudes to varieties of English, made by Gunnel Melchers, shows that many Swedish teachers have started to use and accept Mid-Atlantic English (1998:266).

Overall the teachers do not report that they get any directions from their school or school system on what variety they should use. 19 teachers answered that they do not get any directions, while some added that “it’s up to every single teacher to decide”. One teacher stated that “[a]s long as you stick to one, the school system is very open-minded” while another teacher stated “[o]nly that we should provide instructions in both + dialects”. Since there is no explanation whether teachers or students should use a specific variety in the National Curriculum or in the Syllabus for the English language the schools should not give the teachers directions on teaching one specific variety. Internationalization is however strongly emphasized and consequently teachers should offer students the possibility to be exposed to several English varieties.

4.4.1. English variety used depending on independent variables³

The independent variables³ from the questionnaire are presented in Table 2. The teachers’ age is presented in the second column from the left. If the teachers have spent any time abroad it is presented in the third column (‘Y’ stands for *year*, ‘M’ stand for *month*, ‘W’ stand for *week*). How many years the teachers have been working as English teachers is presented in the fourth column. The three right-hand columns repeat the figures from Table 1: the actual variety that the teachers prefer and use (results from questions nine and ten).

³ Independent variables: age, years working as teacher and time spent abroad.

Table 2. Independent variables³

Teacher	Age	Time spent abroad	Years working as English teacher	BrE %	AmE %	Variety used
T 1	62	USA 9M, GB 6M	36	48%	52%	Both
T 2	48	No	22	81%	19%	BrE
T 3	29	raised in USA 19Y	4	21%	79%	AmE
T 4	48	USA 1Y+5M, GB 4M	10	54%	46%	Both
T 5	58	USA 1Y	7	25%	75%	AmE
T 6	49	No	22	96%	4%	BrE
T 7	27	Ireland 3M	2	46%	54%	Both
T 8	37	Australia 14Y	3	56%	44%	Both
T 9	38	GB 10W +10W	12	68%	32%	BrE
T 10	37	No	2	43%	57%	Both
T 11	38	No	2,5	50%	50%	Both
T 12	58	No	25	62%	38%	BrE
T 13	28	No	3	32%	68%	AmE
T 14	60	US 7Y, GB 2W+2W	14	32%	68%	AmE
T 15	40	Canada 1Y	5	36%	64%	AmE
T 16	40	GB 3M+2M	5	48%	52%	Both
T 17	35	USA 3W, GB 3W	10			no answers
T 18	59	GB 6M, GB 2-3M	34	65%	35%	BrE
T 19	54	USA 1Y	15	20%	80%	AmE
T 20	62	No	32	77%	23%	BrE

Six teachers use British English and of these six teachers three were approximately 60 years of age, two teachers approximately 50 years of age and one teacher was 38. The 38 year old teacher said she uses British English because of her experiences, and she had been to Great Britain twice, ten weeks each time. Of the other five teachers, four had never been abroad and one teacher had also been to Great Britain twice, altogether about 8 months.

There were also six teachers using American English, ranging in age from 28 to 60. Four of the six teachers, ages 60, 58, 54 and 40 had all been living abroad for more than one year. Three of them had lived in the USA and one in Canada. The two remaining teachers using American English were 29 and 28 years of age, respectively. The 28 year old had never been abroad and the 29 year old had lived in USA for 19 years.

Seven teachers reported using a mixture of both British and American English. The seven teachers were between 27 to 60 years of age. Five of these teachers had been

abroad to Great Britain, the USA, Ireland or Australia, and some of the teachers had also spent time in two of the countries. An interpretation of this would indicate that the teachers' reason for using BrE would be that they learned it during their school years or through travelling. Reasons for using AmE would be that the teachers are comparatively young or have lived in/visited an AmE speaking country. Use of Mid-Atlantic English did not seem to depend on age, but rather on the time spent in both AmE and BrE speaking countries.

Seven teachers had not been abroad, and of those, four use British English, two use a mixture and one uses American English. Of all those (13) teachers who had been abroad there was a tendency to use the variant that they used in the visited country.

Fourteen teachers have worked as English teachers for two to 15 years. Six of these teachers use American English and six of them use a mixture, while one teacher working for 12 years uses British English. Four teachers have worked between 22 to 34 years and they all use British English. The teacher working the longest time, 36 years, uses a mixture. This indicates that BrE is not that popular among those teachers who have been working two to 15 years, although it seems as if BrE is popular among those working over 20 years as English teachers. There is also a tendency for Mid-Atlantic English becoming more popular among young teachers.

