Divided by a Common Language: A Survey-Based Analysis of the Linguistic Norm in the EFL Classroom in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation

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Divided by a Common Language

A Survey-Based Analysis of the Linguistic Norm in the EFL Classroom in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation

Mémoire présenté par **Nicolas SCHROYEN** en vue de l'obtention du grade de Master en langues et lettres modernes, orientation germaniques, à finalité didactique

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

AmE	American English
BrE	British English
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMT	English as a Mother Tongue
ESL	English as a Second Language
FLTM	Foreign Language Teaching Method
GA	General American
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
RP	Received Pronunciation
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
US(A)	United States of America
WBE	Wallonie-Bruxelles Enseignement
WBF	Wallonia-Brussels Federation

Periods of the English language

OE	Old English
ME	Middle English
EModE	Early Modern English
PDE	Present-day English

1　Introduction

1.1　Background and research motivation

> *'We have really everything in common with America nowadays,*
> *except, of course, language'* – Oscar Wilde (1887)

English is globally well-known as the international *lingua franca*, with more second-language speakers than native speakers. Found all over the world, the English language has several regional varieties, not all of which are equally widespread. In the learning of English as a foreign language (EFL), native norms have long been emphasised as the reference norm with which learners should comply. The scientific literature shows that British English (BrE) has long been preferred in European EFL instruction as reference norm (Algeo 2006, Trudgill & Hannah 2008, Nicaise 2015, Gonçalves et al 2017, Gilquin 2018). However, due to globalisation and the development of new technologies, the classroom is no longer the only place for pupils to learn languages and they are increasingly confronted with more varieties on the Internet than in the classroom, in particular when it comes to American English (AmE).

Apart from the fact that this subject has not been widely covered in scientific literature in French-speaking Belgium, this topic struck me as important to address because of my personal experience as a learner of English. I have been confronted with teachers who were eminently forthcoming about which variety of English they expected. Moreover, they would not hesitate to correct pupils or students by asking them to speak the same variety of English as they did, namely BrE most of the time. The employed variety really did seem to be considered as a criterion of language correctness. Once I began my training to become an English teacher, I became aware that these expectations did not always stem from the legal documents on the matter, but from the teacher' personal preferences, and was largely based on how they learned English themselves and the preconceived assumptions that they had as a consequence. It therefore seemed relevant to analyse where the EFL norm stands in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (WBF). Is the linguistic norm explicit or implicit? Are teachers at liberty to choose the variety they want to teach? Which variety is currently preferred?

1.2　Aim and research questions

This dissertation analyses this point, first of all, through an in-depth reading of the legal documents on the matter, i.e. the frameworks of reference and curricula in force in the WBF, supplemented by an analysis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

(CEFR), which influenced the rewriting of the latest legal texts in the WBF. The purpose of this analysis is to clarify teacher's rights and duties in respect of which variety or varieties to teach in the EFL classroom. Then, a survey-based analysis will assess teachers 'norm by analysing their attitudes, beliefs, and habits regarding BrE and AmE in EFL instruction. The language norm can be assumed to function on a more global level than each individual taken separately. For this reason, the final part presents interviews that have been conducted with what will be called 'legitimising authorities of EFL in the WBF', that is, people who may exert influence on the variety of English used and learned by current and prospective English teachers. For the purpose of this dissertation, interviews were conducted with inspectors, educational advisors, English professors or lecturers in tertiary education for future English teachers and professors or lecturers in the field of foreign language didactics.

This dissertation therefore aims to analyse whether there is a linguistic norm in the teaching of EFL in the WBF. Aware of the complexity that this single research question implied, I took the decision to simplify it by subdividing it into six research questions (see Table 1.1 below) which, if not comprehensive, made it possible to assess the state of the linguistic norm in the WBF and the attitudes displayed towards the different varieties of English involved in the analysis.

Table 1.1 – Research questions

Q_1	Is there a language norm among (future) secondary English teachers in the WBF? If so, towards which variety of English?
Q_2	What attitudes do teachers display towards pupils using a variety different from the one they use?
Q_3	Do the legal requirements and curricula show a preference for a specific variety?
Q_4	What influence do the legal requirements and curricula for English as a foreign language in the WBF have on the language norm?
Q_5	What place does the CEFR give to linguistic variation in the teaching of foreign languages?
Q_6	Is there an expected linguistic standard among the legitimising authorities for English as a foreign language in the WBF (inspectors, educational advisors, experts of TEFL didactics, English professors)? If so, towards which variety of English?

Each research question has been assigned hypotheses in the chapter that provides an answer to it, namely Chapter 3 for Q_3 and Q_5, Chapter 4 for Q_1, Q_2 and Q_4 and Chapter 5 for Q_6. This dissertation focuses primarily on teachers as it is assumed that their beliefs and attitudes would provide the most significant evidence of the presence of a language norm. The survey results, upon analysis, will answer research questions 1, 2, and 4. Research questions 3 and 5 will then be followed by an investigation of the legal requirements and curricula applicable in the WBF, as well as the CEFR, in order to determine the place of the teaching of various versions of

English laid out in these documents. Finally, where the quantitative analysis of the survey only permitted a partial answer to the question, it has been complemented by qualitative research through interviewing legitimising authorities of EFL in the WBF. Both quantitative and qualitative research was thought to be necessary to gain a full picture of the situation.

1.3   Scope of the research

As previously mentioned, the research objective appears ambitious, requiring a number of analyses to obtain a picture of the situation that is as complete as possible. However, in view of the limited framework of this dissertation, it also seemed appropriate to establish some guidelines as to what would be covered and what would be deliberately omitted thereby reducing the scope of the research to what was deemed essential.

First of all, where a large amount of research has been carried out on English as a second language (ESL), this dissertation focuses on EFL due to the fact that English is not an official language in Belgium. Hence, concentrating on the particularities related to ESL would not be relevant to address the language norm in French-speaking Belgium.

Although English is now a pluricentric language, meaning that it has several national standards and is more often referred to as *several Englishes*, this dissertation will solely focus on AmE and BrE for various reasons. First, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 150) argue that these two varieties 'represent a large proportion of all native speakers of English', amounting to an estimated 84 per cent (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 150) or 70 per cent, based on more recent estimates (Crystal 2019: 112). Secondly, these two forms are historically recognised as the basis of world English and new Englishes are derived from either the English or American branch (Svartvik & Leech 2006; see Appendix 2). Thirdly, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 150) note that '[t]hroughout the 20th century, AmE and BrE provided the chief native-speaker models which non-native-speaking teachers of English aimed to instil'.

The research component of this dissertation consists of quantitative research, via a survey, and qualitative research, by means of interviews. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that we are proceeding in both cases with declarative data. As such, response biases may arise, as we rely on the participants 'responses without ascertaining whether what they report corresponds to what they actually teach or believe. Therefore, this practical component does not include an analysis of teacher practice in the classroom. Potential biases related to the survey methodology are developed further in Section 4.3.1.4.

Finally, without denying the existence of sub-standard varieties of the language, this dissertation will focus for the most part on the American and British national standards of

English, as they are the most frequently employed and learned in education (see Section 2.1.2). This implies recognising that the standard language is often perceived as an ideal to be achieved and is not necessarily attainable or constantly used by the entire population, even native speakers. It should also be acknowledged that, although standard language predominates in formal contexts, it would be an oversimplification to believe that it has sole influence in a country: within each of these national dialects, there are regional dialects and sociolects, i.e. lects spoken by certain social groups (Murphy 2018: 24). Besides, Murphy (2018: 24) also points out that each individual has their own idiolect, which implies that words may originate in the United States or Britain without necessarily meaning that everyone in those regions will use them. Bryson (2009: 94) concurs with this view, stating that the presence of infinite idiolects can explain the variation in vocabulary and pronunciation that can be found within a country. Therefore, the terms *American English* (AmE) and *British English* (BrE)[1] have been used to refer to the written standard forms and US and UK to refer to their respective standard pronunciation.

1.4 Approach

This dissertation is structured as follows. As a first step, a literature review in Chapter 2 has three objectives: to define key concepts relevant to this dissertation, notably linguistic norm in the EFL context, to provide a historical overview of English and the emergence of BrE and AmE, and to give an overview of the foreign language teaching methods that have been used in Belgium over the last 250 years. Chapter 3 investigates the legal requirements and curricula in force in the WBF, as well as the CEFR, in order to determine whether there are any explicit rules regarding a preferred variety of the language taught. Chapter 4 subsequently examines whether there is an implicit linguistic norm among current and prospective English teachers in the WBF by means of a sociolinguistic survey. This chapter also outlines the methodology used for this purpose and provides a commentary on the results obtained. Chapter 5 constitutes the qualitative part of this research and presents the interviews conducted with legitimising authorities of EFL in the WBF. Finally, the dissertation reaches its conclusion in Chapter 6 when an answer to the main research question is presented.

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[1] Despite Murphy (2016) pointing out that these labels can be problematic as *British* and *American* can refer to multiple realities, this dissertation will still use them to respectively refer to *the English of the United Kingdom* and *the English of the United States*.

2 Literature Review

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework of the main subject of this work. Subsequent use of the insights gained from the scientific literature will help to define the hypotheses of the research in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. A first section provides a definition to the key linguistic terms that is referred to in this research. This section focuses on defining the term *linguistic norm*, as well as other closely related notions: *standard English*, *prescriptivism* vs *descriptivism* and *Americanisation*. The second part of this chapter gives a historical overview of the development of English and its two main variants that are of interest to us in this work, BrE and AmE. Special attention will be paid to the development of English as a world language, its standardisation and codification in the UK and the US, and the historical and attitudinal reasons for the greater or lesser divergence between BrE and AmE. The second section also takes a look at the role played by the two nations in the export of EFL and, finally, at the future of English and the impact that EFL speakers might have on it as the English language is becoming a worldwide lingua franca. The third and last section of this chapter presents the foreign language teaching methods and approaches which have been used for the last 250 years in EFL instruction in Belgium.

2.1 Defining key terms

2.1.1 *Linguistic norm*

The concept of norm is central in the problematics of this dissertation. When attempting to investigate the notion of norm in linguistics, Barsch (1982: 55) observes that, with the exception of a few authors, this concept is not widely used in linguistics: it is not present in theoretical linguistics, but is more common in borderline fields such as ethnolinguistics, sociolinguistics and stylistics, i.e. fields concerned with language use. Yet, her account of the presence of *norm* in traditional linguistics and in European structuralism and functionalism establishes that there is no consensus on the term. The aim of this first section is therefore to contrast several definitions of *norm* (in its linguistic sense), to draw up their invariables, and to propose an operational definition of *linguistic norm* as it has been considered throughout this dissertation.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), the term *norm* has five general-use definitions. Of these five definitions, only one seems significantly related to linguistics (emphasis mine):

> 1b. A <u>standard</u> or <u>pattern</u> of **social behaviour** that is <u>accepted</u> in or <u>expected</u> of a group. Usually in *plural*. Cf. *group norm*
>
> *- OED*, s.v. 'norm'

Other dictionaries also provide a definition for the concept (emphasis mine):

> Norm: **Behaviour** that is <u>typical</u> or <u>expected</u>. See also NORMATIVE RULE
>
> *- The Cambridge Dictionary of Linguistics*, s.v. 'norm' (Brown & Miller 2014)

> Norm: [1810s: from Latin *norma* a rule, pattern, carpenter's square]. A <u>standard</u>, <u>model</u>, or <u>average</u>, often used of **social behaviour** and <u>consensus</u> in the <u>*use of a language*</u>: *deviations from the norm[2]; linguistic norms[3]*. See DEVIANT, NORMATIVE, REFERENCE NORM, REGULAR. Compare CANON, MODEL, RULE, STANDARD. [LANGUAGE, USAGE]
>
> *- The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, s.v. 'norm' (McArthur 1992: 704)

> Reference norm: [Late 20c]. A <u>model</u> for the <u>*use of language*</u>, such as a <u>*standard variety*</u>. In global terms, users of English tend to follow one of two reference norms: Filipinos, for example, have AmE as their reference norm, while Indians tend to follow BrE. See AMERICAN ENGLISH AND BRITISH ENGLISH, NORM, RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION, STANDARD. [LANGUAGE, REFERENCE]
>
> *- ibid.*, s.v. 'reference norm' (McArthur 1992: 856)

> Norm: <u>AVERAGE</u>, such as: a <u>pattern</u> or <u>trait</u> taken to be <u>typical</u> in the **behaviour** of a **social** group
>
> *- Merriam-Webster*, s.v. 'norm'

Several invariables can be identified in the above definitions of the norm (see emphasis in the definitions).

First of all, the norm is characterised as a standard, a pattern, a model or an average. This is interesting because several of these terms do not have the same connotation. While *pattern* and *model* can be considered as synonymous[4], the meaning of *standard* is more ambiguous, as it can imply correctness and excellence[5] or be understood as a criterion, a means of comparison[6]. As for *average*, the term does not express a level of excellence such as *pattern*, *model* or *standard* might do, but simply reflects the linguistic reality as experienced by authentic speakers. Therefore, depending on the meaning attributed to those terms, the norm can be perceived as prescriptive or descriptive[7].

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[2] McArthur's emphasis

[3] Idem

[4] This is true whether one considers them in the sense of 'an example of particular excellence […] worthy of copying' (*OED*, s.v. 'pattern') or in the sense of '[a] simplified or idealized description or conception of a particular system, situation, or process, […] that is put forward as a basis for theoretical or empirical understanding, or for calculations, predictions, etc.; a conceptual or mental representation of something' (*OED*, s.v. 'model').

[5] Taking into consideration the following sense of *standard* (*OED*): '10a. (Originally *fig.* from 9.) An authoritative or recognized exemplar of correctness, perfection, or some definite degree of any quality'.

[6] If we consider the following sense of *standard* (*OED*): '10b. A rule, principle, or means of judgement or estimation; a criterion, measure'.

[7] The difference between *prescriptivism* and *descriptivism* will be discussed in Section 2.1.3

Then, the object of this norm is social behaviour with regard to the use of language, that is, behaviour '[d]eveloping from or involving the relationships between human beings or social groups that characterize life in society' (*OED*, s.v. 'social'). This implies that the norm never relates to a single individual, but to a collective, and that it is constructed through interaction. In this regard, Bös & Claridge (2019: 1) consider languages to be 'linguistic traditions of an external historicity (in the case of individuals languages) and an internal historicity (on the level of varieties within a particular language)'. They then draw on Koch (1988: 330, in Bös & Claridge 2019: 1) to indicate that '[t]hese traditions, or language norms, [...] are socio-historically determined and of limited validity'. In a similar vein, Bartsch (1992: 52) found that the *norm* has often been considered in linguistics as an intermediary between *system*, i.e. the language, and *speech*, i.e. the concrete utterances produced by means of the system[8]. Coseriu (1970, in Bartsch 1992: 52) proposed a tripartition *System-Norm-Speech*, where the norm is seen as a realisation of the system and the speech as a realisation of the norm:

> Thus, the *norm* consists of a selection from the possible *patterns and structures that are compatible with the system*[9]. The norm, thus, is a restriction on these patterns, while the system of the language also allows for more and other patterns. (Bartsch 1992: 52)

Hence, Coseriu (1970, in Bartsch 1992: 52) regards the norm as a 'historically developed restriction on the possibilities which the system of a language permits'. This implies that, '[a]s far as the system is concerned, we could express ourselves in many more ways, but the norm, based on the previously used expressions, restricts this freedom to that which is "normal"' (Bartsch 1992: 52). Coseriu's tripartition is relevant to foreign language teaching because the notions 'system of a language L' and 'competence of L' are not identical, Bartsch (1992: 53) argues:

> A speaker who "knows" only the system of a language but not the norm, would not be able to speak correctly. To be competent in a language L is to "know", or at least to be able to comply to the norm of L. (Bartsch 1992: 53)

According to Bartsch (1992), the norm is therefore inseparable from the actual use of the language. Furthermore, Havránek (1964, in Bartsch 1992: 52), a linguist of the Prague school, 'distinguishes between codification of the norm of a language from the norm of the language itself': he believes that every socially or geographically defined linguistic community has its own language norm, whether it be codified or not.

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[8] This view is shared by Hjelmslev (1942) and Coseriu (1970) (Bartsch 1992).
[9] Bartsch's emphasis

Finally, this social behaviour is characterised as accepted, expected, typical, and/or the result of a consensus. This is in line with Bartsch's ideas (1992: 64), who considers that the norm only has an effective status once the population has internalised it, 'i.e. uses it, without external pressure, as a guide for behavior and correction'. Moreover, Bartsch (1992: 74) also considers the norm as the product of two factors: correctness and acceptability. Whereas correctness focuses on the adequacy of the norm to the language system, acceptability is seen as 'correctness with respect to the highest norm of communication', that is, mutual understanding (Bartsch 1992: 73–75). Hence, '[a]cceptability of an utterance […] is not in all cases identical with *linguistic correctness*[10] or grammaticality of the utterance, i.e. correctness with respect to the specific linguistic norms of gestalt and use of expressions' (Bartsch 1992: 75).

Now that the necessary invariables have been drawn up from the definitions, a generic definition of *linguistic norm* can be put forward:

> The *linguistic norm* is a pattern, an average of accepted and expected social behaviour in the use of language. It is socio-historically determined and of limited validity. It needs to be complied with in order to be competent in a language L.

On the basis of this generic definition, several contextual elements of EFL in the WBF need to be taken into account in order to suggest the following operational definition of the *EFL linguistic norm in the WBF*:

> The *EFL linguistic norm in the WBF* is a pattern, an average of accepted and expected social behaviour in the use of standard language (especially a national variety) in EFL instruction in the WBF. It has developed historically on the basis of native standards[11] and can be either explicit (i.e. prescribed by the legal requirements in force in the WBF) or implicit (i.e. negotiated through interaction and thus evolving).

This definition serves as a basis for investigating the *explicit* (in Chapter 3) and *implicit* (in Chapters 4 and 5) linguistic norm of EFL in the WBF. In the remainder of this section, other key terms related to the subject of the research are defined, namely what the *standard language* represents, the concepts of *prescriptivism* and *descriptivism* and the phenomenon of *Americanisation*.

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[10] Bartsch's emphasis
[11] See Kachru's (1985, in Crystal 2019) typology in Section 2.2.1, where the Expanding Circle is regarded as 'norm-dependent' on the Inner Circle.

2.1.2   Standard English

In the introduction to their book *The Standard Language: The Widening Debate*, Bex & Watts (1999: 6) state that the standard language is nowadays considered as 'the prestige variety', in the sense that 'it is accorded a degree of respect within society as a whole'. This respect can be manifested in a number of ways: '[e]ither people orient to the prestige variety in given situations or they are encouraged to use it by those who are seen as possessing authority', notably educational institutions, which typically promulgate descriptive norms of correctness (Bex & Watts 1999: 5, 7). As a prestige variety, standard language is 'mainly taught in schools, that is used in published books and in public media generally' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 46) and is often identified with written forms (Bex & Watts 1999: 6). Quirck & Stein (1990: 123, in Svartvik & Leech 2006: 191) describe Standard English as 'that kind of English which draws least attention to itself over the widest area and through the widest ranges of usage'[12]. It 'emerged slowly over a period of some three-and-a-half centuries, as a result of convergence of language habits towards a variety associated with the power and prestige of England's capital'[13] (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 46).

There may be some misconceptions surrounding Standard English, not least because of the adjective *standard*, which, according to Svartvik & Leech (2006: 195), could convey a certain monolithism[14], that is, that Standard English would not allow variation. Svartvik & Leech (2006: 195, 205) take a different view and believe that there is a range of language registers (from formal to colloquial) which 'accommodates a wealth of variation'. In addition, Standard English is also 'popularly considered to be the "correct" form of the language' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 191), not taking into account that the standard language is not the whole language, but solely 'the visible tip of an island, most of which (a wealth of dialect variation) lies largely out of sight beneath the sea' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 46). Moreover, Bex & Watts (1999: 9) highlight that Standard English is 'a social myth constructed for ideological purposes': the standard language is therefore not a reality for all speakers of the language, but something towards which people strive for a more global communication purpose.

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[12] However, Bex & Watts (1999: 6) state that there is 'no general consensus' on a definition for Standard English
[13] The standardisation of the English language will be further discussed in Section 2.2.2.
[14] Svartvik & Leech (2006: 195) substantiate this claim by means of collocations in which *standard* is used in the sense of 'default': *standard equipment, standard format, standard procedure*.

2.1.3 Prescriptivism and descriptivism

In linguistics, the concepts of *prescriptivism* and *descriptivism* are the flip sides of the same coin, that is, they have opposing ideologies on how to consider the different forms of one language. On the one hand, prescriptivists proceed with the assumption that 'there are certain forms which are correct because they best express the meanings intended': these forms are considered to be the 'best' English and ought to be encouraged (Bex & Watts 1999: 7). Bex & Watts (1999: 7) also put forward that prescriptivists tend to 'blur the distinction between syntax, meaning and social identity', that is, they believe that 'deviation from "correct" usage leads to imprecision of meaning which, in turn, leads to social chaos'. Prescriptivist ideology 'equates language use with social behaviour and correct usage with good citizenship' and the standard forms are believed to embody correctness (Bex & Watts 1999). On the other hand, descriptivists are more circumspect in this respect: they recognise that there are prestigious forms, but they also recognise that there is variation in the standard language (Bex & Watts 1999: 8). Moreover, 'like prescriptivists, they tend to equate these standard forms with "educated usage"' (Bex & Watts 1999: 8).

Whereas prescriptivism peaked in the 18th century, which is referred to as the 'high noon of prescriptivism'[15] (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 209), the academic field of linguistics seems to have been emphasising descriptivism as its methodological backbone since then. Yet, Bex & Watts (1999: 6–7) do not consider present-day linguistics to be devoid of prescriptivism:

> Quite clearly, not all writing is in the standard language, and yet to discriminate between standard and non-standard in a positive fashion at this level is not merely a descriptive exercise. It also involves a degree of prescriptivism. The sociolinguist in describing what happens in a particular speech situation is also referring indirectly to what is viewed as appropriate in such situations. (Bex & Watts 1999: 6–7)

Nevertheless, Bex & Watts (1999: 6–7) consider that 'notions of appropriacy are developed by the people involved in the interactions' and that to properly describe what Standard English is, it is necessary 'to take into account the people who are using it and their reasons for adopting it'. With regard to education, Bex & Watts (1999: 8) argue that 'pedagogy, by its very nature, tends to be prescriptive'. Indeed, the primary aim of educationalists is 'to identify the varieties which can form the basis of the school curriculum and to describe them as accurately as possible' with the aim of establishing what can be considered standard language suitable for

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[15] The role of prescriptivism in the standardisation of the English language will be further discussed in Section 2.2.2.

teaching, that is 'that variety which best performs the higher functions of a developed society' (Bex & Watts 1999: 8).

2.1.4   *Americanisation*

The concept of *Americanisation* is strongly linked to that of Americanism. The latter was coined by John Witherspoon (1781, in Svartvik & Leech 2006: 158) to mean a 'use of phrases or terms, or a construction of sentences […] different from the use of the same terms or phrases, or the construction of similar sentences in Great Britain'. The term, in fact, originated in the context of the American Revolutionary War, which is noticeable in some definitions, such as John Pickering's in his *Dictionary of Americanisms* (1816), considering them as 'provincialisms that Americans should purge from the usage, in order to conform to the "English standard" of the old mother country' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 158). Nowadays, the term seems to have lost this negative connotation, as the *OED* (s.v. 'Americanism') simply defines it as '[a] word, phrase, or other use of language characteristic of, peculiar to, or originating from the United States'.

The term *Americanisation* was coined because, in today's globalising world, it seems difficult to still speak of Americanisms, and Svartvik & Leech (2006) argue, in the sense that AmE words are no longer gradually imported into other English-speaking countries; instead, there is an 'ongoing and often unnoticed influence of the New World on the Old' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 159). However, Americanisation appears to be a global phenomenon at the moment, not just a transatlantic one, which stems from a 'continuous and instantaneous flow of communication across the Atlantic, as elsewhere in the world, which means that new usages coming from the US can become almost immediately assimilated' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 159). Nowadays, 'the "Americanization" of (global) English is one of the main processes of language change in contemporary English' (Gonçalves, Loureiro-Porto, Ramasco & Sánchez 2017: 2) and it seems, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 206) estimate, that 'the use of grammar in other countries (such as the UK) is tending to follow US usage'.

2.2   English: island language, world language, trend language[16]

With some terms essential to a general understanding defined, this section aims to provide the reader with an overview of some elements of the history of the English language which will prove relevant within the framework of this dissertation.

2.2.1   *The status of English worldwide*

If the history of the English language began on the Anglo-Saxon island, its influence now extends far beyond these borders. Nowadays, English has become 'the most global of languages' and 'the lingua franca of business, science, education, politics, and pop music' claims Bryson (2009: 2). This section looks at the impact that English has had, and is still having globally, and how it has established itself as a global language.

The spread of English around the world has been conceptualised by Braj Kachru (1985, in Crystal 2019; see Appendix 1) as three concentric circles, representing 'different ways in which the language has been acquired and is currently used' (Crystal 2019: 113). The Inner Circle consists of countries where English is spoken by the majority as a first language, as is the case in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). The Outer Circle involves 'the earlier phase of the spread of English in non-native settings' where it plays an 'important "second language" role in a multilingual setting' (Crystal 2019: 113). This includes the many post-colonial countries where English still plays an active role in administration, education and the media (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 4). Finally, the Expanding Circle includes countries where English is learned as a foreign language, i.e. most countries in the world, because it is deemed useful or essential, especially in international contacts in areas such as industry, business, politics, diplomacy, education, research, technology, sports, entertainment, and tourism (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 5). Svartvik & Leech (2006: 5) contend that the Expanding Circle seems to be 'ever-expanding' nowadays, 'strengthening the claims of English as the international language of today'. Kachru's (1985, in Crystal 2019) typology will be used primarily in the following sections to refer to the influence of the Inner Circle countries (primarily the UK and the US) on the English learned in the Expanding Circle (in this case, Belgium).

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[16] The title of this section is inspired by the translation of Jan Svartvik's book, *Engelska – öspråk, världsspråk, trendspråk,* mentioned in his co-authored book with Geoffrey Leech, *English: One Tongue, Many Voices* (Svartvik & Leech 2006: xv). The latter work is referred to at length in this section.

When considering the origins of English as a world language, it would seem that globalisation has made the value of a world language obvious (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 5). In this regard, how English has managed to reach a position of pre-eminence over other languages is intriguing. Svartvik & Leech (2006: 228) argue that this may not be due to its linguistic merits. Crystal (2012: 10) believes instead that a geo-historical reason should be considered: English seemed to have been 'in the right place at the right time'. English could indeed benefit 'from three overlapping eras of world history' which allowed it to become the first global language, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 227) state.

First of all, the 19th century saw the imperial expansion of European powers, including the British colonial power, which spread the use of English around the world (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 227). At the time, the subjects of the British Empire accounted for a quarter of the world's population (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 6). In her book *The Prodigal Tongue*, American linguist Lynne Murphy (2018: 289–290) explains that the English, by planting the seed of English far and wide, can account for the global position that English holds today. This impetus given by the English resulted in the current situation where English is now the official language in more than sixty countries and where no continent is English-free (Murphy 2018: 290). In this regard, the British Empire's imperialist desires for expansion drove it to be the first to bring English to every continent, which might explain why 'British spelling [now] has a far greater geographical claim than American' (Murphy 2018: 290).

The succeeding era, the technological revolution, began with the industrial revolution, in which Britain and the United States played a leading role, and which was proceeded by the electronic revolution, led chiefly by the US (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 227). Moreover, whereas the 19th century was devoted to the spread of English by the British Empire, the 20th century saw the status of the United States as a leading economic, military and scientific power propel English to the forefront of the world stage (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 6). In this regard, Murphy (2018: 262) highlights that '[t]he 20th century brought America to Britain in a way that had not happened before', starting with the stationing of American troops in Europe during the two world wars. Subsequently, after World War II, a gentle invasion of American culture took place in Europe, not only because of the idolised role of the US as liberator, but also because '[t]he post-war Marshall Plan ensured that American loans for European recovery were repaid in part through import of American goods' (Murphy 2018: 262).

Finally, the current era of globalisation entails that the world behaves as 'one single, complex society in terms of political, economic, environmental, communicative and other spheres of activity' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 227–228). As a result of advances in modern

technology and the advent of the telephone, radio, television and computer, the world has experienced a growing need for international communication (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 7), which people have found through English. As a lingua franca, English is seen as neutral ground and therefore the vehicular language in the European Union (EU) in communications across linguistic borders, which, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 7) argue, is likely one of the reasons why about nine-tenths of EU students study English as a foreign language. Another reason mentioned is that English is now also associated with the 'opportunities for self-betterment' it can provide due to its international penetration and the prestige it carries (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 228). This has spurred native speakers to view their mother tongue as a 'product to be promoted and marketed' and to develop EFL into a global industry (see Section 2.2.4) (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 231).

Ultimately, not only did these three eras overlap, but they helped further one another's progress, note Svartvik & Leech (2006: 228): the advent of the internet, brought about by the e-revolution, increased the amount of possible 'e-activities', which then furthered the extent of globalisation. Svartvik & Leech (2006: 9) therefore believe that the hegemony of English could extend 'because of the political, economic and military success, at a crucial period, of the people who were its speakers, not because of the features of the language itself'. In other words, the world has recently witnessed sudden developments, and the omnipresence of Britain and the United States as driving forces behind these changes has allowed English to rise to the forefront. However, although Crystal (2019: 112) agrees that both 'the expansion of British colonial power […] and the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the 20th century' have led to the present-day world status of English, he emphasises in his *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* that '[i]t is the latter factor which continues to explain the position of the English language today'. In fact, while these two nations now account for 70 per cent of the world's English mother-tongue (EMT) speakers, the United States is home to nearly four times as many EMT speakers as Great Britain (Crystal 2019: 112).

For English to become so influential and exported around the world, it was imperative that the language be codified and relatively standardised. The next section focuses on the process of standardisation and codification undergone by the English language and the authorities on each side of the Atlantic who were influential in this process.

