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**AWARENESS AND USE OF BRITISH AND
AMERICAN ENGLISH**

Finnish High School Students' Use of Variants
– Spelling and Lexicon

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Englanti on yleisin kouluissa opetettu vieras kieli Suomessa, ja sekä opetuksen että oppilaiden kielitaidon taso on korkea. Nykyisin englanninopetus alkaa heti peruskoulun ensimmäiseltä luokalta lähtien, ja englannin opetussuunnitelmassa painotetaan kielitaidon lisäksi myös kielitietoisuuden opettamista.

Tämä tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli kartoittaa suomalaisten lukiolaisten britti- sekä amerikanenglannin varianttien käyttöä, sekä tutkia, ovatko he tietoisia valinnastaan, kun eri varianttien vaihtoehtoja ei erikseen mainita. Myös opiskelijoiden kykyä yhdenmukaiseen varianttien käyttöön mitattiin. Kyselyyn osallistui 50 tamperelaista lukio-opiskelijaa. Tutkimus toteutettiin kyselylomakkeella, joka sisälsi suomenkielisiä lauseita, jotka osallistujien tuli kääntää englanniksi kykyjensä mukaan. Jokainen lause sisälsi avainsanan, jonka avulla määritettiin sekä eroavaisuuksia sanavalinnoissa että kirjoitusasuissa, sekä yhdenmukaisuutta varianttien käytössä. Avainsanoja oli yhteensä 20, joista puolet viittasivat sanavalintaan ja puolet kirjoitusasuun. Osallistujat lopuksi vastasivat myös reflektoiiviin kysymyksiin varianttien käytöstä, sekä kertoivat kokemuksiaan niiden käsittelystä koulussa.

Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että sanojen kirjoitusasuissa molemmat variantit ovat lähes yhtä yleisiä, amerikanenglannin ollessa vain hieman suosittumpi. Sanavalinnoissa eroavaisuus oli merkittävä, sillä amerikanenglannin sanoja käytettiin lähes kaksinkertaisesti brittienglannin sanoihin verrattuna. Lähes 80% osallistujista oli vastatessaan tietoinen mahdollisuudesta valita varianttien välillä, mutta suurin osa silti tietoisesti sekoitti eri variantteja. Koulussa englannin eri variantteja oltiin opiskelijoiden mukaan käsitelty vaihtelevasti, ja suurin osa koki, että brittienglantia painotettiin oppimateriaalien ja opettajien puolesta. Osa taas muisti opettajien kehottaneen valitsemaan yhden variantin ja käyttämään yksinomaan sitä. Tutkimuksessa ei otettu huomioon ääntämistä, mutta se olisi mielenkiintoinen osa-alue laajemmalle tutkimukselle tulevaisuudessa.

Avainsanat: englannin variantit, lukio-opiskelijat, amerikanenglanti, brittienglanti

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ABSTRACT

Anna Tahvanainen: Awareness and Use of British and American English, Finnish High School Students' Use of Variants – Spelling and Lexicon

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English is the most common foreign language taught in school in Finland, and the level of the teaching as well as the students' English skills is significantly high. English is taught in elementary schools starting from the first grade, and the Finnish National Curriculum emphasizes language awareness in addition to language skills.

This study was conducted to investigate Finnish high school students' use of British and American variants and whether or not they were aware of the alternatives when not explicitly told. The students' ability to be consistent in their use of variants was also studied. Altogether 50 high school students from Tampere participated in the study. The study was conducted by a questionnaire which included Finnish sentences to be translated into English. In each sentence, a keyword was hidden, which would include an alternative spelling or word choice. There were 20 keywords altogether, half of which were related to spelling and the other half to lexical choice. The questionnaire contained both spelling and lexical differences, which were analyzed together with consistency. Finally, the students also answered questions on using the variants and how they were discussed in school.

It became clear that the British and American spellings are almost as equally frequent amongst Finnish high school students, the American one being only slightly more popular. In the choice of lexicon, the difference was extremely clear; American words were more common and used almost twice as much as their British English counterparts. A majority of the students, 80%, were aware of the variants' alternatives while translating, but chose to use both variants. How and whether the variants were discussed in school, varied greatly, and many students found that the British variant was emphasized by teachers and textbooks. Some noted that their teachers encouraged them to choose one variant and use it consistently. The study did not take pronunciation into account, which would be an interesting focus for later research.

Keywords: English variants, high school students, American English, British English

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

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1. Introduction

Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish, that every student must learn at school. Additionally, every student must learn at least one foreign language (A1 language), and at the moment, the most common foreign language is English. Of the students in Finnish comprehensive schools, 90% have chosen English as their A1 language (EDUFI 2019). Over half of the remaining 10% are Swedish-speaking students, who learn Finnish as their A1 language. Foreign language education in Finland is highly valued and Finns perform at TOEFL¹ tests rather well, with the average score being 96 (TOEFL iBT Test and Score Data Summary 2021, 22). In comparison, the score for the United States was 93 and for the United Kingdom 98 (ibid. 22-23). Many textbooks and teachers in Finnish schools choose to use more British English, even though American English is also mentioned in the textbooks (Kiukas 2022, 28). In the context of this study, the term Standard British English (SBE) is used to refer to English spoken and written mainly in England, and Standard American English (SAE) to the variant used mainly in the United States of America, not America as a continent. This study aims to answer three questions: (1) Which English variant, Standard British or Standard American, do Finnish high schoolers² use more when it comes to spelling and choice of lexicon, (2) is their use of variant consistent and (3) are they aware of their choice of variant or does it happen subconsciously. It is expected that British way of spelling dominates among the students due to the influence of textbooks; however, they prefer using American English lexicon. The majority of them would not be aware of the English varieties of the spelling, other than what they think is grammatically correct. While choosing certain words from their vocabulary, they are likely to think of the equivalent of the other variety, but do not recognize the difference in variety and therefore choose the word that feels most familiar.

