Typical errors in the use of regular and irregular English verbs by EFL learners

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Filozofski fakultet

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Vedrana Plazibat

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Mentor: izv. prof. dr. sc. Tanja Gradečak-Erdeljić

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Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department for English Language and Literature

Vedrana Plazibat

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Table of contents

1. Introduction 7

2.1. Vocabulary 8

2.2. Spelling 9

2.3. Pronunciation 11

2.4. Grammar 12

3. Teaching grammar 13

3.1. Teaching irregular verbs 14

3.2. Notion of different English language varieties while teaching 14

4. L2 learner's errors in the use of irregular verbs in British English and American English 15

4.1. Aims 15

4.2. Participants 15

4.3. Instrument 16

4.4. Results and discussion 17

5. Error analysis and questionnaire results 19

5.1. Theoretical background 19

5.2. Error analysis 20

6. Conclusion 24

7. Bibliography 27

Summary

The English language is widely spread and used by a large number of both native and non-native speakers. Due to the political influence of their speakers and pop culture, the two most dominant varieties nowadays are American and British English. There are several aspects through which the differences between the two varieties can be discussed: vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, and grammar. Vocabulary and pronunciation receive the most attention in empirically based studies, while grammar is rarely discussed in great detail.

When it comes to irregular verbs, it is thought that American speakers prefer –ed forms, while British English speakers opt for –t forms. To see which variety Croatian students are prone to, a research was conducted among high school students and college students. The research shows that the learners prefer American English. The results could give a better insight in the errors learners make while acquiring American and British irregular verb forms.

Keywords: American English, British English, error analysis, irregular verbs

1. Introduction

As a result of colonial expansion in the last four centuries, English is the most widely spoken language in the world. It is spoken today on all five continents and used by a large number of speakers, both native and non-native. We can distinguish several distinct varieties of English, including British English, American English, Australian English, Canadian English, Indian English, Philippine English, and Ugandan English. Due to the necessity of intercultural communication, the English language is heavily used as a lingua franca, with the emphasis on function rather than form. Since there are millions of non-native English speakers, International English could also be considered as a different variety of English. However, even though there is a plethora of the English language varieties, British and American English varieties are the most widely recognized. Differences including solely American and British English contrasts concerning phonological, orthographic, lexical and grammar varieties are the most abundant. The two major national varieties receive the most attention when it comes to academic research, as well.

Differences between American and British English can be seen in many aspects, and one of them is grammar. Among plenty of grammar differences, one of the prominent differences is the contrast between different forms of irregular verbs in the American and British English language. Past tense forms vary from one variety to the other, and that reflects on the usage of the irregular verb form as well. According to Quirk (as cited in Stein and Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 1994), American English speakers use –ed forms more often, while British English speakers prefer using –t forms for both past tense and past participle.

EFL students in Croatia are exposed to both American and British English varieties of irregular verbs. Their choice of irregular verb form is influenced by different media, the textbooks they use in school, and their teachers. Even though the differences between American and British English contrasts concerning pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling and grammar are mentioned in class, the students might not always be aware of the differences when using English in everyday life. In Croatia, most of the teachers consider both varieties correct during different examinations as long as the learners are consistent in their choice of either American or British variety of the English language.

However, most textbooks used in Croatian classrooms are British, teachers that speak British English are rare, and the media is saturated by American English. Since there is a clash between different varieties of the English language the EFL learners are exposed to, they are prone to making various mistakes when it comes to distinguishing American from British English. To determine which variety EFL learners in Croatia use more often and how consistent the learners are in their usage of one variety, a research was conducted. Learners were asked to solve a questionnaire in which they were supposed to choose the irregular verb form which they find more natural.

At the beginning of this paper, the main differences between American and British English considering pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling and grammar are presented. After that, there is a brief overview of the methods of teaching grammar and suggestions on how to present and deal with different English language varieties in the classroom.

The research conducted among the EFL learners in two high schools in Osijek, and among the English language college students in Osijek is described thoroughly in the second part of the paper. The last part is dedicated to a detailed analysis of the results given in the questionnaire used for the purpose of this research.

2. American and British English language in contrast

There are several aspects in which one can study American and British English language in contrast: vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, and grammar. Vocabulary and pronunciation receive the most attention in empirically based studies, while the issue of grammar differences between AmE and BrE is rarely explained in great detail. Even though AmE and BrE speakers are able to communicate among each other with no major difficulties, learners of EFL might be puzzled due to the different meaning of the same word in different English language varieties.

