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# THE AMERICANISATION OF THE DUAL PAST TENSE FORMS IN ENGLISH

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Few would contradict the fact that the English language plays a vital role in global society nowadays. The British Council (2013) states that its impact is largely due to two of its main qualities: momentum and adaptability. Religion, politics, the military and business have all contributed to the former and it is because of its capacity of adaptation that it has remained so important. Whilst other languages such as Spanish or Chinese must not be undermined and have more native speakers than English, it is the latter that has the highest total amount of speakers and is a language that many aspire to dominate for a myriad of reasons (Lane 2021). However, this topic does not come without controversy, Harmer (2015: 2) raises the question of who should be considered an English ‘speaker’, is it anyone learning the language even if they are complete beginners, is it anyone who has a B1 level or higher or is it anyone who can communicate using the language? This is one of the many questions that remains unanswered and is open to interpretation.

English is studied in schools worldwide and is often associated with an improved quality of life and a higher social class. It is widely agreed that it is a language with two, equally important varieties, British English (BrE) and American English (AmE). It is unclear what variety should be taught with much variation from place to place. The influence of one or the other typically depends on a number of different factors such as localisation, society or even the teacher themselves.

English as a lingua franca (ELF) or English as an international language (EIL) is used globally as a form of communication between two people who do not share a native language. The language is characterised for its use as a lingua franca, Harmer (2015: 4) describes this use of the language as a process of accommodation rather than a variety. On the other end of this continuum we have native speakers, considered by many as the example to follow. Holliday (2006: 385) coined the term *native-speakerism* and describes it as “a pervasive ideology within ELT, characterised by the belief that “native speaker” teachers represent a “Western culture” from which spring the ideals both of the English language and English language teaching methodology”. Again, this raises the question as to which variety is best, what variety should the population aspire to learn and how should it be taught? The answer is by no means simple and is the cause of much controversy. Crystal states that “why a language becomes a global language has little to do with the number of people who speak it. It is much more to do with who those speakers are” (2003: 57).

International communication and connectivity effectively sum up the past few decades, the invention of the world wide web combined with easy access to technology have meant that it is relatively simple to communicate from anyone from anywhere around the world. Logically, this has had an impact on every aspect of our daily lives including the language we speak. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted this connectivity as millions of people worldwide have made use of technology to communicate with one another in a scale never seen before. This process of adaptation will have long lasting effects and has probably permanently changed communication as we knew it. As for the language, it has meant that many different varieties have come into contact with each other contributing to language change and evolution.

Regarding research into this phenomenon, there are a considerable number of studies which focus on the differences and similarities between the two main varieties, BrE and AmE, but there are not many corpus-based approaches focusing on the dual past tense forms and their use across different varieties. This study aims to carry out an in-depth analysis of the use of the past simple and past participle tenses in their regular and irregular forms across six different English varieties, AmE, BrE, Canadian English (CanE), Indian English (IndE), South African English (SAE), and Jamaican English (JamE). The main objective of this study is to determine to which degree AmE is influencing the current language trends, that is, the Americanisation of the irregular verb forms.

The study is divided into a number of sections, the first is dedicated to the literature review, which provides basic information on the worldwide varieties of English and then delves deeper into the six different varieties used in this study, AmE, CanE and BrE from the inner circle and IndE, SAE and JamE from the outer circle. This is then followed by an overview of the historical evolution of the dual past tense forms as well as their current situation in textbooks and grammars. The next chapter presents a detailed description of the methodology and data with a detailed description of the corpus used and the process of data retrieval. The following chapter contains the analysis and is divided into different sections which analyse the phenomenon across particular verbs, across the different varieties, across verb tenses and across text types. The results and discussion section sums up the results and suggests some possible reasons for their present configuration and likely development in the future.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Worldwide varieties of English**

The English language is defined as a global language. As David Crystal (2003: 3-5) explains, a language achieves this status by being used as a mother tongue as well as having an

important role in other countries, either as a second language, when it is used for official purposes, or when it is prioritised as a foreign language. English is spoken all around the globe by an estimated 1.35 billion people, roughly 17% of the total population, and is recognised as an official language by law in 55 different countries (Gration 2022). Kachru (1985: 13) categorises the use of English into three circles: the inner circle, where it is used as a mother tongue; the outer or extended circle, where it has some official status due to a colonial background; and the expanding circle, where it is taught as a foreign language. As it to be expected, when a language is spoken in so many different countries, there will be a considerable number of different varieties, each influenced by a series of different factors depending on where, when and how it is used.

The success of English today can be attributed to two factors, on a historical level, the colonisation carried out up until the late nineteenth century, which initiated its widespread use; and on a socio-cultural level, the economic power held by United States, which plays a vital role in maintaining its importance today (Crystal 2003: 59-60). In 2021, 68 million people spoke English in the United Kingdom versus nearly 333 million in the United States, ranked as the most populous English-speaking country in the world (World Population Review 2022). The sheer number of AmE speakers added to the influence it has around the globe means that it is this variety which is becoming more and more influential. This phenomenon is not new as in 1974, Jacques Chastenot, member of the Académie Française, declared that the European Economic Community should use Latin as its official tongue as he was worried that American might take over, a language described as “not a very precise idiom” (Schur 2013).

There is an ongoing debate as to which variety should be taught and used as a model. Language contact inevitably produces language change which, in turn, is slowly blurring the existing boundaries between the different varieties (Crystal 2010). To this we must also add the fact that the number of non-native English speakers far surpasses the number of native speakers. The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (2013) provides samples of English as it is spoken by the non-native speakers around the world and also makes reference to this new reality stating that:

In the early 21st century, English in the world finds itself in an “unstable equilibrium”: On the one hand, the majority of the world’s English users are not native speakers of the language, but use it as an additional language, as a convenient means for communicative interactions that cannot be conducted in their mother tongues. On the other hand, linguistic descriptions have as yet predominantly been focusing on English as it is spoken and written by its native speakers.

### *2.1.1. Inner circle Englishes*

The inner circle of English was established with the first diaspora when the language was spread due to people immigrating to the colonies from the British Isles. The speakers belonging to this group have traditionally been the ones who establish the norms and constitute the dominant culture, they use English as a native language (ENL). To this group belong countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada or Australia.

#### *2.1.1.1. The status of British English*

BrE is the variety of English that is spoken in the United Kingdom and has traditionally dominated the English language scene. The language originated after the Jutes, Saxons and Angles arrived in Great Britain in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. These Germanic tribes settled in different areas around the island, and gradually four dialects became established: Northumbrian, Mercian, Kentish, and West Saxon. Over time and with further invasions from people such as the Vikings, the last dialect became the standard form until the next change in Anglo-Saxon England (Potter 2021).