¹ TOEFL tests measure non-native speakers' ability to read, write, listen and speak English.

² High school in this study refers to Finnish *lukio*, which usually lasts three years. Students must apply for *lukio* after completing comprehensive school, when they are approximately 15-16 years of age.

2. Standard British English and Standard American English

The two most well-known variants have significant differences in both spelling and lexicon. The spelling differences typically occur in certain clusters of letters or in specific inflections, while vocabulary differences seem to follow no pattern at all. The spelling differences will be discussed by a feature. It is to be noted, that the English language is being “Americanized”, meaning that the Standard American English features are becoming more acceptable around the world and especially SAE vocabulary is gaining popularity Europe as well – or at least it is not always considered incorrect (Gonçalves et al. 2017, 6). Even former colonies of the British Empire such as Australia, South Africa and New Zealand have shifted their lexicon towards American, and American English spelling is becoming more common as well (ibid., 5). The differences between the two variants are also not limited to only spelling and lexicon, but there are grammatical differences as well, such as Subject-verb agreement (Barata 2020, 107). However, the grammatical differences are not ones that Finnish high school students are expected to be aware of, and therefore they are not relevant to this study. British English is often referred to as Received Pronunciation or RP, while American English is sometimes called General American (Novari et al. 2021, 29). These terms, however, are typically used when discussing pronunciation, and since that is outside the scope of this study, then solely the terms Standard British English (SBE) and Standard American English (SAE) are used.

2.1. Differences in spelling

There are multiple differences in spelling between the two variants, not all of which will be discussed in this paper. Looking thoroughly through all of them would be unnecessary for the purpose of this study, but the ones included in the data collection, such as -OUR/OR, -TRE/-TER, -ISE/-IZE, and -LLED/-LED will we discussed. The changes and the Americanization

of the spelling of English language cannot be discussed without mentioning Noah Webster, a lexicographer and a teacher in the 18th and 19th century America. He was the first to introduce many of the changes discussed in this study, such as -OUR/-OR, -TRE/-TER and -ISE/IZE. His ideology was to develop “cultural independence” for the United States, and an American-specific language variety would be a crucial factor in that (Merriam-Webster). He put this ideology in motion by publishing multiple works such as *A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language* (1806) and *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828).

2.1.1. -OUR / -OR

One of the differences between British and American variants is the presence or absence of the letter *u* in specific words. In the British variant, the cluster of letters is -OUR, whereas in the American variant the *u* is omitted, resulting in -OR. The cluster typically occurs at the end of the word, such as in *behaviour*, *colour*, *favour*, *rumour*, *neighbour*, all of which include the letter *u* in Standard British English, while these would be considered misspelled in Standard American English (Darragh 2000, 3). The difference applies also in words that are derived from such words, i.e. words in which the cluster is not the final syllable (e.g. *favourite/favorite*, *behavioural/behavioral*). There are, however, words that have the ending -OUR in both variants, and the *u* cannot be omitted in the American variant either, such as *contour*.

2.1.2. -TRE / -TER

Another differentiating factor in spelling is the order of the letters *r* and *e* following the letter *t* at the end of certain nouns. The British spelling requires the *r* to precede the vowel, resulting in -TRE, while the American spelling reverses this order to -TER. This pattern is present in words such as *theatre*, *centre*, and *litre* (SBE) or *theater*, *center* and *liter* (SAE). Many words

that include this feature are often originally derived from French (Darragh 2000, 3), but the order of the letters was reversed to Americanize the word. As in the -OUR/-OR factor, the change in the order of the letters is also present in derived words, and the cluster does not have to be at the end of the word (e.g. *centrefold* (SBE) / *centerfold* (SAE)) (ibid).

2.1.3. -ISE / -IZE

As with many of the features discussed, differentiation between -ISE and -IZE is also typically seen at the end of the words, which are in this case verbs. Whether or not a verb ends with an -IZE or -ISE is not always logical nor dependent on the region alone. There are words that have the -IZE ending in both American and British English (e.g. *seize*), and on the contrary, there are verbs with the ending -ISE in both variants as well (e.g. *advertise*) (Darragh 2000, 4). However, some verbs are spelled with a different ending in each variant, British English preferring the -ISE ending and American English using the -IZE. For example, Britons use the words *analyse* and *organise*, whereas Americans spell them as *analyze* and *organize*.

2.1.4. -LLED / -LED

Some disyllabic words in which the stress is on the second syllable – and their derivatives, are spelled with only one *l* in British English and with two in American English (e.g. *skilful*, *enrol* (SBE) / *skillful*, *enroll* (SAE)) (Darragh 2000, 6). However, the feature is reversed in some verbs once suffixes -ING, -ED, or -ER are added and the stress of the root word is not on the second syllable. For example, verbs such as *travel* and *cancel*, where the stress is on the first syllable, the past tense forms in Standard American English would be *traveled* and *canceled*, while in Standard British English the other -l is added, resulting in *travelled* and *cancelled* (ibid.).