2.1. Vocabulary

When it comes to vocabulary differences, there is an abundance of examples concerning AmE and BrE varieties. As Hargraves (2003:12) suggests, there are three different situations in which different varieties of the English language can cause imperfect transatlantic communication:

1. an unfamiliar word appears, comfortably ensconced among know words but giving no clue to its meaning
2. a familiar word appears, used in a way that is clearly not familiar
3. a familiar word appears, used in a way that seems familiar but in fact means something completely different.

Furthermore, according to Swan (2005:40) sometimes the same word can have different meaning, e.g. *mad* = *crazy* (BrE); *mad* = *angry* (AmE). However, very often different words are used for the same idea, eg. *lorry* (BrE) = *truck* (AmE). Here are some other examples (definitions are taken from Oxford Online Dictionary):

(1) *biscuit*:

AmE: a small, soft round cake like a scone

BrE: a small baked unleavened cake, typically crisp, flat, and sweet

(2) *bill*:

AmE: a banknote

BrE: a printed or written statement of the money owed for goods or services.

(3) *sidewalk* (AmE) / *pavement* (BrE)

= a raised paved or asphalted path for pedestrians at the side of a road.

(4) *gas* (AmE) / *petrol* (BrE)

= a light fuel oil that is obtained by distilling petroleum and used in internal combustion engines

2.2. Spelling

As Venezky states, “American and British spelling practices derive from the same common stock, but have diverged since the American Revolution in a number of ways, none of which has affected the major patterns of the orthography.” (Venezky, 1999:23) It is also suggested that BrE tends to keep the original form of the word absorbed from other language, for example French, while AmE is prone to adapt the spelling so it reflects the way the words sound when they are spoken. Nevertheless, although both AmE and BrE versions are correct, it is important to stay consistent in one style throughout the same piece of writing.

Some of the ways in which AmE and BrE are different, according to Swan (2005:42) are the following:

- A number of words end in *–or* in AmE and *–our* in BrE

(5) *color* (AmE) – *colour* (BrE)

- Some words end in *–er* in AmE and *–re* in BrE

(6) *center* (AmE) – *centre* (BrE)

- Many verbs which end in *–ize* in AmE can be spelt in BrE with *–ize* or *–ise*

(7) *realize* (AmE) – *realize* / *realise* (BrE)

- Some words end in *–yze* in AmE and *–yse* in BrE

(8) *analyze* (AmE) – *analyse* (BrE)

- Words which end in *–ense* in AmE and *–ence* in BrE

(9) *defense* (AmE) – *defence* (BrE)

- Words with double vowels in AmE are spelt with *e* and in BrE with *ae* or *oe*

(10) *leukemia* (AmE) – *leukaemia* (BrE)

(11) *maneuver* (AmE) – *manoeuvre* (BrE)

- Verbs ending in a vowel plus *l* in BrE are spelt with double *l*

(12) *fueled* (AmE) – *fuelled* (BrE)

2.3. Pronunciation

The most prominent difference between AmE and BrE speakers is the pronunciation. Swan (2005:43) distinguishes the most important differences between AmE and BrE speech as following:

Some vowels are nasal in some varieties of AmE, but not in most British accents

BrE has one more vowel than AmE, the rounded short o /ɒ/, which is used in words *dog*, *got*, *off*, *stop*. AmE speakers pronounce these words either with /ɑː/, like the first vowel in *father*, or with /ɔː/, like the vowel in *caught*

Some words written with a + consonant, for example *fast* and *after*, have different pronunciations: with /ɑː/ in standard southern BrE, and with /æ/ in AmE

The vowel in the words *home*, *go*, *open* is pronounced with /əʊ/ in standard southern BrE, and /oʊ/ in AmE

In standard southern BrE, *r* is only pronounced before a vowel sound, while in AmE *r* is pronounced in all positions where it is written in a word. Therefore words like *car*, *turn*, *offer* sound very different on AmE and BrE speech

In AmE, *t* and *d* have a very light voiced pronunciation /d/ between vowels. Therefore words *writer* and *rider* might sound the same. In BrE they sound quite different: /ˈraɪtə(r)/ and (ˈraɪdə(r)/.

Words pronounced with /uː/ in most varieties of AmE have /juː/ in BrE. For example

(13) *enthusiastic* /ɪnˌθuːziæstɪk/ (AmE) /ɪnθjuːziæstɪk/ (BrE)

(14) *duty* /ˈduːti/ (AmE) /ˈdjuːti/ (BrE)

Word ending in unstressed *–ile*, for example *fertile*, *reptile*, *missile*, and *senile*, are pronounced with /aɪl/ in BrE, while some are pronounced with /l/ in AmE

(15) *fertile* /ˈfɜːrtl/ (AmE) /ˈfɜːtaɪl/ (BrE)

Some long word ending in *–ary*, *-ery* or *–ory* are pronounced with one more syllable in AmE

(16) *secretary* /ˈsekrəteri/ (AmE) /ˈsekrətri/ (BrE)

Words *borough* and *thorough* are pronounced differently

(17) *borough* /ˈbʌroʊ/ (AmE) /ˈbʌrə/ (BrE)

(18) *thorough* /ˈθʌroʊ/ (AmE) /ˈθʌrə/ (BrE)

Words borrowed from French are often stressed differently. The final vowel is usually stressed in AmE, but not in BrE.