4.5. Variety differences taught

Out of 20 teachers, 18 mentioned that they think about teaching differences between English varieties to their students. Some teachers think it is very important to teach differences while others do not seem to think that it is that important. One teacher does not think of teaching differences at all.

One teacher wrote: "to fully understand a language you have to be aware of the differences that mark that certain English speaking country. It helps an awful lot in communication." Six teachers agreed on teaching differences because that will make it easier for the students to "communicate" with people from other countries. One teacher added that it is "also a way of getting to know the different cultures". One teacher did not seem to think that differences were important; "[a]t this stage, no. They'll know in time if continue studying at a higher level."

Question 5.3 concerned what differences teachers teach. They mentioned vocabulary (14 out of 20 teachers) and spelling (13 out of 20 teachers) as the most common

differences taught, followed by structure and pronunciation (four out of 20, respectively). Accents, idioms and grammar were other differences mentioned.

Modiano says: “[i]n the event that someone is not aware of the meaning of a specific word an adept speaker of MAE presents synonyms which, while they may indicate a switching of register or variety, allow for a greater understanding” (1998: 245). In the light of this it would be very important for teachers to be teaching differences between varieties for the students to have the best possibilities to switch between registers. Whether teaching differences is something that should not be taken into consideration until a higher level, then I would say: it would be too late. I believe that it is something Universities can demand students will have learned in their earlier studies. Modiano also claims that it will help students to communicate effectively, both in written and in spoken English, if they have a good understanding of the differences between AmE and BrE (1996: 5).

4.6. The variety most useful for students

The purpose of question four was to get the teachers to think about what variety students will find most useful to learn. Four teachers did not quite interpret the question right and answered what variety the students like most. These answers are not included.

Six out of the 20 teachers thought that it does not matter what variety the students use. Two teachers added that it does not matter “as long as they can use ‘their’ variety” and “understand other varieties as well.” Another teacher wrote “I am pleased as long as the talk”, while a third teacher wrote “I don’t think it’s important what variety you speak/know; what’s important is to be aware of how many varieties there are and try to be consistent. But of course it also depends on what you need your English for; knowing the culture is probably more important in either country than how you actually speak.”

One teacher mentioned Mid-Atlantic English as a variety that “students will come across, rather than any of American or British standard...” and another teacher wrote that “I don’t focus on varieties. Most of us have a Swedish accent and mix words (American/British English)” and she also thought that “[t]his subject is more connected to College studies.” Six teachers mentioned American English, and out of those six teachers only two phrased it as if it could be a better variety to learn/use than British English. One teacher wrote “[s]hould you want to work in a major international business corporation you might get further if you sound American.” As one teacher puts it:

American is winning a lot of ground and it is simple, straightforward and has pedagogical qualities. Not that British is a worse alternative but accents will be acquired when the students have a need for it and get one for free. This happens naturally and to have a neutral start can't be wrong. But as I said, it doesn't really matter. Accents should evolve without us trying to force too much onto the students.

Several teachers wrote that what variety is the most useful for the students depends on; "what they want to do with it", "their interests" and "where they want to go". Three teachers thought it has to do with "their future plans". In this respect one teacher considered it to be difficult for a teacher to predict what variety would actually be most useful for the students. Modiano argues that educational policy for L2 speakers should be a question about communication strategies. Learners "prefer forms of the language which best suit their communicative needs" (1998: 242), and I believe that is also what teachers should have in mind. For the time being students may have use for one variety while in the future they may have use for another and in this manner teachers should be open-minded concerning teaching different varieties. Students will likely speak more and more English with other L2 speakers through chats and computer games and as they also are increasingly exposed to AmE they will become less willing to imitate the British manner (ibid: 243).

4.7. Students mixing varieties when speaking and writing

Eleven out of 20 teachers think it is "okay" for the students to mix varieties. Seven out of these eleven teachers do not seem to think of inconsistencies at all, one teacher wrote; "as long as I understand what they mean it doesn't really matter". The rest of the eleven teachers add that they "correct", "point at" and "explain" differences while other teachers added statements like this; "I think it's OK but I encourage them to stick to one variety." Even if they thought it was "okay" for students to mix varieties, five teachers wrote they encourage their students to be consistent when both writing and speaking.

Six teachers seem not to correct their students when speaking, but when writing they want them to be consistent. Some think it is important for the students to reflect upon formality when writing and one teacher adds that it is "required to use one of either variety if they study English at the University."

Two teachers seemed to think it was very important that students should be consistent – "they are not allowed to mix the different varieties when they write and I would prefer if they stuck to one variety when speaking" and "I encourage students to choose which

variety to speak, and to be consistent, i.e. avoiding mixture.” However, two teachers stated that there are differences within the varieties, and that Swedish pupils are influenced by several varieties, so teachers should not give it too much attention.