2.2. Differences in lexicon

Differences in lexicon tend to be much more noticeable than the ones in spelling, since choosing a certain word might make the meaning of the sentence either change or completely obscure and can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. However, speakers of British and American English typically understand each other without problems, despite some exceptions. The differences do not seem to follow any particular pattern as with spelling, and a specific division into semantic categories might be impossible, though they might more often relate to certain themes such as food or clothing.

There are multiple reasons for the difference in lexicon between varieties. One of the more common reasons is adopting words from other languages, which often happened through colonial contact and/or immigration: According to Van Gelderen (2014), contact with African slaves and European immigrants led to American English lexicon being influenced by African and European languages (267). The word *cookie*, for example, was adopted through Dutch (*ibid.*, 268). Some words in Standard American English have survived from Old English, whereas their counterparts in Standard British English would be early loan words from other languages, such as French (*ibid.*). The table below portrays examples of words that differ in the two variants, the counterparts in both variants and their Finnish translation. The words used in the present study are marked with an asterisk.

Standard British English	Standard American English	Finnish translation
football*	soccer*	jalkapallo
bonnet	hood	konepelti
waistcoat	vest	liivi
biscuit*	cookie*	keksi

flat	apartment	asunto
holiday*	vacation*	loma
parcel	package	paketti
lorry*	truck*	kuorma-auto
pavement	sidewalk	jalkakäytävä

TABLE 1

2.3. Addressing variants in the Finnish education system

In Finland, the educational system in which foreign languages are also included, is national, yet every municipality applies it in the way they consider most suitable. In the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education one of the goals for English education is stated to be “guiding the students” to appreciate different languages, their speakers and different cultures (*Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014 2015*, 219). Once the pupil is in 7th grade, the goal is more specifically improving the student's ability to reflect on the variants of English as well as their status, and to teach the student the skills to develop intercultural competence (*ibid.*, 349). To this curriculum, an addition was made in 2019 in regards to learning a second native language (Finnish or Swedish) and a foreign (A1) language in grades 1 and 2 during primary school. Starting from 2020, 1st and 2nd graders would start learning either their second native language or a foreign language, while previously this education would start later on in the third grade, where the students are typically 8-9 years old (Ojamies 2018, 4). Beginning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes immediately in the first grade means that the students are usually 6-7 years old. The addition states the goals of early language education to be creating a positive attitude towards language learning and to encourage the children to use their existing skills and be confident in their abilities (*Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteiden 2014 muutokset ja täydennykset koskien A1 kielen opetusta luokilla 1-2 2019*, 24).

Once the student reaches high school, the status of English as a lingua franca, a global language, is discussed, and the curriculum includes an entire course focusing on this topic (*Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2019*).

There are multiple well-known English textbook series that are used in different schools. The books have chapters with audio, vocabulary lists, and exercises included. The vocabularies in the books mainly consist of British English words, although sometimes the American alternative might be mentioned. According to a study by Kiukas (2022, 28), in one of the English textbooks, called *On Track 1*, which is still used in Finnish high schools today, all of the words that had an alternative spelling, were spelled in British English. For example, all the words that were part of the -ISE/-IZE or -OUR/-OR categories previously discussed, were all written the first way, i.e. in Standard British English. Also, most of the time the audio is read in British English, even though there are of course some exceptions. The books include chapters on different cultures that discuss different variants as well, for example Australian or New Zealand English. Some English education platforms do not only discuss spelling, lexicon or accents, but other linguistics differences as well. At least on the Finnish teaching material platform Studeo³, the numeric differences are discussed, primarily how the order of writing down dates is different and the differences between the metric system and the imperial system.

3. Literature review

3.1. Previous studies in Finland

The topic of English variants has been studied in Finland previously, and most of the focus is on American English and British English. A research project by Kytömäki (2016) studied 9th

³ Studeo (Studeo.fi) is a digital learning platform used in some Finnish high schools and its English materials include English texts, exercises and theory.

graders' use of the two variants. They discovered that Finnish 9th graders use more British spelling but more American vocabulary. The study also included the connection between these findings and the participants' media consumption. These results validate this study's hypothesis. However, the method as well as the age of the participants in the past and the current study are different. The data in the current study has been gathered from Finnish sentences that the participants translated independently into English, while the past study gave participants a choice between the two variants. Therefore, one of the main factors examined in the current study is awareness of different variants.

3.2. Similar studies in other Nordic countries

In other Nordic countries, such as Sweden and Norway, similar studies have been conducted. In Sweden, Finland's bordering state, the attitudes toward the varieties are clear: nearly half of the Swedish high school students would prefer to use American English themselves (Eriksson 2019, 213). In Norway, similar effects can be seen, as according to a study by Kolsvik, Norwegian students use the American variant more, even though the English teachers tend to use the British variant more often (2019, 50). Especially the students' vocabulary and pronunciation were more "Americanized", but the increase in American English spelling was visible as well (ibid., 52).