(19) *ballet* /bæˈleɪ/ (AmE) /ˈbæleɪ/ (BrE)

2.4. Grammar

Even though most of the differences between AmE and BrE are those concerning vocabulary and pronunciation, one should not neglect the grammar aspect. There are some differences in the way grammar is used. Due to the influence of American pop culture and the Internet, there are many new ways of using grammar which BrE adopted from AmE. According to Swan (2005: 39) two different forms are often possible in one variety of English, while only one of the forms is possible or normal in the other variety. For example, Present Perfect is more common in BrE, while AmE speakers prefer Past Simple in these cases:

(20) He *just went* home. (AmE) / He *has just gone* home. (BrE)
(or He *has just gone* home.)

Furthermore, BrE speakers add the substitute verb do to short clauses with modal verbs, while AmE speakers prefer using just the modal verb:

(21) Will you buy it? I *may*. (AmE) / ……I *may do*. (BrE)

Next, AmE speakers use *real* instead of *really* before an adjective in informal spoken AmE.

(22) He looked at me *real strange*. (AmE) / He looked at me *really strangely*. (BrE)

One of the differences is also the usage of prepositions. For example, BrE speakers opt for 'at the weekend', while AmE speakers prefer 'on the weekend'.

(23) What are you doing *on the weekend*? (AmE) /…*at the weekend*? (BrE)

There are different forms of irregular verbs in the use of Past tenses. AmE speakers tend to use –ed forms, while BrE speakers use-t forms more often.

(24) *dreamed* (AmE) / *dreamt* (BrE)

3. Teaching grammar

It is not unusual for people to pick up a second language to which they are exposed to without any formal learning. However, even though they are able to talk and communicate without knowing grammar, awareness of particular forms helps learners to utter correct sentences and makes them improve their proficiency in speaking a particular language. Ur argues that "most people agree that knowledge of a language means, among other things, knowing its grammar; but this knowledge may be intuitive (as it is in out native language), and it is not necessarily true that grammatical structures need to be taught as such, or that formal rules need to be learned." (Ur, 1996: 76) Furthermore, when learners study grammar in a formal environment, it is important for the teacher to enable the learners to use the language outside the classroom. Their ability to construct grammatically correct sentences does not mean they are able to produce a real life discourse. Hence the teachers should strive to practice grammar with the learners so they could produce the structures correctly on their own. Ur (1996: 83) states that there are many examples of students who get full marks on all the grammar exercises and tests, but make mistakes in the same structures while speaking or writing. The teacher's job is to offer learners a variety of activities that familiarize them with different grammar structures in order to give the learners ability to practice both form and communicative meaning.

3.1. Teaching irregular verbs

Ur (1988:7) suggests an organization of stages which represents a general framework into which a variety of techniques fits. She offers four stages: presentation, isolation and explanation, practice and test.

The class should begin by presenting a new form within a text. For example, the teacher gives a few sentences as an example: *Yesterday I spoke to a friend. We went to the movies. We saw Eclipse. My friend ate popcorn. I drank soda.* The aim is to get the learners to perceive the structure and take it into the short-term memory. At the stage of isolation and explanation, the focus moves from the context to the grammatical item. In other words, the learners pay attention to the rules. They should understand that, in this case, the past form is the same for all persons. The learners adopt the form and the rules of usage from short-term to long-term memory through the most important stage – practice. Teachers should use a variety of activities to cause the learners to absorb the grammatical item thoroughly. For instance, after explaining the form and the rules of usage, the teacher can go around the class and make statements in Present Simple such as *I usually drink orange juice for breakfast*. The learner's task is to change it to Past Simple: *Yesterday you drank juice.* The last phase, testing, serves as an indicator to which extent the learner adopted the new forms and structures and the rules of their usage. Tests provide feedback to both the teacher and learners and show the teacher where to go next.

3.2. Notion of different English language varieties while teaching

While teaching, the teacher should remark that there are existing differences between English language varieties. Most textbooks refer to the two most dominant varieties, American and British English. To adequately induce the learner's awareness of the differences, the teacher should first be well aware of the grammatical, phonological, and lexical differences. The teacher should also emphasize that both varieties are correct, and that different does not mean wrong. The learners naturally opt for one version, whichever they find easier and clearer to understand, and the teacher's job is to initiate them to consistently use one variety.