Modiano writes; “to the dismay of some students, is the request (or demand) to be consistent... the call for consistency is often simply a disguised form of discrimination” (1998: 242). It is not always that the teachers are right when pointing out to their students the so-called ‘errors’ in mixing, they may sometimes also be wrong. Modiano claims that “identifying lexical items or aspects of grammar as exclusively AmE or BrE is a difficult task, even for the expert” (1998: 246). It seems as if some teachers do not teach their students differences between varieties but still want their students to be consistent. I believe that for students to be consistent they need to know the differences. If they do not know them, how would they know what English is AmE and what is BrE, which they need to know to be able to be consistent. Teachers cannot ask for the students to be consistent if they do not teach differences between varieties.

4.8. Consistency regarding British and American English

In question seven the teachers were supposed to answer what opinions they have about consistency regarding British and American English. The question was interpreted as what the teacher thinks about both students’ and teachers’ consistency. Four teachers wrote either “[n]o particular opinion” or “[y]ou don’t have to be consistent”. One teacher wrote “I don’t make a big deal about it and mix it myself to be honest...” and three teachers stated - “you should be consistent”.

Other statements were: “[h]ard to keep consistency today owing to the transatlantic influence on both sides”, “[t]he more you know the better!! Synonyms are always important. If someone doesn’t understand you should be able to rephrase your utterance. Think Global English!” and “[s]ince it’s becoming more and more acceptable to use the “Mid-Atlantic” variety of English, I think consistency is less important today than it was before.” One teacher wrote: “[i]n our society today, I believe the differences between the two will become less and less due to the Internet and television” while another teacher wrote “[t]he pupils I teach don’t know that much English, it’s okay if they use British or American English.”

The two teachers using other English varieties (Canadian and Australian) wrote; “[b]eing used to the Canadian standard I am not that concerned about consistency. In Canada

they speak American English, spell some words the American way and many according to British standard” and “[i]t helps to be consists, for the students sake but it can be difficult in my case considering that Australian English is a mixture of both British and American and later a variety of its own.”

There are reasons for doubting both BrE and AmE Standard in European education. Modiano claims that “Europeans require a form of the language which allows for cultural pluralism, for a politically and socially neutral lingua franca, and here, MAE is much more functional” (1998: 242). He further states that those who learn to speak BrE are expected to act British and are “implying ‘membership’ in the culture”. This could be something that students do not want or also will not suit their own interests (1998: 244), and this is also highly relevant when learning AmE. But of course differences between varieties are more important than we actually consider them being; if the vocabulary of one variety is used in the wrong situation there can easily be misunderstandings between people.

4.9. Changes in society and schools

Some teachers were convinced that they see changes in attitudes regarding British and American English in both society and schools while others do not feel they see any changes. Most of the teachers seem to think that;”American English is growing in popularity” in both society and schools because of the American influences. The teachers also think American English and its corresponding culture is the most common variety learned by the students while three teachers mentioned that most teachers prefer British English and the British culture. One teacher stated “[c]ompared to when I went to school: yes. British English has much less influence on ‘school English’ today”. Another teacher stated that “[h]istorically British has been stronger and some parents wonder about which our students learn. They learn both!”

One teacher wrote; “[s]tudents are more used to American English from media and have a more positive view of that. They can sometimes be a bit biased about British English” while two teachers had a different point of view regarding the students use of English; “[y]oung people are slightly fed up with AE, and are turning towards BE” and “there are some students that persist on sticking to British English.” Most of the teachers seem to think that AmE is favored by the students while one teacher thought BrE is favored. Modiano states: “for those students who want to follow traditional practices in their English language

studies, adequate opportunity to learn British English (or other culture-specific varieties) should be provided” (2001: 162).

“At this point in time, we can ascertain that the Americanization of Euro-English is so far developed that it no longer possible to exclusively teach one variety”. Today the “educational norms should reflect the goal and needs of the people who are the beneficiaries of the instruction” (Modiano 1998:247). I would ascertain that since the old curriculum from 1970’s (Lgy 70), where the only norm for English language was British English, there has been a significant change. Due to the latest curriculum, Lpf 94, both teachers and students today are allowed to speak and write whatever variety they prefer. I agree with Söderlund (2004) when she speculates that “Americanization” through media could be behind the changes and that there is a historical shift going on.

5. Summary and conclusion

The upper secondary teachers were very open-minded to both American and British English. Most of them considered British English more difficult to understand for both students and teachers, while some only mentioned that they thought BrE sounds nice but proper and snobbish. The teachers agreed that the students like AmE most, since that is what they are most frequently exposed to through media.