4. Methodology and Participants

The data was collected with a questionnaire (see Appendix) distributed to private Finnish high schools in Tampere, southern Finland. In total, 50 students from two high schools participated. Of the 50 participants, three (3) had resided in an English-speaking country for a period longer than six months and therefore their answers were excluded when analyzing the spelling and

lexical choices. However, their answers on the reflecting questions concerning variants and English language education in Finland were taken into account. All remaining 47 participants were over the age of 18 and were educated in Finland, and are currently enrolled in a Finnish high school. They were asked to fill out the questionnaire without the assistance of any outside help or referring to dictionaries, but a margin of error exists in case they have done this nevertheless, since the environment the questionnaire was answered in was not controlled or monitored.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections; the first section included background information on their English education, the second section had 18 sentences in Finnish, asking the students to translate them into English. Each sentence included a word or a phrase that would have either two alternatives in spelling or word choice, one American and one British (for example color/colour or truck/lorry). Altogether there were ten keywords from each of these categories, spelling and lexicon. The students were not told that the feature being investigated was their use of these two variants in order to avoid the conscious choice, however, this was revealed later on while they still had the option not to submit their answers. The third section asked them to analyze their own awareness of their choice between variants and whether or not they realized that these two alternatives were present.

It was compared, how many of the participants used American spelling and British spelling, and how many chose American words and British words. The alternation between the two with individual participants was analyzed, as well as quantitatively how many could stay consistent. Of the sentences, only the keyword was analyzed, and any grammatical or spelling errors were ignored, except for those in said keywords (e.g., colour instead or color/colour).

The keywords used in the survey can be seen on tables 2 and 3 below. The word on the left is the Standard British English word and the middle one is the Standard American

equivalent. On the right is the Finnish word used in the questionnaire. If the keyword in the questionnaire was inflected (other than for tense), the inflection is in parentheses.

Keyword	Standard British English (SBE)	Standard American English (SAE)	Finnish word used in the questionnaire
1.	organise	organize	organisoida
2.	cancelled	canceled	peruttu
3.	favourite	favorite	lempi-
4.	colour	color	väri
5.	behaviour	behavior	käytös(tä)
6.	humour	humor	huumori
7.	travelled	traveled	matkusti
8.	analyse	analyze	analysoida
9.	litre	liter	litra(a)
10.	centre	center	keskus

TABLE 2. Spelling

Keyword	Standard British English	Standard American English	Finnish word used in the questionnaire
1.	postal code	zip code	postinumero
2.	rucksack	backpack	reppu(si)
3.	football	soccer	jalkapallo
4.	crisps	chips	sips(ejä)
5.	biscuits	cookies	keks(ejä)
6.	lorry	truck	kuorma-auto(n)
7.	rubber	eraser	pyyhekumi(ni)

8.	lift	elevator	hissi(IIä)
9.	holiday	vacation	loma(n)
10.	cinema	movies	leffa(an)

TABLE 3. Lexicon

5. Results and analysis

5.1 Spelling

There were ten (10) keywords that depicted the choice of spelling. Based on previous studies, the hypothesis was that the British variant's spelling would dominate significantly due to the influence of English text books in Finland. However, this hypothesis was proven wrong.

As there were 47 eligible participants and 10 keywords, the choice of spelling was made 470 times in total (47*10). Of these 470 times, the students chose the British spelling 214 times and American spelling 216 times. The evenness of the variants is illustrated table 1 below, with 46.0% rate for Standard American English (SAE) spelling, 45.5% for Standard

British English (SBE) spelling and 8.5% for other, including spelling mistakes and empty answers.

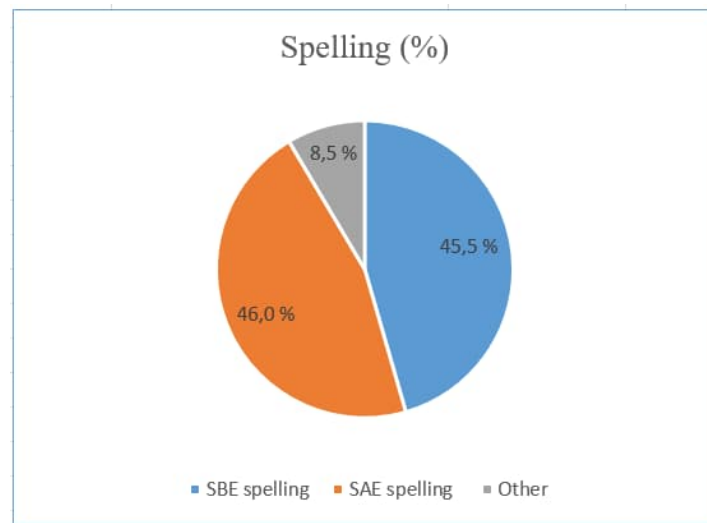


FIGURE 1⁴

As seen below in table 2, which portrays the number of occurrences of each variant with each keyword, the variants were used nearly equally often, but this varied greatly based on the word. The grey line displays the instances a synonym was used instead of the keyword, there was a misspelling, or the keyword was completely left out.