When an American English speaker teaches with a British textbook, there could be a clash between the two varieties. As Maxwell and Clandfield[1] suggest, the teacher should always point out the difference during the class. The differences are not so numerous as to overload the students and often can be easily dealt with. For example, if the American English speaker teaches a lesson and comes across the phrase *at the weekend*, he or she should emphasize that in American English the term is *on the weekend.* Furthermore, the teacher should accept both versions when it comes to oral or written examination. However, the learners should try to remain consistent and stay in one convention while speaking or writing.

4. L2 learner's errors in the use of irregular verbs in British English and American English

4.1. Aims

The aims of this research were to find out which of the two varieties of English language learners in high schools and college in Croatia prefer, and how their choice reflects on the use of irregular verbs. This research also tried to explore the influence of different textbooks, media, and professors on the use of British and American English, concentrating on the usage of different forms of irregular verbs.

4.2. Participants

The research was conducted on a total number of 90 learners. There were 47 high school students, and 43 college students. The high school participants were 23 students of "I. gimnazija Osijek" and 24 students of "Tehnička škola i prirodoslovna gimnazija Ruđera Boškovića" in Osijek. They attended 4th grade grammar school program at the time of the research. There were 18 male and 29 female students. The majority of students were 18 years old, while some of them were 19 years old. Their grades varied from A to D. However, the majority had grades A or B, while a smaller fraction of students marked grades C and D. Most of the students have been learning English as a second language for 12 years, but the time period varies from 5 to 15 years. There were also 43 English language college students of Faculty of Humanities and Social

[1] http://www.onestopenglish.com/grammar/grammar-reference/american-english-vs-british-english/differences-in-american-and-british-english-grammar-article/152820.article

Sciences in Osijek. The students were in their third year in college at the time of the research. There were 16 male and 27 female students. They were aged from 20 to 24, with the majority of them being 21 years old. They had been learning English from 10 to 16 years. Their grades in English varied from A to B. Both groups of students had been learning and using English for a long period of time, so they had been well acquainted with irregular verbs through their schooling. The other reason for including both high school and college students in the research is to see whether college students are more aware of the differences in American and British English irregular verbs, and mistakes connected to irregular verbs in general.

4.3. Instrument

The instrument for this research was designed for the purpose of this study and it consisted of two parts. The first part was a survey which contained general information about students, such as number of years learning English, their grade, and the textbook they used in their English language classes. Furthermore, they had to estimate how often they were exposed to the English language through media. To do that, they had to circle numbers 1 to 3 (1 - rarely, 2 - sometimes, 3 - often). Students were also asked to declare through which media they are exposed to the English language the most. In addition, we asked them to define which variety of English, American or British, are they prone to using (Appendix 1).

The second part of the questionnaire was in a form of a test. It consisted of three grammar tasks concerning irregular verbs. In the first task there were ten sentences, and the students were supposed to choose between the two options of irregular verbs. One verb form was American and the other one was British English. The students had to choose the one that sounded more natural to them in each particular sentence. However, there were two examples of different form of verb *quit* and *wet* which are not typically learned in schools. We wanted to see to which extent these forms are adopted by the learners. The second task consisted of a short text. Every sentence had a blank space and the student's task was to implement each sentence with the correct form of the verb in the brackets. The verbs in the brackets were listed in their infinitive form. There were five irregular verbs that could show us their preference of either American or British English. However, there were four other verbs which could not show us their preference of American or British English used as distractors. In the third task the students were asked to

correct five sentences if necessary. Three sentences contained irregular verb form and they were there just to see whether they would correct a certain form of the verb, even though both American and British English forms were correct. There were also two sentences containing two forms of irregular verbs that are not yet used in schools. However, their usage is noticed in everyday language. We wanted to see how well adopted these new forms are among foreign language students in Croatia.

The topic had not been discussed previously with the students, so they were not aware of the fact that we were testing their preference on different forms of irregular verbs. Also, there was no time limit for the questionnaire.

The whole instrument used in this research can be found in Appendix 1.

4.4. Results and discussion

After the learners stated basic information in the questionnaire, such as their age, sex, years of studying English, and the textbook they used in their English classes, we wanted them to estimate which of the two different varieties of English language they believe they use more in their everyday life.

First, we touched upon the media they are exposed to on a daily basis. The learners had to evaluate the amount of exposure to the English language through media in general. The results show that 81 learners are often exposed to the English language through the media, while 9 learners said they are sometimes exposed to the English language through the media. The results reflect our overall exposure to various media, and the majority of it, besides our mother tongue, is in the English language. In addition, learners also had to state through which specific media they are exposed to the English language. The Internet, music and TV were offered, but they were prompted to write down their own examples of media which could influence their usage of the English language. The results show that they are exposed to the English language through the media to a large degree. They are influenced the most through the Internet and music. Suggestions which learners added to the list of media are video games, books, various phone applications, radio, and podcast. These suggestions are also indicators and certifiers that the Internet and technology development affect learners' usage of the English language to a large extent.