2.2.2   The call for standardisation and prescriptivism

Over the years, many researchers have commented on the lack of regularity in the English language. Murphy (2018: 133–134) estimated for instance that there are more than a thousand

ways to spell the forty-two phonemes that make up the English language and provides various explanatory factors. First, the longevity of the system means that English has been written for almost as long as it has existed, but at the beginning, there was no authority to regularise this (Murphy 2018: 134), which means that dialects could prosper and multiply (Bryson 2009: 115). Secondly, English has been influenced by foreign languages on more than one occasion and it is common knowledge that French was a particularly influential source for Middle English (ME). After 1066, the Normans took over the business of writing in England and indulged in some liberties with the English spelling system: some letters of Old English (OE) that did not exist in French were replaced by letters closer to the Normans' customs (Murphy 2018: 134–135). As a result, the OE letters thorn (þ) and eth (ð) gave way to the French digraph *th*, OE ash (æ) was replaced by *e*, and the OE letter wynn (ρ), which represented the sound /w/, was dropped (Murphy 2018). Simultaneously, other spellings were added, such as the digraphs *gh* and *ch* (Murphy 2018). Furthermore, Bryson (2009: 119–120) points out that English not only tends to borrow terms freely from other cultures, but also tends to retain their original spelling, unlike other borrowing languages. Nevertheless, the irregularity of English spelling also seems to be inevitable, as Crystal (2019: 284) suggests: 'With only 26 letters to handle over 40 phonemes, the criterion of one letter – one phoneme is plainly too strong. English has never been a "phonetic language", in that sense'. Bryson (2009: 124) also puts forward another argument to support the wide variety of spellings in English: he argues that most spellings in English 'cater to a wide variation of pronunciations' and that communication between nations would therefore be impossible if spellings were adapted to reflect pronunciation.

If spelling now seems to be regularised and the language standardised and codified, the process necessary to achieve this spanned many centuries. As early as the 13th century, a monk named Orm 'was calling for a more logical and phonetic system for English spelling' (Bryson 2009: 116). Later, by 1500, the invention of the printing press 'brought a much-needed measure of uniformity to English spelling – but at the same time guaranteed that [English] would inherit one of the most bewilderingly inconsistent spelling systems in the world', laments Bryson (2009: 117). Thereafter, it was not until the Early Modern English (EModE) period that a modern standard English language emerged: this period saw English in England undergo great changes thanks to three 'R' happenings: the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Restoration (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 47). First of all, the Elizabethan period, in the second half of the 16th century, has frequently been regarded as the golden age of English, with a growing pride and confidence in the language: during the Renaissance, the modern vernacular languages of Europe were no longer considered inferior to Latin (Svartvik & Leech 2006). However, in Elizabethan

England, 'there had hardly been a standard for written language' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 62). During the Reformation, King Henry VIII paved the way for the translation of the Bible into English: the King James Bible, published in 1611, required that English become a written language capable of matching Latin (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 47–48). The rise of printing, with more than 20,000 titles available in Britain by 1640, is also believed to have pushed towards a more regular spelling, claims Bryson (2009: 118).

More than a century after the Reformation, the Restoration marked the emergence of a more standardised written English, in so far as this period began to show more restrained and moderate attitudes towards language, as Svartvik & Leech (2006: 48) note. In fact, there was a growing sense of need for a set of standards for the proper use of the language and 'writers became more grammar-conscious and more critical of "incorrect" usage' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 61–62). Moreover, the idea was beginning to spread among contemporaries that '[a] great national language needed to be codified by rules in grammars and dictionaries' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 62).

This sentiment was originally voiced by John Dryden, author, royal propagandist and poet laureate (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 62), who complained in 1660 that English did not have 'so much as a tolerable dictionary or a grammar', and that this made the language barbarous, in a sense (Bryson 2009: 129). His genuine concern, as was the case with other contemporary poets such as Waller and Pope, was that his texts would become incomprehensible in the future and be forgotten (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 191–192). He therefore called for an academy to regulate English usage, 'and for the next two hundred years, many others would echo his view' (Bryson 2009: 129). Among them were authors such as Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift, who, around the turn of the 18th century, also appealed for the establishment of an academy to oversee the English language (Bryson 2009), based on the model of Cardinal Richelieu's Académie Française, founded in 1635 (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 64). In his book *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue* (1712), Swift asserted purist views on language, claiming that 'all linguistic change spelled corruption' (Svartvik & Leech 2006). This request for an academy also emerged on the American side, where John Adams wrote in 1780 to the President of Congress, appealing to him to establish an academy 'for the purpose of refining, correcting, improving and ascertaining the English language' (Bryson 2009: 129).

Despite numerous calls for the establishment of an academy, the many attempts to form one were unsuccessful, which did not prevent this period from giving birth to some of the precepts about 'good' usage and 'good' grammar, based on prescription rather than actual usage (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 62). These precepts marked the 18th century, so much so that it is

known as the 'high noon of prescriptivism' today (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 209). The pervasiveness of prescriptivism is seen as what allowed Standard English to emerge and triumph in the 18th century. This state of affairs has therefore ensured that 17th and 18th-century poets such as Waller, Dryden and Pope are still intelligible today (Svartvik & Leech 2006).

Although some have dubiously claimed that the standardisation process uniformised English to the extent that 'a word ha[d] just one spelling' by the end of the 18th century – which is still not the case nowadays[17] (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 60–61), others 'were beginning to call for a more orderly and reliable system of spelling' at the same time (Bryson 2009: 120). In America, Benjamin Franklin was greatly concerned that words, if left unreformed, would cease to express sounds and would only stand for concepts. To remedy this, he proposed a phonetic alphabet in *A Scheme for a New Alphabet and a Reformed Mode of Spelling* (1768), 'which could hardly be called a simplification since it required the creation of six additional letters' (Bryson 2009: 120). Another authority figure in America, Noah Webster, not only sought simplified spelling, but lobbied Congress to make it a legal requirement, which would have turned 'America into the only country in history where deviant spelling would be a punishable offence' (Bryson 2009: 120). It seemed that the movement was gaining momentum, so much so that by the end of the century, many a prominent person on both sides of the Atlantic – among them Charles Darwin, Arthur Conan Doyle, James A.H. Murray (the first editor of the *OED*) and Mark Twain – seemed to be pushing for spelling reform, although they turned out to have little effect (Bryson 2009).

We have seen that there was a call for a regularisation of English, but may now wonder who initiated these calls. As seen earlier in this section, English has never had a lasting, impactful Academy that could drive linguistic change[18] (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 64). In this regard, Murphy (2018: 236) mentions that neither the UK nor the US has an official language. In these two countries, English only has a *de facto* national language status[19], which entails that neither country has any form of governmental linguistic oversight and that language is not managed by committees (Murphy 2018). According to Bryson (2009: 130–131), it might be beneficial that 'the English-speaking world never saddled itself with such a body' as he

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[17] There is indeed still some spelling variation to be found in present-day English (PDE), e.g. *judgement/judgment, likable/likeable, pricy/pricey* (see Svartvik & Leech 2006: 60-61).
[18] The only two attempts to this end mentioned by Murphy (2018: 236) are the Advisory Committee on Spoken English (founded in 1926 by Sir John Reith, Director General of the BBC) and the Simplified Spelling Board (an American organization who operated between 1906 and 1920). Both of them had little effect, as they only existed two to three decades at most. See Bryson 2009: 121-122; Murphy 2018: 138-139 for further information.
[19] In contrast, legally recognized national languages have a *de jure* official language status.

estimates that as many influential users of English were opposed to academies as there were who favoured them. In 1761, Joseph Priestley (in Bryson 2009: 130) claimed that a national academy was 'unsuitable to the genius of a free nation' and put the emphasis on natural language change, where 'the best forms of speech [would], in time, establish themselves by their own superior excellence'. Similarly, Samuel Johnson doubted the value of curbing language change, and Thomas Jefferson thought it undesirable in any case (Bryson 2009: 130–131). However, based on the history of the French Academy, Bryson (2009) notes that its originally progressive and far-seeing approach to spelling quickly gave way to a more conservative one, with a resulting depressing effect on language change over time. As a result, English has been hailed for its lack of rigidity, in comparison to French, and Bryson (2009: 137) labels English as a fluid and democratic language, 'in which meanings shift and change in response to the pressures of common usage rather than the dictates of committees'.

The lack of an authoritative dictionary entails that the individual is expected to regulate their own language (Murphy 2018: 236) and more and more people thus felt the need for an authoritative dictionary (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 64). Two dictionaries played an essential role in this respect and, as Svartvik & Leech (2006: 67) note, can account for how little spelling has changed since the early 19th century: Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) and Noah Webster's *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828). As Svartvik & Leech (2006: 67) explain, codification 'leads to convergence in usage, and puts a brake on linguistic change' and ultimately 'serve[s] to conserve and bolster existing approved language' (2006: 193).

Johnson's dictionary gave an impetus for a new emphasis on prescribing 'correct' and 'incorrect' usage (Murphy 2018: 82) as he originally claimed that 'all change is of itself evil', before changing his mind in the preface of his dictionary and declaring that languages necessarily undergo changes (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 64–65). In the 18th century, prescriptivism was at its peak, so it should come as no surprise that Johnson centred his dictionary on how people *should* use the language, rather than describing how English was used (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 67).

In America, Webster's 1828 dictionary, which promoted an American standard of English, soon found itself pitted against that of Webster's former assistant, Joseph Worcester's *A Comprehensive Pronouncing and Explanatory English Dictionary* (1830), which focused on the 'best usage' of words, while staying 'as close as possible to educated London usage' (Murphy 2018: 245). In trying to outsell each other in what soon became known as the Dictionary Wars, Webster and Worcester 'set the commercial tone for dictionary culture in

America' (Murphy 2018: 245): both of them 'assured Americans that their dictionary was best loved in Britain' (2018: 94), testifying to the persistent linguistic dependence of the United States on the British norm in the 19th century[20]. This observation can be further reinforced by the fact that Worcester's dictionary outsold Webster's in the beginning (Murphy 2018: 94). In addition, the Dictionary War campaigns in America generalised the idea of the relevance of the dictionary in everyday life (Murphy 2018: 245–246), thereby creating a gap and reflecting the differing attitudes of the British and American towards dictionaries. While consulting a dictionary for Britons is done leisurely, to ascertain 'the story of words', Americans use them to have legalistic certainty that a word can be used in a given context, Murphy (2018: 242) states. As a result, American publishers tend to gear their dictionaries more towards the 'linguistically insecure who want reassurance when they write term papers or business letters' (Murphy 2018: 243–244).

With Johnson's and Webster's dictionaries catering to a prescriptivist function of language, and the lack of an academy, it could be expected that dictionaries would take up the 'banner of defenders of language', yet Bryson (2009: 136) remarks that 'in recent years they have increasingly shied away from the role'. For instance, the editor of *Webster's Third International Dictionary* (1961), Philip Gove, wished to develop the dictionary on a descriptivist, rather than prescriptivist, basis (Murphy 2018: 255), as he believed that distinctions of usage were elitist and artificial (Bryson 2009). For this reason, the dictionary defined terms such as *ain't* and *irregardless* without explicitly stating that they were 'mistakes to avoid' (Murphy 2018: 255), even contending that *ain't* was 'used orally in most parts of the U.S. by many cultivated speakers' (Bryson 2009: 136). This overly liberal attitude, resented by some, led to the reactionary creation of *The American Heritage Dictionary* (1969), which aimed to publish paragraphs on usage for controversial words (Murphy 2018: 256). Another example of a dictionary based on descriptivist foundations, which has received much acclaim (Murphy 2018: 244), is the *OED*. It was first published as *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* in 1884 and aimed 'to record every word used in English since 1150' (Bryson 2009: 150–151).

In addition to authoritative dictionaries, the absence of an official academy was also compensated for with the help of 'self-appointed authorities', such as Robert Lowth, the brothers H.W. and F.G. Fowler and Sir Ernest Gowers in Great Britain and Theodore Bernstein and William Safire in America (Bryson 2009: 131). These authorities have led to various

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[20] See Section 2.2.3 for a historical account of the linguistic relationship between the UK and the US.

strictures in the English language, in the form of stylistic prescriptivism. Robert Lowth introduced a number of strictures in his book *A Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762) that are still influential in English today, such as the preference to avoid dangling prepositions at the end of sentences, to use *different from* instead of *different to* or *different than*, to say *the heavier of two objects* instead of *the heaviest of two objects* and to use *you were* instead of *you was* (Murphy 2018). One of the limitations of the stylistic prescriptivism proposed by these authorities, Murphy (2018: 134–135) states, is that what represents good or bad English is to a large extent a matter of prejudice and conditioning. Ultimately, whereas the 18th century was the 'high noon of prescriptivism', Svartvik & Leech (2006: 209) consider that we are now entering a stage of liberalisation, entailing an increase in liberal attitudes to grammatical rules.

2.2.3   *Two nations divided by a common language*

This section examines BrE and AmE, attempting to outline how similar or different the two varieties of English actually are and explore factors that may explain this divergence. A second part then examines the attitudes which Britons and Americans display towards each other's English and look for the ideological reasons behind these attitudes.

2.2.3.1   *Convergence and divergence of American and British English*

When the relationship between the United States and Great Britain is discussed, the two nations are commonly referred to as 'two countries divided by a common language'[21] (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 152). This quote is a good indication of the linguistic reality between the two national varieties: that is to say that in spite of some differences, they are built on the same foundations. They are indeed similar enough to be considered varieties of the same language, rather than different languages, notes Murphy (2018: 64), and ESL/EFL learners may find the differences to be 'small curiosities and occasional inconveniences, but rarely are they barriers to learning' (Murphy 2018: 64–65).

When comparing the American and British standard varieties, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 157; see also Mair 2007) found that their grammar and spelling were very similar, that their vocabulary was different in some areas while remaining strikingly the same, but that their pronunciation was clearly different, although mutually intelligible. Several factors may account for these similarities. As Murphy (2018: 67) explains, written language is more resistant to regional differences, while these are more directly noticeable in spoken language. This stems

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[21] The origin of this quote is not unequivocal. *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* attributes it to George Bernard Shaw, but acknowledges that it has not been found in his published writings (Partington 1992: 638).

from the fact that the written form offers more opportunities to correct natural language to a standard form of the language, while the spoken form allows less editing and 'needs to be understood where we are' (Murphy 2018: 271). Speaking is therefore characterised by a certain degree of interactivity, where a speaker can adjust their language according to their audience, gauging how well they are understood and reformulating their speech if necessary (Murphy 2018: 271). Conversely, written forms involving little interaction require the use of a clear and universal language that can be understood by the widest audience possible. Formal written language is particularly suitable for this purpose due to its being 'highly decontextualised by definition' (Mair 2007: 98). Following this line of reasoning, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 194) found that in World Standard English, leaving aside the occasional differences of spelling between American and British standards, English varies remarkably little from one region of the world to another, which could indicate that national standard varieties may be influenced more by cultural differences than linguistic ones. Murphy (2018: 78) also points out that the British and Americans may have the same basic language structures, but that '[they] perform the rituals in slightly different ways'.

With respect to vocabulary, it has been estimated that there are approximately 4,000 vocabulary differences between AmE and BrE (Bryson 2009: 171), a number which seems relatively trivial when compared to the 600,000 words in the English language included in the *OED*. This could explain why 'the differences between AmE and BrE vocabulary are [therefore] rarely so great as to cause serious misunderstanding' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 153). Nevertheless, this comparison may not be entirely reliable since the *OED* intends to record all English words going back as far as 1150 (see Section 2.2.2). A more recent comparison has been made by the editors at Oxford University Press, who calculated that the British and American databases of their general-use dictionaries shared about 78 per cent of their headwords (Murphy 2018: 73). Moreover, American lexicographer Laurence Urdang once estimated, in Murphy's words (2018: 74), that 'if he were to Americanize a British dictionary or Briticize an American one, about 20% of the text would have to change for vocabulary, spelling, or grammatical reasons'.

A further explanation for the lack of greater divergence in British and American vocabulary can be found in the *open* and *closed classes of words*. The former can be defined as 'the areas of vocabulary that are considered to be prone to expansion and change – nouns, verbs, and adjectives' (Murphy 2018: 90). Murphy (2018: 90–91) finds that most differences between AmE and BrE can be found in the open classes, which results in 'superficial differences' between the two varieties. Murphy (2018) conjectures that English would have looked different

if the two varieties had undergone divergence in the closed classes, for instance by having different pronouns, as Latin American Spanish and European Spanish do.

The differences between AmE and BrE may not be quantitatively significant; yet they remain part of the collective consciousness. Commenting on the nature of these differences, Murphy (2018: 5) describes them as follows:

> These differences are superficial and deep, simple and complex, blatant and sneaky: the spelling of *colo(u)r*, the pronunciation of *garage*, the meaning of *frown*, whether you eat *mashed potato* or *mashed potatoes*. They touch on the language's relationships with time, with the landscape, with other languages, and especially with social class and self-image. They raise questions about what we value in our language. (Murphy 2018: 5)

In attempting to provide an explanation for the discrepancies between BrE and AmE, Murphy (2018: 79) suggests that they may be as much an accident as Americans '*trying*[22] to be difficult'. There follow the historical-linguistic factors raised by Murphy in her aforementioned quote to provide an explanation for the persistence of the AmE/BrE differences in present-day English (PDE), namely geography, time, other languages, social class, and self-image and identity.

2.2.3.1.1 Geography

First of all, it is a well-known fact for linguists in the field of language variation that new dialects can easily emerge in the presence of geographical barriers (Murphy 2018). When the first English colonies were established in the New World in the early 17th century, there were around 4,000 kilometres between Britain and its American colonies (Murphy 2018). Since audio recording and broadcast technology had not been invented yet, one could only hear English spoken by those around them (Murphy 2018). As a result, the language variation occurring in each country did not travel fast to the other, if at all (Murphy 2018). Moreover, when the colonists arrived in the New World, the geographical novelties they encountered 'call[ed] for new words, new phrases, and for the transfer of old words to new objects', declared Thomas Jefferson (in Murphy 2018: 79). As a result, words were imported from Dutch, Indian, Spanish, and Native American languages (Bryson 2009; Svartvik & Leech 2006).

Murphy (2018: 110) further points to immigration as a factor in why AmE is the way it is, namely 'because it comes from all corners of the British Isles':

> General American English shares properties with the English of Ireland, Scotland, and northern and western England because distance and local identity meant that those regions were less likely (or at least slower) to be affected by the more recent 'metropolitan' linguistic fashions of London-Cambridge-Oxford. (Murphy 2018: 110)

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[22] Murphy's emphasis

The so-called 'Golden Triangle' London-Cambridge-Oxford, i.e. the perceived source of wealth, influence and high culture in south-east England, has been the source of the so-called 'most standard' spoken English since the 18th century (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 192). Following the Puritan migration to America in the 17th century, it could therefore be argued that the BrE/AmE differences are, in part, originally differences between the English of London and the English found in other parts of the UK.

Immigration has gone through three phases in the US, according to major social and political events, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 78) explain: the Colonial Period (1607-1790), the National Expansion Period (1790-1865) and the Third Period (1865-1929). Each of these periods had different impacts in terms of linguistic variety and uniformity. During the colonial period, few people migrated to America in comparison with the two subsequent periods; yet it was this first period that had the greatest influence for the development of the English language in the US (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 79). Indeed, the early English-speaking immigrants, coming from the British Isles, were politically and culturally dominant, whereas the later immigrants, coming from all over Europe, had to learn English and lost their mother tongue in a span of two to three generations (Svartvik & Leech 2006). Numbers of Britons emigrating to America, however, began decreasing after the colonial period. Due to the American Revolution and the 'subsequent estrangement of the countries' that it had caused, 'movements of people and communications across the Atlantic were relatively infrequent' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 160). Instead, Britons started to emigrate more to Canada and then to Australia, which increased the exposure of these countries to BrE (Murphy 2018: 83).

As a result of the later immigration, Bryson (2009: 165) states that 'it was easy to find isolated speech communities throughout much of America', prompting the belief that 'the existence of these linguistic pockets would lead the United States to deteriorate into a variety of regional tongues' (Bryson 2009: 162–163). This linguistic diversity did not last long in the US, however, as the conditions were ripe for dialect levelling, which Murphy (2018: 112) defines as 'the tendency for mobile and changing populations to merge to the same standard of speech'. Bryson (2009: 162–163) outlines three reasons for this dialect levelling. First, the 'continuous movement of people back and forth across the continent' prevented the emergence of permanent regionalisms (Bryson 2009). Secondly, homogeneity could be reached through the 'intermingling of people from different backgrounds' (Bryson 2009). Thirdly, and arguably most importantly, social pressures arose from the desire for a common national identity: whoever did not blend in was made to feel like an outsider (Bryson 2009). The convergence of

American accents has led to a paradoxical situation when compared to what has been occurring in Britain, as pointed out by Bryson (2009: 94–95):

> A paradox of accents is that in England, where people from a common heritage have been living together in a small area for thousands of years, there is still a huge variety of accents, whereas in America, where people from a great mix of backgrounds have been living together in a vast area for a relatively short period, people speak with just a few voices […] According to some estimates almost two-thirds of the American population, living on some 80 per cent of the land area, speak with the same accent – a quite remarkable degree of homogeneity. (Bryson 2009: 94–95)

This situation does not seem peculiar to Svartvik & Leech (2006: 79), who claim that until the 19th century 'there was comparatively little movement and mixing of population' in the British Isles.

Today, the distance between the two countries has been reduced through communication and travel technologies, but Murphy (2018: 287) doubts that this has had more than a limited effect on language, as it is acquired by interacting with other people. This may explain the persistence of differences between AmE and BrE vocabulary in the domestic area, i.e. the family and local life, for instance *mom/mum, candy/sweets, closet/wardrobe* (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 161). Additionally, Murphy (2018: 287) believes that foreign music and video games might somewhat influence EMT speakers' language, but the exposure to the other national dialect is 'not immersive enough to allow all the words, meanings, structures and connotations to transfer unscathed from one country to another'. Hence, although the distance between the two countries has been reduced by technology, the geographical distance and lack of frequent interaction between the citizens of the two nations may still account for the persistence of differences between AmE and BrE.

Nonetheless, some geographical factors have also affected the two varieties, preventing them from alienating from each other. Murphy (2018: 92) asserts that '[m]any of the early settlers were from southern England, and so was their English', with Puritans being 'mostly urban, literate folk with Cambridge-educated leaders', while those with regional British dialects were mostly indentured servants in the colonies. Furthermore, New England and the coastal north were where the universities and dictionaries were founded and where Americans sought their linguistic standards, which implies that the earliest AmE was fairly close to the 'metropolitan' English spoken in the UK at the time (Murphy 2018). Besides, with the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, standard forms had been on the rise, which meant that the books that early Americans read were mostly from Britain (Murphy 2018). The US and the UK thus originally remained in the same written tradition (Murphy 2018). This situation soon

changed, however, when the westward migration increased the distance between Americans and Britain in the 19th century and expanded the Midwestern cities (Murphy 2018). As a result, '[t]he status of England-conscious New England as the cultural powerhouse of America started to wane', as evidenced by the influence of Midwestern writer Mark Twain (Murphy 2018: 119). This also led to the emergence of regional variations within the US, as 'the colonists along the eastern seaboard naturally had closer relationships with England than those colonists who moved inland' (Bryson 2009: 99–100).

2.2.3.1.2   Time

Another interesting factor is time, as Murphy (2018: 98) states that 'some British-Americans differences emerged because time provided different forks in the road, detours, and diversions'. It is for instance 'not uncommon to hear claims that Americans today speak "like Shakespeare"' (Murphy 2018: 97). Looking at the period when America was colonised, Bryson (2009: 87) states that it coincides partially with the Great Vowel Shift and 'so it was from this stock of pronunciations that American English grew'. The turn of the 17th century, around when English was taken to America, was also a time of intense vocabulary growth (Murphy 2018). At the time, English was still in its Early Modern phase, but 'by the time the United States came into being, it had entered its Late Modern period' (Murphy 2018: 80–81). This means that while English continued evolving in many different countries, not all changes could cross the Atlantic (as seen in Section 2.2.3.1.1). Time was also an influential factor for the establishment of AmE as a competitor for BrE as it allowed a 150-year head start for AmE on other Englishes between the first successful English colony in America in 1607 and the Declaration of Independence in 1776 (Murphy 2018: 80–81).

In addition, some lexical differences between AmE and BrE can also be explained by the period in which these words appeared. Svartvik & Leech (2006: 159–160) put forward that lexical differences between AmE and BrE are located in particular areas of vocabulary, such as transportation. As rail and car travel were invented in the 19th century, a period when the US and Britain were both physically and culturally isolated from each other, it is not surprising that many of the words related to these inventions differ in AmE and BrE (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 160), such as *gas/petrol, truck/lorry,* and *trunk/boot.* Another 19th-century invention which received different names in the two countries is the *elevator/lift*. Subsequently, the early 20th century saw an explosive increase in Anglo-American communication, due to technological advances (television, air travel), the First World War and films, but by that time, the language of the road and rail and their differences had already been institutionalised (Svartvik & Leech

2006: 160). Svartvik & Leech (2006: 160–161) further notice that as of the mid-20th century, there seem to have been fewer and fewer separate terms for technological advances and new technologies. Vocabulary seems to converge towards an American standard, for instance in the terminology of the computing and electronics industries, with only one recent exception: *cell phone/mobile phone* (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 160–161).

2.2.3.1.3   Other languages

As seen in Section 2.2.2, foreign languages have long exerted a strong influence on the English language, in terms of its vocabulary, its orthographic system and its pronunciation (Murphy 2018: 127-128). Over the course of 1,500 years, English has been influenced by Old Norse, French, Latin and Greek (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 7). French began to infiltrate the language after the Norman Conquest (1066), causing it to shift from OE to ME (Murphy 2018). Subsequently, French declined and gave way, during the EModE period, to Latin and Greek, from the second half of the 15th century onwards (Murphy 2018). It is believed that French played a crucial role in letting Latin into the English language, as Svartvik & Leech (2006: 198) suggest: 'French acted as the Trojan horse of Latinity in English, the sluice gate through which Latin was able to pour into English on a scale without any equivalent in any other Germanic language'. At the dawn of the Scientific Revolution, English was considered 'insufficient to serve as a language of science and learning' (Murphy 2018: 130), which is why importing Latin and Greek was deemed necessary. The influx of words of Latin origin was so great that a debate took place during the 16th and 17th centuries, the inkhorn controversy, as to whether English really needed such a large supply of foreign words (Murphy 2018). Some people believed that their value was limited because Latin and Greek words were outlandish and therefore obscure (Murphy 2018).

More recently, the 19th and the 20th centuries brought no new influences to compare with 'the profound impact of Old Norse, Norman French, Latin and Greek' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 65). Nevertheless, BrE and AmE have recently known divergence on the place that these foreign languages should keep in PDE, in particular French. Many British people now have a peculiar fear that English may be slowly Americanising. What Murphy (2018: 128) has found, however, is that '[t]he aspects of English that Britons want to protect against "Americanization" are often the Frenchest parts' and that actually 'Americans have done much to make English more English and less French'. For instance, Murphy (2018: 140) explains how AmE has anglicised *airplane* and *airport*, 'while the French *aeroplane* still hangs on in Britain', or how the spelling of BrE *centre* was adapted to AmE *center* to keep away from the French-inspired

spellings. It is expected that this American view would make the language more accessible to those who are learning it, Murphy (2018) believes, as tricky foreignisms would be left out and there would be less near-synonyms for the learners to distinguish between (Svartvik & Leech 2006). Yet, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 198) believe that the influence of French and Latin may have actually increased the learnability and the spread of English as an international language, with transparent words – such as *document*, *information*, *number*, *candidate*, and *vocabulary* – which can resonate with many speakers whose first language is not English.

2.2.3.1.4 Social class

As cited earlier in this section, Murphy (2018: 78) stated that Britons and Americans have the same basic language structures, but that '[they] perform the rituals in slightly different ways', which seems to be in line with how social classes are valued in both countries. In the UK, social classes play a predominant role, so much so that the three main social classes (*upper class, middle class, lower class*) are subdivided to better capture the slight differences existing between them, amounting to a total of seven social classes. There is for instance not one middle class, but three, namely the established middle class, the new affluent workers, and the technical middle class (Murphy 2018). By comparison, the US seems to have rejected this notion as soon as it seceded from the UK and its cherished monarchy, aristocracy, and state religion (Murphy 2018). In the US, social stratification is not as valued as it is in the UK, in that one's upbringing seems to matter less than what an individual can achieve in their lifetime (Murphy 2018: 7). This idea is embedded in the very foundation of the country, as its Declaration of Independence (1776) guarantees American citizens the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The third right is frequently associated with the American Dream, meaning that anyone can be successful in America provided that they put in work. Hence, the term 'middle class' occurs five times more in AmE than it does in BrE, which, to Murphy (2018: 204), is due to 'Americans see[ing] themselves as members of an egalitarian middle class'. Indeed, it is not necessary to own a house or possess a college degree to be considered middle class in America, but only have a secure job and the ability to save money (Murphy 2018). This makes adhesion to the middle class both attainable and desirable, and a majority of Americans are therefore on the same level with a clear signal: 'We may be different, but no one's better than anyone else' (Murphy 2018: 204–205). Unlike the US, social class in the UK is not determined by financial security, but by upbringing, that is where and how one has been raised. The label 'middle class' in the UK may thus imply one's superiority or one's aspiration to be, in contrast to the American egalitarianism (Murphy 2018: 205–206).

Whereas the traditional British social-class structure was bleached once it reached America, racial divisions, on the other hand, amplified (Murphy 2018: 201). This polarisation is also found in language and how it is perceived, as described by Murphy (2018: 235):

> In the US, region and class often take a back seat to race. Standard American English isn't necessarily 'upper class', but it sure sounds 'white' to many people. Thus, in the US, the term *Standard English* is often contrasted with *Black English* or *African-American English*. (Murphy 2018: 235)

Linguistic prejudices therefore seem to be based on social class in Great Britain, and on race in the United States. In both countries, it would seem that 'prejudice against "non-standard" speakers is one of the last acceptable forms of discrimination' and some people in the UK have argued that 'a person with a decidedly northern accent cannot be considered "middle class"' (Murphy 2018: 235). This would suggest that one's accent may be more important than their level of education, wealth, or social status in determining which social class they belong to in the UK (Murphy 2018). For Americans, Britishness is frequently associated with good English, which often translates into the English spoken by the upper classes (Murphy 2018). Thus, '[t]he British vocabulary that Americans consume lives at Downtown Abbey, 221B Baker Street, or Hogwarts' (Murphy 2018: 44). Conversely, Americans do not seem to be so interested in 'struggling English folks', and Murphy (2018: 20–21) believes that they either ignore series that depict British lower classes or remake them in an American setting.

2.2.3.1.5 Self-image and identity

The last factor mentioned by Murphy (2018) that may explain the persistence of BrE/AmE divergence may be found in how Britons and Americans define their own national identity.