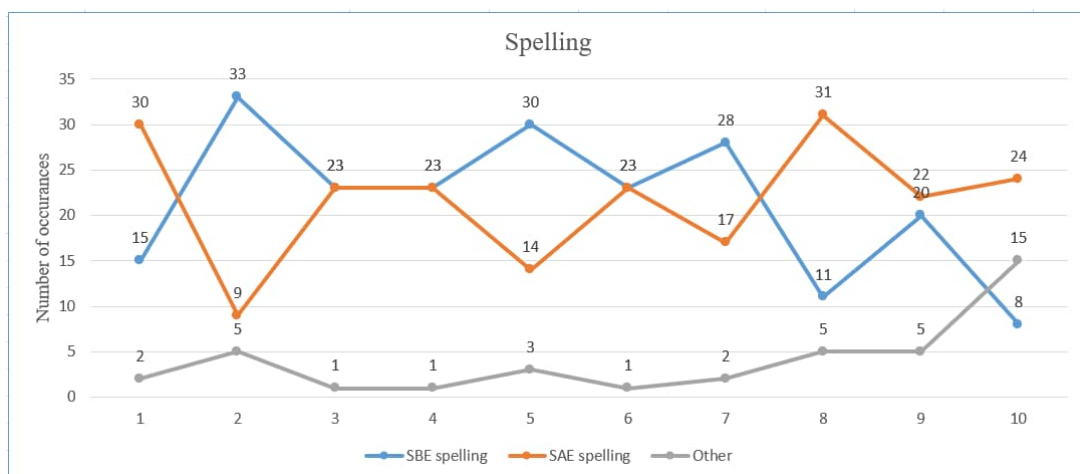


FIGURE 2

⁴ The specific percentages are 45.96% for SAE, 45.53% for a SBE and 8.51% for "other". In the pie chart the percentages are rounded up to the first decimal.

Of the ten keywords, with three the variants were used equally, with four the American spelling was more common, and with three the British was more common. The clearest distinction was made with the second keyword, which was cancelled / canceled. Of the participants, 33 used the British double-l-spelling, only 9 the American single-l and 5 answers were not accepted. Keyword number 8 (analyse/analyze) was also distinctive, since 31 participants chose the American ZE-spelling and 11 the British SE-ending. Again 5 students phrased it differently. The three equally common spellings were with keywords 3 (favourite/favorite), 4 (colour/color) and 6 (humour/humor). From this we can conclude that the -OUR/-OR spellings are equally familiar to Finnish high school students, since they are comfortable using both. However, the table above does not yet illustrate the individual students' consistency in the use of variants. This will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 5.3. In the questionnaire, keywords 3 and 4 (favourite / favorite and colour / color) were in the same sentence to be translated, immediately one after another. Surprisingly, 18 of the 47 participants chose different variants within this sentence, using either favourite + color combination (altogether eight instances) or favorite + colour combination (ten instances).

5.2. Lexicon

Based on previous studies, the hypothesis of this study was that the American lexicon was more popular than the British. This was proven correct, as of the 470 instances of word choice, 298 (63%) were of the American variant and only 106 (23%) were British variant words. The percentual division is visible in the pie chart below in figure 3.

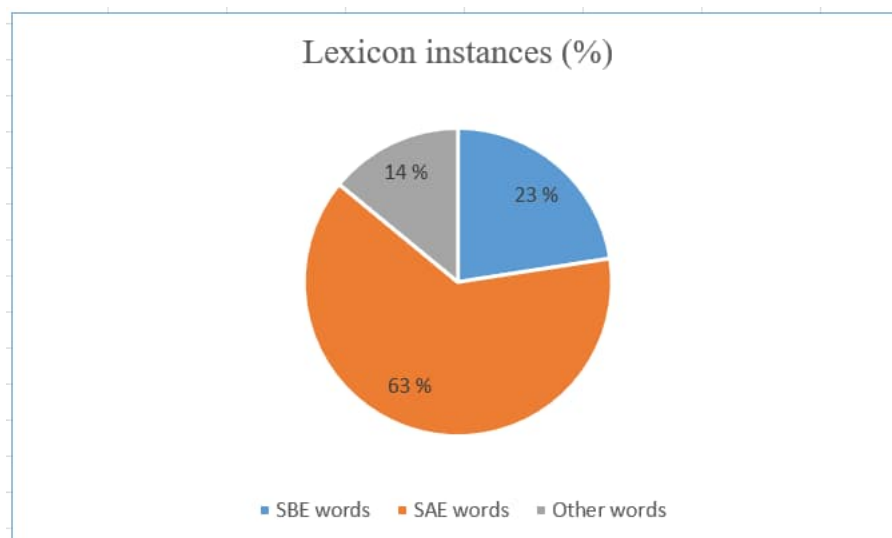


FIGURE 3

Only in two of the ten keywords, the Standard British English variant was more common. These were keywords 1 (postal code / zip code) and 3 (football / soccer). The first one, however, turned out to be difficult for many of the participants, with only 20 people using the correct British variant and 5 the correct American word. Number 3 was most likely due to the sport being very popular in Finland and in Europe, and the American version is not as common outside of the US. The word *football* in the US refers to a completely different sport, which is not that common in Finland, and is often referred to specifically as *American football* to avoid confusion. Of the 47 participants, 38 chose the word football and only 6 referred to it as soccer.