Next, we wanted to determine which variety of the English language learners prefer. They had to determine whether they prefer AmE or BrE on a scale from 1 to 5. The mean value of AmE is 3.94, while the mean value for the usage of BrE is 2.64. This can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Differences between the usage of AmE and BrE

Variable	Mean value
I use American English.	3.94
I use British English.	2.64

The preference of AmE was highly expected. The largest number of learners declared themselves as mostly AmE users, 60 learners showed their preference towards AmE. Only 3 learners showed their preference of BrE. However, 17 learners stated that they do not know which variety they use more often, while 10 learners consider they use both varieties equally. This is shown graphically in Figure 1.

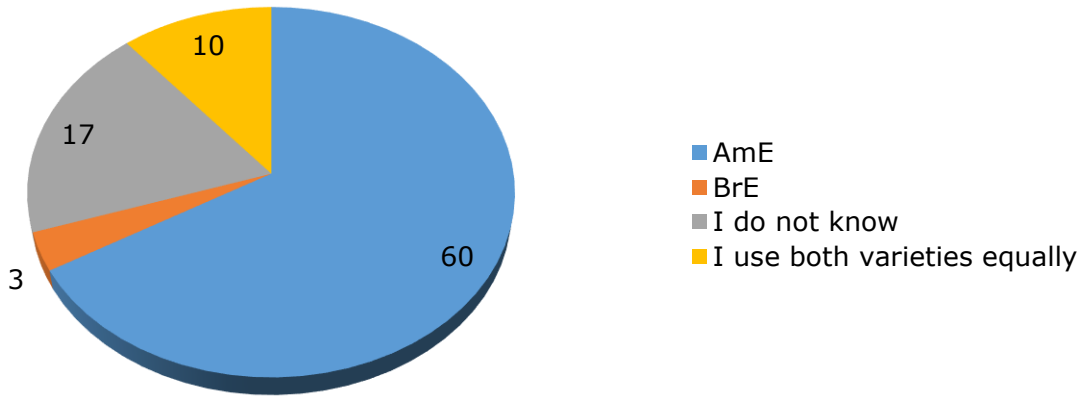

Figure 1: Learner's perception of their usage of different varieties of the English language

According to the questionnaire results, 60 learners used AmE irregular verb forms, while only 23 learners opted for BrE irregular verb forms. However, 7 learners used both AmE and BrE irregular verb forms in equal proportions. This is shown graphically in Figure 2.

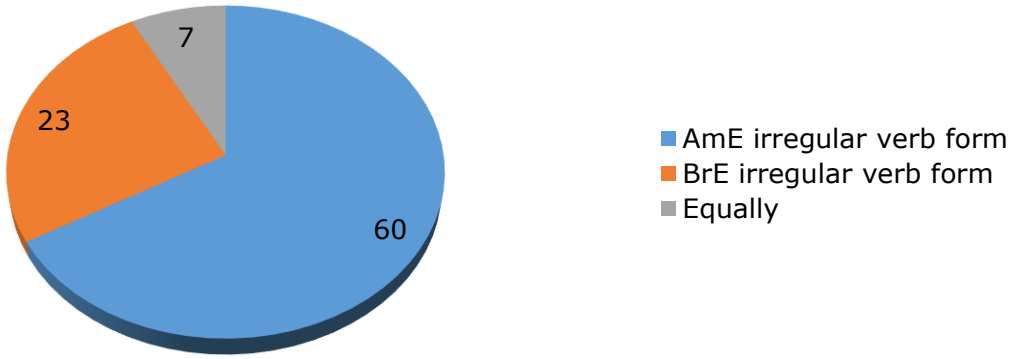

Figure 2: Learner's use of AmE and BrE irregular verb forms

Out of 60 learners who stated they used AmE, 41 used mostly AmE irregular verb forms. Out of those same 60 learners, 5 learners used BrE irregular verbs forms, while 6 learners used both forms equally. Next, there were 3 learners that declared themselves as mostly BrE users. All 3 of them turned out to prefer AmE irregular verb form in the questionnaire. Also, 10 learners thought they used both AmE and BrE equally. Out of these 10 learners, 7 learners used AmE the most, 2 learners showed their preference of BrE, and only 1 learner used both forms equally. There were 17 learners that did not know what variety they used. However, 9 learners used preferably AmE irregular verb forms. There were 8 learners which used BrE more often, and none of them used them equally. Even though the majority of learners used AmE irregular verb forms, the highest percentage of AmE usage in the questionnaire is 77%, which goes to show that they are still inconsistent in their choice of different English language varieties.