At the end of the eight-year American Revolutionary War and because of the thousands of casualties suffered, there was hostility towards Britain (Bryson 2009; Murphy 2018) and 'many Americans wanted to break with the mother country, in language as well' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 83). Since rejecting the King's English was another way of rejecting the king, 'some early Americans went as far as to suggest that "French, Greek or Hebrew should be the national language, just to spite the British"' (Murphy 2018: 83). Most people soon came to realise that they could not do without English, but 'there was a general notion that English in America should be "improved and perfected" and given its own identity' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 83–85). Among them was Noah Webster (1789, in Murphy 2018: 84) who advocated linguistic separation from Britain, stating that 'a *national language*[23] is a band of *national*

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[23] Webster's emphasis

union[24]', and implicitly referring to it in the title of his most famous work, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828). Webster's dictionary was considered 'America's answer to Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*' (1755) and 'was enormously influential not only in spelling but in pronunciation' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 154). This linguistic patriotism prompted the calls for the creation of a language academy in the US modelled after Richelieu's Académie Française (Murphy 2018: 84–85; see Section 2.2.2).

Nevertheless, this linguistic patriotism was not unequivocal in the beginning, in that 'the general population had more mixed views about whether to look home or abroad for linguistic models and authorities' and many early Americans seemed uncomfortable with the idea of a national standard of English usage (Murphy 2018: 85). Moreover, despite Webster's efforts, 'it [was not] until the start of the 20th century that American linguists started talking about a "Standard *American*[25] English"' (Murphy 2018: 93). This change was facilitated by westward migration and the waning cultural influence of England-conscious New England in the 19th century (as mentioned in Section 2.2.3.1.1): 'As more Americans started writing and being published, they felt less need to look to Britain for the written English standard' (Murphy 2018: 119). Later, after the Second World War, 'Americans preferred the accents that had developed through westward dialect levelling, in the middle of the country, rather than at the edges': by then, the US had established itself as a world power and no longer needed the linguistic approval of England (Murphy 2018: 232). The growing confidence Americans felt in their developing identity as AmE speakers allowed their standards of spelling, pronunciation and grammar to shift from the BrE model (Murphy 2018: 287–288). This new-found linguistic security may have put some pressure on Standard British English as sole influential variety of English (Murphy 2018).

Ultimately, national identity remains a significant factor to account for the divergence between AmE and BrE 'since we generally establish our own identity by contrasting ourselves with those who are like us but not us', asserts Murphy (2018: 288), which entails that 'sounding American is going to involve not sounding British, and sounding British is going to involve not sounding American'. Svartvik & Leech (2006: 159) concur with this view, stating that 'overall people's pronunciation of their native language [may be] too intimately bound up with who they are'. In this respect, national identity can explain why US and UK pronunciations are unmistakably different. Accordingly, Murphy (2018: 298) forecasts that the natural

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[24] Idem
[25] Murphy's emphasis

convergence that is expected to occur between AmE and BrE could be hindered in order to maintain a language that is in line with the desire for a national identity of each nation.

2.2.3.2 *Attitudes towards American and British English*

When analysing the attitudes that the two nations have towards each other's varieties, it may be noticed that British attitudes are significantly more negative than those of Americans. It is an often-held belief on the British side that Americans are ruining the English language (Murphy 2018: 1). This belief may have spread in part because of statements by influential Britons, such as Prince Charles (in Murphy 2018: 1), who assessed AmE to be 'very corrupting', or Baron Somers, who made his opinion clear in the House of Lords in 1979: 'If there is a more hideous language on the face of the earth than the American form of English, I should like to know what it is' (in Bryson 2009: 167; Murphy 2018: 1). Living in the UK since 2000, American linguist Lynne Murphy (2018: 1) noticed that the British press frequently want to instil the fear of AmE invading BrE:

> English is under attack from American words that are 'mindless' (the *Mail in Sunday*), 'ugly and pointless' (*BBC Magazine*), 'infectious, destructive and virulent' (the *Daily Mail*). American words 'infect, invade, and pollute' (*The Times*). (Murphy 2018: 1)

However, these direct attacks targeted at AmE are not a new occurrence, as Bryson (2009: 165–166) points out, but, in fact, date back to the early American colonies: 'Almost from the beginning of the colonial experience it has been a common assumption in Britain that a word or turn of phrase is inferior simply by dint of its being American-bred'. Later, the mid-19th century saw Americans asserting and justifying their right to bring innovation into the language, which brought conflicting reactions from across the pond (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 158). While Britons began to borrow more and more from AmE, Americanisms were seen as barbarisms among British commentators (Svartvik & Leech 2006). In their book *The King's English* (1906), the Fowler brothers write that, although there is nothing wrong with AmE, it is a foreign language and should be treated as such, expressing their view that AmE and BrE 'are better apart than mixed' (Bryson 2009: 168).

More recently, Murphy (2018: 9) explained that British attitudes towards the US are relatively mild and positive, as illustrated in a 2014 survey where 66% of Britons claimed to have a 'favourable' view of the US. Despite this, Britain appears to remain the 'worldwide hub of anti-Americanism-ism', which is at the heart of all the 'prejudice against parts of the English language that are believed to be American' (Murphy 2018: 10). Murphy substantiates this claim with several attitudinal pieces of research carried out in the early 21st century. One such study

conducted in 2001 showed that '15% of American comments about British accents mentioned negative interpersonal characteristics. Interestingly, the equivalent figure for negative British-on-American comments in that study was 45%' (Murphy 2018: 267). This study therefore confirmed that, although negative interpersonal characteristics in accents are mentioned by both Americans and Britons, the latter use them three times as often. Furthermore, in 2004, 'the BBC Voices project asked over five thousand Britons to score each of thirty-four British and "foreign" accents', a study in which the North American accent was ranked eighth in prestige, but only fifteenth in pleasantness (Murphy 2018: 267).

Other studies have been conducted with Americans to determine their attitudes towards different accents, including the British one. In 1985, a study showed that 'Americans rated the British voices as higher in personal status than the American accents – with ratings for intelligence, confidence, success, and ambition contributing to the overall score' (Murphy 2018: 263). The balance seemed to shift, however, in a 2001 study where American voices were rated as highly in intelligence as English accents, with the American female voice being rated as more intelligent and better educated than both English accents in the study (Murphy 2018: 263–264). In a 2005 study looking at impressions of national accents, Americans rated British accents as 'cultured', but with regard to interpersonal and emotional connotations, they were also labelled 'stuffy', 'conceited' and with a 'full-of-yourself attitude' (Murphy 2018: 264). This perception may be rooted in the fact that, in an American society which emphasises friendliness and egalitarianism (see Section 2.2.3.1.4), sounding 'cultured' is not necessarily an advantage, Murphy (2018: 264) explains. Finally, in a 2014 poll, 35 per cent of Americans claimed to find British accents attractive, while 49 per cent of them reported being simply indifferent (Murphy 2018: 265). In this regard, the Irish and Australian accents are gaining popularity in America because of their exoticism, devoid of the perceived stuffiness and condescension associated with the British accent (Murphy 2018). A 2007 accent-attitude study also indicated the influence of other accents in the English-speaking world: it revealed that Americans who have lived abroad found the British accent to sound the least intelligent of all the accents compared in the study, unlike Americans who have never left the country (Murphy 2018). This study therefore seems to indicate that Americans seem less positively impressed by a British accent once they have heard other accents around the world (Murphy 2018).

In summary, comparing the reception of the standard forms of UK and US English, Murphy (2018: 230) puts forward that the British standard (also called *the Queen's English* or *Received English*) is oft-held in a 'royal standard position' and is inextricably linked to social class (see Section 2.2.3.1.4), whereas the American standard (*Standard American English*)

sounds educated, but not elite. Their respective standard accents, Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA), are held in the same position. Hence, the RP accent is often associated with the worst stereotypes of the British upper classes: to some, it sounds snobbish, over-privileged, and out of touch (Murphy 2018: 233), notwithstanding that RP has a cachet in the US (Murphy 2018: 232). Comparatively, GA does not imply eliteness like RP does[26] (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 82).

It is now appropriate to look at the ideological reasons behind these attitudes. First of all, it seems important to clarify the contrast between the perception of language in the two countries: whereas Britain seeks to be literary, America seeks to be literate (Murphy 2018: 253). In the spirit of the American Dream, Americans want a path to success and want help to achieve it, and the 'best help is the help that is clear and simple' (Murphy 2018: 253). For this reason, when it comes to language, Americans seem to prefer a 'one-size-fits-all rule', i.e. a prescriptive rule which does not take all the subtleties into account, but is easy to learn and remember instead (Murphy 2018). In other words, their mantra regarding language usage could be, as Murphy (2018: 255) puts it: 'Easy to teach, easy to follow, a bit authoritarian'. As a result, Americans have opted for highly tractable rules, such as the *-ize* spelling which has been largely generalised[27], or the grammar rule to consistently use a singular verb with collective nouns (e.g. *The team is…* rather than *The team are…*) (Murphy 2018). This tendency to follow authoritative rules can be seen either as 'sheepish American conformity', or as a way of 'democratizing the language' because '[i]f everyone has access to the rules, then everyone can use them', which can then lead to linguistic equality (Murphy 2018: 260). Americans being more 'grammar conscious'[28] and more careful in following grammatical rules (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 167) can in this means be seen as a way to reach a more democratic English language, which does not divide people into classes.

Moreover, American attitudes towards British English seem to indicate that Americans tend to suffer from what Murphy (2018: 19) calls *American Verbal Inferiority Complex*[29] (AVIC), that is 'a neurotic sense of low linguistic self-esteem, characterised by lack of linguistic

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[26] A range of London-centric accents, known as *Estuary English* has started to emerge to come in the place of RP and is gaining ground in England, both socially and geographically (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 238; Murphy 2018: 231). Compared to RP, Estuary English is perceived as 'classless' (Murphy 2018).

[27] It should be kept in mind that some verbs always end in *-ise* regardless, e.g. *advertise, advise, compromise, rise, supervise, surprise* (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 155).

[28] American grammar consciousness, however, does not always hold up, especially in the spoken language (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 168).

[29] Despite this term, verbal inferiority complexes are not exclusive to Americans: symptoms of a verbal inferiority complex can be found in anyone who 'is overtly conscious of "correct" versus "incorrect" language' (Murphy 2018: 22), which can lead to phenomena such as hypercorrection, i.e. applying rules where they should not be applied.

self-worth and sometimes crippling verbal self-doubt'. Murphy (2018: 21) sees AVIC as what makes Americans perceive that people with British accents are smarter than they are, to the extent of believing anything a Brit would tell them about how their common language should be. As a professor of linguistics, Murphy (2018: 20) observed for instance that American university students tend to use Britishisms in their essays, assuming that this would improve the style of their writing. In the early days of the American nation, AVIC had a strong presence, ingrained in the fact that 'the US had yet to develop its own culture separate from the former colonial power' and 'Americans felt theirs was a substandard version of the language, rather than just a different version' (Murphy 2018: 266). In comparison, British attitudes towards American English seem to indicate the opposite phenomenon, namely *British Verbal Superiority Complex* (BVSC) (Murphy 2018: 49). In the US, being or sounding British seems to give a cultural capital, Murphy (2018) believes, which makes upward social mobility easier. It is then 'in English people's interest to provoke American verbal inferiority by declaring the inferiority of American English' (Murphy 2018: 21–22).

Furthermore, at the early days of the American colonies, BrE was largely predominant over AmE, but this started to change during the 20th century, as it took about 100 years after the American independence for 'America's linguistic centre of gravity [to] really [start] to shift away from Britain' (Murphy 2018: 119). This event turned English into a pluricentric language, which Clyne (1992: 1) describes as a language 'with several interacting centres, each providing a national variety with at least some of its own (codified) norms'. Beyond that, '[s]ince 1900 the balance of power has shifted markedly from BrE to AmE' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 150–152; see also Gonçalves et al. 2017). AmE is now the most populous native-speaker variety, with four times as many speakers as BrE (Svartvik & Leech 2006). Furthermore, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 152) argue that AmE 'looms larger than BrE as a target variety to be learned and imitated throughout the world' for both EFL and ESL. Finally, AmE has influenced World English through several channels of communication, such as television, the internet and popular culture (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 152). All in all, these elements demonstrate the pervasiveness of American culture and AmE. Through the current context of globalisation, Great Britain has not been spared and undergoes the transatlantic drift, which means that American habits are imported into the UK and that the British are busy borrowing linguistically from the US (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 157).

This growing dominance of the US has led to a global reactionary phenomenon, anti-Americanism, born out of the fear of seeing one's culture displaced by the American behemoth (Gienow-Hecht 2006: 1074; Murphy 2018: 12). This phenomenon, Gienow-Hecht (2006:

1068–1069) notes, 'seems to be unique to the United States' and is represented in Europe by 'a variety of heterogeneous expressions of this phenomenon, conditioned by geographical concerns and historical cycles' (Gienow-Hecht 2006: 1069). The proponents of anti-Americanism in Britain seem to operate against a background of nostalgia for its colonial period, as described by Gienow-Hecht (2006: 1081):

> In the early days of the Cold War, proponents of anti-Americanism in Britain focused on the belief that their country had yielded its status as an empire to the United States, while at the same time, many British felt that the New World could and should continue to learn from the mother country. (Gienow-Hecht 2006: 1081)

This criticism has not faded today as the British still criticise the imperialist ambitions of the US (Gienow-Hecht 2006). This general attitude towards the US nation also applies to its language and it is common for British people to suffer from *amerilexicophobia*, i.e. the fear of American words (Murphy 2018: 11). This fear 'feeds on the perception that American English, like the country it comes from, is too powerful and *takes over*[30]' (Murphy 2018: 12). During the last century, distaste for America was a way to resist American cultural imperialism (Murphy 2018: 7). Murphy (2018: 12) synthesises the crux of British linguistic anti-Americanism in the fact that '[t]he American role in the globalization of English is disconcerting for the nation that formerly exported the English language' as '[t]he British Empire practically invented linguistic globalization'. Moreover, she puts forward that 'distaste or admiration for a particular way of speaking is just thinly cloaked distaste or admiration for the people who speak that way' (Murphy 2018: 22). Accordingly, stereotypes about a people are transferred to the way they speak, which entails that the ambiguous relationship between the two countries only serves to reinforce the distaste or admiration for their way of speaking.

Ultimately, a point that seems important to consider is what really qualifies as AmE and BrE. Native speakers may sometimes believe that they can distinguish between AmE and BrE because they are confronted with both strains through books and television, but Murphy (2018: 29) dismisses this idea as 'the kind of blissful confidence about language knowledge that can only come from relative ignorance'. Even professional linguists may find it hard 'to make claims about "British English" and "American English"' because it is difficult to establish 'what counts as one or the other' (Murphy 2018: 61). Murphy (2018: 36) explains that 'our beliefs about language are steeped in cognitive biases'[31], making it unreliable to trust intuition or memory as our experiences with language 'are filtered through several layers of selective

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[30] Murphy's emphasis
[31] Murphy mentions several cognitive biases, i.e. *novelty bias*, *confirmation bias*, and *out-group homogeneity effect*. See Murphy 2018: 36–37 for further information.

attention'. Murphy (2018: 270) also puts forward the idea that '[t]he fear of Americanization has led British folk to misjudge their own language', leading to influenced divergence, such as in the case for collective noun agreement, 'with the British increasingly saying *the team are*' in response to Americans opting for *the team is.*

Finally, it should be noted that, although there are still 'calls to arms against linguistic impoverishment' from the British side, calls for tolerance and even appreciation of AmE are now ringing out (Murphy 2018: 268). British journalist Michael Skapinker (2013) points out that 'the US speak[ing] the same language has helped many Britons thrive during America's ascendancy'. The spread of English in the 20th century arose from the cultural and economic power of the US, which meant that British actors could be employed in Hollywood, that British newspapers gained worldwide readership, and that British authors – such as J.K. Rowling – ended up belonging to the world's bestsellers (Skapinker 2013). Therefore, Skapinker (2013) urges the British to 'thank America for saving our language'. This change in attitude is not, however, to be attributed to a new-found appreciation of the USA, Murphy (2018: 268) suggests, but rather to changing attitudes towards class, language shift and linguistic prescriptivism. As Western societies become more open, more voices can be heard in public forums (Murphy 2018). In addition to this, 'the academic field of linguistics has been increasingly effective in getting its messages out beyond university walls' (Murphy 2018: 268), which entails that linguistic change is more widely recognised.

2.2.4   *British English and American English: EFL vs ESL*

In the aftermath of World War II, the size and influence of the US could account for the increase in EFL learning. However, Murphy (2018: 290) notes that it is not AmE that is being spread: '[w]hile American economic power, media, and consumer goods were raising the profile of the English language in the 20th century, the UK was making the language an export product'. This was made possible by the British Council, founded in the 1930s to promote British culture, which Prince Charles described as ensuring 'that English maintained its position as the world language' (Murphy 2018: 290). Britain is establishing its leadership in the export of English in a number of ways, from the creation of dictionaries specifically geared for EFL learners to the organisation of language proficiency tests (e.g. the British Council-founded International English Language Testing System, henceforth IELTS) that allow entry into many English-speaking schools, universities and workplaces (Murphy 2018: 291). So although Americans are known for their cultural imperialism, it seems that they have not invested as much effort in exporting their language variety for EFL instruction purposes, 'content to piggyback on British

linguistic expansionism' (Murphy 2018: 290). Due to its history of immigration and linguistic integration, the United States seems to focus more on the acquisition of English by US citizens in order to live in an egalitarian society (Murphy 2018: 291).

History[32] would therefore suggest that BrE would be more inclined towards EFL instruction while AmE would predominantly focus on ESL instruction. This perspective has long been the traditional norm in Europe, as pointed out by Trudgill & Hannah (2008: 5; see also Gonçalves et al 2017: 5, Gilquin 2018: 7), although they also recognise the growing influence of AmE:

> Traditionally, schools and universities in Europe – and in many other parts of the world – have taught the variety of English which is often referred to as 'British English'. In this respect too, things have been changing and AmE has become a strong competitor of BrE in teaching. (Trudgill & Hannah 2008: 5)

This European preference for BrE is also acknowledged by Algeo (2006: 1), who states that:

> American has more native speakers than British and is rapidly becoming the dominant form of English in non-native countries other perhaps than those of Western Europe. Much European established academic bias favors British as a model; but evolving popular culture is biased toward American. (Algeo 2006: 1)

As increasing numbers of people speak English as a second language or as a foreign language, to the extent that they exceed the native speakers (see Section 2.2.1), the emphasis on 'British' and 'American' English should become less important, Murphy (2018: 293) argues, as English is 'a global language that works beyond borders'. This prompts Crystal (2012: 2) to declare the independence of English, claiming that 'nobody owns it anymore', while Svartvik & Leech (2006: 232) believe that native speakers will no longer have any special authority in how the English language is used and developed. Despite this, Murphy (2018: 293) finds that the choice of a national dialect remains important to many and that '[a]t the very least, a spelling system needs to be chosen'. Students and teachers debate which English is better to learn, speak or write, which may stem from the often made 'native is best' discourse found in English teaching and English testing (Murphy 2018: 293). Indeed, the tests allow all 'native' varieties of English[33], but test coaches do not recommend switching between AmE and BrE, arguing that this would make the language confusing for the listener or reader (Murphy 2018). Therefore, 'learners of English are meant to be conscious about which English they [are] aiming for and which one they [are] getting' (Murphy 2018: 293).

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[32] In particular, the Britons' imperialist past and the Americans' immigrant past
[33] Not only British and North American varieties, but also e.g. Australian and New Zealand (Murphy 2018: 292).

Fifteen years ago, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 233) noted that there were signs that Europe was showing a preference for a Mid-Atlantic variety of English, i.e. a mix of American and British characteristics. They believed that European teachers in the 1980s used to make a conscious decision in favour of one variety or the other, but that this was nowadays considered an 'outmoded attitude' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 233). However, the results presented in Nicaise's PhD dissertation (2015: 115) cast doubt on Svartvik & Leech's assessment. Nicaise (2015) conducted a survey among 105 EFL teachers and 38 student teachers from the WBF between 2009 and 2010 to research their attitudes towards native and non-native models of English in EFL instruction. In a question probing the choice of English varieties among French-speaking EFL teachers, an overwhelming majority (79%) of the respondents claimed to prefer BrE (Nicaise 2015). Some of the reasons mentioned included a willingness to provide consistent teaching with the pupils' knowledge and in harmony with the textbooks, which are often in BrE. The geographical closeness to Britain, the purity and the prestige the variety carries were other reasons given for this preference (Nicaise 2015: 117). In comparison, only 8% mentioned using AmE and 8% claimed to use both BrE and AmE (Nicaise 2015).

In a more recent corpus study, Gilquin (2018: 14) attempted to analyse the degree of influence of AmE and BrE on other varieties of English (ESL and EFL) in different regions of the world by determining the rate of 'Americanness' or 'Britishness' of twenty pairs of distinguishing AmE/BrE features. Although the results for EFL showed a rate of Americanness of 63.18% (58.26% in Europe), it also showed much more variation, spanning almost the entire scale (from 6.19% to 98.44%) (Gilquin 2018). These results may indicate several trends in the preferred variety in EFL instruction, as outlined by Gilquin (2018). First, the somewhat high rate of Americanness may reveal that 'the traditional view of EFL learners in the Expanding Circle as only getting exposed to the English language in the classroom, through instruction, no longer corresponds to the reality of most EFL learners' (Gilquin 2018: 25). Then, the variation in results seems to point to either 'a preference for certain individual AmE words/constructions rather than a true phenomenon of Americanisation affecting EFL across the board', and/or 'a preference for a word/construction that is somehow easier for learners to acquire and remember' (Gilquin 2018: 26). In addition, a test conducted among 130 Belgian (French- and Dutch-speaking) bachelor students majoring in English (in Gilquin 2018: 27) revealed that they were not always aware of the (American or British) origin of a selection of items submitted to them. This can suggest that 'EFL learners are unlikely to consciously choose an AmE item because they know it is American' (Gilquin 2018: 27).

2.2.5   *The future of English in the global village: the case of English as a lingua franca*

This section will attempt to look at the potential paths that English could potentially pursue in the future, focusing in particular on the emergence of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and its implications for EFL.

In the past, there was a belief that AmE and BrE were diverging so much that they would one day become two separate languages. Noah Webster compared the two varieties as two 'rays of light, shot from the same center, and diverging from each other' so that future AmE would be 'as different from the future language of England' (Murphy 2018: 86; Bryson 2009: 160). The break-up of the British Empire and the spread of varieties of English into 'new Englishes' has been compared to the situation of Latin and the process of diversification into Romance languages that it underwent after the division of the Roman Empire (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 223). The question has been raised whether English would undergo a similar process. This appears to be unlikely, as 'sufficient continuity of communication can preserve the oneness of a language' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 224) and films, television, books, and tourism are present-day factors acting as binding influences (Bryson 2009: 243–244). Nevertheless, it does not entail that there will not be divergence among the world's local varieties of English, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 224) explain. There is indeed a scale between the need to identify with one's local community and the need for international communication: while the former 'maintains the vigour of basilect and mesolect varieties', the latter 'maintains the importance of acrolect and standard varieties' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 224). English can thus be said to be pluralising and becoming a *language complex*, as Tom McArthur (in Svartvik & Leech 2006: 224) describes it, i.e. a language that is both singular and plural, both 'a language' and 'languages'.

Beyond the Inner and Outer Circles, English is nowadays increasingly used in the Expanding Circle as a lingua franca, that is 'as an intermediary between people with different native languages, none of them English' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 233–234). Svartvik & Leech (2006: 234) observe that it is 'developing its own systematic codes of usage, independent of the Inner Circle countries whose norms of usage have been so far regarded as the target for non-native speakers'. In this way, ELF develops features that may deviate from native standards because native features can be complex for non-native speakers to learn, e.g. pronunciations for the digraph *th*, /ð/ and /θ/, which can become /d/ or /z/ and /t/ or /s/ in ELF[34] (Svartvik & Leech

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[34] Some ELF grammatical features were also outlined by Seidlhofer (2004: 220), who considers their deviance from native-speaker norms unproblematic for ELF communication, e.g. the omission of -s in third person singular, using *isn't it?* as a universal tag or the confusion between *which* and *who*.

2006). These ELF features are often recognised by teachers as common errors in the interlanguage of foreign learners, i.e. 'the transitional system of a learner of a foreign language at any stage between beginner and advanced' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 234).

In view of the growing numbers of non-native speakers over native speakers of English, the question may be raised whether ELF will ever replace EFL in English Language Teaching (ELT). On the one hand, Jenkins (1998: 119) puts forward that '[t]he acquisition of a native-like accent is no longer the ultimate objective of the majority of learners, nor is communication with native speakers their primary motivation for learning English'. Instead, Jenkins (1998: 119) suggests that their ELT needs now revolve around successful communication 'with other non-native speakers of English from different L1 backgrounds'. On the other hand, this idea seems difficult to see implemented, Svartvik & Leech (2006: 234) argue, since tradition favours the teaching and testing of English using the standard native-speaker norms. They speculate that if ELF were to be codified based on observed usage, it would be more likely to be considered as an auxiliary international English for certain functions, which entails that native speakers would have to learn it as well (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 234). This view would, however, be in line with the search for an international auxiliary language 'lacking the irregularities and arbitrary details of real natural languages', such as Esperanto, Basic English or Nuclear English before, none of which have had any success (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 234–235).

In addition, the ELF project may encounter other difficulties. First of all, ELF would certainly also have regional 'dialects': it would be difficult to imagine ELF in Europe being identical to ELF in East Asia for instance (Svartvik & Leech 2006). Furthermore, it seems unlikely that teachers, educators, administrators or even students would 'readily turn their backs on the prestige of knowing a "proper language", [World Standard English]' and the providers of EFL 'will not easily yield ground to ELF' (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 235). This perception is reinforced by the fact that many scholars 'continue to describe the expanding circle Englishes indiscriminately as EFL varieties', i.e. an English 'learned as a foreign language for use in communication with native speakers' and which is described as 'norm-dependent' on inner circle varieties in Kachru's model (Jenkins 2006: 161). Furthermore, European Englishes have been assumed not to be 'legitimate varieties' as 'they did not arise through colonisation and have not undergone a process of institutionalisation' (Jenkins 2006: 164). In Belgium, the preference for native norms seems to be confirmed by the survey conducted by Nicaise (2015) among English (student) teachers from the WBF. It was found that a vast majority of respondents (69.2%) considered the native model to be the standard to aim for (Nicaise 2015).

According to the respondents, it 'remains the ideal type of language to aim for' whose standards, even if unattainable, 'need to be set' (Nicaise 2015: 115). Other responses included the confusion of what the non-native model represents, in contrast to the native language, and the fear that this lack of standards would lead the international model to too great a deviation from its original (Nicaise 2015: 115–116). Another reproach levelled at the non-native model, in line with the one directed at artificial international languages, is that it 'misses out on the rich cultural background' (Nicaise 2015: 116). A minority of respondents opted for a non-native model (16.7%) or a mix of native and non-native (7.6%).

Meanwhile, it seems that where English has made a home abroad, people gradually seem to want to speak their own version of the language, as is the case in Norway, where sociolinguists Ulrikke Rindal and Caroline Piercy conducted interviews with English-learning adolescents (Murphy 2018: 295). A 'large minority' of them claimed to wish to acquire a 'neutral' accent, not wanting to pass as American or British (Murphy 2018: 295). The rest of the respondents were distributed between those who aimed for BrE (34%) and those who preferred AmE (41%) (Murphy 2018). The lack of clear-cut alternatives and of an international learning context has been deplored by Jenkins (1998: 126), for whom the 'inclination tends to be towards EFL rather than [ELF], regardless of the future uses to which the learners will put their English'.

2.3   Language teaching methods in Belgium: a chronological overview

This research seeks to synchronically establish whether there is a language norm in EFL instruction in the WBF. However, it seems important to take a closer look at the different foreign language teaching methods (FLTMs), which, because of their main concerns, might have put the emphasis on different aspects of ELT over time. In other words, a diachronic analysis of language teaching methods in the WBF might provide some clues to present-day norms and attitudes in EFL teaching. To this end, a global account of the FLTMs used over the last 250 years will be given. This account is based on Howatt & Smith (2014) and Simons (2020). Howatt & Smith's formula has been retained, adopting a *periodisation approach*, which groups the different methods used in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) from 1750 to the present day into four periods: the Classical Period (1750-1880), the Reform Period (1880-1920), the Scientific Period (1920-1970) and the Communicative Period (1970-present day). Howatt & Smith (2014) drew the boundaries of these four periods on the basis of their main concerns and general approaches, moving from one period to the next solely when a significant paradigm shift was apparent. Whereas Howatt & Smith (2014) present the FLTMs from a

British and European perspective, Simons's (2020) contributions will be of particular interest to focus on the FLTMs within these four periods which have been influential in TEFL in Belgium.

2.3.1   The Classical Period (1750-1880)

The first period, known as the Classical Period, extended from the end of the 18th century to the end of the 19th century[35] and was mainly embodied by the Grammar-Translation Method in Belgium. Its core concern was to emulate the teaching of classical languages (Howatt & Smith 2014). This implies that the methods used at that time had two main objectives: to teach students how to decode and analyse the grammatical rules of the foreign language and to raise awareness of the culture of the foreign country through its literature (Simons 2020). Literature teaching was emphasised in reaction to 'some of the criticism coming from the classicists' who considered 'that modern languages were "soft options"' (Howatt & Smith 2014: 79). Alongside literature, analytical grammar teaching was a key feature of this period, making it one of its priorities to select an intellectual elite in society (Howatt & Smith 2014; Simons 2020). Many criticisms were levelled at the methods of this period, notably their 'exaggeration and excess', as well as their 'continued failure to treat the spoken language with the respect it deserves' (Howatt & Smith 2014: 79). Indeed, as travel and means of communication improved, so did the need for practical skills in spoken language, and 'increasingly arcane grammar rules, increasingly silly sentences for translation and increasingly lengthy and wearisome lists of exceptions for memorization' did not help in this regard (Howatt & Smith 2014: 80). This led to the end of the emulation of classical languages in the following period, which has not returned since (Simons 2020).

2.3.2   The Reform Period (1880-1920)

The following period, known as the Reform Period, developed in opposition to the Classical Period and emphasised 'the teaching of spoken language as the main pedagogical activity since, it was argued, speech is the primary foundation of all language activity' (Howatt & Smith 2014: 81). During this period, the language teaching paradigm was moving away from traditional topics such as grammar and literature[36] and towards 'a practical command of the modern spoken

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[35] This does not imply that the influence of its methods is no longer found today. Indeed, the Grammar-Translation Method, in particular, is still strongly present in higher education in the WBF. Simons (2020: 11) argues that teachers can therefore feel torn between the demands of secondary education and the methods used in their initial scientific training.

[36] Both topics were still present, but were less prominent than in the Grammar-Translation Method (Simons 2020: 6).

language' (Howatt & Smith 2014: 82). In this respect, the Direct Method gave priority to oral expression, using the target language (almost) exclusively[37], and aimed at teaching the language relevant to everyday conversation (Simons 2020: 6). While the use of the pupils' mother tongue was in theory mostly proscribed, Howatt & Smith (2014: 84) point out that secondary school teachers 'were quite happy to use the mother-tongue judiciously, for example to explain new vocabulary', but still rejecting the translation into the language that was being learned. All in all, Simons (2020: 6) concluded that the Direct Method contained several of the essential principles on which modern didactics is based, but a century before the advent of the Communicative Approach (see Section 2.3.4.1).