After the Norman Conquest in 1066, the cultural centre shifted to London and the four initial dialects gradually changed into five: Northern, West Midland, East Midland, South Western and South Eastern. During this period French gained importance as the language of the court and Latin was used for academic purposes. Old English was reserved for the lower classes (Potter 2021). The 15<sup>th</sup> century can be characterised by the increase in use of the London variety, the invention of printing and the Renaissance. People from all over the country moved to London for the opportunities it provided, bringing their own language and dialects with them. During this century, English started to regain importance and was used in all areas except from the Church which still used Latin. Middle English considered the standard form to be the Chancery Standard which was based on the London and East Midland dialects (Signoriello 2016).

Early Modern English, or Shakespearean English, gradually spread throughout the United Kingdom, when James I became king of both England and Scotland in 1603. Late Modern English is the variety present during the rise of the British Empire. The Industrial Revolution highlighted the need for an increase in the available vocabulary, which mainly stemmed from Greek and Latin. Colonialism spread this variety all around the world and English began to be seen as the language of culture and education, a necessary tool to succeed in life. English influenced many of the languages and cultures it came into contact with and

vice versa, words and expressions from these countries became accepted and used in English (Potter 2021).

Despite being a relatively small country, there are over thirty different dialects that can be found around the country, all with their own idiosyncrasies. Received Pronunciation (RP), also known as Queen's English, is the accent which is usually taught when learning BrE. It can be considered a social accent rather than a regional one and is only used by around 5% of the population. There are a number of stereotypes associated with this accent as it tends to indicate social class but also relatively easy to understand. It is used on some TV and radio programmes, although this is changing as they come to reflect more the reality of the country (Trudgill & Hannah 2013: 14-15).

#### 2.1.1.2. *The status of American English*

AmE emerged with the first British colonisers who arrived in the New World. The first permanent colony was founded in Jamestown in the year 1607, and by the year 1770, more than two million people lived in the thirteen colonies owned by the British in America (Colonial America (1492-1763) n.d.). For some years, the language used remained faithful to that which came with the original colonisers, however, from around 1720, this began to change. Close contact with Scottish and Irish English as well as with languages from other colonies such as Spanish, Dutch or French, all influenced the language.

There was also some intentional effort to change the language and to differentiate the American language from the British. As Noah Webster (1789) stated in his *Dissertations on the English Language*: "As an independent nation, our honour requires us to have a system of our own, in language as well as government. Great Britain, whose children we are, and whose language we speak, should no longer be our standard; for the taste of her writers is already corrupted, and her language on the decline". As early as 1756, Samuel Johnson referred to the "American dialect" in his dictionary and in 1923, Illinois became the first state to propose an "American Language" Bill (Wrona n.d.).

The language continued to evolve with authors such as Irving or Mark Twain as well as the continuous arrival and mixing of new people from around Europe. AmE used some old English words as well as incorporating many new ones influenced by a myriad of different elements. Over time, the vocabulary and grammar remained similar to BrE, and even nowadays, the differences do not tend to cause misunderstandings (Trudgill & Hannah 2013: 59).

The language spoken nowadays presents a lot of regional variation regarding accent but there is no a standard pronunciation like in BrE. The South-East of the United States can be divided into the Lower South and the Inland South. The accents



in both are similar but the latter is more rhotic than the former, probably due to the increased distance from the ports. Black English varieties also traditionally share many features from this area due to slavery. North-Eastern America can also be divided into Eastern New England and New York City. The first is the one which bears the most resemblance to BrE due to the maritime link between Boston and London. New York's accent is influenced both by the geographical closeness to the United Kingdom and its cosmopolitan nature, in this sense, it is worth noting that the upper class do not have as many distinguishing features as the lower classes. Finally, General American is usually used to refer to those accents which are not markedly southern or northern. It can be divided into four smaller areas: Central Eastern, Western, Midland and Northern (Trudgill & Hannah 2013: 45 – 52).

The country as a whole does not have an official language, even though 32 of the 50 states have established English as their official language. State governments have to provide information regarding health or public safety in other languages apart from English (Díez 2019). 78.2% of Americans speak only English meaning that the influence from other languages is a vital element that must be considered (Central Intelligence Agency 2022). Language has always been a controversial topic, in the 1700s, Franklin was worried about the German influence on the language. In 1900, Roosevelt declared: “We only have room for one language in this country, and it is English”. Nowadays there are still many who advocate for the sole use of English such as the *English Only Movement* which aims to promote the use of English over Spanish, despite there being over 40 million Spanish speakers in the United States. One of their key objectives is to establish English as the official language in the whole country (Díez 2019).

#### 2.1.1.3. *The status of Canadian English*

The first European country to settle in Canada was France, they called the land New France. The first French colony was established in 1604 in Acadia, the stark land and the harsh winters made life complicated for the settlers who depended on agriculture and the fur trade. To these problems were added the conflicts with the indigenous people, the relationship started off cordial but ended in conflict, mainly due to the French's hunting demands. Canada was largely ignored by France as it was not deemed profitable and had many problems. However, in 1663, Louis XIV invested in the country at an attempt to stop the issues. He sent over soldiers to sign a peace treaty and *filles du roi*, single women destined as brides, to try and increase the population (Blakemore 2020). Later conflicts between Britain and French over the colonies triggered the Seven Year's War, which ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris of 1763 and the signing over of the French colonies to the British. Before this event, only a few 17<sup>th</sup> century fishing communities used the English language.

The American Revolution that took place between 1775 and 1783 further contributed to the spread of English. Many of those who were loyal to the British Crown fled to Canada after the fighting. They were joined several years later by people immigrating from the British Isles after the economic and social problems that stemmed from the British Industrial Revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many of these immigrants were Irish (Boberg 2019).

Nowadays, Canada uses both French and English, the former can be traced back to the descendants of the *filles du roi* and the latter mostly influenced by AmE due to the establishment of the first major settlement by the Loyalists (Boberg 2019). Canada was declared a bilingual country in its constitution in 1982. French is spoken by around 30% of the population, the majority living in and around Quebec. It is within this population that the highest level of bilingualism is found. Apart from French and English, there is also a considerable amount of immigration and a few aboriginal languages (Chacón Beltrán 2015: 156-157).