5. Error analysis and questionnaire results

5.1. Theoretical background

Error analysis in second language acquisition studies and determines the types and causes of different language errors. It was established in the sixties by Corder. The branch arose as a response to Contrastive Analysis Theory, which emphasized the influence of mother tongue as

the main source of errors in second language acquisition. However, Error analysis points out that the interference from the learner's mother tongue is not the only cause of errors. Richards (1971) classifies errors as following:

a) Overgeneralization, covering instances where the learners create a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of other structure of the target language

b) Ignorance of rule restriction, occurring as a result of failure to observe the restrictions or existing structures

c) Incomplete application of rules, arising when the learners fail to fully develop a certain structure required to produce acceptable sentences

d) False concepts hypothesized, deriving from faulty comprehension of distinctions in the target language

Error analysis focuses on learner's errors in order to predict the difficulties which could occur while learning a second language. To have a better insight in the learner's progress, it is important for the teacher to distinguish errors and mistakes. An error "arises as a result of a lack of knowledge." (Ellis, 2003: 51) Errors can also be described as "mistakes which individual students could not correct even if they were pointed out." (Edge, 1989:9) However, "a mistake occurs when learners fail to perform their competence." (Ellis, 2003: 51) As long as the mistakes are correctly identified, they can be excluded from the error analysis.

5.2. Error analysis

In the first task learners were asked to choose one of the two given verbs according to which one sounds more natural to them. The learners showed their preference of AmE in the first task, since in 7 out of 10 sentences the majority of students chose AmE irregular verb form, while in 3 sentences the learners opted for BrE irregular verb form.

Through high school and college, learners in Croatia are taught that the past tense irregular verb form of the verb *quit* remains the same as its base form. However, there are other acceptable forms of the verb used by BrE speakers. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995), the verb *quit* in Past tense and Past Participle can also be found as *quitted* in BrE.

In addition, Swan (2005: 286) claims that *quit* is usually irregular in AmE. Therefore, we wanted to test how acquainted the learners are to the other form of the verb. To see to which extent the learners are aware of the other form, in the first task there were two sentences in which the learners had to choose between the form *quit* or *quitted* and *wet* or *wetted*. Their task was to implement one of the two different forms in the sentence. The results show that 13 out of 90 learners altogether chose the form *quitted* over *quit*, while 25 learners chose the form *wetted* over *wet*. However, only 1 college student chose *quitted* over *quit*, while 10 college students chose *wetted* over *wet*. This shows that college students are less prone to the forms which were not learnt in school. However, it is unlikely for the high school learners to be aware of the fact that both forms can be used in different varieties.

In the second task the learners had to fill in the gaps with the appropriate verb form. There were 4 verbs used as a distraction. In other words, 4 verbs were not irregular verb forms which could indicate their preference of AmE or BrE version of the English language. In this task, 3 irregular verb forms were written majorly in BrE forms, while 2 of them were preferably written in AmE form.

This task unexpectedly revealed that the learners did not completely adopt the irregular verb forms in general. The learner's answers pointed out a lot of errors and most of them were spelling errors, or they offered a completely incorrect form of the irregular verb. The list of errors is presented in Table 2.

In the third task the learners were asked to correct 5 sentences, if necessary. The first 3 sentences contained AmE or BrE form of the verb. In the two sentences the majority of the learners opted for AmE irregular verb forms. Only 1 sentence showed the learner's preference of the BrE irregular verb form. However, this task also indicated some errors which are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Error analysis

Identification of error	Definition and classification of error	Explanation of rule

spot 1x	Word class: verb Incorrect verb form	Both past tense and past participle forms of the verb spit are *spat* (BmE) or *spit* (AmE).
spitted 13x	Word class: verb Incorrect irregular verb form	Both past tense and past participle forms of the verb spit are *spat* (BmE) or *spit* (AmE).
doved 1x	Word class: verb Incorrect irregular verb form	Both past tense and past participle forms of the verb dive are *dived*, and *dove* (AmE).
lept 2x	Word class: verb Incorrect spelling, omission of the letter *a*	The past tense and past participle form of the verb leap are *leapt* and *leaped* (AmE).
spoilled 2x	Word class: verb Incorrect spelling, unnecessary insertion of double *l*	Both past tense and past participle form of the verb spoil are *spoilt* (BrE), or *spoiled* (AmE).
rid 1x	Word class: verb Incorrect form of the verb	The past tense form of the verb ride is *rode*, and past participle from of the verb ride is *ridden*.
riden 1x	Word class: verb Incorrect spelling, Omission of the letter *d*	The correct past participle form of the verb ride is *ridden*.
rided 3x	Word class: verb Incorrect verb form	The correct past tense form of the verb ride is *rode*, and past participle verb form is *ridden*.
smeled 1x	Word class: verb Incorrect spelling, Omission of the letter *l*	The correct AmE irregular verb form of the verb smell is *smelled*.
spout 1x	Word class: verb Incorrect verb form	Both past tense and past participle form of the verb spit are *spat* and *spit* (AmE).
misspellt 9x	Word class: verb Incorrect spelling, unnecessary insertion of double *l*	The correct BrE irregular verb form of the verb misspell is *misspelt*.
mispelled 2x	Word class: verb Incorrect spelling, omission of the letter *s*	The correct AmE irregular verb form of the verb misspell is *misspelled*.