It seemed as if it was an even distribution between the varieties teachers teach; seven teachers claimed to teach AmE, six teach BrE and six teach MAE or several varieties. One teacher had the ambition to teach her students AmE, BrE and Australian English. To teach several varieties is ambitious and something every language teacher should aim for. Among the reasons mentioned for using the particular variety were; language influences, due to students, travelling, and learning during school years. Teachers preferring BrE seemed to depend on; travelling in a BrE speaking country, learning in school and working as teachers over 20 years. Preferring AmE depend on travelling in an AmE speaking country and young age. MAE was popular among those visiting both an AmE and BrE speaking country as well as there was a tendency for MAE becoming more popular among young people. Söderlund (2004) mentions in her study that “Americanization” through media could be behind her result and that there is a historical shift going on the same conclusion applies to this research: since both AmE and MAE seem to be growing in popularity among the younger teachers.

Six teachers mentioned that AmE would be the variety most useful for students since it is winning a lot of ground in Europe. Six teachers thought that it does not matter what variety students use: it depends on what they need it for and what their future plans are. The conclusion is that because teachers can never actually know what variety students will need in the future they should be open to teach different varieties. As in Söderlund’s study (2004), where most of the teachers thought of teaching differences between varieties, the result in this research showed that 18 of 20 teachers think of teaching differences. The main argument is that if students know differences between varieties they can communicate effectively with people from other countries. Eleven out of 20 teachers thought it was okay for students to mix varieties but most of the teachers encourage them to be consistent when writing and speaking. Six teachers thought it is okay to mix when speaking but not when writing. Two teachers were very determined on students being consistent. I agree when Modiano states that “consistency is often a disguised form of discrimination” (1998: 242) and that teachers are not always

correct in their correction. The results indicated that six of the 20 teachers were not aware of the differences between the most usual varieties taught in Swedish schools but nevertheless seemed to be persistent in students being consistent.

The final conclusion is that it appears that teachers are aware of what the English speaking world looks like today, that Mid-Atlantic English is an emerging variety. In this study it also shows that some teachers are using and have accepted Mid-Atlantic English as a norm for ELT in Sweden. 19 of 20 teacher said they do not get any directions from the school system on what variety they should use but a few teachers are though persistent in viewing BrE as the definitive norm in schools even if the latest curriculum (Lpf 94) emphasize internationalization. An interpretation of that would be that students should get the chance to be exposed to several varieties.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire

Gender: M / F Age _____

Year/-s as an English teacher: _____ What levels do you teach? A B C

Have you been in any English speaking country for a longer period? Yes No

If yes, in what country and how long was your continuous stay? _____

1. What are your opinions about British English? Feel free to write anything you like!

2. What are your opinions about American English? Feel free to write anything you like!

3.1. What variety of English do you use when you teach?

British American Both Other? _____

3.2. What are your reasons for using that variety?

3.3. Do you get any directions from your school/school system on what variety you should use? Please explain!

4. What variety do you think will be most useful for your students and why?

5.1. Do you think it is important for students to know differences between varieties? Why?

5.2. Do you teach your students differences? Yes No

5.3. If yes, what differences do you teach? (E.g. vocabulary, spelling, structure)

6. Is it okay for students to mix varieties when they speak/write? Do you correct them?

7. What is your opinion about consistency regarding British and American English?

8. Do you see any changes in attitudes regarding British and American English at your school as well as in society?

9. Encircle the form you would teach your students first:

- a) He *spilled/spilt* the coffee.
- b) I'm going to study at *the/---* university.
- c) The restaurant is *on/in* Main Street.
- d) You may fill *in/out* a form.
- e) There is a house *round/around* the corner.
- f) The majority *is/are* going to vote.
- g) We don't tolerate that kind of *behavior/behaviour*.
- h) I think you should *apologise/apologize*.

10. Encircle the word you would teach your students as your first choice:

a) termin	semester	term
b) enkelbiljett	one-way ticket	single ticket
c) nota	check	bill
d) lastbil	truck	lorry
e) mat-avhämtning	takeaway	takeout
f) affärsinnehavare	storekeeper	shopkeeper
g) biograf	cinema	movie theater
h) fotboll	soccer	football
i) soptunna	trash can	dustbin
j) segelbåt	sailboat	sailing boat
k) järnväg	railway	railroad
l) småkaka	cookie	biscuit
m) lägenhet	apartment	flat
n) efternamn	surname	last name
o) hyra	hire	rent
p) hav	ocean	sea
q) semester	holiday	vacation

Thank you for participating! ☺