Phonologically, there is not much variation in the country. It can be divided into General, Maritime and Newfoundland. The first area is the biggest and shares the same vowel system as the Western area of the US. The Maritime provinces have a considerable Irish and Scottish influence and is more rural than the general accent, this can be explained by its complicated history with many changes of power. Newfoundland has only belonged to Canada since 1949 and is characterised by its many varieties, it is the most similar to BrE and Irish English (Trudgill & Hannah 2013: 53-55). Canadian Rising is a distinctive pronunciation pattern that differentiates CanE from AmE, it consists of the shortening of certain diphthongs and the vowels being pronounced higher in the mouth than other accents. Another typical feature found in CanE is the addition of the word *eh* to the end of a sentence to check understanding or agreement (Boberg 2019).

### **2.1.2. Outer circle Englishes**

The outer circle was established with the second diaspora and is formed by countries which were once under British colonial rule. The speakers in this group tend to have English as a Second Language (ESL), which is used jointly with their mother tongue or native language. These countries were mostly forced to use English as a form of communication and have a tendency to challenge the norms established by the inner circle countries due to language contact and the influence of their native languages. To this group belong countries such as India, South Africa, Jamaica, Pakistan or Egypt.

### *2.1.2.1. The status of Indian English*

The East India Company was formed in 1600 which set off the initial contact between India and Britain. At first, the relationship was one of business but over the subsequent 150 years, it gradually changed as the British took control over different regions in the country. One of the main consequences was the establishment of English as the language of instruction for higher education in 1835. By 1857 there were universities which, as well as exposing Indians to the language, also exposed them to the western culture (Sailaja 2022).

India gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1947. The federal government established a language policy in which Hindi replaced English as the official national language and a number of different actions were carried out in the attempt to spread Hindi and detach it from the former colonial language. Each state was allowed its own regional official language, as a result, in 1950 the Constitution recognised fifteen different languages. Despite these efforts, English was reintroduced two decades later as an Associate Official language. Nowadays, state and regional concerns are looked after by state governments who frequently use a local, minority language. This contrasts with English or Hindi, mostly used by the central government (Sailaja 2022).

Multilingualism is encouraged in India and many children learn both English and Hindi in the Devanagari script. The spread of Hindi still faces problems due to its literary nature and its differences from other local and regional languages. There have been attempts to introduce a 'Three Language Formula' in schools but they have mostly been unsuccessful as English has spread and is the preferred language in many different areas. English is present in governmental issues, education, media and the publishing industry. Regarding the latter, India is the third largest English book producer in the world, after the United Kingdom and the United States. Some characteristics of Indian English are reduplications when an adjective is used twice for emphasis; the tendency to use fronting, especially with adverbs; and the creation of many new words using affixation and compounding (Sailaja 2022).

In 2021, the English Proficiency Index ranked India in the 48<sup>th</sup> position within the moderate proficiency range with a score of 515, undergoing a slight increase from the previous year. Men's English proficiency is higher than that of women, with India leading this change in Asia. English is much more widely spoken in urban areas than in rural ones where Hindi or other minority languages tend to be used more widely (EF English Proficiency Index 2021). In 2019, a survey showed that 87.6% of people living in an urban surrounding spoke English versus 3% from a rural background who did, 12% did not speak English in the urban areas, a stark contrast to the 96.6% who did not in the rural areas (Kanwal 2020).

#### 2.1.2.2. *The status of South African English*

In 1652, Holland was the first European country to colonise South Africa, the Table Bay colony supplied fresh produce to passing ships. The first British colony, Cape Colony, was not established until 1806. This period was characterised by frequent fights and conflict between the different colonies and the original inhabitants. With the discovery of diamonds and gold, came more conflict and the Anglo-Boer War resulted in a significant loss of both money and lives. The Union of South Africa is dated in 1910 and the African National Congress (ANC) was created two years later in the defence of black people. Several years of racial segregation and the apartheid characterise the following years. 1994 was the first democratic election and the ANC won by majority, since then, equality has continued to improve (Official Guide to South Africa. n.d.).

English has been used in South Africa since the arrival of the British colonisers at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As with most colonies, it was gradually introduced to be established as an official language in 1910, when the country became a dominion of the British Empire. It has maintained this status and is now used alongside the other ten official languages. Its spread can be attributed to politics and caused special resentment amongst the Dutch colonisers already residing in the Cape Colony (Silva 2012).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Afrikaans replaced English as the main language used for governmental purposes but English kept its importance due to the fact that it was used in business, higher education and for communication all around the world. Its status is still controversial today as it represents colonialism but is also seen as vital for success in life.

SAE has many idiosyncrasies. It has a number of words with Dutch origin, and Afrikaans still has an important influence on it today. Some of the surrounding African languages have also played their part in forming this variety as did those introduced by the slaves sent from Indonesia and Malaysia (Silva, 2012). For this reason, SAE uses many words that are completely different from those used in other varieties of English, providing it with many unique features.

In 2021, the English Proficiency Index ranked IndE at 12<sup>th</sup> position with a total score of 606, the highest in the African continent. Contrary to the situation in India, women's proficiency is higher than that of men with South Africa leading this change (EF EPI 2021). Nowadays, only about 8% of the population use English as their mother tongue and the majority of these are white. Despite this, its influence means that it is maybe the most important language in the country and is definitely the one which has the highest status, mainly due to its international character (The English in South Africa n.d.).

#### 2.1.2.3. *The status of Jamaican English*

Jamaica's history can be characterised by its background of colonisation and slavery. The use of English as a lingua franca first emerged due to the communicative needs of the colonisers with the colonised and the slaves. The first coloniser was Christopher Columbus in 1494, who mainly used the island as a supply base with only a few settlements. In 1655, the British attacked the island and established their rule with the help of some buccaneers. These British settlers principally used the island for growing sugar which was then sold in England. These plantations used African slaves as manpower and the slave trade also became a profitable business. Frequent slave rebellions and wars against the Maroons –escaped slaves living in the mountains–, characterised this period until the Abolition Bill was passed in 1808 with full freedom for slaves granted in 1838.

The years following this abolition were not easy until the Crown Colony system replaced the Constitution, which had a positive impact on the quality of life. After a period of discontent and rebellions, the first general elections were held in 1944 and in 1958, the Federation of the West Indies was formed by Jamaica along with ten other Caribbean countries. However, in 1961, Jamaicans voted against this alliance and were granted independence from the British Empire in 1962 (The History of Jamaica 2013).

The official language in Jamaica is English, which is used in formal contexts, seen as prestigious and associated with the upper classes (Sawe 2017). Jamaican Patois, an English-based creole language developed by the slaves, also plays an important role in the country and is considered to be its unofficial language. It is a spoken language and is becoming increasingly used for literary purposes as it symbolises Jamaican culture and heritage (Jamaican Creole, an article 2021).