misspeled 1x	Word class: verb Incorrect spelling, omission of the letter *l*	The correct AmE irregular verb form of the verb misspell is *misspelled*.
rade 1x	Word class: verb Incorrect verb form	The correct past tense verb form of the verb ride is *rode*.
spited 2x	Word class: verb Incorrect verb form	Both past tense and past participle forms of the verb spit are *spat* and *spit* (AmE).
spoilted 1x	Word class: verb Incorrect verb form	Both past tense and past participle forms of the verb spoil are *spoilt* (BrE) and *spoiled* (AmE).
spoilen 1x	Word class: verb Incorrect verb form	Both past tense and past participle forms of the verb spoil are *spoilt* (BrE) and *spoiled* (AmE).

The last two sentences in the third task contained verbs *broadcasted* and *bursted*. According to irregular verb lists, these forms are not learned in school or college, but the modern media shows their frequent appearance. The verb *broadcasted* seems to be showing in the US recently, while *bursted* is thought to be an old verb form which could be used informally. We wanted to check to which extent it is adopted among Croatian English language learners. The research shows that 21 learners corrected the verb form *broadcasted*, while 17 learners corrected the verb *bursted.* Furthermore, we noticed that 19 out of 21 learners which corrected *broadcasted*, and 16 out of 17 learners which corrected *bursted* were the English language college students. Considering that these were the last two sentences in the questionnaire, it is highly possible that high school learners did not pay attention to the verb form, rather than them not?? being acquainted to that particular verb form. It is highly doubtful that both high school and college learners would use the forms that were not taught during their formal education.

The overall questionnaire results show that EFL in Croatia use AmE irregular verb forms more frequently. According to the irregular verb forms the learners offered, 61% of them chose AmE

verb forms more frequently, while 39% opted for Bre irregular verb forms. This is shown graphically in Figure 3.

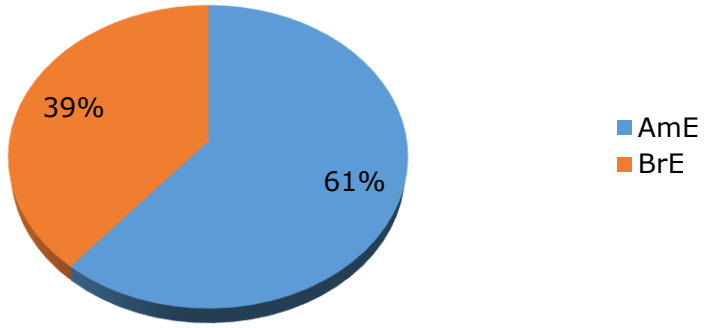

Figure 3: The questionnaire results

Even though they use AmE in higher percentage, the results show that the learners are still inconsistent in their choice of different English language variations. Every single learner used a mixture of both versions, and none of the individual questionnaires examined stood out as being significantly consistent in their choices of irregular verb forms.

6. Conclusion

The majority of the participants declared as AmE users, and the research confirmed that the learners in Croatia opt for AmE irregular verb form more often than for BrE irregular verb form. The research also revealed a great influence of the media on the Croatian learners. The Internet and TV have the most impact on the Croatian students, and majority of content presented to them through the media is AmE. Error analysis of the questionnaire results revealed they still struggle with the irregular verb forms. They made errors such as writing a completely wrong irregular verb form, they would omit a double letter, or they would put double letters where they are not needed. However, the study also shows that the English language college students made fewer errors than high school students. Next, only a small amount of learners chose the forms *quitted* and *wetted*, which are not typically taught in schools. Also, a small fraction of learners corrected verb *broadcasted* and *bursted*. We believe that this might not be due to their awareness of the different forms, but rather the fact that it was the last task, and they were not paying enough attention. Furthermore, a larger amount of college students corrected the two verbs. In general,

both groups of learners most frequently use the verb forms they are familiarized with through their formal education. We believe that their choice of the other form of the verb could be considered more likely as an error than as an indicator of their awareness of other forms, since they are not taught in school and the majority of high school learners opted for them. In addition, the research also showed that learners are generally inconsistent in their choice of a particular variety. However, during the class the teachers should always emphasize that both varieties are correct, but it is important for the learners to stay in one convention.