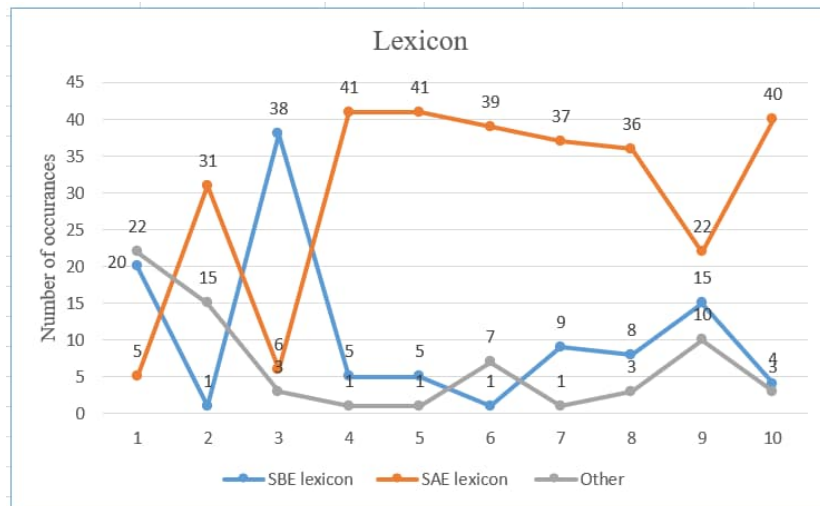


FIGURE 4

The most extreme difference in figure 4 is visible with keywords 4 and 5 (crisps / chips and biscuits / cookies) with 40 students answering chips, whereas only 5 chose crisps. While the spelling differences presented instances of keywords with even distribution, i.e., the same number of students chose the British and the American variant, this was not the case with choice of vocabulary, which yielded a more uneven division. Closest to this it came to with keyword 9 (holiday / vacation), when 22 students favored the American version and 15 chose the British.

5.3. Consistency and awareness

As proven, the way high school students use variants as a group varies. However, the use of the variants by individual is still left to discover. According to the hypothesis of this study most students would be consistent within category, i.e. always use British spelling or always use American lexicon, but the categories together would be inconsistent, that is, British spelling with American lexicon or vice versa. This was proven partly incorrect, as only two of the participants were fully consistent with their use of vocabulary and the other two were consistent with their spelling choice. Since American vocabulary was dominant over all, it was to be

expected that the majority of the participants would use it more often, and occasionally choose a British word as well. As presented in figure 5 below, only three participants used the lexicon of both variants equally and only two individuals preferred Standard British English vocabulary. Both of the two participants who were consistent with their lexical choices favored Standard American English.

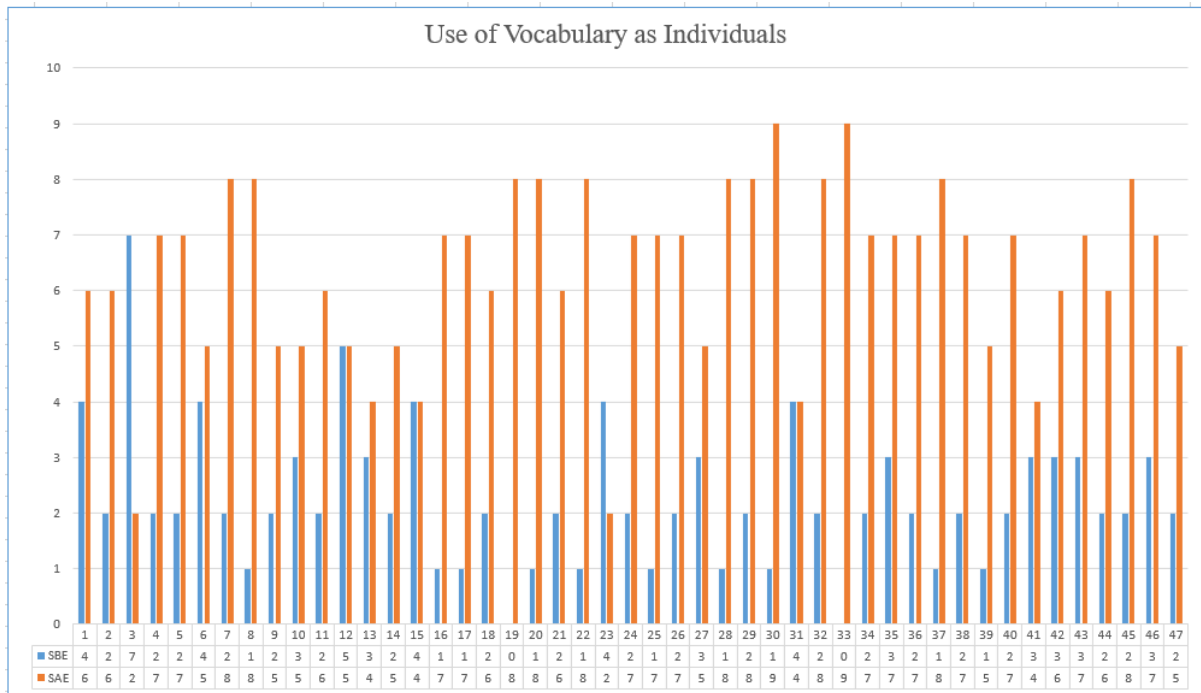


FIGURE 5

With spelling there was more variation, and as both variants were proven to be nearly equally common, it is no surprise that most students would use both. As visualized on figure 6 below, only two participants were fully consistent in spelling, with one choosing the British spelling and one the American spelling. Five would use both variants equally, while the rest 40 would at least slightly lean towards one or the other.