These two languages often form a continuum and the distinction between them is not that clear as both have mutually influenced each other. Its main influence is BrE but there has also been relative exposure to AmE English. Intonation, phonetics and spelling make it distinguishable from other varieties of English, the sound of the final consonant /t/ or /d/ is often omitted while added stress to some words has contributed to the so-called Jamaican lilt. Regarding grammar, the past tense verb markers as well as some articles are often dropped and the singular noun tends to be used over the plural form (Jamaican English and Patois 2020).

## 2.2. Dual past tense forms in English

### 2.2.1. Historical development of these dual forms

The English language spoken today is one that has undergone multiple changes since it first originated in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD with the arrival of the Angles, Jutes and Saxons to the British Isles following the Roman departure (Porter 2021). English belongs to the West Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family and, as such, shares characteristics with all the Germanic languages. An example of this is the distinction between weak and strong verbs. The strong verbs are so-called because they change their root vowel to indicate a change of tense whereas those categorised as weak use inflection to form the past tense by adding a dental suffix to the infinitive form. This important characteristic shared by all the Germanic languages (Crystal 2008: 457).

These dual past tense forms can be traced back to the origins of the English language. Old English dates between 450 and 1150 and is sometimes known as the period of full inflections, a demonstration of its Germanic origins. It only differentiated between two tenses, the present and the past by the use of inflection, and was much simpler than Latin or Greek. Old English, and the other Germanic languages, divided the verbs into two classes, the weak and the strong, known today as regular and irregular verbs, even though with some changes. The weak verbs add a dental consonant and, in some cases, an extra syllable to indicate a tense change. These verbs added *-ede*, *-ode* or *-de* to form their past tense and *-ed*, *-od* or *-d* to form their past participle. An example is the verb *lufian* ‘to love’, which has *lufode* as its past tense and *gelufod* as its past participle. In contrast, the strong verbs are so-called because they indicate tense changes by modifying their root vowel, this ability is called *ablaut* (Baugh and Cable 2002: 56-57). Despite their classification as irregular verbs, the 300 or so strong verbs can be divided into seven classes or groups, each following their own regular pattern:

|     |                                          |         |
|-----|------------------------------------------|---------|
| I   | I + consonant                            | writan  |
| II  | eo/u + consonant                         | beodan  |
| III | vowel + l/r/h/n + consonant              | helpan  |
| IV  | e + l/r/m                                | beran   |
| V   | e + consonant (not l/r/m/n)              | sprecan |
| VI  | a + consonant or e/ie + double consonant | faran   |
| VII | a/o/ea/æ/e + consonant                   | feallan |

Table 1: Groups of Strong Verbs. Adapted from: <https://oldenglish.info/sv9.html>

Middle English dates from 1150 – 1500 and is also known as the period of levelled inflections as the distinctive endings marking number, case and gender were slowly lost. The most noticeable and relevant change during this period was the loss of nearly a third of the original strong verbs. Following the principle of analogy, new verbs that originated from nouns, adjectives or other languages tended to use the weak conjugation. There were a number of factors that this decline can be attributed to, but perhaps the most important is the Norman Conquest. French replaced English as the official language and was spoken amongst the upper classes, leaving English to the lower classes who applied the pattern of weak verbs to some strong ones. These changes occurred slowly over time, with the strong form being eventually disused in favour of the easier weak form. In some cases, the strong form was preserved but this was not the norm (Baugh and Cable 2002: 158-160).

Modern English or the period of lost inflections occurred from 1500 to 1900. Nowadays, 68 of the strong Old English verbs remain in use alongside with 13 that can be conjugated in either form or have maintained one strong form. The past participle form seems to have survived more than the past simple with some of the strong forms still in use today, a clear example is the verb *beat* which takes *beaten* as its past participle (Baugh and Cable 2002: 160). Crystal (2008: 351-352) defines the participle as “a traditional grammatical term referring to a word derived from a verb and used as an adjective. [...] such a word ‘participates’ in the characteristics of both verb and adjective”. This strong form also seems to have survived in the form of adjectives, for example, we say *he has shaved* but *he is clean-shaven*.

It was during this Modern English period that the English language spread beyond the British Isles. AmE was established in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century with the arrival of the first colonists to the new world. These colonists were from different parts of Great Britain and used different dialects as well as mingling with people from other cultures, so there were many different influences. AmE was subjected to this mix of cultures and languages which logically had some impact on the language as well as there being a growing feeling of national identity.

One of the characteristics of AmE is its archaic use of the language in comparison to British English, for example the preference for the past participle *gotten* over the British form *got*. There are different opinions on this and some attribute it to “colonial lag”, others to “colonial innovation” or to “colonial revival” (Hundt 2009: 13-14). This dissertation investigates the regularisation of some irregular verbs in AmE and, in principle, “colonial innovation” seems to explain the phenomenon in this case.

### **2.2.2. *Current state of the art (in grammars and textbooks)***

Nowadays, it seems that AmE has more of an influence on BrE than the other way round. The American-speaking population is much larger, there is a larger cultural influence, and technology, publishing and mass media play an important role in spreading the AmE variety. In the sphere of teaching of English as a foreign language, both varieties appear to be given equal status and materials can be found which use both. However, the question of which variety should be used is still present and appears to be a debate the different publishing companies are not willing to enter.

There are different attitudes among publishers. For example, MacMillan clearly specifies on its webpage and in its catalogue which variety is used in each textbook. Some can be ordered in either BrE or AmE, whilst others are only available in one or the other and, more importantly, it is also interesting to note how some are in International English. If we compare the catalogues from different countries, we can see the influence held by the two varieties. For example, in the Italian catalogue all the available books use BrE except for two which offer both versions. In contrast, in the Argentinian catalogue, whilst there are still more BrE textbooks, about one third of them use AmE with only one being available in both, and there are also three books which are written in International English (MacMillan 2022). A similar situation can be observed in the Oxford's catalogue. If we look at the Young Learners section and select Italy as the country, we get two books in AmE, nine in BrE and one in International English, while in Argentina three are in AmE, thirteen in BrE and three in International English. Similarly, the Teaching Adults section shows one American option versus seven British options whilst Argentina has four American options while maintaining the seven British ones (Oxford 2022). From this, it is clear that the variety used depends on the country itself and the level but, in general, BrE is more dominant than AmE with those countries that are geographically and culturally nearer to the United States having a wider offer of textbooks in AmE and International English.