2.3.3 The Scientific Period (1920-1970)

The Scientific Period was named after the fact that didactic ideas were justified in the light of insights from the new social sciences, especially linguistics, but also 'learning theory derived from psychology' (Howatt & Smith 2014: 85). Several methods were influential in Belgian education during this period: the Oral or Compromised Method[38], the Audiolingual Method and the Audio-Visual Method.

2.3.3.1 The Compromised Method

The Compromised Method took its roots from the Grammar-Translation Method and in the Direct Method. Both of these methods were abandoned due to their limiting aspects, whereas the Compromised Method has retained their best and strongest aspects and merged them to lead to the most open eclectic practice possible. The objectives and core principles of the Compromised Method were formulated by François Closset, the leading figure of this method in Belgium and former professor of modern language didactics at the University of Liège, in his book *Didactique des Langues Vivantes* (1942):

> Telles sont les raisons qui ont fait abandonner l'emploi intégral et exclusif de la méthode directe. On en a retenu ce qu'elle avait de meilleur, de plus solide, de définitivement acquis : l'emploi de la langue étrangère dans la mesure du possible, le recours à l'intuition et à l'activité de l'esprit, la vie ; mais on l'a assouplie en la combinant avec la méthode indirecte ou grammaticale, on en a fait une pratique éclectique, accueillante à tous les procédés de contrôle (exercices, versions, thèmes, etc.). (Closset 1942: 40–41, in Simons 2020: 8)

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[37] Note that at that time, the teacher was the language model in the classroom, not the native speaker, because audio recording had not yet developed (enough) to justify its use in schools.

[38] It should be noted that at the time this method came out, only scientific aspirations were on the agenda and that the Compromised Method is closer to the methodology of the two previous periods than to the structuralist and behaviourist methodology of the two subsequent methods (the Audiolingual and Audio-Visual Methods).

The Compromised Method emphasises the active participation of pupils and gives priority to the practice of the foreign language, without excluding the use of the language of schooling to clarify specific grammatical or semantic elements. It also includes many oral exercises based on real-life situations (Simons 2020: 10). Grammar is introduced inductively, in a well-balanced progression (Simons 2020). Finally, it reuses the translation exercises present in the Grammar-Translation Method, but in a moderate way (Simons 2020).

2.3.3.2   The Audiolingual Method

The Audiolingual Method was developed between the 1930s and the 1950s in the US (Simons 2020). This method was strongly influenced by de Saussure's structuralism, on the linguistic side, and Watson's and Skinner's behaviourism, on the psychological side (Simons 2020). These two currents changed the way language teaching was conceived during the Scientific Period, as described by Howatt & Smith (2014: 85):

> By the end of the [Scientific] period, key features of all good teaching practice were considered to be the use of drills and exercises aimed explicitly at the formation of correct habits in the production of grammatical structures which had themselves been scientifically selected. (Howatt & Smith 2014: 85)

The combination of these two currents resulted in several methodological principles of the Audiolingual Method, such as the priority given to oral language through the imitation of a linguistic model[39] ('pattern') (Simons 2020). The aim was to create new language habits in the learner by following the 'stimulus → response → feedback' behavioural methodology (Simons 2020). This method, unlike the next one, was not very successful in Belgium (Simons 2020).

2.3.3.3   The Audio-Visual Method

The Audio-Visual Method was developed in France starting in the 1950s, but really gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s (Simons 2020). Its core principle remained the same as its predecessor, the Audiolingual Method, i.e. the creation of linguistic behaviours through the imitation of models provided by native speakers (Simons 2020). However, it used 'a filmstrip technology to present social situations accompanying tape-recorded dialogues' (Howatt & Smith 2014: 88). One of the criticisms directed at the Audiolingual and Audiovisual Methods was the total absence of reflection on language, in favour of focussing on systematic drill exercises, which led to highly repetitive, even mechanical teaching (Simons 2020). The exercises promoted by this method left little freedom for pupils to produce and express their

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[39] In contrast to the Direct Method, the native speaker became the linguistic model in the Audiolingual Method.

ideas (especially in writing), as the primary concern was to avoid the fossilisation of mistakes, which can arise due to the pupils' mother tongue (Simons 2020: 13). Furthermore, the predominance of aural skills (listening and (limited) speaking) in these FLTMs has severely limited the written aspects of language learning, emphasising the quality of pronunciation and intonation (Simons 2020).

2.3.4 The Communicative Period (1970-present day)

Around the 1970s, a communicative paradigm shift took place in foreign language teaching: man began to be perceived as a necessarily communicating being, or, in Watzlawick, Bavelas & Jackson's (1967: 275) words, 'one cannot *not* communicate' (Simons 2020). In Europe, there was also a political will to encourage exchanges between peoples, which entailed promoting foreign language learning (Simons 2020). It is around this chain of thought that the Communicative Period has developed since the 1970s, meaning that the aims and priorities of language teaching have shifted away from 'the acquisition of well-rehearsed skills in their own right and towards the confident use of those skills in the attainment of purposes and objectives of importance to the learner in the "real world"' (Howatt & Smith 2014: 88).

2.3.4.1 The Communicative Approach

Within this period, the Communicative Approach, also known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), emerged following on from an initiative of the Council of Europe 'to create an internationally valid language assessment system, which in turn led to a fresh approach to course design through the specification of objectives in semantic/pragmatic rather than the traditional syntactic terms' (Howatt & Smith 2014: 89). From this initiative sprang the lists of lexical fields and language functions to be covered in language teaching, which are still included in the legal requirements of the WBF to this day (see Chapter 3) (Simons 2020). Unlike the FLTMs presented in the sections above, CLT was not presented as a method, but as an approach (Simons 2020). This means that, besides the general objectives and guidelines proposed, no methodology is explicitly imposed, and therefore affords teachers a great deal of pedagogical freedom (Simons 2020). This freedom, however, makes it difficult to define what the Communicative Approach is in comparison with its predecessor FLTMs (Simons 2020). This does not prevent CLT from exhibiting a number of characteristics common to all its varieties, which are outlined below.

First, CLT differs from earlier FLTMs in that the teaching system is no longer defined in terms of subject matter or method, but according to the learner's *presumed*[40] needs so that they can use the language outside the classroom in plausible communication situations (Simons 2020: 19). CLT therefore sets the learner as its central element, compared to the Audiolingual Method which, following the behaviourist theory, focused on the linguistic environment (Simons 2020).

Secondly, the Communicative Approach lives up to its name in that language is no longer the core concern, but communication (cf. *communicative competence*) is: language is thus seen as a tool for (inter)acting in plausible communication situations (Simons 2020). Communicative competence[41] in CLT is divided into five sub-competences: linguistic competence, sociocultural competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Simons 2020). In the context of this research, it is mainly the first two sub-competences that attract our attention: the first one, *linguistic competence*, enables the effective use of lexical, grammatical and phonetic tools to carry out a communicative activity, while the second one, *sociocultural competence*, enables an understanding of the cultural references, what is implicit in the discourse of the interlocutor and to react appropriately (Simons 2020).

Thirdly, and because of the limited exposure to the foreign language, another objective of the language course under CLT is to increase the learner's independence. In this way, the roles of the student and the teacher change in perception: the former becomes an actor in their learning and has to take responsibility for themselves, while the latter is a learning facilitator, a reference person between the student and the language (Simons 2020).

Fourthly, all four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) are now considered important in learning, although it is true that listening and speaking are more important in the early stages of learning (elementary level) and reading and writing become more important in the intermediate and advanced levels (Simons 2020). Regarding receptive skills (listening and reading), *authentic* documents are used, i.e. documents which are created *by* native speakers *for* native speakers (Simons 2020).

Fifthly, CLT uses a *functional-notional approach* as its methodological backbone, which means that the objectives are articulated for communication purposes (Simons 2020). It

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[40] The needs are considered as *presumed* as they were assessed by the designers of the Communicative Approach (Simons 2020: 19).

[41] Although the term is used in CLT, it did not originate in that context. The term was coined by anthropological linguist Dell Hymes (1967, 1972) in response to Noah Chomsky's theory of *language competence* and *performance*, whose distinction was later deemed fallacious (Celce-Murcia 2007: 42).

was on the basis of a reflection carried out in the 1960s by the Council of Europe on the real, concrete, authentic speech acts produced or likely to be produced by a target group of learners that the *language functions* (i.e. what language can express, e.g. 'making suggestions') and the *notions* (i.e. the concepts with which one performs language functions) were developed (Howatt & Smith 2014: 89; Simons 2020: 21–22). This reflection led to the publication of Van Ek's *The Threshold Level of English* (1975), which was later adapted to the school context with Van Ek's *Threshold Level for Modern Language Learning in Schools* (1976) (Simons 2020).

2.3.4.2   The CEFR's Action-Oriented Approach

The Council of Europe's CEFR, published in 2001, has had a significant influence on foreign language course design in the EU[42] as it provides a taxonomy of proficiency levels (the common reference levels[43]), defined by transparent proficiency criteria for all language learners. Simons (2020) notes that a disclaimer in the preamble to the CEFR announces that the CEFR merely asks questions without providing answers. This means that the CEFR is not intended to be prescriptive about the *objectives* and *methods* to be adopted for foreign language teaching in Europe (Simons 2020: 29). Nevertheless, the CEFR favours an approach, which is termed 'action-oriented'[44]. The CEFR defines this action-oriented approach as follows:

> A comprehensive, transparent and coherent frame of reference for language learning, teaching and assessment must relate to a very general view of language use and learning. **The approach adopted here, generally speaking, is an action-oriented one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks** (not exclusively language-related) **to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action.**[45] While acts of speech occur within language activities, these activities form part of a wider social context, which alone is able to give them their full meaning. We speak of 'tasks' in so far as the actions are performed by one or more individuals strategically using their own specific competences to achieve a given result. The action-based approach therefore also takes into account the cognitive, emotional and volitional resources and the full range of abilities specific to and applied by the individual as a social agent. (Council of Europe 2001: 9)

Hence, the action-oriented approach complements the Communicative Approach by considering the foreign language speaker *and* learner as *social agents* who must be able to use language as a vehicle for communication in order to accomplish a number of *tasks* in a given *context*.

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[42] In the WBF, the latest reference frameworks are based on the CEFR and define the target levels at the end of each two-year stage according to the taxonomy of levels proposed in the CEFR. We will return to the CEFR in Section 3.3 to investigate the place of language variation within it.

[43] The six proficiency levels are, in order, A1 (Breakthrough), A2 (Waystage), B1 (Threshold), B2 (Vantage), C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency) and C2 (Mastery) (Council of Europe 2001: 23)

[44] This approach is also known as Task-based language teaching (TBLT)

[45] Emphasis mine

In the WBF, the transition between the Communicative Approach and the action-oriented approach was not so clear-cut, in fact, so much so that a neologism, combining the two approaches, has recently appeared in the latest modern language curricula: 'l'approche communic'actionnelle'[46] (FESeC 2018: 61). This label reflects, on the one hand, the complementarity of the two approaches, but also the difficulties of fully implementing the action-oriented approach in foreign language teaching in the WBF. Simons (2021) finds several disadvantages to project-based pedagogy, which is extremely similar to the expectations of a fully implemented action-oriented approach. First of all, it is very time-consuming to carry through (Simons 2021: 22), while it is well-known that teachers tend to lack time to achieve the objectives set by the frameworks of reference (Simons 2021: 32). Moreover, the action-oriented approach really puts pupils in the position of 'social agents', which implies that the task must be carried out by them: it is therefore possible to imagine that the investment involved will vary according to the pupils (Simons 2021: 23). Finally, Simons (2021: 23) also highlights the difficulty of evaluating projects that have been carried out in groups, as can be expected of pupils having to play the part of 'social agents'.

2.3.5 Summary and conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that there have been many FLTMs and approaches since the introduction of foreign language teaching in schools around the middle of the 18th century (Howatt & Smith 2014: 91). Simons (2020: 35) notes that the history of methods and approaches to foreign language teaching seems to be driven by a 'pendulum swing', whereby a new reform emerges in opposition to the previous one with, at times, a more eclectic method that refocuses the pendulum by seeking to achieve a compromise between previous methods (cf. Compromised Method). Figure 7.3 (in Appendix 3) shows Simons's (2020) pendulum metaphor, including all methods and approaches (excluding the CEFR's action-oriented approach).

It might be tempting, Howatt & Smith (2014: 92) state, 'to assume that teaching methods replace one another and "old" ones are thrown into the "dustbin of history" but […] this is probably rather rare'. Several reasons can be advanced to substantiate this. First of all, the success of new methods is not necessarily ensured by their 'supposed intrinsic merits', but rather by 'the degree to which they correspond with teachers' abilities or otherwise to use them' (Howatt & Smith 2014: 92). Then, Howatt & Smith (2014: 92) also point out that the labels

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[46] Henceforth translated as 'communic'actional approach'

associated with the methods tend to emerge retrospectively for easier reference, usually in a detached or even dismissive posture. However, it is perhaps simplistic or idealistic to assume that, within a given period, all teachers will conform to the FLTM which is the current 'norm'. Indeed, Simons (2020: 36) argues that the FLTMs and approaches have rarely been strictly applied in Belgium, as teachers seem to prefer an *eclectic* approach for several reasons. In particular, he mentions a resistance to change that is widespread among teachers, which can stem, among other things, from a certain distrust or weariness following the advent of several methods or approaches, all presented as 'the right one' (Simons 2020: 10).

With regard to the subject of this research, this overview highlights several elements. First, whereas the Direct Method only involved the teacher as a linguistic model, the technological means which were developed in the 20th century made it possible, as early as the Audiolingual Method, to record native speakers and to introduce them as language models in the EFL classroom. It can be hypothesised that, in the absence of native audio-visual material prior to the Audiolingual Method, geographical proximity to the UK was a far more important factor than it is today and that, therefore, the absolute majority of teachers might have been teaching BrE for this reason. Secondly, the history of FLTMs and approaches shows that we have entered a communicative zeitgeist, where communicative competence and mutual understanding seem to be two essential aspects. It could therefore be assumed that teachers do not attach much importance to the variety used by pupils as long as communication is not hindered.

3 The Written Norm of EFL in the Legal Texts of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation

3.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the different legal documents in force in the WBF in order to report on the place of linguistic variation within them. The second section of this chapter will establish hypotheses to the two research questions related to the analysis of official documents, based on the insights gained in Chapter 2. Section 3.3 will focus on the place of linguistic variation within the various frameworks of reference for modern languages, which set out the legal requirements for the teaching of modern languages, as well as the curricula of the official and free networks, which determine how the legal requirements ought to be implemented in practice. To this end, the frequency of the following lemmas will be analysed: *variété (linguistique)*, *variation (linguistique)*, *différence (linguistique)*, *(anglais) britannique*, *(anglais) américain*, *(langue/anglais/variété) standard*[47]. Due to the polysemous nature of these words, each occurrence will be analysed and deemed relevant if it fits in the context of the word(s) in brackets. Section 3.4 will then carry out the same analysis for the CEFR, in its English[48] version, which served as the basis for the development of the current frameworks of reference in the WBF.

3.2 Hypotheses

On the basis of the several conclusions drawn from the previous chapter of this dissertation, several hypotheses can be put forward for the two research questions relevant to the official documents. These hypotheses are summarised in Table 3.1 below. With regard to the third research question, i.e. whether the legal requirements show a preference for a specific variety of English, three hypotheses can be formulated. The first hypothesis ($H_{3.0}$ or *null hypothesis*[49]) would be that the legal requirements do not mention linguistic variation at all. The second hypothesis ($H_{3.1}$) is that if the legal requirements express a preference for certain varieties of English, they will favour a choice between teaching British or American English, but without

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[47] Although some of the legal documents are also issued in English, only the French version is legally binding, which is why the analysis of the WBF legal texts will only be conducted in the French version. These lemmas are searched regardless of their declension.

[48] For the analysis of the CEFR, the frequency of the following lemmas will be analysed: *(linguistic) variety*, *(linguistic) variation*, *(linguistic) difference*, *British (English)*, *American (English)*, *standard (language/English/variety)*. These lemmas are searched regardless of their declension.

[49] Null hypotheses have been added in case the statistical hypothesis testing proves to be inconclusive

imposing any variety. This reflection is based on the prevalence of BrE and AmE in the global ELT industry (see Section 2.2.4), while taking into account that, due to globalisation, other standard varieties are emerging on the world stage and that linguistics is succeeding in conveying that these varieties are just as recognisable as BrE or AmE (see Section 2.2.3). The last sub-hypothesis ($H_{3.2}$) is that the legal texts would allow a standard language (read: *any* standard language) to be taught, allowing for even more geographical variation than BrE or AmE, while restricting the learning of non-standard varieties. Although popular culture makes frequent use of forms considered non-standard, it seems unlikely that these are sanctioned by legal requirements, since standard forms have always been seen as the most suitable for education (see Section 2.1.3). For the fifth research question, which seeks to establish the place given to linguistic variation in the CEFR, the null hypothesis ($H_{5.0}$) is that the CEFR would not mention linguistic variation in the teaching of foreign languages. However, if the CEFR does mention linguistic variation, it could be expected to be tolerant towards the different varieties that a language possesses as per the current context of globalisation ($H_{5.1}$).

Table 3.1 – Research questions and hypotheses regarding the legal texts

RESEARCH QUESTIONS			HYPOTHESES
Q_3	Do the legal requirements and curricula of the WBF show a preference for a specific variety?	$H_{3.0}$	The legal texts do not mention linguistic variation in the teaching of foreign languages.
		$H_{3.1}$	The legal texts of the WBF allow a choice between British or American English, but do not impose a variety.
		$H_{3.2}$	The legal texts of the WBF require that a standard language be taught.
Q_5	What place does the CEFR give to linguistic variation?	$H_{5.0}$	The CEFR does not mention linguistic variation in the teaching of foreign languages.
		$H_{5.1}$	In view of the context of globalisation, the CEFR is expected to be tolerant of the different varieties that a language possesses.

3.3 The importance of linguistic variation in the legal texts of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation

3.3.1 Frameworks of reference for modern languages

In the WBF, several frameworks of reference are in force for modern language teaching in secondary education: the *Socles de compétences – Langues modernes* (2017) and the *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis* (1999, 2017). The former defines the objectives at

the end of the primary education and the second year of secondary education, while the latter outlines the goals at the end of the sixth (or seventh) year of secondary education. While the new frameworks of reference (2017) will fully come into force in secondary education as of the academic year 2021-2022, this section will also look at the previous ones (1999) in order to establish a comparison over time.

Looking at the *Socles de compétences* (see Table 3.2[50]), it can be observed that the new version (2017) contains more occurrences of the terms *variété*, *variation*, *différence*, *britannique*, *américain* or *standard* than the previous one (1999): while the old framework of reference does not refer to these lemmas in its nine pages, the term *standard* occurs three times in the 128-page new version (2017). Looking more closely at the context in which these lemmas appear, the new framework includes the notion of standard language in the parameters to take into account when assessing oral interaction competence at the A1 and A2- CEFR levels. However, the notion is not used to describe the expectations of pupils' oral production, but rather the context in which they should be placed, i.e. the teacher, assuming the role of the native or assimilated speaker, is required to speak in a standard language, without any strong regional accent that would be an obstacle to the comprehension of the message[51]. This is understandable, given the low level at which the *Socles de compétences* is aimed. Moreover, as the new reference frameworks are based on the CEFR, they also introduce the socio-cultural dimension, which implies, among other things, that the pupils should learn to 'decode various facts, behaviours and reference points useful for communicating and behaving appropriately' and to 'identify the socio-cultural elements that guarantee effective communication'[52] (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles 2017a: 31, 68). Despite the note that this dimension ought to be worked on as often as possible (FWB 2017a: 12), the *Socles de compétences* does not set precise objectives for this at a beginner level. This means that with a relative frequency of 0% (1999) and 2.34% (2017), there is no emphasis on language varieties at beginner level for pupils. The only guidelines are that teachers are expected to speak a standard language when interacting with their pupils.

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[50] The layout of this table is freely inspired by that of Maud Noël in her thesis (2019).

[51] Note that the '*sans accent régional marqué*' part is not found in the *Socles de compétences* (FWB 2017a), but in the *Compétences terminales* (FWB 2017b, 2017c). However, given that the beginner levels are supposed to be the same in both documents and the sentence in the *Socles de compétences* seems strangely formulated ('*l'interlocuteur* [...] *s'exprime dans une langue standard qui constituerait un obstacle à la compréhension*'), one can imagine that this is purely an oversight.

[52] Original quote: 'Le cours de langue moderne constitue une opportunité pour amener l'élève à : [...] **décoder** divers faits, comportements et points de repères utiles en vue de communiquer et se comporter de façon adéquate ; [...] identifier les éléments socioculturels garants d'une **communication efficace**.' (FWB 2017a: 12; original emphasis).

With regard to the *Compétences terminales et savoirs requis*, more references can be seen in the new version (19 references in 398 pages) than in the old one (three references in 18 pages), but the relative frequency is lower in the new reference framework (4.77% vs 16.67% in the old one) as it has more pages (398 p. vs. 18 p.). The old *Compétences minimales* text (1999) is not particularly specific about language variation, mentioning only that written and oral messages used in listening and reading skills ought to be in a standard language. The new framework is more detailed in comparison: in addition to using the same descriptors as the new *Socles de compétences* for beginner levels (A1–A2), the new *Compétences terminales* (2017) imposes the same requirements for listening and reading skill messages as in the old reference framework. Furthermore, the grammar which needs to be covered is more detailed in the new framework, only with the clarification that the grammatical elements of reference ought to be those constituting a standard language at B1 and B2- levels (FWB 2017b: 131). The grammar at B2- level can also be coloured in terms of language registers (FWB 2017b: 149).

In summary, it is possible to observe an increase in the absolute frequency of terms referring to linguistic variation, although this only concerns the notion of standard language. Nonetheless, this growth must be put into perspective due to the equally increasing length of the new frameworks. This suggests that it is not possible to observe a strong presence of the notion of linguistic variation in the reference frameworks. When it is present, it is only in relation to the expectations of the teacher's preparations (i.e. restricting the language presented to pupils to what is considered standard) without specifying clear objectives in terms of skills to be attained by pupils.

Table 3.2 – Overall frequency of the lemmas *variété*, *variation*, *différence*, *britannique*, *américain* and *standard* in the frameworks of reference of the WBF

	Socles de compétences – Langues modernes		*Compétences terminales et savoirs requis*	
	Old (1999)	New (2017)	Old (1999/2000)	New (2017)
Absolute frequency (N_{occ})	0/9	3/128	2/11 (HGT) + 1/7 (HPT)	12/233 (HGT) + 7/165 (HPT)
			3/18	19/398
Relative frequency (N_{occ}/N_p)	0%	2.34%	18.18% (HGT) 14.29% (HPT)	5.15% (HGT) 4.24% (HPT)
			16.67%	4.77%

N_{occ}/N_p = $N_{occurrences}/N_{pages}$; HGT = *Humanités générales et technologiques*[53]; HPT = *Humanités professionnelles et techniques*[54]

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[53] *Humanités générales et technologiques* (HGT) refers to general and technical secondary education.
[54] *Humanités professionnelles et techniques* (HPT) refers to vocational and technical secondary education.

3.3.2   Curricula for modern languages

This section now seeks to investigate the latest curricula, which are based on the 1999 and 2017 reference frameworks analysed in the previous section. Indeed, while the frameworks determine what must be taught, curricula define how the subject matter should be covered. This entails that the curricula may differ from one network to another, while keeping a common core, i.e. the requirements from the latest reference frameworks. This section will therefore analyse the 2000 and 2018 curricula of the free network and the 2000 and 2020 curricula of the official network (*Wallonie-Bruxelles Enseignement*[55]).

First of all, the analysis of the free network curricula reveals, in the same way as for the frameworks, no use of the terms *variété*, *variation*, *différence*, *britannique* or *américain*. Only the notion of standard language is present (15 occurrences in 70 pages). In the new curriculum of the free network, the place of standard language is the same as in the new frameworks. However, it is interesting to note that in the old curriculum, standard language is not only a criterion for the teacher to take into account when choosing texts and audio tracks for listening and reading skills, but also a criterion of correctness for pupils in the productive skills:

> [Au terme du troisième degré,] l'élève sera capable de produire un message oral en situation de communication significative et réaliste, dans une **langue standard non spécialisée**, en **adaptant le registre de langue** à la situation et/ou à son interlocuteur. (FESeC 2000a: 18; original emphasis)

> [Au terme du troisième degré,] l'élève sera capable de rédiger un message écrit, cohérent et logique, s'adressant à une personne, dans une situation de communication significative et réaliste. Il utilisera une **langue standard non spécialisée**, en **adaptant le registre de langue** à la situation et/ou à son interlocuteur. (FESeC 2000a: 18; original emphasis)

These two curriculum extracts are the only ones where the use of standard language is used with explicit reference to the expectations for pupils, not for teachers. When analysing the number of occurrences of *(langue) standard* (see Table 3.3), it can be seen that the absolute frequency is similar between the old and the new curricula of the free network, but the relative frequency has been halved (from 10.95% to 5.13%) due to the new curriculum being twice as long (210 pages vs. 409 pages in total). Coupled with the fact that the importance of the standard language is now limited to what the new frameworks stipulate, it would seem that the curricula of the free network have become less precise in their expectations of the language used by pupils in the productive skills over time. As with the frameworks, the use of standard language is viewed in relation to the teacher and the way they teach.

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[55] Henceforth abbreviated WBE.

Table 3.3 – Overall frequency of the lemmas *variété*, *variation*, *différence*, *britannique*, *américain* and *standard* in the curricula of the official and free networks of the WBF

	FREE NETWORK		OFFICIAL NETWORK (WBE)	
	Old (2000)	New (2018)	Old (2000)	New (2020)
Absolute frequency (N_{occ})	5/140 (OA) + 15/70 (2-3T)	3/114 (1DC) + 12/166 (HGT) + 6/129 (HPT)	0/9 *(Introduction)* + 1/14 *(Cahier 1)* + 1/45 *(Cahier 2)* + 8/73 *(Cahier 3)* + 18/40 *(Cahier 4)* + 0/66 *(Cahier 5)*	29/359 (1DC) + 38/448 (HGT) + 36/386 (HPT)
Total	**20**/210	**21**/409	**28**/247	**103**/1193
Relative frequency (N_{occ}/N_p)	3.57% (OA) 21.43% (2-3T)	2.63% (1DC) + 7.23% (HGT) + 4.65% (HPT)	0% *(Introduction)* 7.14% *(Cahier 1)* 2.22% *(Cahier 2)* 10.96% *(Cahier 3)* 45% *(Cahier 4)* 0% *(Cahier 5)*	8.08% (1DC) 8.48% (HGT) 9.33% (HPT)
Average	**9.52%**	**5.13%**	**11.34%**	**8.63%**

N_{occ}/N_p = $N_{occurrences}/N_{pages}$; OA = *Outils d'accompagnement*; 2-3T = *2e-3e degrés transition*; 1DC = *1er degré commun*; HGT = *Humanités générales et technologiques*; HPT = *Humanités professionnelles et techniques*

In comparison, the official network curricula (both old and new) appear to provide more detail on linguistic variety than the free network curricula, with the terms *variété*, *variation*, *différence*, *britannique*, *américain* and *standard* occurring several times, as shown in Table 3.4[56]. Despite the occurrence of the other terms, the analysis shows that the focus remains on the standard aspect of the language, with a much higher occurrence for the lemma *standard*, particularly in the new HGT and HPT curricula, in which the term accounts for about half of the total relative frequency.

Table 3.4 – Frequency of the lemmas *variété*, *variation*, *différence*, *britannique*, *américain* and *standard* in the curricula of the official network of the WBF

	Old (2000)				New (2020)					
	C3 [73 pp.]		C4 [40 pp.]		1DC [359 pp.]		HGT [448 pp.]		HPT [386 pp.]	
	N_{occ}	%	N_{occ}	%	N_{occ}	%	N_{occ}	%	N_{occ}	%
variété	-	-	5	12.5	4	1.11	4	0.89	4	1.04
variation	-	-	-	-	3	0.84	3	0.67	3	0.78
différence	-	-	-	-	6	1.67	6	1.34	6	1.55
britannique	-	-	5	12.5	4	1.11	4	0.89	4	1.04
américain	-	-	2	5	2	0.56	2	0.45	2	0.52
standard	8	10.96	6	15	10	2.79	19	4.24	17	4.40
Total	**8**	**10.96**	**18**	**45**	**29**	**8.08**	**38**	**8.48**	**36**	**9.33**

N_{occ} = $N_{occurrences}$; % = N_{occ}/N_{pages}; C3 = *Cahier 3*; C4 = *Cahier 4*; 1DC = *1e degré commun*; HGT = *Humanités générales et technologiques*; HPT = *Humanités professionnelles et techniques*

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[56] The layout of this table is freely inspired by that of Nathalie Moers in her thesis (2020).

When investigating the old curriculum of the official network (2000) and its various *Cahiers* in more depth, the standard language is presented as being in a difficult position because of the media, the songs and the ambient culture, which can undermine the status of this strictly formalised standard language learned at school (Communauté française de Belgique (*Cahier 1*) 2000: 9). Moreover, the same curriculum recognises that the communicative aim of learning a foreign language should relativise the priority of perfecting the language, while acknowledging that the school context retains a very strong link to the norm and cultivates the fear of mistakes (CFB (*C1*) 2000: 10). The notion of standard language then reappears in the third and fourth *Cahiers*, where it is stated that listening and reading comprehension exercises are facilitated when the accent and language are standard (CFB (*C3*) 2000: 8, 18). The final goal for both skills is set as being able to understand a message in a *standard* language (ibid.: 10, 20). The fourth *Cahier*, with its focus on language and its evolution, shows the highest frequency of searched terms (45%, i.e. 18 occurrences in 45 pages; see Table 3.4). This *Cahier* explains that, because of the limited time available for learning, it is necessary to make wise choices in teaching language varieties. To do this, the curriculum gives three general objectives: pupils ought to (a) express themselves in a standard language, (b) express themselves in an appropriate language register, and (c) understand a wide range of varieties. The first objective assumes that by learning a 'standard' language, pupils should be able to access the different varieties they might encounter with relative ease. With regard to TEFL more specifically, the curriculum states the following:

> [E]n anglais, aucune directive n'est donnée quant au choix entre l'anglais britannique et l'anglais américain. Il paraît toutefois *indiqué*[57] de réserver une place significative à l'anglais britannique, langue de nos voisins directs et base de la langue culturelle internationale (CFB (*C4*) 2000: 2)

Although the old curriculum does not preclude teaching AmE, its authors seem to find learning BrE more *appropriate* due to the UK's geographical proximity and BrE being the starting point of the international cultural language. The second objective implies that pupils must be able to express themselves in a range of different registers and choose the one that best suits the communication situation (between formal and colloquial). In terms of receptive skills, the third objective implies that pupils should progressively learn to understand interlocutors speaking another standard or near-standard language of other major language regions. Interestingly enough, the curriculum only mentions BrE and AmE in that regard.