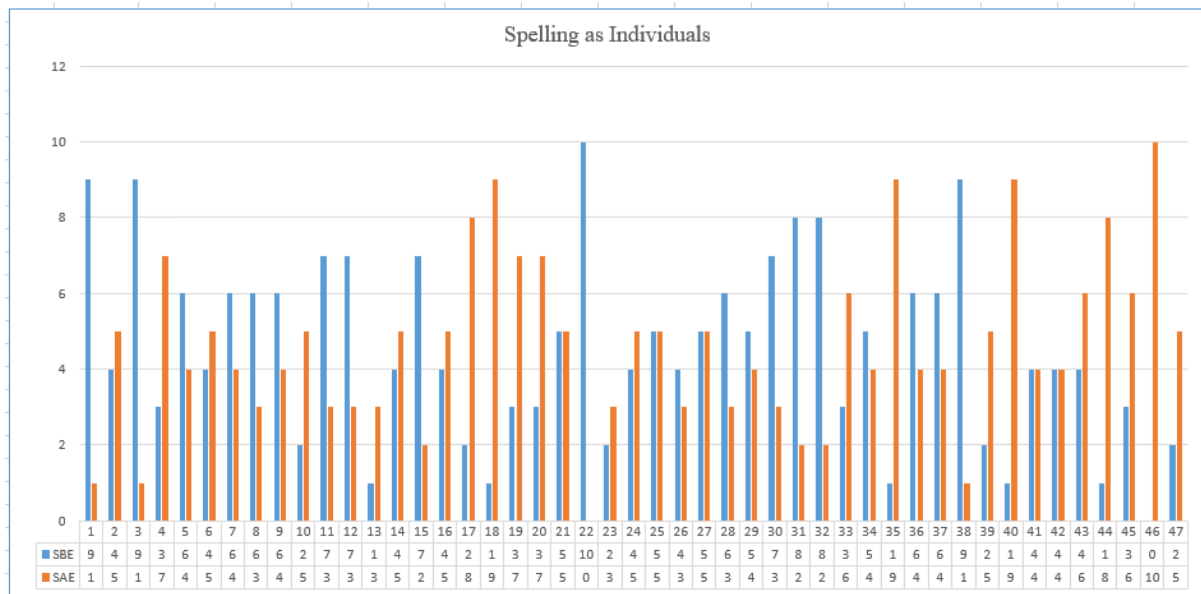


FIGURE 6

When asked whether or not the participants noticed the possibility of choosing between the variants, 88% did, 10% did not, and 2% were not sure. These statistics also include the participants who were originally excluded due to a long stay in an English-speaking country. The majority (60%) found that the British variant was emphasized in comprehensive school and in high school, and just under half (48%) had had teachers who would only use the British variant. The way and frequency with which the variants were addressed in school varied greatly. It is to be noted that most likely the students attended different comprehensive schools before high school. Some mentioned that the variants and their differences were only discussed rarely if at all in comprehensive school, but more in high school. A few participants said that the differences were taught thoroughly in high school. Mostly the -OUR/OR, -ISE/IZE spelling and vocabulary differences were mentioned.

When asked how the variants were addressed at school, many participants mentioned that they were taught that one should choose one variant and use it constantly, however, 54% of the participants still responded that they consciously use both variants. The dominance of the SAE was visible in this question as well, since 22% said they aimed to use mainly the American variant, and only 10% chose the British variant. Only one student

mentioned using other variants than the standard British or standard American ones. Furthermore, some students expressed frustration with the practice of only choosing one variant, when one can still be understood even if they are used together.

6. Discussion

The role of school in learning English is not as significant today as it used to be. There is no denying that it is still important, especially to younger students and in terms of grammar, but in a Finnish high school each course typically includes three 75-minute classes a week, altogether 3 hours and 45 minutes. Teenagers spend countless hours online and on social media, where their media consumption is mostly in English or in Finnish. From a young age Finnish children learn to watch movies with the original language and Finnish subtitles. They are exposed to the English language very early on, whereas in countries such as Germany, Spain and France most movies are dubbed into their native language or voiceover is added⁵. Therefore, media is teaching the youth alongside the actual education system, as was discovered by Kytömäki (2016) as well.

The results of the study comply with previous data by Kytömäki (2016) in that American vocabulary continues to dominate among students, however, the frequency of American spelling has increased. Of course, from this small sample of data, we cannot generalize about the entire population, but the difference was unexpected. It was surprising how many students knowingly chose to mix both variants, even though many have been told by teachers not to. This could be explained by the casual setting of a questionnaire with no consequences for the students. In the matriculation examination, the grade of which might be a determining factor when applying for later studies, the pressure to be exact is much greater.

⁵ Dubbing is replacing the original audio completely with audio in the target language. Voiceover in this context means adding audio in the target language, in addition to having the original audio played. This is more common in some countries than in others.

One of the participants even mentioned the teachers' instructions to have been specifically to avoid mixing the variants in the matriculation examination, which might imply that the use of alternating variants outside of the exam does not really matter, which it mostly does not. The fact that the students' vocabulary is mainly American, and the standard American spelling is slightly more common as well suggests that the text books and teachers preferring the standard British English over standard American English does not strongly affect learners.

What remains the most important aspect of language education is to understand and be understood and to be able to communicate with other people. Since English has the status of a lingua franca, it is likely that Finnish people mostly use it with other non-native speakers. Therefore, language awareness is to be included in teaching as well when discussing different variants, as is stated in the curriculum. The results of this study should only be applied in situations where the students' English skills are on a high level enough, to benefit from feedback on their use of particular variants. With students who need support in general communication in English, it could be discouraging to mark alternating variants as errors.