English language exams also showcase how both varieties are widely accepted. Cambridge English specifically states that “in Cambridge English Writing tests, British or American spelling can be used”. They can also be used together – in the way that Australian and New Zealanders will use British spellings for some words and AmE spellings for other words. The Oxford Placement Test gives users the choice to choose which variety they want or they can combine both. In contrast, the TOEFL exam is conducted entirely in AmE and it does not offer the chance to use BrE. Exams that focus on general English are available in either



variety whilst exams specific to a certain culture, like the TOEFL, focus on one or the other variety.

Dictionaries are another area where both forms can be found together. The *Cambridge Online Dictionary* provides users with options in both varieties. For example, the verb *spell* contains both *spelled* and the British English alternative *spelt* (Cambridge University Press 2003). Oxford Learner's dictionaries have two options, English or AmE and, as such, do not provide the user with both forms when conducting a simple search (Oxford 2000). The *Collins Bilingual Spanish-English Dictionary* provides us with both forms under the infinitive *spell* (Collins 2018). The same can be said for the *Longman Dictionary*, which specifies that *spelt* is BrE and *spelled* AmE. Most accept either form and provide users with the alternative which suggests that neither are considered incorrect but rather, the other spelling is preferred (Longman 1978).

### 3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

#### 3.1. Corpus

The corpus used for this study is the *Corpus of Global Web-based English* (GloWbE). Its database contains a total of 1,885,632,973 words, extracted from 340,619 web sites and from 1,792,045 web pages. In this sense, a web site contains different sections under one domain address whereas a web page is one single document (Davies 2015). The corpus was published in 2013 with the objective of creating a tool to be able to compare different varieties of English and contains both more formal –webpages– and more informal texts –blogs. GloWbE allows for a number of different searches and it is annotated using POS tags which enables its users to search for linguistic forms taking into account the specific part of speech. Users can search for the overall frequency, the frequency of each country and compare frequencies between any of the twenty different countries included in its database (Davies & Fuchs 2015).

GloWbE was created with the objective of representing a more informal aspect of the language from twenty different English-speaking countries and, for this purpose, webpages were chosen to ensure that the corpus would be big enough. It represents the extent to which each variety is used in web-based communication around the globe (Davies & Fuchs 2015). Informal blogs make up around 60% of the database whereas more formal genres and text types constitute the remaining 40%. The *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) and Google were used to create GloWbE, this was done by extracting hundreds of high frequency 3-grams, groups of three words, from the corpus, which were then typed into Google. The subsequent searches filtered the results both by region and by text type, each country provided

around two million randomly extracted URLs, firstly from a general search that took into account any type of web page or web site and, secondly, only from informal blogs. The proportion of 60% to 40% is due to the fact that it was inevitable that some blogs were also included in the general search. The metadata associated to all these different URLs was also recorded and contains important information such as the country, the authors or the name of the page (Davies 2015).

The following table shows the total number of websites, webpages and words used for each of the six countries studied in this dissertation:

| Variety | Web sites | Web pages | Words         |
|---------|-----------|-----------|---------------|
| AmE     | 82,260    | 275,156   | 386,809,355   |
| CanE    | 33,776    | 135,692   | 134,765,381   |
| BrE     | 64,351    | 381,841   | 387,615,074   |
| IndE    | 18,618    | 113,765   | 96,430,888    |
| SAE     | 10,308    | 45,264    | 45.364.498    |
| JamE    | 3,488     | 46,748    | 39,663,666    |
| Total   | 340,619   | 1,792,045 | 1,885,632,973 |

*Table 2: Total number of web sites, web pages and words per country in GloWbE.*

GloWbE allows its users search for a word and compare its usage in all the twenty varieties included in its database as well as carrying out more complicated searches to discover what words are more likely to be found in some varieties over others. It can also be used to compare words which may have different meanings or connotations in the different varieties.

As negatives, GloWbE does not include any spoken data, although for this specific study it would not have much of an impact as the verb forms being analysed are often pronounced the same. It also does not detect if someone from a different country is posting to a web site belonging to a different country, for example, if an English writer posts to an American web site. In contrast to some of the smaller, manually annotated corpora, the amount of data included in this corpus means that it is not possible to check all of it. However, some of the webpages have been randomly checked and no problems have been detected (Davies & Fuchs 2015).

### **3.2. Data retrieval**

All the data was retrieved following the same steps. Sixteen different searches were carried out, the eight verbs in both the past simple and the present perfect tenses. This was done by using the POS annotation tool which either added *\_v?d* to indicate the past simple or *\_v?n*

to indicate the past participle. The results are shown in various tones of blue, the darker the colour, the more frequent the structure is.



Figure 1: Spelled in past simple



Figure 2: Spelled in past simple results in raw frequencies

Due to the different length of the corpus of the varieties, the figures were all normalised to 10.000.000 words to enable an objective interpretation of the data. The resulting data was then put into tables to present the bar charts in a more visual way.

It is important to note that whilst the first four analyses were conducted by taking into account the data relative to each individual variety, the last analysis, which compares the use of the dual past tense forms in informal blogs with their use on the web in general, has taken into account the total number of blogs and general webpages, respectively. There are 583,716,636 words from informal blogs and 1,299,493,498 from webpages in general, so these numbers have been used to normalise the absolute figures. In the particular case of this last analysis, it has been carried out in light of the following three verbs T – *spell*, *dream* and *learn* – as there was little or no variation in the pattern across all the eight verbs.

## 4. ANALYSIS

### 4.1. The phenomenon across particular verbs

#### 4.1.1. *Spelled vs spelt*

The use of *spelled* and *spelt* follows a similar pattern in both tenses. In AmE and CanE *spelled* is used considerably more frequent than *spelt* whereas in the other varieties the difference is much smaller. *Spelled* is used more in the past simple in all the varieties with the smallest difference between *spelt* being found in JamE. The use of *spelt* over *spelled* in the past participle is favoured in BrE while in IndE they are equally distributed. All the other varieties prefer the use of the regular form *spelled*.