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[57] Emphasis mine

In comparison, the new official network curricula (2020) are substantially less precise and restrictive. When it comes to the free network curricula, the notion of standard language is based on what is described in the new reference frameworks, which is more limited than in the old curriculum. However, the new curriculum still considers that learning a standard language should enable pupils to access the different language varieties they might encounter. In the same vein, BrE is no longer advertised as the variety that automatically prevails[58]. In terms of linguistic variation, pupils need to be made aware of the differences existing from one variety to another and which, in a communication situation, might hinder proper understanding or expression, which is in line with the Communicative Approach as described in Section 2.3.4.1. Among the existing differences between varieties, the curriculum mentions lexicon, spelling, grammar, pronunciation, intonation and cultural elements[59].

In summary, in both the free and the official network curricula, there was an increase in the absolute frequency of searched terms, but this was not proportional to the increase in the length of the documents, which drastically reduced the relative frequency of the lemmas in the new curricula. Moreover, the official network curricula have a higher relative frequency than the free network curricula, and all searched lemmas appear in them, unlike the free network curricula. The official network curricula accordingly seem to address more aspects of linguistic variation than the free network curricula, which only mention the standard language to the same extent as the reference frameworks. One of the most striking changes is the removal of the recommendation that pupils should speak BrE in the official network curricula. In the future, and provided that the recommendations of the legal texts truly have an influence on teachers' choice of variety[60], this lack of explicit recommendation could lead to greater diversity in the varieties chosen by teachers.

Several avenues could be explored to explain this lack of emphasis on language variation in the curricula. First of all, since the law of 29 May 1959, known as the *Pacte scolaire*, the school organising authorities have been free to determine their own teaching methods (art. 6, in Lafontaine 2019: 4). Hence, if the reference frameworks do not impose a variety to teach, the curricula ought not to be too restrictive, lest they encroach on this pedagogical freedom to which teachers are attached. Secondly, the removal of the recommendation to teach BrE seems to go hand in hand with the Communicative Approach

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[58] This does not necessarily mean that this mindset is no longer widespread, especially since the new curricula might not have had enough influence on the language which is taught and learned.
[59] With this in mind, the survey administered to teachers and analysed in Chapter 4 focuses only on differences of lexicon, spelling, grammar and pronunciation.
[60] This question constitutes research question 4, which is addressed in Chapter 4.

and the current context of globalisation. The new curricula of the official network states in this respect that the differences between language varieties should be taught so that they do not hinder communication *in specific communication situations*. Consequently, setting expectations that are too precise in terms of language varieties to learn could be limiting and lead teachers to favour one variety over another, which would make pupils able to communicate *effectively* in a given language area, but not necessarily elsewhere. Another view would be that, as seen in Section 2.2.3.1, the varieties of standard English are sufficiently similar to be mutually intelligible (here, AmE and BrE), which would mean that the variety chosen would be of little importance, as long as pupils were aware of the differences between language areas.

3.3.3 Conclusion

Following the analysis of the reference frameworks and curricula for modern languages, it is now possible to test the hypotheses of research question 3, i.e. 'Do the legal requirements and curricula of the WBF show a preference for a specific variety?'.

First, the null hypothesis ($H_{3.0}$), i.e. 'The legal texts do not mention linguistic variation in the teaching of foreign languages', can be directly rejected, since as demonstrated, linguistic variation is indeed addressed in the legal texts, albeit in a limited way. Regarding the next hypothesis ($H_{3.1}$), i.e. 'The legal texts of the WBF allow a choice between British or American English, but do not impose a variety', it would seem that this hypothesis should also be partially rejected in view of the latest legal prescriptions, which are less precise than the old ones. Indeed, only the official network curriculum of 2000 allows a choice between British and American varieties with a slight preference for the British variety, which has since disappeared. However, although the recommendation is no longer explicit, the new curricula of the official network only give examples of differences between BrE and AmE. This difference in representation could be seen as a preference, or simply as reflecting the reality of the quantitative importance of these two varieties among EMT speakers (see Section 2.2.1). Finally, the last hypothesis ($H_{3.2}$), 'The legal texts of the WBF require that a standard language be taught', appears to have been confirmed, given the importance that the legal texts give to the standard language in modern language instruction. Still, it would be worthwhile to find out from the teachers whether they allow non-standard forms in their pupils' speech (see Chapter 4). In conclusion, the legal texts currently in force are no longer precise enough to impose a variety of English in TEFL. In the past, only the official network curriculum gave preference to BrE. It is therefore unlikely that the legal texts have been of major importance in setting the language norm in the WBF.

3.4 The importance of linguistic variation in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

As previously stated in Section 2.3.4.2, the Council of Europe's CEFR has had a significant influence on educational policies in Europe over the last two decades, 'provid[ing] a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe' (Council of Europe 2001: 1). In Belgium, in particular, the latest frameworks of reference were based on the CEFR as they have integrated the six Common Reference Levels (from A1 to C2) in determining the objectives to be achieved by pupils. Since its original publication, two Companion Volumes have been issued in 2018 and 2020 to complement the inputs of the original CEFR. Taken together, these three documents form an integrated set of policy-making considerations, which does not intend to enforce anything. It would therefore be interesting to conduct the same analysis as in Section 3.3 to see to what extent the authors of the WBF's new reference frameworks have drawn from the CEFR. This analysis would also provide an insight into how language varieties are perceived in modern language instruction in Europe. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of the CEFR and its two Companion Volumes might help discover whether the perception of or emphasis on language variation has evolved over the years in the Council of Europe's perspective.

When searching for the occurrences of the lemmas *variety*, *variation*, *difference*, *British*, *American* and *standard* in the CEFR and its Companion Volumes (see Table 3.5), several observations can be made. First of all, it can be seen that all the lemmas appear in the three documents, with the exception of *British* and *American*. This can be explained by the European dimension of the CEFR and the multiplicity of languages and varieties falling within the scope of the document: the aim of the CEFR is not to target aspects of specific languages, but to provide very general descriptors which can be applied in a wide range of situations to a substantial set of (varieties of) languages. Then, with each new version, the absolute frequency of the searched terms increases. This can notably be explained by the fact that the Companion Volumes incorporate original passages from the CEFR in order to modify or improve specific descriptors[61]. Nevertheless, for a relatively similar number of pages between the three documents, the relative frequency of terms doubles between the 2001 CEFR and its 2018 and 2020 Companion Volumes.

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[61] These original descriptors are indicated in blue font in the 2018 Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2018: 45)

Table 3.5 – Frequency of the lemmas *variety*, *variation*, *difference*, *British*,
American and *standard* in the CEFR (2001) and its Companion Volumes (2018, 2020)

	CEFR (2001) [265 pp.]		CV (2018) [235 pp.]		CV (2020) [278 pp.]	
	N_{occ}	%	N_{occ}	%	N_{occ}	%
variety	5	1.89	26	11.07	52	18.71
variation	3	1.13	1	0.43	1	0.36
difference	7	2.64	15	6.38	17	6.12
British	-	-	-	-	-	-
American	-	-	-	-	-	-
standard	39	14.72	62	26.39	43	15.47
Total	**54**	**20.38**	**104**	**44.26**	**114**	**40.65**

N_{occ} = $N_{occurrences}$; % = N_{occ}/N_{pages}; CV = Companion Volume

In Table 3.5, the two lemmas with the highest frequency are *standard* and *variety*. It is worth noting that *variety* has very little presence in the original CEFR, while having the highest frequency of all the searched words in the 2020 Volume, increasing its relative frequency over time from 1.89% to 18.71%. With regard to the term *standard*, its high frequency can be explained by its importance in the descriptors of the CEFR levels for different language skills in specific contexts (e.g. *Listening as a member of a live audience*, *Reading as a leisure activity* or *Watching TV, film and video*). Unlike *standard*, the term *variety* is rarely a feature of the CEFR descriptors – at least in the 2001 CEFR and the 2018 Companion Volume. Instead, the term appears mainly in relation to the notion of plurilingualism and plurilingual and pluricultural competence (see Table 7.1 in Appendix 4). Plurilingualism is described as 'an uneven and changing competence, in which the user/learner's resources in one language or **variety**[62] may be very different in nature to those in another' (Council of Europe 2018: 28). When it comes to the 2020 Volume, the term *variety* also occurs in the descriptor scales: the collocation *familiar variety* is considered as an alternative to the standard language, such as in the following excerpt:

> Overall oral comprehension (B1): Can understand the main points made in clear standard language or a **familiar variety**[63] on familiar matters regularly encountered at work, school, leisure, etc., including short narratives. (Council of Europe 2020: 48)

In comparison, the CEFR and its 2018 Volume make no mention of a *familiar variety*:

> Overall listening comprehension (B1): Can understand the main points of clear standard speech[64] on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure etc., including short narratives. (Council of Europe 2018: 55)

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[62] Emphasis mine
[63] Idem
[64] Idem

Looking more closely at the descriptors in which the notion of *variety* appears in the 2020 Volume, there are several observations to be made.

First, the notion of *familiar variety* occurs from level B1 up to level C2. At levels B1 and B2, it is presented as an alternative to a clearly formulated standard language (at level B1) or a standard language (at level B2). From level C1 onwards, the variety of English understood may become unfamiliar and the discourse may be extended and cover complex and abstract topics, although the learner/speaker 'may [then] need to confirm occasional details' (Council of Europe 2020: 48). At level C2, for the *Understanding an interlocutor* skill, the learner/speaker should be able to understand any interlocutor, even on abstract and complex topics, provided that they have been 'given an opportunity to adjust to a less familiar variety' (Council of Europe 2020: 73).

A second finding is that the collocation *familiar variety* only appears in the 2020 CEFR for the descriptors of aural skills, i.e. oral comprehension, audio-visual comprehension, and the comprehension of the interlocutor part of oral interaction. Therefore, it can be seen that the CEFR only introduces linguistic variation from level B1 onwards for the listening comprehension skill. Looking at the expected levels of listening comprehension in secondary school in the WBF's new reference frameworks[65], this aspect would therefore only be attainable, according to the CEFR, in the last three years of secondary school (for modern language 1 pupils[66]), or even the last (two) year(s) of secondary school (for modern language 2 pupils[67] and technical education pupils with four hours of English a week). As far as the term *standard* is concerned (see Table 7.2 in Appendix 4), in addition to the contexts in which it is found alongside *familiar variety*, the term is also found in the reading comprehension descriptors, but only in the sub-skill *Reading as a leisure activity* at level C1.

Hence, it would seem that the loose requirements in terms of language variation in the new reference frameworks are in line with the CEFR[68]. As in the reference frameworks, the CEFR does not mention *standard language* or the notion of variety in the productive skills (oral production, written production, written interaction or online interaction), but only uses it as a criterion for the input to which the learner/speaker can be exposed.

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[65] Namely, for listening comprehension, A2(-) at the end of the first two years in secondary school, B1(-) at the end of the 4th year in modern language 1 and A2(+) in modern language 2, B1(+) at the end of the 6th year in modern language 1, B1(-) in modern language 2 and A2(+) in modern language 3 [that is, pupils who study English from the fifth year of secondary school onwards]. For pupils in technical education, only pupils with four hours of English per week are expected to reach a B1(-) level in listening comprehension by the end of their sixth year.

[66] That is, pupils who study English from the first year of secondary school onwards

[67] That is, pupils who study English from the third year of secondary school onwards

[68] It should be noted, however, that the new frameworks were published before the 2020 Volume, which makes more mention of variety in its descriptor scales.

The following change in the notion of standard language between the first two versions of the CEFR (2001, 2018) should also be taken into consideration: whereas the CEFR refers to the competence *Understanding a native speaker interlocutor* (Council of Europe 2001: 75), the 2018 Volume only refers to *Understanding an interlocutor* (Council of Europe 2018: 84), which suggests that the Council of Europe does not necessarily recognise being able to hold a discussion with a native speaker as an inherent goal of foreign language learning anymore (see Section 2.2.5). Furthermore, from the 2018 Volume onwards, the C2 level descriptor for this competence no longer mentions a *non-standard* accent or dialect, as was the case in the 2001 CEFR, but now refers to a *less familiar variety*:

> C2: Can understand any native speaker interlocutor, even on abstract and complex topics of a specialist nature beyond his/her own field, given an opportunity to adjust to a **non-standard**[69] accent or dialect. (Council of Europe 2001: 75)

> C2: Can understand any interlocutor, even on abstract and complex topics of a specialist nature beyond their own field, given an opportunity to adjust to a **less familiar variety**[70]. (Council of Europe 2020: 73)

The notion of non-standard language has, however, not entirely disappeared from the CEFR over the years: the competence *Understanding audio (or signed) media and recordings* still retains in the 2020 Volume that a learner/speaker at level C1 'can understand a wide range of recorded and broadcast material, including some non-standard usage' (Council of Europe 2020: 52). Nonetheless, level C1 is still not relevant for secondary school pupils in the WBF, and levels B1 and B2 only refer to the comprehension of a standard language for this skill.

Finally, when looking at the occurrences of *difference* (see Table 7.3 in Appendix 4), it is possible to see that the term is never used in the collocation *linguistic difference*, but in connection with borderline fields, thus referring to *sociocultural*, *sociolinguistic* and *stylistic differences*. So, in the CEFR's action-oriented approach, linguistic differences are seen from a cross-cultural communication perspective, in order to ensure that sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences do not impede communication (Council of Europe 2018: 122; see Section 2.3.4.1). The CEFR descriptors mentioning these sociolinguistic and sociocultural competences range from level B1 to level C2, but there are few descriptors at level B1 for these competences, namely only one in the competence *Sociolinguistic appropriateness*:

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[69] Emphasis mine
[70] Idem

> B1: Is aware of, and looks out for signs of, the most significant **differences**[71] between the customs, usages, attitudes, values and beliefs prevalent in the community concerned and those of his or her own. (Council of Europe 2001: 122)

In addition, the authors of the CEFR state that '[i]n early learning (say up to level B1), a relatively neutral register is appropriate, unless there are compelling reasons otherwise' (Council of Europe 2001: 120), restricting the language registers learned up to level B1, which is the final objective of foreign language learning in most types of education in the WBF.

In conclusion, we can now attempt to test the original hypotheses for the CEFR-related research question, that is, 'What place does the CEFR give to linguistic variation?'. First of all, the null hypothesis, 'The CEFR does not mention linguistic variation in the teaching of foreign languages' ($H_{5.0}$), should be discarded. Indeed, as we have seen, the various searched terms do appear in the CEFR (with the exception of *British* and *American* for the reasons already mentioned) and their relative frequency has doubled between the original version and the Companion Volumes. This may suggest that the CEFR is placing increasing emphasis on the notion of language variety, in particular by including it in its descriptors alongside the notion of standard language.

Secondly, with regard to hypothesis 5.1, i.e. 'In view of the context of globalisation, the CEFR is expected to be tolerant of the different varieties that a language possesses', the strong increase in the frequency of the term *variety* did not result in a restriction to certain language varieties. On the contrary, the CEFR has added the notion of 'familiar variety' as an alternative to the standard language in the descriptors, calling for consideration of the different varieties that belong to a language and are less visible behind the term *standard language*. Furthermore, replacing the term 'non-standard accent or dialect' (Council of Europe 2001: 75) with 'less familiar variety' (Council of Europe 2020: 73) may have two effects on the perception of linguistic variation. First, it reinforces the legitimacy of existing varieties (and dialects), which are then perceived in relation to the familiarity that learners/speakers have with them, rather than in a standard/non-standard language dichotomy which is no longer adequate to talk about different varieties in today's linguistic academic context in view of the number of languages which, over time, have become pluricentric. Secondly, it further reinforces the hegemony of the standard language as a model in language teaching, to the detriment of linguistic elements considered non-standard, which see their representation in the descriptors decrease.

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[71] Emphasis mine

As a result, it would seem that the CEFR is now more tolerant of different language varieties in comparison to its original version (2001), where the political desire to unite Europe by promoting the acquisition of European languages was more keenly felt (see Section 2.3.4).

3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of the curricula and reference frameworks in force in the WBF and the analysis of the CEFR revealed that, with time, greater tolerance seems to have been shown towards linguistic varieties in foreign language learning: the emphasis is no longer on one particular variety (as recommended in the former curriculum of the official network), but rather on familiarising pupils with a *standard language* in a *neutral register* (up to level B1) before opening up to more registers from level B1 onwards. Indeed, the curricula consider that learning a standard language in a neutral register allows pupils access to the different linguistic varieties that they may encounter. Because of the lack of consensus on the issue between networks and the fact that it is no longer explicitly stated in legal texts, it may be time to ask teachers and future teachers about the language practices they (would) accept from their pupils, and experts in the field of foreign language (teaching), who may have an influence on the variety that teachers favour. Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to this case study in the WBF.

4 Investigating the Norm of EFL Among (Future) Teachers

4.1 Introduction

As established in Chapter 3, the modern language curricula and reference frameworks of the WBF do not appear to exhibit much precision or impose many restrictions regarding linguistic variation. This allows teachers a certain freedom in the variety they wish to use and teach in the EFL classroom. In the absence of highly explicit rules, it is necessary to look into teachers' practices so as to establish whether there might be an implicit norm present in the WBF. To this end, a survey for (future) English teachers in the WBF was designed. Its main purpose was to establish whether there was a linguistic norm in the teaching of English and, if so, what variety it was leaning towards. Secondly, it aimed to investigate teachers' attitudes towards pupils who employ a variety other than that used by the teacher. Its third and final aim was to gather teachers' views on the value and place of linguistic variation in foreign language teaching. Subsequent analysis of this survey will provide insight into three research questions of this dissertation.

4.2 Hypotheses

On the basis of the three relevant research questions and relying on the several conclusions drawn from the previous chapters of this dissertation, several hypotheses can be put forward. These hypotheses are summarised in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 – Research questions and hypotheses regarding the online survey

RESEARCH QUESTIONS			HYPOTHESES
Q_1	Is there a language standard among (future) secondary English teachers in the WBF? If so, towards which variety of English?	$H_{1.0}$	There is no strong language norm that emerges from the survey results.
		$H_{1.1}$	A majority of (future) teachers state that their variety of preference leans towards British English.
		$H_{1.2}$	Variants of English other than the standard language are not tolerated.
		$H_{1.3}$	Teachers might be less tolerant of the specifics of American English grammar compared to American vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation.
Q_2	What attitudes do teachers display towards pupils using a variety different from the one they use?	H_2	A majority of teachers are tolerant of both varieties, regardless of the variety they use
Q_4	What influence do the legal texts for English as a foreign language in the WBF have on the language norm?	H_4	Few teachers report that they have been influenced by legal texts in their preferred variety.

With regard to the first research question, i.e. whether there is a language standard in EFL teaching in French-speaking Belgium, four hypotheses were formulated. The first hypothesis ($H_{1.0}$ or *null hypothesis*) is that it may not be possible to observe a strong linguistic norm emerge in the WBF. Given the prevalence of BrE in TEFL exports (see Section 2.2.4), it is a reasonable assumption that if a strong language norm were to emerge from the survey, it would lean towards BrE ($H_{1.1}$). Moreover, as previously identified in the official documents of the WBF that a *standard* variety is expected to be taught (see Section 3.3), it is unlikely that teachers would tolerate the more *dialectal* variants ($H_{1.2}$). Finally, the last sub-hypothesis surmises that if teachers were to tolerate AmE, this would be more obvious in vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation than in grammar ($H_{1.3}$). For the second research question, which seeks to establish what attitudes teachers demonstrate towards pupils who use a variety different from them, it was hypothesised that a majority of teachers would be tolerant of both varieties, regardless of the variety they use (H_2). In terms of the fourth research question, only one hypothesis was put forward, namely that few teachers would report being influenced by the legal texts in choosing their preferred variety (H_4). An analysis of the survey results will enable these hypotheses to be confirmed or invalidated.

4.3 Methodology

This section aims to chronologically present the different steps that were necessary to conduct this quantitative research, with a particular focus on the design of the survey and its constituent parts.

4.3.1 *Survey construction*[72]

The survey was conceived following the advice and proofreading of Professor Germain Simons. Audrey Renson, a doctoral student in the field of foreign language didactics at the University of Liège, was also of great assistance, giving a seminar on how to design a survey and enhance the participation rate. She also reviewed the survey in one of its final stages and provided advice to make the questions more intelligible and easier to analyse. The survey eventually went through eight versions from October 2020 to January 2021 before its trial run in late January (see Section 4.3.1.5) and ensuing administration in early February 2021 (see Section 4.3.2).

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[72] It should be noted that a paper version of the online survey is available to consult in Appendix 8.

These successive revisions eliminated some risks of bias[73], in particular by rephrasing ambiguous or loaded statements and by splitting double-barrelled questions into two separate ones, as recommended by Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010: 41–42). Due to the relative length of the survey and in order to ensure that the nuances of the questions were understood by all the participants, the survey was designed in French, which was assumed to be the mother tongue of the vast majority of respondents[74]. This survey was designed in such a way that it complied with the legal requirements set out in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR; 2016), namely by guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality to respondents and informing them of their role in completing the survey.

4.3.1.1 Survey sample

The survey was designed for English teachers in the WBF, as well as for students training to become English teachers, as their input could be of interest when compared with the teachers'. Secondary school teachers were of particular interest in the population of this research, as their language norm could be compared to the legal requirements of the WBF. However, as a language norm can be described as operating at a more global level, all English teachers in the WBF were welcome to participate, whether they worked in primary, secondary or tertiary education.

4.3.1.2 Survey medium

The survey took the form of an online questionnaire. This medium was preferred in view of the ease of designing, administering, completing the survey and subsequently analysing its results. When it came to choosing the platform on which to host the survey, many free options had to be discarded considering a conditional logic was essential for the development of the survey. Indeed, based on their responses in Section II.a, respondents had to answer a question from either Section II.b or II.c, but not both[75]. Conditional logic was therefore indispensable so as not to make all the questions appear, which would have disrupted an easy answering flow for the respondents. The platform ultimately chosen was Qualtrics, the survey platform of the management faculty of the university, which turned out to tick all the boxes and give me many

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[73] It should be kept in mind that there are several risks of bias when conducting research through surveys or interviews. Although some may have been avoided or mitigated through extensive proofreading, others are inherent in the type of survey conducted. See Section 4.3.3.2 for a more thorough discussion of those risks.

[74] For the sake of consistency, the survey questions will be translated into English when outlined in the following sections. The original French formulation can be found in Appendix 8.

[75] This will be further detailed in Section 4.3.1.3.3

possibilities in the design of the survey, including a *Display Logic* feature, which displayed some questions if and only if their given condition(s) was/were met.

4.3.1.3 Structure of the survey

The survey was divided into three main sections, each with a different objective. Section I consisted in a general introduction to the survey, where the main goals of the research were presented. Besides the general instruction, Section I also included space for the respondents' profile, i.e. several factual questions to learn more about their background. The survey itself was divided between Sections II and III. At the end of the survey, an additional section was added to thank the respondents for their participation in the study and give them the opportunity to leave their contact details if they wanted to receive the results of the survey after analysis or agreed to be contacted to provide further information on their teaching practices.

4.3.1.3.1 General introduction

In the general introduction, the study was briefly introduced and the importance of the teachers' participation was outlined. As Audrey Renson emphasised in her seminar, a good introduction is particularly important because it can maximise participation. Several guidelines were therefore followed in writing the introduction: Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010: 19) suggest requesting honest answers by stressing that there are no right or wrong answers, as well as promising confidentiality and thanking the respondents for their time. In order to ensure that all teachers and prospective teachers responded to the survey in the same way, they were asked not to consult any dictionaries or grammar books. This request was necessary to ensure that the responses would be as close as possible to the 'natural' attitudes of teachers towards language variation. However, it was obviously impossible to substantiate whether respondents followed this instruction. In addition, other general guidelines for completing the survey were included, such as the estimated time (20-30 minutes, based on the trial run conducted), the requirement to be able to listen to audio extracts when completing the survey, and the possibility to pause the survey between sections. These additional guidelines may have prevented some participants from dropping out in the middle of the process.

4.3.1.3.2 Section I: Respondents' profile

Below the general introduction were several factual and behavioural questions to determine the respondents' profile, i.e. whether the respondent was a teacher or a student teacher, what province they came from, their scientific background, whether they had stayed abroad in an

English-speaking country, and how they kept in touch with the English of native speakers. In addition, further questions were displayed to the teachers to specify their profile. They were asked how long they had been teaching, whether they had a pedagogical diploma, and in which level(s) of education (primary, secondary or tertiary), which form(s) and branches (general, technical or vocational) they were working this year. There were thirteen questions in total in the respondent profile section, five of which were only visible to teachers.

4.3.1.3.3 Section II: Corpus of BrE/AmE items

The purpose of Section II was to submit a corpus of BrE and AmE items to the respondents in order to establish which variety they allowed or tolerated from their pupils. The corpus was composed of British and American pairs of differences in vocabulary, spelling, grammar and pronunciation. The corpus was assembled on the basis of major differences found in the scientific literature on the subject, namely four books addressing the differences between BrE and AmE (Darragh 2000; Svartvik & Leech 2006; Bryson 2009; Murphy 2018). This choice was made for several reasons. First, if these categories of differences can be found in the literature, it would be reasonable to expect that they are sufficiently documented. Secondly, the most salient categories of differences were more likely to be familiar to teachers and therefore to be taught, whereas minor differences might be overlooked. As seen in Section 2.1.3, written differences between BrE and AmE are not particularly common, so it was important to take categories that were sufficiently generalisable so as not to fall into superfluous differences related to individual idiolects, rather than national standard differences. Once the corpus was compiled, it was sent to Professor Lieselotte Brems for approval and after correction of a few pairs of items, was incorporated into the survey. The survey corpus can be consulted in Appendix 5 and an in-depth analysis of its items can be found in Appendix 6.

The corpus was presented to respondents in the form of question matrices in Section II.a. For each pair of items, the respondents were asked to mark their acceptance of one or both items, as they would do when assessing the written or oral production of their pupils. To do so, they were asked to tick box A (if they considered only item A to be correct), B (i.e. only item B is considered to be correct) or AB (i.e. both items are deemed correct). Each category (vocabulary, spelling, grammar, pronunciation) was clearly explained so that respondents would not be confused as to what they had to analyse. Afterwards, depending on which box they ticked, respondents were asked a specific clarifying question in Section II.b or II.c for each pair of items. If they ticked box AB to indicate that they would accept both options, a question in Section II.b would ask them which option they believed they used more frequently. In

contrast, if they ticked either box A or box B, a question in Section II.c asked them to tick one (or several) explanation(s) they would give their pupils to explain why they consider the other option to be wrong. The rationales that respondents could tick are outlined in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2 – Possible justifications in Section II.c of the survey

POSSIBLE JUSTIFICATIONS COMMON TO ALL FOUR CATEGORIES	
❑ This is not standard English[76]. ❑ This is American English and I teach British English. ❑ This is British English and I teach American English. ❑ This is not a word / spelling / grammatical construct / pronunciation that my pupils will often come across; it is not useful for them to learn it. ❑ I do not know this word / spelling / grammatical construct / pronunciation.	
POSSIBLE JUSTIFICATIONS SPECIFIC TO ONE CATEGORY	
Spelling	❑ The word is misspelled.
Grammar & Usage	❑ The register is not appropriate: the construction is too formal ❑ The register is not appropriate: the construction is too informal ❑ The construct is not grammatically correct.
Pronunciation	❑ The word is mispronounced.

In addition to the choices, there was an open-ended question at the end of Section II.c ('Do you also give your pupils other reasons to those suggested above? If so, list them in the box below') also provided respondents with an opportunity to indicate other reasons given to their pupils than the checkable propositions.

In this way, Sections II.a and II.b aimed to shed light on the most commonly used variety and Section II.c to reveal possible ideologies (or preconceptions) of teachers about language variation.

4.3.1.3.4 Section III: Survey on linguistic variation in the EFL classroom

The final section of the survey sought to collect teachers' attitudes and opinions regarding the place of linguistic variation in the EFL classroom in the WBF. For this purpose, different types of questions were used, namely Likert scales and multiple-choice questions. Likert scales are defined by Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010: 27) as follows:

> Likert scales consist of a series of statements all of which are related to a particular target (which can be, among others, an individual person, a group of people, an institution, or a concept); respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they *agree*[77] or *disagree*[78] with these items

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[76] To ensure that the meaning of *Standard English* was agreed upon by all respondents, the following definition from Merriam-Webster was translated into French and provided at the top of Section II.c: 'the English that with respect to spelling, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary is substantially uniform though not devoid of regional differences, that is well established by usage in the formal and informal speech and writing of the educated, and that is widely recognized as acceptable wherever English is spoken and understood' ("Standard English" n.d.)

[77] Dörnyei & Taguchi's emphasis

[78] Idem

by marking […] one of the responses ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010: 27)

The value of using these types of closed-ended questions lies in the ease of coding participants' responses and their subsequent analysis. While open-ended questions require a cumbersome coding process, closed-ended questions are comparatively more straightforward to code, which stems from the fact that the processing of the latter does not require content analysis (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010: 84). One of the potential risks, however, was that the range of possible responses may not have been sufficiently anticipated and that some respondents may not find their answer in any of the boxes. For questions where this might occur, an *Other* checkbox was added where text entry was possible. For the Likert scales, it was decided to take Professor Simons's advice and use an even number of response options (*Strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree*). Some researchers favour this alternative to Likert's classical five response options to prevent respondents from using the middle category to 'avoid making a real choice' (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010: 28). Over the course of the reviews, the Likert scale items were sometimes subdivided to prevent them from containing two separate questions. Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010: 42) have shown that double-barrelled questions should be avoided at all costs in Likert scales, where only one answer is expected, as there is then 'no way of knowing which part of the question the answer concerned'.

Each question in Section III was designed with a purpose in mind. The remainder of this section will describe their relevance to the subject.

To begin with, a first category of questions sought to determine the respondents' preferred variety of English, why they chose it and the extent to which they adhered to it. Questions 22-24 aimed to identify which variety of English respondents state they learned in secondary school, in higher education, and which variety they used in the classroom.

Q22. Which variety of English did you mainly learn when you were a secondary school pupil?
Q23. Which variety of English did you learn when you were a higher education student?
Q24. What variety of English do you use in class when speaking to pupils?