7. Conclusion

EFL education in Finland is valued and regulated by the Finnish National Curriculum, and Finns perform at a rather high level in TOEFL tests. Even though many students have experienced EFL education as favoring the British variety, Finnish high school students prefer the American lexicon, but use both American and British spelling rather equally. They are aware of the choice between variants and the differences have been addressed in school, even though only briefly in some cases. As individuals, only few are fully consistent in their use of variants, and the majority uses both variants knowingly. The results indicate that the textbooks or teachers favoring the standard British English does not heavily influence the

students' language use, since their lexicon is predominantly American and the standard American spelling is slightly more common as well. In the future, it would be interesting to study whether or not there is a correlation between the students' written and oral expression, for example through rhoticity and h-dropping, since oral communication is one of the key elements of language education.

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9. Appendix. Questionnaire

Lukiolaisten englannin kielen taito

* Pakollinen

Esitiedot

1. Sukupuoli *

- Nainen
- Mies
- Muu
- En halua sanoa

2. Olen vähintään 18-vuotias. *

Kyllä

3. Oletko asunut/opiskellut englanninkielisessä maassa? *

Kyllä

Ei

4. Jos vastasit kysymykseen 3 "Kyllä", missä ja kuinka kauan?

5. Kuinka vanha olit, kun aloitit englannin kielen opiskelun? *

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6. Minkä lukion opiskelija olet? *

Osa 2

Käännä alla olevat virkkeet englanniksi parhaasi mukaan. Älä käytä mitään apuvälineitä. Jos et tiedä/muista jotakin sanaa, voit jättää sen sanan pois ja korvata viivalla.

Esimerkiksi: Käyn usein rannalla perheeni kanssa. / I often go to the - with my family.

7. Mikä postinumero minun pitäisi kirjoittaa korttiin? *

8. Unohditko reppusi koulun ruokalaan? *

9. Meillä on jalkapalloharjoitukset kolmesti viikossa. *

10. Voisin syödä sipsejä ja keksejä vaikka joka päivä. *

11. Äitini on kuorma-autonkuljettaja. *

12. Hukkasin pyyhekumini. *

13. Mennään hissillä kolmanteen kerrokseen. *

14. Hän on ansainnut viikon loman. *

15. Voimmeko mennä lauantaina leffaan? *

Osa 2

Käännä alla olevat virkkeet englanniksi parhaasi mukaan. Älä käytä mitään apuvälineitä. Jos et tiedä/muista jotakin sanaa, voit jättää sen sanan pois ja korvata viivalla.

Esimerkiksi: Käyn usein rannalla perheeni kanssa. / I often go to the - with my family.

16. Hän organisoi koko tapahtuman. *

17. Tämän päivän tunti on peruttu, koska opettajamme on sairaana. *

18. Viininpunainen on lempiväriini. *

19. Emme siedä huonoa käytöstä. *

20. Hänellä on synkkä huumorintaju. *

21. Hän matkusti Alaskaan viime vuonna. *

22. Minun täytyy vielä analysoida tulokset. *

23. Voitko ostaa minulle kaksi litraa maitoa?

24. Maapallon keskus on polttavan kuuma. *

Osa 3

Käännettävissä virkkeissä oli jokaisessa ainakin yksi mahdollisuus, jossa virkkeen pystyi kääntää joko brittienglannilla tai amerikanenglannilla. Joissain lauseissa sanan kirjoitusasuun oli useampi vaihtoehto (esim. color/colour tai humor/humour), tai samaa tarkoittava sana eri varianteista (esim. truck/lorry, soccer/football). Molemmat vaihtoehdot ovat aivan yhtä oikein. Älä enää palaa muokkaamaan vastauksiasi.

Tutkielma käsittelee tarkemmin lukiolaisten eri englannin varianttien käyttöä ja tietoisuutta niistä. Alla on kysymyksiä näiden lauseiden kääntämiseen liittyen.

25. Huomasitko, että virkkeissä oli mahdollisuus valita amerikan- tai brittivariantin välillä? *

- Huomasin.
- En huomannut.
- En osaa sanoa.

26. Koetko, että koulussa (peruskoulussa ja lukiossa) on painotettu enemmän toista varianttia? *

- Kyllä, painotettu brittienglantia (colour, humour, football...)
- Kyllä, painotettu amerikanenglantia (color, humor, soccer...)
- Kumpaakaan ei ole painotettu.
- En osaa sanoa.

27. Ovatko opettajasi peruskoulussa ja lukiossa käyttäneet itse enemmän jompaa kumpaa varianttia? *

- Kyllä, enemmän brittienglantia.
- Kyllä, enemmän amerikanenglantia.
- Tasapuolisesti molempia.
- En osaa sanoa.

28. Pyritkö itse tietoisesti pysymään kirjoittaessasi vain yhdessä variantissa? *

- Kyllä, yritän pysyä brittienglannissa.
- Kyllä, yritän pysyä amerikanenglannissa.
- Käytän tietoisesti molempia.
- En osaa sanoa. / En ole ajatellut asiaa.

29. Onko englannin tunneilla peruskoulussa ja lukiossa puhuttu varianttien välisistä eroista ja niiden käytöstä? Mitä muistat? *

30. Annan luvan käyttää ja käsitellä vastauksiani tutkielmassa. *

- Kyllä.
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