##### 4.1.1.1. *Past simple*

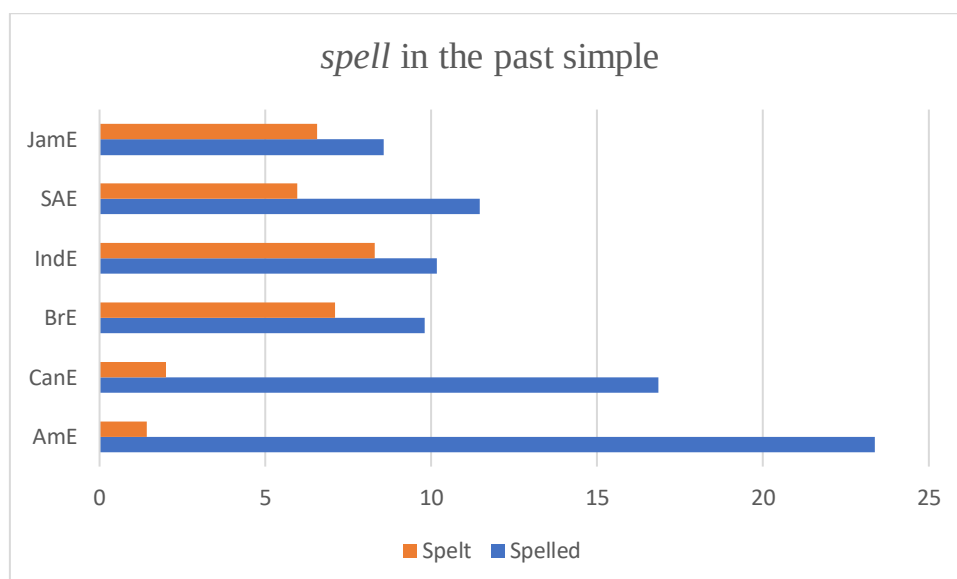


Figure 3: *spell in the past simple*

##### 4.1.1.2. *Past participle*

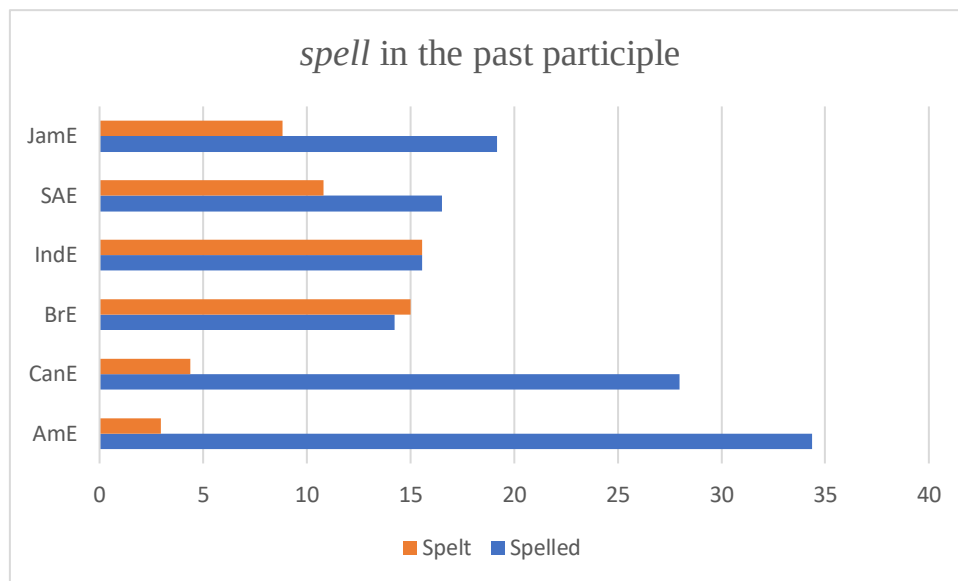


Figure 4: *spell in the past participle*

#### 4.1.2. *Dreamed vs dreamt*

As shown in the following figure/table, *dreamt* is considerably more frequent in AmE, CanE, BrE and SAE in both the past simple and the past participle. In the past simple form, *dreamt* predominates in IndE and JamE, although the difference is not overly significant. It is worth noting that all the varieties prefer *dreamed* in the past participle with AmE having the biggest difference and IndE the smallest.