Sažetak

Engleski jezik široko je rasprostranjen i koristi ga veliki broj izvornih ali i neizvornih govornika. Zbog političkog utjecaja i pop kulture, u današnje vrijeme najdominantnije varijante engleskog jezika su američka i britanska. Postoji nekoliko aspekata kroz koje se mogu promatrati njihove razlike: vokabular, pravopis, izgovor i gramatika. U dosadašnjim istraživanjima najviše se važnosti pridaje vokabularu i izgovoru, dok se o gramatici rijetko piše.

Kada govorimo o nepravilnim glagolima, u školama se uči da govornici američkog engleskog koriste –ed nastavak, dok govornici britanskog engleskog koriste –t nastavak. Kako bismo provjerili kojoj su verziji engleskoj jezika hrvatski učenici više skloni, provelo se istraživanje u kojem su sudjelovali maturanti dviju gimnazija i studenti engleskog jezika. Istraživanje je pokazalo da obje grupe češće koriste američki engleski. Rezultati istraživanja mogu pružiti učiteljima bolji uvid u pogreške koje učenici rade tijekom usvajanja američkih i britanskih nepravilnih glagola.

Ključne riječi: američki engleski, britanski engleski, analiza pogrešaka, nepravilni glagoli

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Appendix 1

Draga kolegice/Dragi kolega!

Pred Vama se nalazi upitnik koji je dio istraživanja koje provodim u svrhu izrade diplomskog rada.

Upitnik je anoniman.

Molim Vas da popunite cijeli upitnik.

Hvala na sudjelovanju!

Spol: ___ Dob: ___

Koliko godina učiš engleski jezik? (*upisati broj godina*) ___

Ocjena iz engleskog jezika u srednjoj školi: ___

Koji udžbenik ste koristili u nastavi engleskog jezika? _____

Na sljedeće pitanje odgovori zaokruživanjem broja uz tvrdnju koja se odnosi na tebe.

1 – rijetko 2 – ponekad 3 - često

Koliko si često izložen/a engleskom jeziku putem medija? 1 2 3

Na sljedeće pitanje odgovori upisivanjem broja tvrdnje koja se odnosi na tebe na za to predviđeno mjesto.

1 – rijetko 2 – ponekad 3 - često

Putem kojih medija si izložen/a engleskom jeziku?

TV ___

Glazba ___

Internet ___

Nešto drugo? (*upisati što*) _____

Na sljedeća pitanja odgovori zaokruživanjem broja ispred tvrdnje koja se odnosi na tebe.

1 – nikada 2 – u principu ne 3 – ne znam/svejedno mi je 4 – većinom da 5 - uvijek

Koristim američki engleski.	1	2	3	4	5
Koristim britanski engleski.	1	2	3	4	5

1. **Choose the answer which sounds more natural.**

1. He'd _____ many times about his sister and his family, but she'd never talked to him directly.
   a) dreamt b) dreamed
2. He _____ the word correctly.
   a) spelled b) spelt
3. They _____ the tunnel wide open.
   a) bust b) busted
4. He____ back in his chair.
   a) leaned b) leant
5. Tom _____down and prayed.
   a) knelt b) kneeled
6. The new baby _____.
   a) thrived b) throve
7. He _____ a finger and flicked through the pages.
   a) wet b) wetted
8. She at once _____ smoking.
   a) quitted b) quit
9. I_____ out of bed.
   a) sprang b) sprung
10. A fire _____ and crackled cheerfully in the grate.
    a) burned b) burnt

2. **Fill in the gaps with the appropriate form of the verbs in the brackets.**

Dear mom,

Camp has _____(be) a blast! This week, I've _____(make) some cool crafts, _____ (ride) a horse, and _____ (dive) in the ocean. We've _____(get) to see all kinds of snakes and bugs, and I paid Nathan 5 dollars to eat a spider. Tom told us that he won't be able to eat a spider but I've_____(prove) him wrong! However, the spider didn't taste good so he _____(spit) it out. Let me know whether you got my last letter since I think I've _____(misspell) the address. Sorry!

I miss you and Dan, but I've _____(have) so much fun.

Love,

Adam

3. **Correct the sentence if you think it is necessary.**

1. I leaped across the doorstep.

2. Her children are spoilt.

3. It smelt like cough medicine.

4. The announcement was broadcasted live.

5. We inflated dozens of balloons and only one bursted.