Question 25 was then designed to identify factors that may have influenced the respondents' choice of variety (e.g. a consistent school choice among all teachers, a recommendation from educational curricula, a personal preference, prestige associated with the variety or the variety learned as a pupil/student). For each factor, respondents were asked to choose whether it had an *influence*, a *low influence*, a *high influence* or *no influence at all* on their choice of variety. This question was therefore intended to identify positive beliefs towards the respondents' chosen variety.

Q25. To what extent did the following reasons influence your choice of variety?

Question 26 asked whether teachers were consistent in their use of their preferred variety and question 173[79] inquired, if not, under what circumstances they switched from one variety to another.

Q26. Are you consistent in the use of the variety you use in class?

Q173. For which reason(s) do you switch from one variety to another? Check whether you *agree*, *disagree*, *strongly agree* or *strongly disagree*.

A second category then focused on how the respondents would react towards the use of another variety of English in their school than the one they used. Question 180 was a multiple-choice question to gauge how a teacher would react if a pupil used a different variety to the one the teacher used in the classroom. If they responded that they asked them to use the same variety as they did, a clarifying question (Q181) prompted them to describe their reaction if the pupil did not switch varieties: did they then consider the pupil's response as 'correct' or as 'incorrect'?

Q180. How do you react when a pupil uses a different variety than the one you use in class?

Q181. How do you react if a pupil still uses the other variety than the one you recommend/allow? You can specify your answer in the box.

Question 182, in the form of a Likert scale, assessed how teachers would react if a colleague used a variety other than their own.

Q182. How would you react if one of your colleagues was using a different variety in the classroom than yours? For each proposal, tick whether you *agree*, *disagree*, *strongly agree* or *strongly disagree*.

The last category of questions consisted of questions 27 and 28, whose purpose was to analyse the respondents' attitudes, beliefs and habits regarding linguistic variation. Question 27 inquired about the variety or varieties of English present in the documents used in class.

Q27. What variety(-ies) of English are used in the documents you use in class with your pupils? If you do not use a document, tick *Not applicable*

Question 28 was a Likert scale with nineteen items, with the objectives displayed in Table 4.3 below.

Q28. For each proposal, tick whether you *agree*, *disagree*, *strongly agree* or *strongly disagree*.

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[79] Please note for the sake of clarity that the question numbers do not follow the order of the survey, but the chronological order in which the questions were created. These question numbers were not displayed to the respondents, but are included here and in Appendix 8 for ease of reference to specific questions.

Table 4.3 – Objectives of the items in Q28

ITEMS	OBJECTIVES
(1) I try to systematically give my pupils synonyms from the other variety.	Do teachers also teach vocabulary from the other variety?
(2) I allow my pupils to choose the variety in which they want to **write**. (3) I allow my pupils to choose the variety in which they want to **speak**.	Can pupils choose the variety they want to speak and write in the classroom?
(4) Pupils must stick to the variety they choose: one cannot mix BrE and AmE when **writing**. (5) Pupils must stick to the variety they choose: one cannot mix BrE and AmE when **speaking**.	Can pupils mix the two varieties when speaking or writing?
(6) British English is better recognised worldwide than American English. (7) Students who are proficient in British English will have more professional opportunities than students who are proficient in American English.	Do teachers feel that British English is more recognised than American English?
(8) I feel sufficiently well trained to differentiate between British and American English when **reading**. (9) I feel sufficiently well trained to differentiate between British and American English when **listening**.	Do teachers feel adequately trained to distinguish between the two varieties in reading and listening?
(10) The variety of English I use to address my pupils is the same as the one I speak personally (outside the classroom) (11) When I enter the classroom as a teacher, I feel I have to speak an English which is as *standard* as possible.	Do teachers use the same variety in and out of the classroom? Do they feel compelled to use a standard language in the classroom?
(12) Learning different varieties has its place **in the lower secondary** English course. (13) Learning different varieties has its place **in the upper secondary** English course. (14) Learning different varieties has its place in the English course **in higher education** (college/university). (15) Learning different varieties has its place in the English course **in further education**.	Do teachers think that learning different varieties of English has its rightful place in secondary, higher and further education[80]?
(16) Language variation should be an integral part of the curriculum in the initial **scientific training** of future teachers. (17) Language variation should be an integral part of the curriculum in the **initial** teacher training of future language teachers. (18) Language variation should be an integral part of the curriculum in the **in-service teacher training** of language teachers.	Do teachers believe that linguistic variation has its rightful place in the scientific training and in the initial and in-service pedagogical training of language teachers?
(19) Other varieties of English should be introduced in English courses (Australia, Canada, South Africa, India, Philippines, Uganda, etc.)	Should other varieties of English than British and American be introduced in EFL courses?

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[80] *Further education* here refers to *l'enseignement de promotion sociale* in the WBF.

4.3.1.4   Potential limitations and shortcomings of the survey construction

Despite the efficiency of using surveys for statistical analysis, researchers have also shown that they can also have serious limitations, which have been claimed to render 'questionnaire data […] not reliable or valid' by some researchers (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010: 8). While some shortcomings are due to poor item formulation or survey construction, others can also be inherent in the context in which the survey takes place. This section aims to outline some of the limitations of the survey and, when relevant, how these were mitigated or avoided.

First of all, a risk inherent to the survey is the *social desirability bias*. Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010: 8) note that '[q]uestionnaire items are often "transparent," that is, respondents can have a fairly good guess about what the desirable/acceptable/expected answer is, and some of them will provide this response even if it is not true'. This type of survey, conducted in an academic setting, may prompt some participants to respond as expected by the academic institution, rather than according to their personal beliefs. In order to mitigate this risk of bias, it was specified in the introduction to the survey that:

> Whether you practice language variation in the classroom or not, your responses will be of great help to me in giving a clear picture of the status quo of the issue. In this regard, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. The survey is anonymous and can be stopped at any time.[81]

The promise of anonymity and the emphasis on the absence of right or wrong answers were, indeed, both recommended in the introduction to reduce this bias, as 'anonymous respondents are likely to give answers that are less self-protective and presumably more accurate than respondents who believe they can be identified' (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010: 17). Caution seems warranted, however, regarding the influence of this passage of the general guidelines: it may alleviate the social desirability bias, but it cannot negate it. Another risk related to social desirability is self-deception, which Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010: 8–9) define as a human defence mechanism which 'minimize[s] faults and maximize[s] virtues so that we maintain a sense of personal worth'.

Secondly, *question order bias* implies that the order in which questions are asked can influence the responses to subsequent questions. In this case, the questions in Section III were placed at the end because, considered as a whole, they could have influenced the answers in Section II and therefore skewed the results. This is also the reason why respondents were not able to go back to a previous section in the survey. That said, the fact that the purpose of the

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[81] English translation of part of the survey introduction. The original French formulation can be consulted in Appendix 8.

research (i.e. the preference between AmE and BrE) was stated in the introduction may have guided the participants' responses. Still, it was used as an incentive for teachers to be interested in the research and willing to respond.

Thirdly, the *framing effect* implies that the positive or negative connotation of a statement could influence the response given. Similarly, the *acquiescence bias* is a 'tendency for people to agree with sentences when they are unsure or ambivalent' (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010: 9). Both of these effects have been partially mitigated thanks to the significant input from Professor Simons, Audrey Renson and the trial run respondents.

Fourthly, the *fatigue effect* can be felt when a survey is too long or too monotonous. While it is recommended that a survey not exceed 20 minutes (Umbach 2004, in Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010: 71), the trial run estimated that the time required to answer all the questions ranged from 20 to 30 minutes, which may have led to discouragement and withdrawal after seeing the estimated time in the introduction or after several questions. To reduce the discouragement that could have resulted, respondents were notified in the introduction that their responses would be recorded between sections and that it was possible to resume the survey at a later time – provided that they remembered or wished to continue. Furthermore, a progress indicator was included to show how much remained to be completed, which could 'stop respondents from abandoning the questionnaire halfway through completion' (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010: 71).

Fifthly, honesty seems to be required in acknowledging that when the survey was sent to respondents by e-mail, those were traineeship supervising teachers. This meant that they had somehow been recognised by the didactics department for their didactic skills and do not therefore represent mainstream teachers. Moreover, it also meant that the majority of teachers responding to the survey should come from the province of Liège. This assumption will be tested in Section 4.4.1. Sharing the survey in a Belgian Facebook group of teachers, on the other hand, may have broadened the audience reached by the survey and somewhat increased its representativeness.

Finally, it should be kept in mind that the declarative data collected by a survey can only be reliable up to a point. Indeed, what respondents *report* they do in the classroom is not necessarily equivalent to what they actually *do*. Therefore, while the answers provided through this survey could be said to give an indication of how the teachers consider language variation, it is not possible to make unequivocal assumptions based on the collected answers[82].

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[82] Avenues for further research will be formulated in Section 6.2

4.3.1.5   Trial run

Following several rounds of proofreading by Professor Simons and revisions to the formulation of the survey, it underwent a test phase in late January before being distributed. The purpose of this trial run was to ensure that there were no technical problems in completing the survey and that all instructions were clear, as well as to calculate the average time needed to complete the survey. To this end, a panel of ten respondents was drawn from modern language master students and language teachers. In order for this panel to be representative, of the ten respondents selected, there were four students and six teachers[83]. Of the six teachers, three were from subsidised free education, two were teaching in public schools organised by the WBF[84], and one was from subsidised public education (i.e. education organised by provinces and municipalities). Among the teachers, three assistants in the modern language didactics department at the University of Liège (Julie Vanhoof, Florence Van Hoof and Alain Segatto) were approached. The pre-testers were instructed to mark any item that seemed strangely worded or whose meaning was not fully clear. After the trial run, the average time of completion was calculated based on the data collected in Qualtrics: where the estimate had been 20 to 25 minutes, the pre-test revealed that it took several pre-testers about 30 minutes. For this reason, the time predicted at the beginning of the survey was increased to 20-30 minutes.

The trial run proved to be conclusive and highlighted some shortcomings of the survey, which were remedied before it was released online[85]. Notably as a result of the trial run, a definition of Standard English was provided at the beginning of Section II.c to ensure that all respondents had a common understanding of it. In addition, other comments led to the realisation that, although some items in the corpus reflected important grammatical differences between BrE and AmE, these were probably not sufficiently known to teachers to lead to meaningful results. For this reason, the item with mandative subjunctive was removed and the items with the regular and irregular preterites *sneaked/snuck* and *dived/dove* were replaced by the item *dreamed/dreamt*.

4.3.2   Survey administration

The survey was distributed in early February electronically. In the first instance, collective mails were sent to the teachers who usually supervise teacher traineeships in the province of

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[83] This distribution was decided with Professor Simons, assuming that this would be the proportion of respondents in each category. This assumption will be tested in Section 4.3.4 in the analysis of the survey respondents' profile.
[84] More precisely its government agency, WBE
[85] The comprehensive list of changes can be consulted in Appendix 7.

Liège. These supervisors were drawn from the database of the modern language didactics department of the University of Liège and of some vocational colleges established in the province. Secondly, the survey was shared on Facebook in the discussion group for English teachers *Enseignants d'anglais : échanges de cours*, in order to reach as many teachers as possible throughout the WBF and expanding the respondent sample. In addition, sharing the survey on Facebook enabled a *snowball sampling* effect, which Dörnyei & Taguchi (2010: 61) describe as 'involv[ing] a "chain reaction" whereby the researcher identifies a few people who meet the criteria of the particular study and then asks these participants to identify further members of the population'. This effect was facilitated by the sharing function on Facebook. The survey remained online and could be accessed for two months, between early February and late March. Despite this, the majority of the responses were collected in the first three weeks after the survey was launched.

4.3.3 Survey processing

Once the survey was closed, the results were extracted as an Excel file. Before any analysis could be carried out, all incomplete responses were removed from the database: of the 230 responses in total, only 134 were therefore considered valid for analysis, which represented the total sample of the survey (N = 134). A second step consisted in deleting the email addresses that some of the respondents had given to be notified of the results of this survey, in order to comply with RGPD regulations. On the basis of this Excel file, univariate and multivariate frequency distribution analyses were conducted. The univariate analyses allowed for the creation of pie charts of the frequency distribution (for questions where respondents could only choose one answer) or bar charts (if multiple answers per respondent were possible or to display the respondents' answers to several sub-questions on one figure)[86]. Multivariate analyses were also carried out, in particular to compare teachers' opinions according to certain characteristics of their individual profiles.

In addition to analysing the respondents' answers within each section of the survey, an inter-section analysis made it possible to calculate whether what the respondents *reported* corresponded with their *observed* attitudes towards language. More specifically, it was possible to analyse their tolerance towards both varieties, their preference for BrE or AmE and the

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[86] Note that most tables and figures showing the survey results are available in Appendix 9 and are systematically labelled Table/Figure 7.X. The tables and figures that appear within the body of this chapter are referred to as Table/Figure 4.X.

consistency demonstrated in the use of their reportedly preferred variety. The formulas used to calculate these frequencies are detailed in the following three subsections.

4.3.3.1 Tolerance ($\mathbb{T}$)

Tolerance here refers to the (student) teacher's willingness to deem an AmE/BrE pair of items correct or to the (student) teacher's willingness to allow their pupils to choose the variety of English they wish to use. It was necessary to distinguish between two types of tolerance for which it was possible to obtain data through the survey: *reported tolerance* ($\mathbb{T}_r$) and *observed tolerance* ($\mathbb{T}_o$). The reported tolerance was determined from the respondents' answers to questions 180 and 28 (2–3) in Section III: while Q180 asked about the attitudes displayed by teachers when their pupils use a different variety to them, items (2) and (3) from Q28 determined whether teachers would let their pupils choose their variety in writing and speaking. The observed tolerance was calculated on the basis of the answers given by the respondents to Q17–20 (Section II.a) according to the following formula:

$$\mathbb{T}_o^x = \frac{\sum n_{AB}^x}{\sum(n_A^x + n_B^x + n_{AB}^x)}$$

where $\mathbb{T}_o^x$ stands for the observed tolerance for a given category x and n_{AB}^x for the number of answers AB for a given category x – whether it be vocabulary (^{Voc}), spelling (^{Sp}), grammar & usage (^{Gr}), pronunciation (^{Pr}) or the average of all four categories (^{Av}). The observed tolerance can also be calculated for a pair of items i (where i represents pair of items 1, 2, …, or 41).

4.3.3.2 Preference ($\mathbb{P}$)

Preference refers to the (student) teacher's preferred variety of English. Again, it was necessary to distinguish between *reported preference* ($\mathbb{P}_r$) and *observed preference* ($\mathbb{P}_o$). (Student) teachers had to opportunity to give their preferred variety of English – that is, the one they use in the classroom – in Q24 (Section III), where they are given a choice between AmE, BrE and a mix of AmE and BrE. The observed preference was calculated for each respondent and for each pair of items, based on their answers in Sections II.a and II.b. As shown in Figure 4.1 below, the combination of these two sections ensured that all respondents were asked to give their personal preference, even if they had demonstrated tolerance in Section II.a. By doing this, the observed preference for a variety A for a given category x could be formulated as follows:

$$\mathbb{P}_{o_A}^x = \frac{\sum(n_{A_{II.a}}^x + n_{A_{II.b}}^x)}{\sum(n_{A_{II.a}}^x + n_{A_{II.b}}^x + n_{B_{II.a}}^x + n_{B_{II.b}}^x)}$$

where $\sum(n^x_{A_{II}} + n^x_{A_{II.a}})$ stands for the summation of the number of answers showing a preference for variety A in Sections II.a and II.b for a given category x. The observed preference can also be calculated for a pair of items i (where i represents pair of items 1, 2, …, or 41).
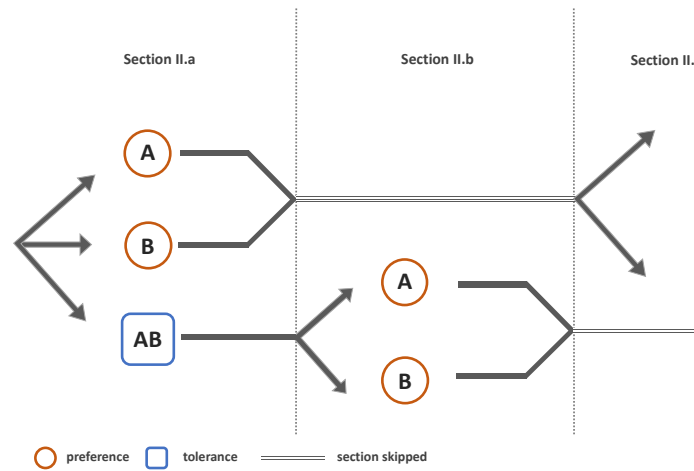
Figure 4.1 – Sequencing of Section II in the survey

Once the reported and observed preferences had been determined, it was possible to establish whether there was any congruence between them. It was assumed that, if $\mathbb{P}_r$ = BrE or AmE, there was congruence if $\mathbb{P}_o$ was superior to 60%. If $\mathbb{P}_o$ was ≥ 40% and ≤ 60%, the observed preference was then believed to be a mix of BrE and AmE. If $\mathbb{P}_o$ was strictly inferior to 40%, there was an observed preference for the other variety than the one reported by the respondent, which was deemed an incongruence between the reported and observed preferences. If $\mathbb{P}_r$ = Mix of AmE/BrE, the same rates as above applied and the rate of Americanism in the answers was calculated. Hence, there was congruence if $\mathbb{P}_o$ is ≥ 40% and ≤ 60%. However, if $\mathbb{P}_o$ was superior to 60%, there was an observed preference for AmE and if $\mathbb{P}_o$ was inferior to 40%, there was then an observed preference for BrE.

4.3.3.3 *Consistency* ($\mathbb{C}$)

Ultimately, consistency refers to the (student) teacher's ability to use their reportedly preferred variety in a persistent fashion. Consistency was subdivided into *reported consistency* ($\mathbb{C}_r$) and *observed consistency* ($\mathbb{C}_o$). The respondents wrote whether they believed they were consistent in the use of their preferred variety in Q26, i.e. whether they stuck to one variety or if they sometimes switched from one to the other. Subsequently, the observed consistency was determined according to the reported preference, the observed preference and the reported consistency:

Table 4.4 – Use of the variables $\mathbb{P}_r$, $\mathbb{P}_o$ and $\mathbb{C}_r$ to determine $\mathbb{C}_o$

	$\mathbb{P}_r = \mathbb{P}_o$?	
	Congruence	Incongruence
$\mathbb{C}_r$ = Yes	Consistency OK (++)	Consistency KO (+-)
$\mathbb{C}_r$ = No	Inconsistency KO (--)	Inconsistency OK (-+)
$\mathbb{C}_o$	+	-

If the respondent's reported preference was reflected in their observed preference, their observed consistency was automatically be positive. However, what differed was the respondent's accuracy in evaluating the consistency of their own language production. The first case (++) implied that the respondent had an accurate perspective that the variety they are aiming for and the one they speak are one and the same. In the other case (--), the respondent believed that they were inconsistent in their use of one variety, while their observed preference seemed to indicate the opposite. In other words, they thought they used a mix of the two varieties, while showing a stronger preference for one of the two in practice. On the other hand, if the respondent's reported preference was incongruent with their observed preference, their observed consistency was automatically negative. In this case, it was particularly interesting to look at the responses of those who believed that they were consistent in their language, but who actually exhibited inconsistencies between their reported and observed preference.

4.4 Results and analysis

This section presents the results of the survey and their analysis. First, the results of each individual section are detailed and commented on. Subsequently, a cross-analysis of the sections gives an assessment of the respondents' tolerance, preference and consistency in their use of one (or a mix of) English language variety(-ies).

4.4.1 Section I: Respondents' profile

Of the 134 survey respondents, the vast majority were teachers (112 out of 134, that is, almost 84%; see Figure 7.4). The remaining 16% of the respondents were master's students in modern languages (12 out of 134, almost 9%), *AESS* students in modern languages (i.e. people who had already obtained their master's degree and were doing an extra year to obtain the educational qualifications to teach in upper secondary education; 7 out of 134) and some *AESI* students in Germanic languages (i.e. students undertaking a bachelor's degree to obtain the educational qualifications to teach in lower secondary education; 3 out of 134). It should be noted from the

outset that due to the disproportionate number of respondents per occupation, it was not possible to make any generalisable conclusions for the last three respondents' profiles.

Looking at the place of origin of the respondents (see Figure 7.5), two-thirds of them came from the province of Liège (89 out of 134 respondents, which was in line with the expectation set out in Section 4.3.1.4), followed by the provinces of Hainaut and Luxembourg (both around 8%), and the province of Namur and the Brussels-Capital Region (both around 7%). The province of Walloon Brabant was the least well represented, with only 5 respondents out of 134.

A cross-analysis of the respondents' occupation and location (see Table 7.6) demonstrated that the most quantitatively significant profile of respondents was that of teachers living in the province of Liège (around 51%), followed by teachers living in the province of Hainaut (around 8%) and, finally, student teachers enrolled in a Master's degree in modern languages with a teaching focus coming from the province of Liège (around 7%). The remaining profiles account for less than 7% each.

When analysing the scientific degrees obtained by the respondents (see Figure 7.7), it was observed that an absolute majority of respondents had obtained a bachelor's degree (either from a university (33 out of 134) or a college (32 out of 134)) and/or a master's degree (either under its current name of *master* (29 out of 134), or under the former name of *licence* (33 out of 134)) in modern or Germanic languages. A small minority had a bachelor's and/or master's degree in translation (namely 5 out of 134 and 14 out of 134).

With regard to teaching qualifications (see Figure 7.8), a clear majority claimed to have the required qualification to teach at upper secondary level (*AESS*; 70 out of 134 respondents) and/or at lower secondary level (*AESI*; 39 out of 134 respondents). It should be noted that 21 respondents reported that they did not have teaching qualifications, but this number largely coincided with the number of students who responded to the survey.

In order to clarify the profile of the 112 teachers who participated in the survey, they were asked five additional questions, the results of which are summarised in Figures 7.6 and 7.9 to 7.12.

First, Figure 7.6 shows that most teacher respondents had taught for less than five years (42%), followed by those who had taught for between 5 and 10 years (17%) or between 11 and 15 years (11%). Teachers with 16 or more years of service accounted for the remaining 30%.

Secondly, Figure 7.9 shows that most respondents taught at upper secondary level (73 out of 112) and/or at lower secondary level (42 out of 112). Some respondents also reported

teaching in primary education (9 out of 112), in higher education (7 out of 112) and/or in further education (7 out of 112).

Thirdly, 60% of teachers reported to work in the free denominational network (67 out of 112; see Figure 7.10), almost 30% in the organised official network (WBE; 31 out of 112) and 13% in the subsidised official network (14 out of 112).

Fourthly, most respondents taught in general education (89 out of 112; see Figure 7.11), and/or in technical education, subdivided between *technique de transition* (36 out of 112) and *technique de qualification* (40 out of 112), and/or in vocational education (20 out of 112).

Fifthly, Figure 7.12 indicates that most teachers taught at upper secondary level, particularly in the fourth form. In addition, from the third to the sixth form, there were twice as many respondents teaching English as a first modern language than as a second modern language.

Further questions were asked of all respondents to indicate a potential preference for one or the other variety of English, whether they had lived abroad and, if so, in which English-speaking region, as well as a question as to how they kept in touch with native speakers' English, and which variety(-ies) were involved.

From the first question, it appeared that about 47% of respondents had been to stay in an English-speaking region for at least several months (see Figure 7.13). Of these 63 respondents, 23 stayed in the USA, 19 in England and 11 in Ireland. Other destinations reported by the remaining respondents included Australia, Canada, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales (see Figure 7.14).

As for the second question (see Table 7.7), it was noted that almost all respondents (130 out of 134) used films or series in the original language to keep in touch with native speakers' English. This was followed by reading (112 out of 134), online media (102 out of 134), social networks (84 out of 134) and native speaker acquaintances (66 out of 134). For each medium, there was a majority of responses for either *Mostly BrE* or *Mostly AmE* as the contact variety, or an even split between the two. For instance, the majority of respondents were mostly in contact with BrE in the following categories: reading (55.36%), print media (63.64%), online media (55.88%), and English-speaking colleagues with whom school partnerships were organised (58.14%). In the categories where *Mostly AmE* predominated as an answer, the American variety had a significant lead over the British variety: films or series in their original version (71.54%), online games (73.91%), blogs and forums (71.93%) and social networks (71.43%), i.e. categories where the hegemony of American popular culture and American technological advances could be strongly felt. Only native acquaintances were evenly divided

between *Mostly BrE* (34.85%) and *Mostly AmE* (33.33%), a category where life experiences may have differed from one respondent to another. Across all categories, it appeared that respondents were more likely to be in contact with AmE, with a *Mostly AmE* total of 49.70% compared to 38.84% for *Mostly BrE*. Adding up the results for *Exclusively BrE* and *Mostly BrE* and those for *Mostly AmE* and *Exclusively AmE* together, AmE was reportedly more influential with a difference of almost 10%. This data was of particular interest when comparing the teachers' reported and observed preference and observed consistency.

4.4.2 Section II: AmE/BrE items

In this section, the results of Section II are presented chronologically (from Section II.a to II.c) and from more general to more specific. Only results with a strong preference for one particular variety are presented in more detail.

4.4.2.1 Section II.a: Observed tolerance and exclusive preference

An overall analysis by category of the responses to Section II.a of the survey (see Figure 7.16 and Table 7.8) shows that, for all categories, respondents showed a marked tolerance for both varieties. As expected, this was particularly the case for the categories *Vocabulary* (79.4%) and *Spelling* (59.6%). When it came to the *Grammar & Usage* (44.6%) and *Pronunciation* (47.9%) categories, although tolerance is in first place, it no longer represented a majority of respondents, which could be explained by an increasing exclusive preference for British grammar and usage (36.1%) and pronunciation (33.3%), compared to its vocabulary (10.1%) and spelling (14.0%). It also seems interesting to note that for spelling, after tolerance (59.6%), it was the American spelling that seemed to be exclusively preferred (26.4%), compared to the British spelling (14.0%).

Naturally, these averages did not make it possible to understand the preference for certain words, spellings, constructions or pronunciations. In order to identify some trends, Figure 7.18 is presented.

Looking at the first fourteen pairs of items (which concern vocabulary), it was clear that tolerance was predominant for each pair of items. However, several pairs of items also showed an exclusive preference, either for BrE (*crisps, have a look, wardrobe*) or for AmE (*stroller, car trunk, diaper*). In the first case, it can be hypothesised that these words are part of relatively common vocabulary, i.e. differences that teachers could be used to hearing and correcting. In other words, it is possible that these words were preferred by pure stylistic tradition in the classroom. The group of words for which the AmE alternative was preferred, on the other hand,

consisted of three less frequent words, for which it was possible that respondents had only heard the American version due to the cultural influence of American products (see Section 2.2.1).

When shown the next ten pairs of spelling items, the respondents still showed a majority of tolerance, with the exception of the items *airplane/aeroplane*, for which the American alternative was exclusively preferred (54.5%), as well as for *fulfill/fulfil* (47.8%). However, respondents seemed to show a preference for the British *-ll-* (35.1%) when questioned about the pair *traveler/traveller* and the pair of items *defense/defence* seemed to demonstrate the teachers' preference for a simple spelling, closer to the French word (31.3%).

In contrast to the first two categories, when it came to the eight pairs of items concerning grammar and usage, the respondents showed stronger opinions and displayed less overall tolerance overall. Several general trends seemed to emerge for this category. First of all, concerning the pairs of items about register differences (*I did good/I did well, I sure hope/I certainly hope, I ain't done nothing/I didn't do anything*), the respondents showed a clear preference for the neutral alternative (67.2%, 44.8%, 92.5%), which could be used and seen as appropriate in a wider range of contexts, although teachers also showed some tolerance for the idiomatic expression *I sure hope* (39.6%). Another general trend appeared to be that they demonstrated a preference for British grammar, which could be assumed to be favoured in the textbooks used in the WBF. This was shown by the exclusive preference for the present perfect in combination with the adverb *just* (70.9%), but also with regard to the past participle of the verb *to get*, where *got* was preferred over *gotten* (47.8%). A final observation concerned the use of singular or plural verbs with collective nouns: a near majority of respondents (48.5%) exclusively preferred the use of the singular, which corresponds to US usage, whereas the British alternate between singular and plural depending on the intended meaning. Rather than a preference for a specific variety, this choice seemed to be more a matter of convenience.

Finally, when it came to the nine pairs of items concerning pronunciation, the teachers showed an overall tolerance for both varieties, followed closely by a preference for BrE, such as in the pronunciations of *water*, *commentary*, *butter* and *can't*. Particularly noteworthy were the preferences for the British pronunciation of *news* (52.2%) and *docile* (53.0%) and the American pronunciation of *privacy* (60.4%).

4.4.2.2   Sections II.a and II.b: Observed preference

Combining the preferences observed in sections II.a and II.b (see Figure 7.17 and Table 7.9), a clear preference for BrE was observed with regard to the categories *Grammar & Usage* (58.5%) and *Pronunciation* (63.0%). The preference for spelling, however, tended to be more in favour

of AmE (57.1%). For the *Vocabulary* category, the preference was relatively evenly split between BrE (48.9%) and AmE (51.1%). Overall, the combination of responses from both sections seemed to show a very slight preference for BrE (53.3%), but AmE trailed very closely behind (46.7%). In view of these results, it was interesting to look at the preference reported in Section III (see Section 4.4.3), to see whether respondents were evenly split between BrE and AmE or inconsistent with their reported preference (see Section 4.4.4.2).

By analysing the preference for each pair of items in more detail (see Figure 7.19), several trends can be identified. First, concerning vocabulary, the words for which an exclusive preference was observed in Section II.a for BrE (*crisps, have a look, wardrobe*) or AmE (*stroller, car trunk, diaper*) continued to be preferred: the preference for each of these terms increased and stabilised globally between 70 and 80%. Other words, for which a tolerance was well established in Section II.a, experienced a shift towards a preference for one or the other variety: for AmE, *gas* (60.4%), *truck* (79.9%), *can* (89.6%) and *fries* (63.4%), and for BrE, *lift* (69.4%), *mobile phone* (71.6%) and *autumn* (64.2%). Yet again, the preference for American vocabulary was particularly marked for consumer goods. However, this justification is lessened by the preference for the BrE words *lift* and *mobile phone*. Still, it is conceivable that the respondents' mother tongue had an impact on the choice of vocabulary, and that *lift* was preferred to *elevator* in order to avoid the difficulty of the false friend *chariot élévateur* (*forklift*), that *mobile phone* is more transparent to a French native speaker than *cell phone*, just as *autumn* bears a strong resemblance to *automne*.

Secondly, with regard to spelling, besides pairs of items showing a balance between AmE and BrE, the respondents had a strong preference for one variety in particular, such as BrE *favourite* (82.8%), *centre* (58.2%) and *traveller* (76.9%) or AmE *airplane* (94.8%), *fulfill* (77.6%) and *defense* (67.2%). Again, it is possible to see a preference emerging for a stylistic tradition (BrE *-our-* and *-ll-*), for words strongly resembling French equivalents (*centre, defense*) or for the sake of simplicity (*airplane, fulfill*).