##### 4.1.2.1. *Past simple*

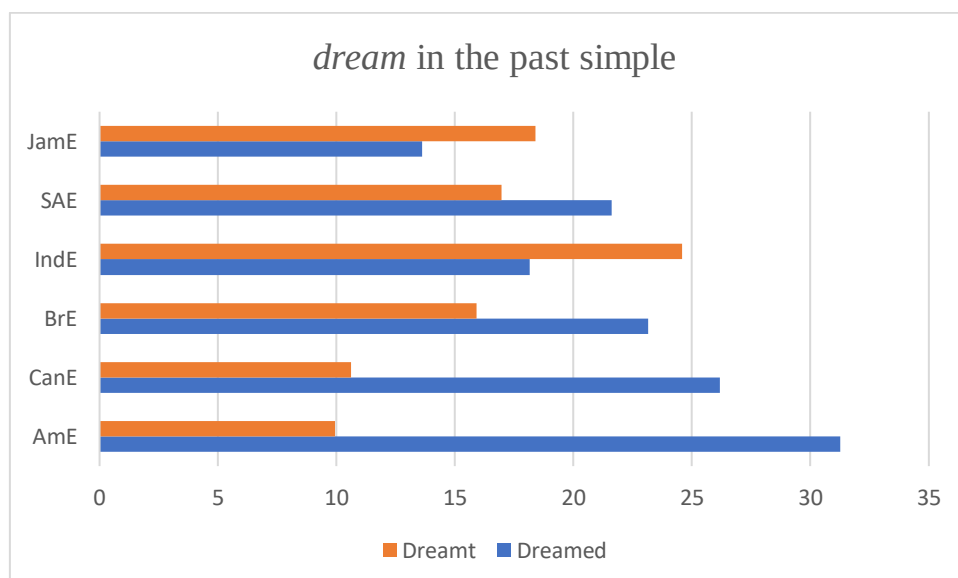


Figure 5: *dream in the past simple*

##### 4.1.2.2. *Past participle*

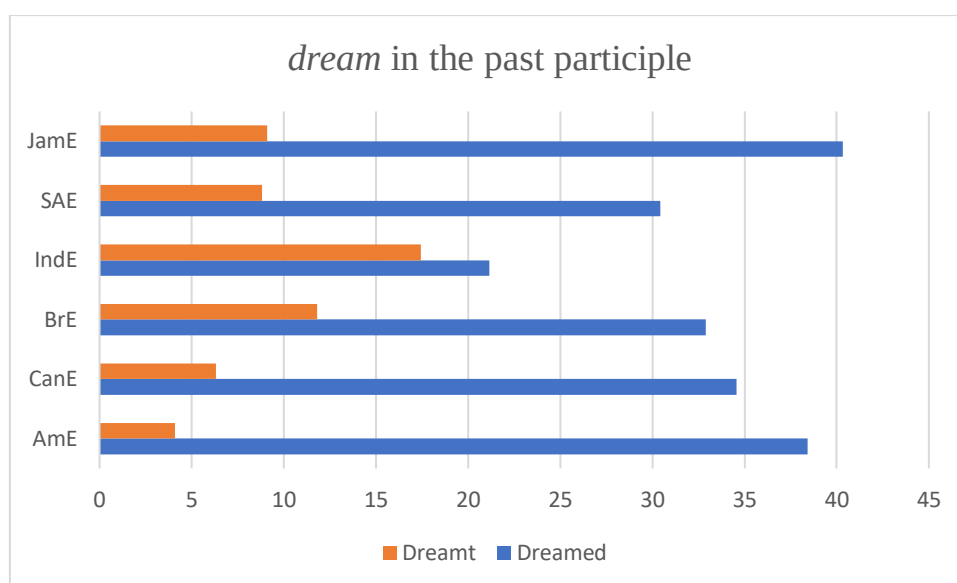


Figure 6: *dream in the past participle*

#### 4.1.3. *Learned vs learnt*

*Learned* is more frequent than *learnt* in both the past simple and past participle forms over all six varieties. The biggest difference in use is found in CanE which contrasts with the majority of the verbs where AmE has the biggest difference. On the contrary, the smallest difference can be found in IndE. The difference is more significant in the past simple than in the past participle.

##### 4.1.3.1. *Past simple*

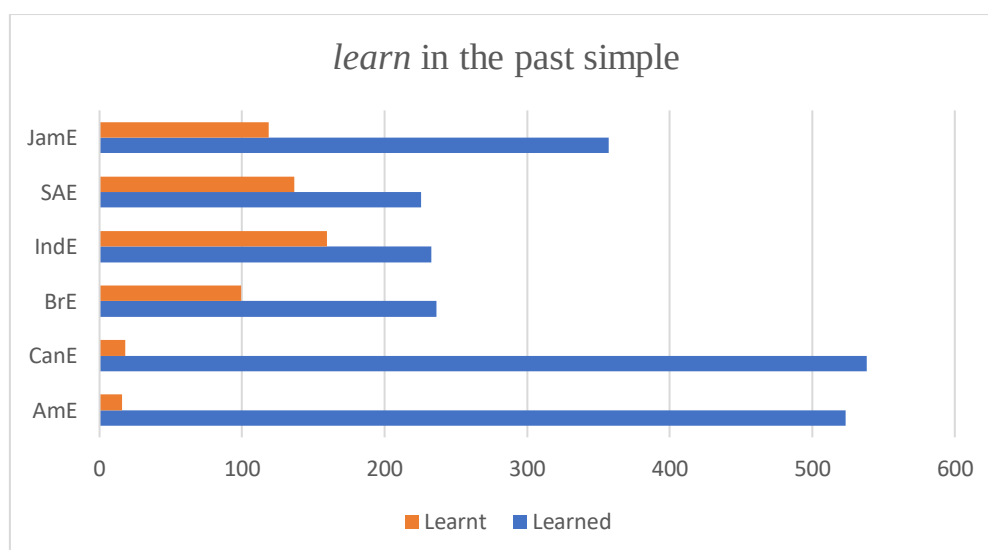


Figure 7: *learn in the past simple*

#### 4.1.3.2. Past participle

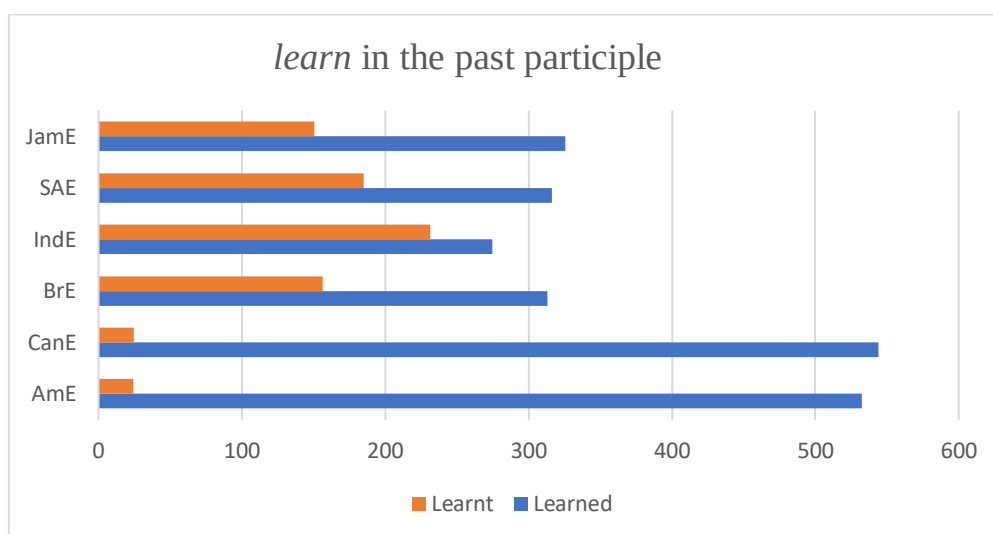


Figure 8: learn in the past participle

#### 4.1.4. Spoiled vs spoilt

*Spoiled* is preferred over *spoilt* in all the varieties in the past simple with the smallest variation found in BrE and the biggest in AmE. This changes in the past participle tense as both BrE and SAE prefer *spoilt*, with the latter presenting more of a difference than the former. It is also worth noting that CanE has the widest gap between use of the two forms in the past participle, which contrasts with the past simple and AmE.