The *Grammar & Usage* category resulted in a clear preference for BrE, with examples such as *I have just had* (88.1%) instead of *I just had*, *dreamt* (64.9%) instead of *dreamed*, *got* (70.1%) instead of *gotten*, which demonstrate a preference for BrE in terms of elemental grammar. The item pair *Do you have/Have you got* was slightly preferred in terms of the American alternative with do-support (52.2%), in the same way as preference for a singular verb with collective nouns (*the committee has*, 78.4%). For the three pairs of items with an informal item, respondents systematically preferred the neutral or more formal item: *I did well* (85.8%), *I certainly hope* (67.2%) and *I didn't do anything* (100%).

Finally, the *Pronunciation* category showed a clear preference from respondents for UK pronunciation, in particular for the pronunciations of the words *news* (91.0%), *water* (75.4%), *docile* (84.3%), *butter* (77.6%) and *can't* (71.6%). Other words were given a relatively balanced preference, e.g. *advertisement* (US /aɪ/ 53% / UK /ɪ/ 47%) and *tomato* (US /təˈmeɪdoʊ/ 53% / UK /təˈmɑːtəʊ/ 47%). Finally, the teachers only showed a clear preference for one pair of items in the pronunciation of the AmE item: *privacy* (/aɪ/ 86.6%).

4.4.2.3   *Sections II.c: Justifications*

At this stage, looking at the justifications given by respondents in Section II.c, it is possible to determine how respondents perceived words, spellings, constructions or pronunciations that seemed foreign to them, possibly revealing teachers' misconceptions about language varieties.

First of all, Figure 7.20 shows that most of the justifications given for the vocabulary[87] are that the word in question appeared American to them while the respondents taught BrE (35%). The second most common justification was that pupils would not come across the word regularly and that it was therefore not considered essential that they learned it (27%). In the first case, respondents seemed to justify their choice by the desire to show consistency in the variety of their choice and, in the second case, they took the intrinsic interest of the linguistic element for the communicative objectives of the language course into consideration. Also noteworthy is that in 19% of cases, respondents considered the word to be non-standard English, although no non-standard words were present in the corpus. Table 7.10 shows that these justifications mainly concerned words such as *chips* (as a synonym for *crisps*) and *take a look* (instead of *have a look*). Overall, in 13% of the cases, respondents did not know the synonym (which was mainly observed for the last three items, i.e. BrE *pushchair*, *car boot* and *nappy*).

The analysis of Figure 7.21 illustrates similar results for *Spelling*: 28% of the selected justifications were related to the allegedly American origin of the spelling while 24% of them questioned the value of learning this spelling (mainly for the spellings of *whilst* and *aeroplane*, as shown in Table 7.11). The relatively high frequency of the justifications *This is not standard English* (12%, e.g. *whilst*, *defence*) and *The word is misspelled* (18%, e.g. *fulfil*, *traveler*, *defence*) can be taken into consideration, as all the words presented for this category were part of standard contemporary English. It is also noticeable that the words with the highest

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[87] Let us bear in mind that the *Vocabulary* category had the highest tolerance rate by respondents in Section II.a, and that only a very small proportion of respondents overall had to give a justification for the vocabulary items, which makes the results difficult to generalise.

frequencies for *I don't know this spelling* were BrE spellings (e.g. *fulfil*, *defence*, *programme*), which seems to be inconsistent with the number of respondents claiming to teach BrE, which was the main justification, as given in Table 7.11.

The results presented in Figure 7.22 show a change in the justifications mainly represented for the category *Grammar & Usage*, namely *This construction is not grammatically correct* (34%), *The register is not appropriate: the construction is too informal* (21%) and *This is not standard English* (14%). This change could be explained by the fact that the three informal items (or even non-standard item in the case of *I ain't done nothing*) represent 45% of the 774 justifications given for this category (see Table 7.12). For these three items, the same three justifications were systematically given in this order: first, the construction is too informal (28-47%), secondly, it is not grammatical (19-30%) and thirdly, it is not standard English (10-18%). This shows that the first priority of teachers in this respect appears to be the acquisition of 'all-purpose' English by their pupils, which they can use in as many contexts as possible. In the other pairs of items in this category for which a significant number of justifications were given (e.g. AmE *I just had*, *gotten*, *The committee have* and *dreamed*), the justification that the item was not grammatically correct seemed to predominate with 24% for *gotten* and between 52% and 65% for the remaining three items, which, again, is questionable given that these items are not ungrammatical, but simply linked to a given English-speaking area.

Finally, Figure 7.23 shows that, in terms of pronunciation, most justifications indicated a desire to remain consistent with the variety taught, namely BrE (40%), as was previously the case for vocabulary and spelling. Although almost all pronunciations aimed at in this justification were accurately identified as American (e.g. US /nuz/, /ˈwɔdər/, /ˈdɑsəl/, /ˈkɑmənˌtɛri/, /ˈbɛdər/, /kænt/), other pronunciations, of British origin, were mistaken for American (e.g. UK /ədˈvɜːrtɪsmənt/ and /ˈprɪvəsi/). The second most important justification was that the other pronunciation was unknown to the teacher (20%, e.g. US /nuz/, /ˈdɑsəl/, UK /ədˈvɜːrtɪsmənt/ or /ˈprɪvəsi/, see Table 7.13). As this rate was the highest for this justification among the four categories, it could be assumed that the written forms of the two varieties were more familiar to the respondents than their pronunciations. As for the more questionable justifications, 10% of them included the belief that the word was mispronounced (e.g. UK /ədˈvɜːrtɪsmənt/) and 9% of them that the pronunciation was not standard English (e.g. US /ˈkɑmənˌtɛri/)[88].

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[88] As a reminder, audio files retrieved from the *OED* were included in the survey so that the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) would not be a hindrance for this category. This entails that all the selected pronunciations were standard and sufficiently common to be included in the *OED*.

On the basis of Tables 7.10 to 7.13 (see coloured cells), it is possible to calculate, for each category, the average misestimation of the linguistic variety of the items, that is, when respondents could not recognise forms of their preferred variety and justified their rejection of that particular form by the fact that they believed the form to be from the other variety of English (AmE or BrE). Table 7.14 therefore presents that the average misestimation was 24.45% for all varieties. Looking at each variety in more detail, the relative frequency was higher for those who preferred AmE (25.96%) than those who preferred BrE (24.10%), but given the disparity between the absolute frequencies (27 vs. 150), it would seem complicated to consider this relative frequency as representative in a comparison between the two groups of respondents. In terms of categories, it would appear that the respondents[89] were least aware of the different forms of their preferred variety in terms of vocabulary (27.21%) and spelling (32.77%).

Finally, 57 out of 134 respondents provided details in the open-ended question at the end of Section II.c. Based on their coded justifications (see Table 7.15), it was noticed that 28 out of these 57 respondents (or 49.12%) told their pupils that both varieties were fine, which demonstrated some form of tolerance and that no penalty was applied in the written and oral assessments. Then, 25 respondents (43.86%) claimed to explicitly teach the differences between BrE and AmE in their answer. This was mainly the case in areas of pronunciation (11 respondents), grammar and usage (10 respondents) and spelling (8 respondents), while only 5 respondents claimed to explicitly teach differences in vocabulary. Furthermore, 15 respondents (26.32%) thought it was important for their pupils not to mix varieties and therefore demanded consistency. The last additional justification given by a relatively large number of respondents was that the teacher believed that communication and being understood was primordial in language learning (8 respondents).

4.4.3   *Section III: Teachers' opinion of linguistic variation in EFL teaching*

In this section, the responses to Section III are outlined, providing teachers' views on language variation in education, including their reported preference, tolerance and consistency.

4.4.3.1   *Category 1: Reported preference and consistency*

First of all, the hegemony of BrE in ELT from the middle of the 20th century to the present day (i.e. when the respondents were themselves studying) was blatantly obvious in the respondents'

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[89] By 'respondents' is meant here 'respondents who did not select AB and therefore chose an exclusive preference in Section II.a', which implies that the justifications given by respondents showing tolerance are not taken into account here.

answers, both in secondary education (87.3%; see Figure 7.24) and in higher education (97.8% overall, 79.1% of which reported the variety they had/have learned to be mostly BrE; see Figure 7.25). When comparing these figures for the variety to which respondents were/have been exposed during their studies with the variety they reported speaking in the classroom (see Figure 7.26), several findings were noted. First, although 79.1% of respondents reported having been exposed to a mixture of varieties (predominantly BrE) and 2.2% to a mix of varieties (predominantly AmE) during their higher education (see Figure 7.25), only 32.8% of respondents reported speaking a mixture of both varieties (see Figure 7.26). Conversely, only 18.7% of respondents declared they had only been exposed to BrE during their higher education, while 56% of respondents state that they favour BrE as their preferred variety. Finally, 11.2% of respondents had AmE as their reported preference, which was a higher rate than that reported as the variety learned during secondary and tertiary education (2.2% each). This discrepancy would therefore suggest that the variety learned during the respondents' education was not the only variable for their choice of English. Furthermore, a more in-depth analysis of the reported preference according to the profile of the respondents (see Table 7.18) confirms that of the 44 respondents who claimed to speak a mixed variety of BrE and AmE (32.8%), 75% of them (33 respondents) were still studying or had been teaching for 10 years or less.

When analysing further the reasons that influenced the respondents' choice of variety (see Table 7.19), it was noticed that few reasons were positively rated. Indeed, many respondents stated that their choice had not been influenced by school practices to homogenise the variety spoken by teachers (73.2%), nor was it based on the recommendations of the curricula in force in the WBF (61.9%) or educational advisors (69.6%). The prestige that a variety may carry was not a factor either (50.7%), nor was the target language country's international influence and power (72.2%). Finally, the respondents stated that a lack of knowledge about the variety that could be used and taught in ELT (based on the legal requirements) did not come into play either (92.8%). Among the reasons that were moderately accepted (i.e. there were as many respondents who thought that those may have influenced their choice of variety as there were who thought that they had not) were the fact that the variety was learned when they were pupils, as well as the desire to be consistent with the variety of English used in textbooks. Finally, the only reason that received much assent was personal preference (85.7% overall). Similar responses seemed to emerge from respondents who entered an additional reason in the *Other(s)* box: 11 of them mentioned personal life experiences that had led to their choice of variety. From these responses, the idea seems to emerge that a choice of

variety is a personal decision that cannot be constrained by external decision or strong recommendation.

Looking at Figure 7.27 on teachers' reported consistency, i.e. whether they believed they had kept to one particular variety or sometimes switched from one to another, it appeared that 62.5% of respondents reported being inconsistent in their use of variety, while the remaining 37.5% considered themselves to be consistent. Among the reasons given by the respondents who considered themselves inconsistent in the use of their reported preference (see Table 7.20), a large majority felt that they switched from their preferred variety to the other in order to maintain a steady language immersion (i.e. speaking in English most of the time, only resorting to the language of schooling at certain times; 73.5% overall), to explicitly teach the differences between AmE and BrE (89.1% overall), or when dealing with a subject that was exclusively typical to the country of the other variety (72.2% overall). A small majority also claimed to switch from one variety to another in order to appear more informal (59.7% overall), but conversely, the majority did not believe in switching from one variety to another to appear more formal (66.7% overall). Finally, of the 13 respondents who added a reason in the *Other(s)* box, 4 respondents felt that they did not systematically care about the variety they spoke, but simply said the first word that came to mind, according to the structures and vocabulary they were used to seeing and hearing.

4.4.3.2   *Category 2: Reported tolerance*

Focusing now on teachers' reported tolerance, the results presented in Figure 7.28 show that the respondents reported being fully tolerant of the variety used by their pupils, even if it did not match the one they personally used. 13.6% of respondents were already satisfied with a pupil speaking any form of English to them. On the other hand, the response of some teachers seemed to be more in line with didactic and communicative concerns, notably that 27.3% of respondents reported mentioning to a pupil that they have used another variety, but that the content remains the same, or when 20.8% said they did not comment on the use of a different variety, unless the interpretation of the message could differ according to the variety used. Finally, 38.3% of respondents listed their own reaction in the *Other(s)* box (see Table 7.21), of which 6.1% of respondents said that they asked their pupils to be consistent with the variety they chose, 10.7% drew their pupils' attention to the variety they used, and 6.1% explained to their pupils that, depending on the country and language register, several linguistic forms were correct. The respondents' reported tolerance was shown by the 0.0% rate for the item *I ask the pupil to use the same variety as I do in the classroom.*

The analysis of the respondents' reactions to a colleague who would not use the same language variety as them (see Table 7.22) also shows a form of tolerance towards linguistic variation in education: 99.3% of respondents said that they thought it was more enriching for the pupils as it showed them several sources of input and 95.5% did not consider it a bad choice in regard to the recommendations of the legal requirements. For respondents whose reported preference was BrE or a mix of BrE and AmE, 99.2% of them believed that pupils were confronted with AmE, from media such as Netflix and the Internet, and so there was no point in opposing it. Moreover, 96.6% of them did not consider geographical proximity of the UK as a sufficient reason to favour BrE in ELT, which was at odds with the argument given in the 2000 official network curriculum (see Section 3.3.2). For respondents whose reported preference was AmE, 93.4% of them were used to the fact that the majority of their colleagues preferred to teach BrE. Finally, for respondents whose reported preference was AmE or a mix of BrE and AmE, 76.3% of them did not accept the argument that AmE was the variety most commonly found in films and series and on the Internet as a valid argument for favouring the teaching of this variety.

4.4.3.3   Category 3: Respondents' general attitudes, beliefs and habits

In question 27 of the survey, which enquired about the varieties of English present in the documents used in the classroom, 59.81% of respondents declared that they use a mixture of BrE/AmE on average across the 11 text genres, which was particularly the case for the genres of advertisement (78.9%) and videos (70.5%). Only for books was the main used variety BrE (49.5%) before a BrE/AmE mixture (47.5%). In other cases, some genres had a second preference that was very close to the rate for the BrE/AmE mixture, namely, for BrE, press articles (43.2%) and TV news (41.6%), and for AmE, films (34.2%), series (45.2%) and teasers (34.1%).

The last question in the survey, question 28, sought to capture some final attitudes, beliefs and habits from the teachers in terms of language variation in EFL instruction. The results of the items in this question are presented comparatively below, by grouping similar items together (see Table 7.24).

First of all, for item (1), which looked at whether teachers systematically gave a vocabulary word in both varieties, a small majority (55.2%) seemed to lean towards agreement.

Regarding items (2) and (3), investigating the respondents' reported tolerance further as to whether they would let their pupils choose the variety in which they wanted to write or speak, it appeared that, although teachers showed a high tolerance for both skills, it was even higher

for speaking (95.5% overall) than writing (90.3% overall). While showing great tolerance in letting their pupils choose their variety, the counterpart of this was that respondents expected their pupils to be consistent in the variety used, as shown by the results of items (4) and (5). However, this was significantly more evident in writing (71.6% overall) than in speaking (54.5% overall), which proves that pupils are more at liberty to be inconsistent in their use of variety for the latter.

Then, for item (6), which looked at whether respondents believed that BrE was better recognised than AmE, the vast majority of respondents (78.3% overall) believed that it was not. As for item (7), which examined whether pupils could be disadvantaged on the labour market if they spoke AmE, almost all respondents (94.7% overall) were of the opinion that they would not be.

When asked if they felt sufficiently well trained to distinguish between BrE and AmE in receptive skills (reading and listening), respondents thought this was true for both skills, but more so for listening (85.9% overall) than for reading (68.6% overall).

As far as the variety spoken in class was concerned, 97% of the respondents (overall) believed that they spoke the same variety in class with their pupils as they personally use outside of class and 66.4% of them considered that their position as an English teacher meant that they should speak as standard a version of English as possible in the classroom.

Regarding the place of learning different varieties in ELT, respondents felt that it has its rightful place from the beginning of secondary education, but the responses also showed that the interest was proportional to the pupils' level, i.e. 68.6% of the respondents (overall) felt that it could be seen in lower secondary education, 96.3% in upper secondary education and 98.5% in higher education. 5 out of the 7 respondents teaching in further education considered that language variation also has its place in this form of education, but these results are very unlikely to be generalisable given the number of respondents with this profile.

As for the place of learning about linguistic variation in a (future) teacher's educational pathway, the respondents agreed that linguistic variation has a place in scientific, initial and in-service teacher education, but this opinion decreases over time, i.e. 61.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that it should be part of a future teacher's scientific education, while this figure decreased to 56.7% for initial teacher education and 50.7% for in-service teacher education. However, overall agreement hovered around 90% for all three periods of education, which shows that respondents perceived the value of learning about language variation throughout teacher training, only to a lesser degree once scientific training is completed.

Finally, a majority of respondents (73.2% overall) believed that not only British and American English should be taught, but that other varieties of English should be introduced in English courses, e.g. varieties from Australia, Canada, South Africa, India, etc.

4.4.4 Inter-section analysis

This last section of the results analyses the respondents' preference and consistency towards their preferred language variety, as well as tolerance towards the other variety.

4.4.4.1 Tolerance

In Section III, the overwhelming majority of respondents reported showing a high level of tolerance towards different varieties (see Section 4.4.3.2). This was shown by the fact that none of the teachers said that they obliged their pupils to speak the same variety as they did and that they would only comment on it if a communication problem arose from this, but also by the fact that more than 90% of the respondents let their pupils choose the variety in which they wanted to write or speak. However, the comparison of reported and observed tolerance is not as congruent, since the observed tolerance was not as high as the respondents' reported tolerance. For the items presented in Section II.a of the survey, the highest tolerance rate was 79.4% for vocabulary, followed by spelling with 59.6%. As for grammar and usage and pronunciation, these categories did not reach 50% in terms of tolerance (44.6% and 47.9% respectively).

Several avenues for this exclusive preference were considered in Section 4.4.2.1, such as stylistic tradition, the cultural influence of American products, or a preference for a transparent word or structure, strongly resembling a French word or structure. The teachers' preferred justifications for this exclusive preference were outlined in Section 4.4.2.3: on average, it appeared that the main reason why some respondents do not deem a word, spelling, grammatical construction or pronunciation correct is its American origin. Other reasons included the desire to remain consistent with the variety of their choice, but also that the construction was not grammatical (for the *Grammar & Usage* category), that the word or pronunciation was not standard English, or even that some words were mispronounced or misspelled. A final striking figure was the average of 24.45% of items whose origin was incorrectly estimated, even though their origin was the very reason why they were rejected by these respondents.

Hence, the reported tolerance of respondents was put into perspective by Sections II.a and II.c of the survey, which showed several elements to be taken into consideration. First, the

majority of respondents considered consistency within a variety to be important, although slightly more so in writing (71.6% overall) than in speaking (54.5% overall). These respondents may have shown tolerance towards pupils writing and/or speaking in BrE or AmE, but did not tend to accept blending between varieties. Secondly, it appeared that a number of respondents had linguistic misconceptions, making them reject a supposedly American item when it was accepted BrE. These misconceptions did not end there, but also concerned other aspects of the language, such as the grammaticality of an item, which was frequently questioned for American constructions, or whether an item was indeed standard English. This lack of knowledge of what constitutes the two main varieties of English could be deemed problematic, because it could leave pupils thinking that only one variety is correct or 'standard'. Another reason could be that some pupils may hear a linguistic item outside the classroom, which might then be refused by the teacher, as the feeling of 'otherness' upon hearing or reading the item might prompt them to believe it does not belong to their preferred variety, and therefore find it unacceptable.

4.4.4.2 Preference

Looking at the preference reported in Section III and comparing it with the preference observed in Sections II.a and II.b, it was seen that the average observed preference for BrE was 53.3%, which was slightly lower than the number of respondents who reported a preference for BrE in Section III (56%).

Analysing the average congruence between reported and observed preference for each variety (see Table 7.25) shows that for respondents whose reported preference was BrE or AmE, the congruence amounted to about 70% (69.1% for respondents preferring BrE on average and 72.2% for respondents preferring AmE). For the respondents preferring a mixture of BrE and AmE, their calculated rate of Americanism was on average 51.1%, which corresponds to a good ratio between BrE and AmE. Although these results were relatively positive and encouraging, they only represented an average across all respondents, which made them difficult to interpret.

Turning now to Table 7.26, these encouraging results do not appear to apply to all respondents. Indeed, across the three types of reported preferences, 24.6% of respondents were considered KO in congruence between their reported and observed preference, which implies that the items they chose in Sections II.a and II.b more frequently belonged to the other variety than the one they reportedly preferred. The respondents with the lowest rate of congruence between their reported and observed preference were those preferring a mixture of BrE and AmE (40.9% of those respondents, see Table 7.27) with an average score that was less than

40% or more than 60%, which suggested that they actually preferred one variety over the other. Conversely, respondents preferring BrE or AmE had a better congruence rate (82.7% OK for BrE, 86.7% OK for AmE, see Table 7.27) and the few respondents in these two categories who were KO in congruence were not incongruent enough to prefer the other variety (with an average score below 40%), but simply a mixture of AmE and BrE, i.e. an average score between 40% and 60%. Analysis of the OK/KO distribution of the respondents according to their profiles (see Table 7.29) shows that 38.3% of the teachers who had been teaching for less than 5 years (i.e. 18 respondents) were incongruent in their variety use, regardless of the reported preference. In comparison, 23.8% of teachers who had been teaching for 5 to 10 years, i.e. the second most represented group in the survey, were observed to be incongruent (i.e. 5 respondents). For didactic master's students, this figure amounted to 33.3% of those respondents (i.e. 4 respondents). For the other respondent profiles, the very small number of respondents representing them makes it difficult to make generalisations which would enable a comparison over time.

In summary, a large number of respondents (75.4%) were found to be congruent between the variety they claimed to speak and the variety they actually spoke. This was mainly the case for respondents who claimed to speak a specific variety (around 80%) rather than a mixture of BrE and AmE (59.1%). It was found that a large minority of respondents who claimed to speak a mixture of BrE/AmE (40.9%) actually demonstrated incongruence at this level: their observed preference seemed to be more towards one variety in particular, rather than a balanced mixture of the two varieties. This observation concerned 18 respondents, 8 of whom showed a preference for BrE and 10 for AmE.

4.4.4.3 Consistency

Finally, it was possible to calculate the teachers' observed consistency on the basis of the (in)congruence between their reported and observed preference and their reported consistency, i.e. whether or not they reported being consistent in question 26 of Section III[90].

As seen in Section 4.4.3.3, 62.5% of teachers stated that they sometimes switch from one variety to another, representing about 50% of respondents whose reported preference was BrE or AmE, but more than 90% of those who reported preferring a mixture of BrE and AmE (see *Inconsistency* in Table 7.31).

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[90] This question was restricted to teachers only, which implies that student teachers did not answer it and that the comparison made in this section between reported and observed consistency cannot be drawn for them.

When comparing the teachers' reported and observed consistency (see Table 7.31), several general trends emerge. First, by combining the total figures of the teachers fulfilling the criteria *Consistency/OK* or *Inconsistency/KO* (for respondents preferring BrE or AmE) and *Inconsistency/OK* or *Consistency/KO* (for respondents preferring a mix AmE/BrE; see coloured cells), it can be observed that 57.6% of the teachers on average had an accurate perception of their actual language use, in that their reported and observed preference and their reported consistency were in agreement with one another. In this respect, teachers preferring AmE seem to have had the best perception of their consistency (66.7%) in comparison to those who preferred BrE, (56.1%) or a mixture of AmE/BrE (50%), although the low representativeness of the first group (8 respondents) could cast some doubt on this observation. The remaining respondents were divided into two groups: those who overestimated their consistency and those who underestimated it. The respondents who overestimated their consistency with their reported preference, i.e. who declared themselves to be consistent, but whose congruence between reported and observed preference was negative, amounted to 4.5% among the teachers who favoured BrE and 47.1% for the teachers who preferred a mixture of BrE and AmE (while there was none for the respondents who preferred AmE). Therefore, among the teachers who preferred one specific variety and who ventured to assert their consistency, few of them estimated it incorrectly. The figures were quite different for those who preferred a mixture of AmE and BrE, where nearly half of them were not aware of leaning more towards one variety than the other.

The second group, consisting of the teachers underestimating their consistency, was composed of 39.4% of teachers who preferred BrE and 33.3% of teachers who preferred AmE. In practice, these teachers did not change varieties frequently and seemed to remain relatively close to their declared preferred variety. Of course, the possibility remains that these teachers did switch varieties, but not in the context of the items that made up the corpus. It is also possible that they switched varieties, but not frequently, which is, however, impossible to establish through the survey because no question was asked about the frequency of switching.

Finally, in comparison with the congruence observed in Table 7.27 (which applied to all respondents), the congruence observed for the teachers only was slightly different, in that there were slightly more respondents whose reported preference was BrE who were congruent (86.4%) than those whose reported preference was AmE (83.3%). For teachers employing a mixture of BrE/AmE, slightly fewer teachers were congruent (50%) than the relative frequency observed for all respondents (59.1%).

4.5   Discussion and conclusion

Following the analysis of the survey results, the hypotheses of the three research questions linked to it, Q_1, Q_2 and Q_4, can now be tested.

In regard to the first research question, 'Is there a language standard among (future) secondary English teachers in the WBF? If so, towards which variety of English?', four hypotheses were formulated. Hypothesis 1.1, i.e. a majority of (future) teachers state that their preferred variety leans towards British English, could be said to have been proven. Indeed, as described in the results above, a majority of respondents (56%) stated that they preferred to teach BrE, followed by a significant proportion of teachers who stated that they preferred a mixture of BrE and AmE (32.8%). When these reported preference figures were compared with the observed preference, an overall slight preference for BrE (53.3%) could be observed, although the preference increased in some categories, such as *Grammar & Usage* (58.5%) and *Pronunciation* (63%), decreased, such as in the category *Spelling* (42.9%) or was balanced for another, *Vocabulary* (48.9%). Where BrE widened the gap over the AmE/BrE mixture was in consistency: it was shown that respondents who stated a preference for BrE were generally consistent with the variety at a rate of 82.7%, in contrast to respondents preferring a mixture of BrE and AmE who were only 59.1% consistent, with the remaining 41.1% almost evenly split between an observed preference for BrE and an observed preference for AmE (see Section 4.4.4.2). Moreover, it was also found that 47.1% of the teachers who declared preferring an AmE/BrE mix were overestimating their consistency to a balanced mix between the two varieties, as they were actually demonstrating preference for one variety (see Section 4.4.4.3). Hence, a majority of respondents claimed to speak BrE and show important consistency in the use of this variety. As a result, it can be estimated that the linguistic norm is leaning towards BrE, although AmE was found to be influential in teachers' usage, especially with regard to vocabulary and spelling. This implies that the null hypothesis ($H_{1.0}$), 'There is no strong language norm that emerges from the survey results', should be invalidated.

Turning to the second hypothesis ($H_{1.2}$), 'Variants of English other than the standard language are not tolerated', it is possible to fully confirm this hypothesis, given the number of respondents exclusively preferring the variant considered as standard in the pair of items *I didn't do anything/I ain't done nothing* (92.5%) and the low rate of tolerance given to *I ain't done nothing* (7.5%). To take it a step further, it was also found that the constructions *I did good* and *I sure hope*, which do not comply with the grammar rules regarding the use of adverbs and adjectives, but are still acceptable in a colloquial context (mainly in America), tended to be

avoided in an EFL learning context, with a clear preference for the neutral register alternative which could be used in a wider range of settings.

Concerning the last hypothesis ($H_{1.3}$), 'Teachers might be less tolerant of the specifics of American English grammar compared to American vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation', it can be partially confirmed. Indeed, the analysis in Section 4.4.2.1 showed that the respondents' tolerance decreased for the category *Grammar & Usage*, albeit remaining in first place (44.6%), in favour of an exclusive preference for British grammar and usage (36.1%). However, the hypothesis is only partially confirmed as it appeared that respondents were also less tolerant of US pronunciation (47.9%) in favour of an exclusive preference for UK pronunciation (33.3%).

In summary, it seems that for a majority of respondents, a preference for BrE appeared to emerge, although respondents were also tolerant of the influence of AmE and were themselves influenced by AmE, mainly in terms of vocabulary and spelling, as shown by the respondents' statement that the variety they were more in contact with was AmE (see Section 4.4.1). However, this tolerance did not appear to apply to non-standard or overly colloquial AmE, with which pupils might nevertheless be confronted with in American series.

Regarding the second research question, 'What attitudes do teachers display towards pupils using a variety different from the one they use?', the only hypothesis (H_2) formulated, 'A majority of teachers is tolerant of both varieties, regardless of the variety they use', could be confirmed to some extent. Indeed, as summarised in Section 4.4.4.1, the respondents declaring in Section III to be highly tolerant of the variety used by pupils did not correspond with their practices observed in Section II, where tolerance depended strongly on the category under scrutiny: a high tolerance could be observed for vocabulary, a somewhat high tolerance for spelling and a lower tolerance for grammar and usage and pronunciation. Furthermore, it was observed that the respondents' tolerance was constrained by the consistency they expected from their pupils (71.6% of them in writing and 54.5% in speaking). Finally, although they expected consistency, more than 90% of respondents declared that they let their students choose the variety they wanted to speak (95.5%) or write (90.3%), which was consistent with what they reported as an influential factor on their own choice of variety, namely that only personal preference would have had an influence on their choice.

Finally, as regards the fourth research question, 'What influence do the legal texts for English as a foreign language in the WBF have on the language norm?', the only hypothesis (H_4) put forward, 'Few teachers report that they have been influenced by legal texts in their preferred variety', can be confirmed. Indeed, as noted in Section 4.4.3.1, 61.9% of respondents

stated that they were not influenced to any degree by the recommendations of the curricula in force in the WBF (77.6% overall) and 92.8% of them strongly disagreed with the fact that a lack of knowledge about the variety that can be used in TEFL in the WBF led them to their choice of variety. Only personal preference seemed to weigh in the balance for 85.7% of respondents overall.

In conclusion, the survey conducted with teachers seems to have lead to the conclusion that BrE is still largely predominant in TEFL in the WBF, although there is a relatively high tolerance for AmE (and other varieties of English). Comparing the respondents' reported and observed preferences, more teachers reported having learned BrE as a pupil in secondary school than there are who reported teaching BrE in the EFL classroom. This raises the question of how the preference of variety has changed over time in TEFL in the WBF. The next chapter will aim to answer this question by interviewing legitimising authorities, who, through their experience in the field of education, may be able to provide some insights on the matter.

5 Investigating the Norm of EFL Among Legitimising Authorities

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 highlighted through quantitative research the fact that teachers tend to be tolerant of both British and American standard varieties of English, but there appeared to be a slight preference for BrE. The purpose of the present chapter is to take the research to a qualitatively based level by interviewing legitimising authorities, such as inspectors, educational advisors, experts in the field of didactics of TEFL and English professors or instructors in higher education to establish whether they expect a certain variety to be taught in EFL instruction. This chapter is subdivided as follows: the next section (Section 5.2) outlines the initial hypotheses that serve as a common thread in the analysis of the interviews. Section 5.3 presents the methodology of the interviews, namely the questions that were asked to the respondents, as well as the respondents' profile. In Section 5.4, the general trends of the interview results are presented and discussed. Ultimately, Section 5.5 attempts to confirm or invalidate the initial hypotheses.

5.2 Hypotheses

With regard to the last research question of this dissertation, several hypotheses can be put forward on the basis of the conclusions drawn in the previous chapters. These hypotheses are summarised in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 – Research question and hypotheses regarding the interviews

RESEARCH QUESTION			HYPOTHESES
Q_6	Is there an expected linguistic standard among the legitimising authorities for English as a foreign language in the WBF (inspectors, educational advisors, English professors)? If so, towards which variety of English?	$H_{6.0}$	There is no expected linguistic standard among the legitimising authorities.
		$H_{6.1}$	The legitimising authorities believe it would be better to teach British English in the WBF.
		$H_{6.2}$	The legitimising authorities report that British English still remains predominantly influential in the WBF.
		$H_{6.3}$	The legitimising authorities report that the linguistic standard has evolved to be more tolerant over the years.
		$H_{6.4}$	The legitimising authorities expect consistency with the variety used.

For research question 6, four hypotheses were put forward, in addition to the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis ($H_{6.0}$) means that it is not possible to observe that the legitimising authorities of English in the WBF have any particular expectations as to which variety of

English should be taught. This hypothesis is based on the current phenomena of globalisation (whereby varieties can be encountered on the internet so quickly that exposure to many varieties is inevitable) and the efforts of the branch of linguistics to explain that language change is natural. Conversely, hypothesis 6.1 proposes that legitimating authorities might favour BrE in TEFL in the WBF. Indeed, as seen in Section 2.2.4, European TEFL has a long tradition of favouring BrE over AmE, something which was confirmed in the survey results in Section 4.4.4.2. It is therefore possible to imagine that for the sake of consistency among teachers, some legitimating authorities might prefer a single model for the main variety used by the teacher. Then, hypothesis 6.2 is that a majority of legitimising authorities report that BrE is still predominantly used in TEFL in the WBF: the results in Section 4.4.4.2 demonstrated that this was the case, so it is likely that this idea will be put forward by legitimising authorities. Hypothesis 6.3 suggests that the legitimating authorities consider that there has been a change in mentality over the years, which implies that the language norm is more tolerant of linguistic variation in the WBF today. Finally, the last hypothesis put forward ($H_{6.4}$) is that, regardless of whether the legitimating authorities would sanction the choice of a variety or not, they expect consistency within one chosen variety.

5.3 Methodology

This section chronologically outlines the different steps that were necessary to conduct this qualitative research, with a particular focus on the design of the interview guide and its underlying objectives.

5.3.1 Interview guide design

In order to conduct the interviews in a relatively uniform manner, an interview guide was designed so that each interview would follow a logical order in the questioning of respondents. The interview guide was created in March 2021 and then submitted to Professor Simons for proofreading, who suggested changes and additional questions, as well as potential valuable respondents to interview. Following the proofreading, the interviews were conducted in April 2021 (see Section 5.3.2).

In its final version (see Appendix 11), the interview guide consisted of a preliminary question, to establish the respondent's profile and experience, followed by 16 questions on language variation in education. Of these 16 questions, 10 were intended for all interviewees, 5 solely for inspectors and educational advisors and 1 for professors of English linguistics.

Although the proofreading made it necessary to reformulate a number of questions and the order in which they were asked, it is worth mentioning here that it was more of a challenge to reduce the risks of bias for the questions than for the online survey. In the latter, the questions were set and identical for everyone, whereas in the former, the interviews involved an interviewer and interaction, which inevitably increased the risks of bias. In particular, there was a risk of leading the respondent when asking a question, while the original formulation was not suggestive in the interview guide.

5.3.1.1 *Structure of the interview guide*

The interview guide was designed to ask a series of questions common to all respondents, but also to ask some questions specific to a particular profile. This section outlines the questions asked of the interviewees (see Appendix 11 for the interview guide).

In the preliminary question (Q0), the respondents were asked to state their role (inspector, educational advisor, professor or instructor) and number of years of service, as their identity would be pseudonymised afterwards.

Questions 1 to 5 were specific to inspectors and educational advisors. They enquired about the place of language variation in the legal texts of the WBF (Q2), in particular whether there was a variety of English that was explicitly recommended or compulsory (Q1). Other questions also involved the expectations of the inspectors (Q3) and educational advisors (Q4) during their inspection/consultancy missions with teachers, notably in terms of chosen variety and consistency. Finally, question 5 asked whether educational advisors received requests for further in-service teacher training on language variation.

Then, questions 6 to 15 were common to all respondents. Question 6 enquired about whether there was any preferred variety in TEFL in the WBF and, if so, what this could be due to. Then, respondents were asked whether they believed that the choice of variety could be due to a generational factor (Q7). Next, question 8 asked the legitimising authorities whether they believed that there was one specific variety which was better to teach in the EFL classroom. Questions 9 and 10 then focussed on the teachers' consistency: question 9 asked the respondents if teachers should remain consistent in the variety of English they use, while question 10 wanted to determine whether teachers should be explicit when switching varieties, i.e. whether a teacher should inform their pupils when switching from one variety to another. Subsequently, questions 11 to 13 focussed on explicitly teaching the differences between varieties, i.e. on its usefulness in secondary school (Q11), at what CEFR level it should be taught (Q12) and whether it should be taught in the initial teacher training (Q13). Questions 14 and 15

investigated whether the respondent believed that legal texts should be more explicit about the variety(ies) to be taught (Q14) and whether BrE should be the first variety to be taught in EFL instruction before expanding to other varieties (Q15). The final, more minor question (Q16) was asked only to professors of English linguistics and examined whether the university had ever hired an American lecturer and whether they thought it should.

5.3.2 Conducting the interviews

The interviews were all conducted during April 2021 via the Microsoft Teams platform and recorded for subsequent transcription. Prior to the interviews, respondents were contacted personally by e-mail to request their participation. If they agreed, they were informed about the practical arrangements for the interview and the protection of their personal data via an informed consent form (see Appendix 10), which they had to sign and return before the day of the interview. In order to respect the personal data of the respondents, it was decided, in accordance with the GDPR, to pseudonymise the respondents' answers, dissociating them from the respondents' name and surname and attributing to them one (or several) letter(s) and a number. The identity of the respondents would therefore only be known by the student who wrote the dissertation and the dissertation jury (see Appendix 13). The interviews took the form of semi-structured interviews, i.e. the questions from the interview guide were asked one by one to the respondents, but the rest of the interview was not so scripted: the respondents could digress and tell anecdotes without the discussion being interrupted and refocussed. Furthermore, if the respondents had already answered a question as part of an answer to a previous question, the question would be dropped so that the respondent would not have to repeat themselves. Once the interviews were completed, the recordings were transcribed for in-depth analysis, using consistent symbols to format the transcriptions in a systematic way (see Appendix 12).

5.3.3 Interview respondents' profile

In total, nine people agreed to participate in the interview. Of these, two were inspectors, one was an educational advisor, three were university professors or college instructors in modern language didactics (two of whom were also English language instructors) and three were professors of English linguistics. The interviewees were chosen for their expertise in their chosen field and/or their extensive experience. In particular, the inspectors, educational advisors and experts in modern language didactics had worn several hats and therefore had wide-ranging experience in a number of areas related to TEFL in the WBF. In addition to having

all taught English in secondary, higher or further education, some of them had also been headmasters or trainers of in-service teacher training.

5.4 Results

In this section, general trends in the answers of the legitimating authorities are presented for each question and, where relevant, a comparison is made with the insights gained in previous chapters.

5.4.1 Linguistic norm in TEFL in the WBF

In this first subsection, the general trends in questions 6-9 and 15 are examined, which provided insights into the opinions of the legitimating authorities on the presence of a linguistic norm in the WBF.

First of all, when asked whether there was a preferred variety in TEFL in the WBF (Q6), all respondents were of the opinion that BrE was still predominant. According to them, three reasons could account for this pervasiveness of BrE.

First, the fact that textbooks issued by English publishers (such as Oxford, Cambridge and others) and which are widely used in Belgium, are mainly based on BrE. Furthermore, although some of these collections have been republished in AmE, they have had little success in Belgium, according to the respondents. This implied that in the auditions, the British accent could be heard much more than other accents. However, respondents noted a real evolution in more recent textbooks, in which a multitude of English varieties are now used, including international English spoken by non-native speakers. Furthermore, Belgian textbook publishers are now starting to publish English textbooks, but their authors, the respondents believed, are, more often than not, teachers with a certain amount of experience, who might favour their preferred variety in the creation of the textbook, a variety which would more often be BrE.

Secondly, the interviewees believed that the teachers' secondary and higher education contexts have had a significant impact on the prevalence of BrE, both of which are more BrE-oriented learning contexts. Nevertheless, several interviewees noted that this was evolving nowadays, particularly in higher education. In summary, the respondents believed that it was only natural for pupils to gravitate towards the British variant if they were more exposed to that in the classroom.

Thirdly, one respondent indicated that the old curricula tended to advocate teaching BrE, as identified in Section 3.3.2 for the old official network curriculum, although it left the choice between BrE and AmE to the teacher's discretion.

Despite the prevalence of BrE, several respondents mentioned that a major evolution was currently taking place for AmE with the evolution of the media and the internet. In particular, they felt that young teachers might be more influenced by AmE because of American culture, which seemed to reach them more now than in the past. This idea was reinforced by the opinion of English instructors in higher education who felt that they heard more American features in their students' speech nowadays than previously. So, to them, it went without saying that the more students are exposed to the American variety, the more they might acquire that specific variant of English.

The following question, asking whether the choice of variety could depend on a generational factor (Q7), was met with both agreement and disapproval. On the one hand, some respondents thought that this might be the case, with the idea that the rise of AmE was strongly linked to globalisation and new forms of technology, which developed at the same time as younger generations were growing up and could then be influenced by AmE. So, although these respondents answered positively, they also recognised that it was not only a generational factor, but is primarily linked to recent historical phenomena: the changing world and the development of AmE in the media meant that people could come into contact with this variety more often than with BrE. On the other hand, some respondents were of the opinion that it was not so much related to the generation, but rather to the individual's experience. Indeed, an older teacher may have been in close contact with other varieties of English than BrE. Furthermore, AmE was perceived as generational because it was associated with modernity, owing to its pervasiveness over the Internet.

Then, when asked if there was one variety that was better to teach in TEFL in the WBF (Q8), the legitimising authorities clearly answered that there is not and claimed that tolerance towards different varieties of a language should be emphasised. Indeed, respondents said that in the last ten to twenty years, AmE has come to play a much more important role (with around 70% of EMT speakers) and that, in order to have education that is relevant to the world as it is, i.e. one that enables pupils to be effective language users, they need to be given resources to be able to communicate in all forms of English, including AmE. This involves offering them a range of materials in comprehension skills that reflect different varieties of English, opening their scope of possibilities while indicating the existence of different varieties. In the same vein, other respondents believed that favouring one variety was an 'anachronistic view of reality', that 'no variety is superior to another' and that 'favouring one variety would be to stand aside from the evolution of the world', particularly since the argument of geographical proximity has

lost importance with the rise of the Internet and that since Brexit, Europeans have, in theory, easier access to the Republic of Ireland than to the UK.

Respondents also argued that anyone can choose their variety, as long as it is standard, because any standard variety represents English as it is spoken somewhere in the world, and this should be acceptable in education. All standard varieties were indeed accepted and allowed people to 'get around the word and communicate globally', which was, after all, the main objective of a language course. It was therefore advisable to choose a variety that one prefers, but not to impose one on the others, as this would be discriminatory. In addition to this, personal interest in the language and culture was also a factor in choosing a variety, as teachers stated in the survey (see Section 4.4.3.1), which makes it difficult to give priority to one variety over the others. In any case, teachers should not neglect other varieties, as they should be able to answer pupils' questions, even those with a variety different to the one they spoke or taught.

Despite this, some respondents acknowledged that this tolerance could lead to confusion for pupils if two English teachers did not speak the same variety. However, some respondents found this to be enriching in the long run for the pupils. It could indeed help them realise that language is something dynamic that can evolve through time, space and the socio-economic environment.

When asked if BrE should be used as a first step of EFL learning in the WBF (Q15), the majority of respondents answered negatively, although there were also a few positive answers in comparison to question 8, which might suggest a biased preference for BrE from the respondents. The few positive responses gave the argument that it would be nice 'to have consistency between colleagues for the sake of the students', but also because 'the norm is still BrE in the WBF', which implied that a large majority of teachers and students speak this variety and that it is therefore 'easier to implement'. Besides, one respondent pointed out that a clear British accent may be easier to understand at the beginning of the learning process than an American accent, where everything seems 'a bit slurred'. However, the majority of respondents did not agree with imposing BrE at the beginning of the learning process and rather felt that 'anything goes, as long as it is standard', that it was important to 'provide learners with the opportunity to hear different varieties of English', but also that 'every teacher has their variety and you can't ask a teacher to change it in order to teach because that would result in poor quality English'. A final reason given was that it is necessary to redefine what is meant by a British accent, with Received Pronunciation representing only 3% of the British speakers, which is rather limited and exclusive.

The following question, asking whether consistency within a variety was required (Q9), was mainly met with approval. Some respondents stated that there were multiple features that make up one variety and that it was illusory to believe that a teacher would be able to master them all for several varieties, so it would be better to stick to one variety and master it well. On the other hand, other respondents felt that the distinction between varieties should be made to avoid confusing students with the input they received. These respondents believed that the teacher should be a consistent model of one variety so that pupils did not believe that all varieties were the same and equal to each other. It was also suggested that mixing varieties could create an incongruous mixture and make the teacher's speech less credible. Moreover, as teacher talk is a significant part of the input that pupils are exposed to, it seemed important to the respondents that this input was as coherent as possible. Other interviewees, however, felt that consistency was more important in writing than in speaking, as written language is highly formalised and requires consistency, whereas spoken language can afford some flexibility. Finally, some respondents, out of pragmatism, were of the opinion that coherence should be *strived for*, but that a) there is no such thing as a pure variety anyway, especially in English, a language that welcomes many other languages with open arms, b) today's culture makes AmE very pervasive and, language and culture being strongly linked, it is normal that the language is influenced by AmE, even in the UK where Americanisms come to find a home, and c) this reflects the reality of all those people who learn English as a foreign language in the world, which is a natural learning process that most people probably do without realising it.

As far as pupils were concerned, the respondents were rather inclined to be flexible. In fact, according to them, imposing consistency in speaking could block the pupils, which would cut short the primary goal of a language course, which is communication. They believed that tolerance should be shown, not penalising pupils, but drawing attention to differences and asking for consistency in writing skills.

To strive for consistency among teachers, the interviewees considered that there was a real need to raise awareness among students and teachers about the extent to which we are aware of the English that we speak, but that it would also be a good idea to establish consistency at secondary school level, by working as a team both horizontally (i.e. English teachers in the same year when the course is created) and vertically (i.e. all English teachers in the same school across the six years of secondary school).

5.4.2 *Explicit teaching of language variation*

This second sub-section focuses on the general trends in questions 10-13, which give an overview of the views of the legitimating authorities on whether language variation should be explicitly taught.

For question 10, where respondents were asked if it was worthwhile drawing the pupils' attention when teachers switch varieties, opinions were divided. On the one hand, some of the respondents considered that this should be done in several contexts, such as to give vocabulary words in another variety than the one taught by the teacher, if this could influence the pupils' understanding, but also to show that teachers themselves are aware of the difference between the varieties and inform their pupils about it. On the other hand, some respondents mentioned two reasons that would make this explicit emphasis on switching varieties unnecessary or impossible. Firstly, if the students have been made aware of the existence of varieties and have worked on this, it would become superfluous to mention every time the teacher switches varieties, as the students should be able to decipher this so that the teacher does not have to interrupt smooth communication within the class. Secondly, some respondents thought that it was unrealistic to think that a non-native teacher could know all the subtle differences between varieties and never mix varieties without being aware of it. There is indeed a cross-pollination effect between the varieties and our Belgian francophone background does not always allow us to access these differences.

With regard to question 11, almost all respondents claimed that there is value in explicitly teaching the differences between varieties in secondary school. Among the reasons put forward, a whole series of benefits were granted: a) it would enable students to communicate better by 'preparing them for communication situations that must be as diverse as possible', b) it 'opens up to otherness', c) 'it refers students to their knowledge of the French language' and d) 'it contributes to the knowledge and development of the individual'. Moreover, other responses included the fact that 'not to include this in your course is to fall short of your task as a teacher, which is to prepare students for any eventuality, which is therefore all the more relevant in the light of how the world is currently evolving', but also that 'if this is not taught, pupils may encounter a form of another variety and think that it is a non-standard form... or that they have not been taught correctly'. In terms of how this can be handled, the respondents insisted that it was essential to draw the pupils' attention, but not to systematise all the differences, which would turn the English course into a linguistics course as given at university. Communication remains the main objective in secondary school, which is

why several interviewees emphasised that it would make sense to see the differences between varieties *in context*, when a particular pair of differences is encountered.

With regard to the level at which differences should be explicitly taught (Q12), respondents thought it should be gradually learned over time. Therefore, they considered that it would be better to keep the explicit learning of differences for the last three years of secondary school (i.e. not before A2/A2+ level). For the first three years of secondary school, however, opinions differed. Some of the respondents considered that it would be preferable to stick to one variety at the beginning of the learning process and then gradually widen access to other varieties. In their view, there is little advantage to be had from exposing pupils to too many varieties, too soon, because they would not yet have mastered the items being taught, nor the metalanguage used to describe these phenomena. Other respondents were of the opinion that, during the first three years, teachers could mention some differences at times, as well as use various supports that would confront pupils with different varieties and show them that variation exists, while keeping the explanation of these differences for a later stage.

Concerning higher education and initial teacher training (Q13), however, the respondents were unanimous that language variation had its rightful place in initial teacher training. Indeed, linguistic variation was seen as part of the subject matter that should be taught, as teachers may also be confronted with pupils who would ask them questions, and so, in interacting with pupils, mastery of these basic differences was believed to be essential. It was therefore thought important to make student teachers aware of these differences and to draw their attention to them, while refraining from making value judgements about the varieties. Although professors of English linguistics put forward that first-year students compared American and British accents in the English Language course, other respondents suggested the idea of introducing a more detailed applied linguistics course on the different varieties of English for master students. In parallel to this, a component could be added to the Modern Language Didactics course to examine how to address these differences with pupils in didactic units.

5.4.3   *Linguistic norm in the legal requirements of the WBF*

This third and last sub-section focuses on the general trends from questions 1-5 and 14, which give an overview of the linguistic norm in the legal requirements of the WBF, as well as the respondents' opinion on whether the legal texts should be more explicit when notions like linguistic variation and consistency are concerned.

First of all, in regard to the presence of a variety that would be recommended or mandatory in the legal texts (Q1), the inspectors and educational advisors who were interviewed indicated that the topic of linguistic variation did not explicitly appear in them, but that, according to individual interpretation, it could be found in several places. For example, 'depending on the network, there may be incentives in the curricula to open up the classroom to other types of English than simply BBC English', as well as the fact that 'by working with authentic material, there will be more varieties involved'. Furthermore, an inspector mentioned that the new reference frameworks were inspired by the CEFR, in which it was not specified that one particular variety should be given priority, but standard language well. It could therefore be deduced that all varieties are allowed, as long as they are standard.

When asked whether they had expectations regarding the variety used by teachers (Q3-4), inspectors and educational advisors replied that they did not, since this was not included in the current reference frameworks (for inspectors) or programmes (for educational advisors). Hence, the inspectors monitored the work on the five language skills and the evaluation, while the educational advisors mainly focussed on the methodology used by the teachers, as well as the contact they had with their pupils. In addition, when asked whether educational advisors sometimes received requests for training on language variation (Q5), the interviewed educational advisor replied that this did not come within an educational advisor's remit, but that the attention of the IFC (*Institut de Formation en cours de Carrière*, i.e. Institute for In-service Training) could be drawn to this, especially as English conversation tables were rare or expensive (when organised by the British Council), unlike their Dutch and German equivalents (Taalunie and Goethe-Institut).

Finally, for the last question, asking respondents whether the legal texts should be more explicit about the variety to be taught (Q14), the majority of respondents claimed to be against it for a number of reasons. First, the reference frameworks underwent a major expansion in 2018, increasing their length from 11 pages to around 230 pages (including appendices). In view of the many constraints already imposed on teachers and considering that teachers are known to experience a certain resistance to change, respondents consider that it would be better to avoid going one step further and concentrate on the essentials instead: ensuring that pupils can communicate. Secondly, several respondents mentioned the fact that restricting to one variety seems an anachronistic approach in the current context of globalisation: imposing a variety would imply banning others. Meanwhile, the further globalisation develops, the less it will be possible to compartmentalise languages. Thirdly, it seemed necessary to allow teachers some autonomy in designing their lessons. In response to this, some of the respondents

indicated that it would be better to rely on the common sense of well-trained teachers so that once they are in the field, they would be able to talk about it and ensure that their course addressed this dimension of language variety. This would imply that initial teacher training should prepare teachers sufficiently to a) have sufficient knowledge of differences, notably to be able to answer pupils' questions and b) to ensure that teachers think about integrating linguistic variation into their lessons and have learned how and where to do so. Nevertheless, the interviews conducted with several professors involved in the training of prospective EFL teachers suggested that this was currently not the case in the training. Ultimately, it should be noted, however, that not all respondents thought that legal texts should not incorporate language variation. Indeed, a few respondents also mentioned the concern that if the notions of awareness of linguistic variation and consistency are not explicitly mentioned, they will never be put into practice by all teachers.

5.5   Discussion and conclusion

The interviews with the legitimating authorities highlighted different facets of the current EFL norm in the WBF. This conclusion will either confirm or invalidate the original hypotheses to the sixth research question, i.e. 'Is there an expected linguistic standard among the legitimising authorities for English as a foreign language in the WBF? If so, towards which variety of English?'.

With regard to the first hypothesis ($H_{6.1}$), 'The legitimising authorities believe it would be better to teach British English in the WBF', it should be considered for invalidation[91]. Although some respondents felt that it would be more convenient for all teachers to speak BrE, particularly in terms of collaboration, the vast majority felt that it was no longer feasible to prescribe one variety in the 21st century. So, by extension, the null hypothesis ($H_{6.0}$), 'There is no expected linguistic standard among the legitimising authorities', could be confirmed as the legitimating authorities did not appear to prescribe one specific variety. On the other hand, hypothesis 6.2, 'The legitimising authorities report that British English still remains predominantly influential in the WBF', could be said to have been confirmed. Indeed, all the interviewees reported that BrE was still regarded as the norm these days, in the sense that the majority of teachers reportedly speak BrE.

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[91] It should be remembered that there are several biases involved in surveys and interviews, including social desirability bias, which means that it is impossible to fully invalidate this hypothesis, but that other methodological means could be used to this end.

Then, the third hypothesis, 'The legitimising authorities report that the linguistic standard has evolved to be more tolerant over the years' ($H_{6.3}$), could also be confirmed, as the majority of respondents indicated that it was no longer customary to be prescriptive about the language variety taught, but that it could have happened about 20-30 years ago.

Finally, the last hypothesis, 'The legitimising authorities expect consistency with the variety used' ($H_{6.4}$), would tend to be confirmed for the majority of respondents, as far as teachers were concerned, to ensure that they provided a consistent and credible teacher talk model for their pupils, while respondents believed that tolerance should be shown towards pupils being inconsistent in speaking.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Is there an EFL linguistic norm?

This dissertation aimed to assess whether there is a linguistic norm in TEFL in the WBF, focusing on the regional variation between BrE and AmE. In order to answer this question, it was necessary to conduct both quantitative and qualitative research.

As a first step, the legal texts that apply in the WBF were detailed in order to determine which *explicit* norms prevail in foreign language teaching. By tallying the occurrences of terms related to linguistic variation in the reference materials, curricula, and the Council of Europe's CEFR, it was observed that whereas the emphasis on linguistic variation had tended to increase over the years in the CEFR, it had decreased in the WBF's reference frameworks and curricula. In both the CEFR and the legal texts, this change in emphasis has in all instances resulted in a greater tolerance vis-à-vis linguistic variety. Thus, it seems that the explicit norm in all these documents is exclusively towards a standard language (in a neutral register) at present, which made it unclear whether one variety of English could prevail.

Since there was no explicit norm to determine whether one variety of English prevailed, it was necessary to conduct quantitative research by means of a sociolinguistic survey among teachers and prospective teachers of English. This survey made it possible to analyse teachers' reported and observed preference, tolerance and consistency towards BrE or AmE. Its results highlighted that a slight majority of respondents prefer BrE, thus involving that the linguistic norm is still leaning towards BrE. However, it also showed that teachers were also influenced by AmE, up to the point that a large minority of respondents reportedly speak a mixture of BrE and AmE. Despite the American influence on the respondents' usage, the survey also showed that their tolerance depended on the category under scrutiny and that it could be constrained by the consistency that they expect from their pupils to stick to one variety.

Finally, the qualitative part of the research involved interviewing legitimising authorities, that is, people who could influence the EFL norm of secondary school teachers through the teaching, advice or recommendations they provided. Their statements implicitly or explicitly suggested that there remains a need in the 21st century to move away from prescriptivism towards a more tolerant descriptivism. Furthermore, although they felt that BrE remains the norm, they stressed that teachers should no longer remain indifferent to other varieties of English and should incorporate them into their lessons. Finally, the majority of the legitimating authorities considered that teachers must be consistent in the language they used,

but that this should not become a constraint of the reference frameworks. Instead, they suggested that initial teacher training should teach prospective teachers sufficiently to be both aware of the language they used and able to aim for coherence, but also to be able to didacticise the essential elements of linguistic variation in order to teach them to their students so that they do not become a hindrance to communication. At present, we can see that this aspect has not really been developed to any degree in the English courses taught to future teachers, which is manifested notably by a high proportion of young teachers declaring that they preferred a mixture of BrE and AmE or whose declared preference was not consistent with their observed preference.

Considering the different parts of the research conducted in this dissertation, it is therefore possible to argue that there is no longer an explicit and prescriptive norm that would aim to favour BrE in TEFL in the WBF. However, it does not alter the fact that many didactic resources are conceived with BrE in mind, which may implicitly prompt teachers to opt for this variety and keep the implicit EFL norm in favour of BrE.

6.2 Limitations and suggestions for further research

In defining the research methodology, a number of choices had to be made, such as surveying a large panel of teachers, despite the potential bias involved. With this in mind, the number of teachers who responded to the survey far exceeded expectations and ensured a certain representativeness of teachers' opinions on the subject of language variation. Nevertheless, it should be recognised that while this type of methodology may be suitable for collecting opinions, it is not sufficient for assessing teachers' language production: indeed, teachers were given the opportunity to state their preference, but it is impossible to ascertain whether their preference in fact corresponded to their actual production. To do so, all respondents would need to be fully aware of the way they speak, which is impossible to affirm via an online survey. Furthermore, where the survey was intended to collect a large amount of data, it became apparent during the administration of the survey that a number of respondents experienced technical problems and were unable to complete the survey, which may explain why of the 230 respondents who started the survey, only 134 completed it entirely.

Due to the limited framework of the master's dissertation, some research ambitions could not be fulfilled, but could now be put forward as new avenues for future research in the field of language variation and teacher talk.

First of all, an analysis of the English textbooks edited by Belgian publishers was planned in order to decipher which norm was represented in the included texts and audio tracks,

as well as to find out whether several alternatives were proposed in the vocabulary lists in particular. However, the conciseness required by the dissertation did not allow for this additional research. In addition to investigating the textbooks of Belgian publishers, it would also be useful to analyse the textbooks of British or international publishers to examine whether several varieties are provided or whether BrE is the only norm used.

Then, the items included in the survey were primarily *linguistic* items. However, language and culture are inseparable, as Murphy (2018: 78) expressed when she pointed out that Britons and Americans have the same language structures but perform communication in different ways. Therefore, the differences between the English used by the British and Americans may also show variation at the sociolinguistic level, in ways of interacting with others. It could, therefore, be interesting to take this variation into account in future research, for example in the textual genre of the job interview, where self-confidence and self-promotion would be a more expected trait in the US, while more restraint could be expected in Britain.

Furthermore, due to the limited amount of research conducted on linguistic variation in TEFL in the WBF, the choice was made in this dissertation to analyse very broadly the four linguistic categories in which BrE/AmE differences could be found (vocabulary, spelling, grammar & usage, pronunciation). Future research might decide to focus more deeply on one of these categories, such as Grammar & Usage, by including more in-depth differences between language registers.

Subsequently, where this research has focused on the teachers' point of view, with their preferences, tolerance and consistency, it would be interesting to conduct a survey on the pupils' side to see if they are affected by the Americanisation of English and, if so, to what extent. Moreover, it would be interesting to examine what teachers can implement to empower their pupils so that they can choose a variety and use adequate resources to then maintain some consistency. Learning phonetics and how to use a dictionary, for instance, seem to be two crucial steps in the process of pupils' independence.

Finally, in order to analyse the teacher talk actually produced and to determine which variety teachers actually use most, it would be possible to extend the research by recording the instructions given by teachers in class. However, this methodology is well beyond the scope of a master's dissertation, although it may prove more trustworthy than simply relying on respondents' statements.

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ABSTRACT

In an era where English has several standard varieties, British English has been considered the reference norm for teaching English as a foreign language in Europe for several hundred years. With the advent of globalisation and the cultural influence of the United States, it seems necessary to question the current state of this norm in the education system in French-speaking Belgium, but also the attitudes displayed by those in the education system who could uphold the state of the linguistic norm.

This dissertation investigates the reference norm of EFL in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, with a choice between the two predominant standard varieties: British English and American English. The analysis was conducted both quantitatively, through a sociolinguistic survey carried out among (student) teachers, and qualitatively by means of interviews with inspectors, educational advisors and professors who could have an influence on the variety of English promoted and learned in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

The results of the sociolinguistic survey indicated that a slight majority of teachers still preferred British English, although there seemed to be a tolerance towards both varieties. It was also found that teachers were influenced by American English in their language use. However, the subsequent analysis of the interview results showed that consistency was expected from the teacher talk in order to expose learners to a consistent model. To this end, the interviewees were in favour of rethinking initial teacher training to include the notion of language variation, rather than adding this as an imperative to an already dense legal framework.