##### 4.1.4.1. Past simple

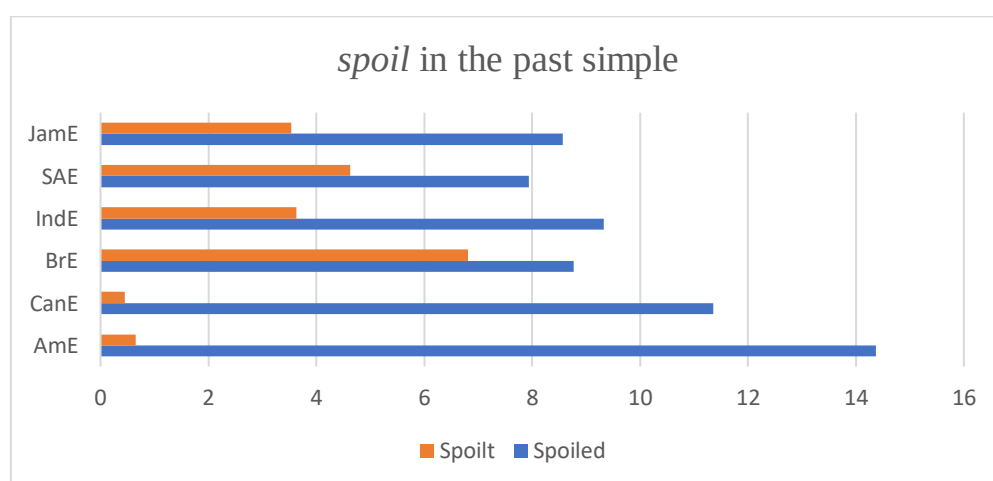


Figure 9: spoil in the past simple

##### 4.1.4.2. Past participle

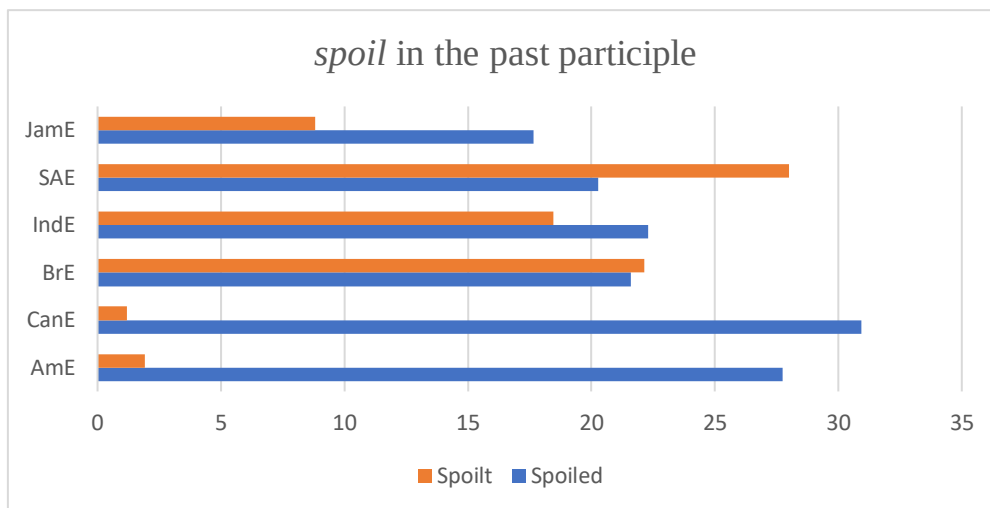


Figure 10: *spoil in the past participle*

#### 4.1.5. *Burned vs burnt*

*Burned* and *burnt* vary quite considerably, *burned* is favoured in all the varieties in the past simple with AmE leading the way. However, in the past participle form, the inner circle varieties prefer *burned* while the outer circle varieties all prefer *burnt*, the smallest variation found in JamE. This is the only verb in which this pattern occurs and a clear difference between the inner and outer circle can be appreciated.

##### 4.1.5.1. *Past simple*

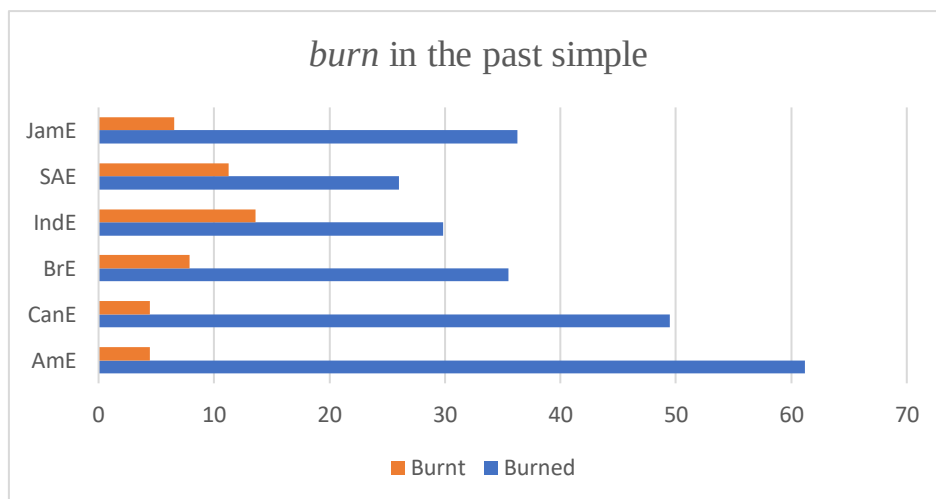


Figure 11: *burn in the past simple*

##### 4.1.5.2. *Past participle*



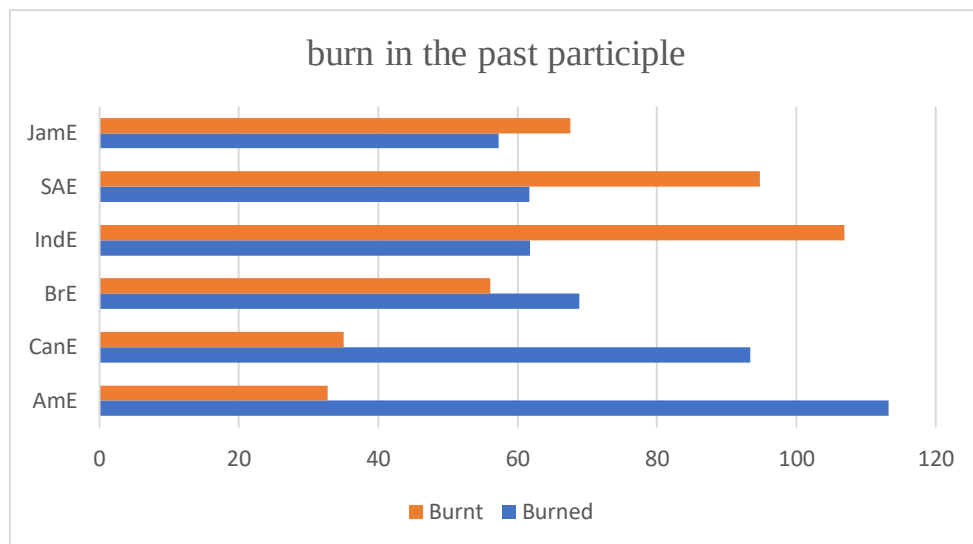


Figure 12: *burn in the past simple*

#### 4.1.6. *Smelled vs smelt*

This verb presents a slightly different pattern. Whilst *smelled* is preferred in all the varieties in the past simple, there is a higher preference for *smelt* in the past participle. It is only AmE that shows a large difference between both forms in both tenses. In CanE, *smelt* is used almost as much as *smelled* in the past participle rather than following the American trend. All the varieties except AmE and CanE prefer the irregular form *smelt*. It is worth pointing out that there are not many instances of the verb in the past participle form, so the result might be corpus-biased, especially if compared with the frequency of the past simple form.

##### 4.1.6.1. *Past simple*

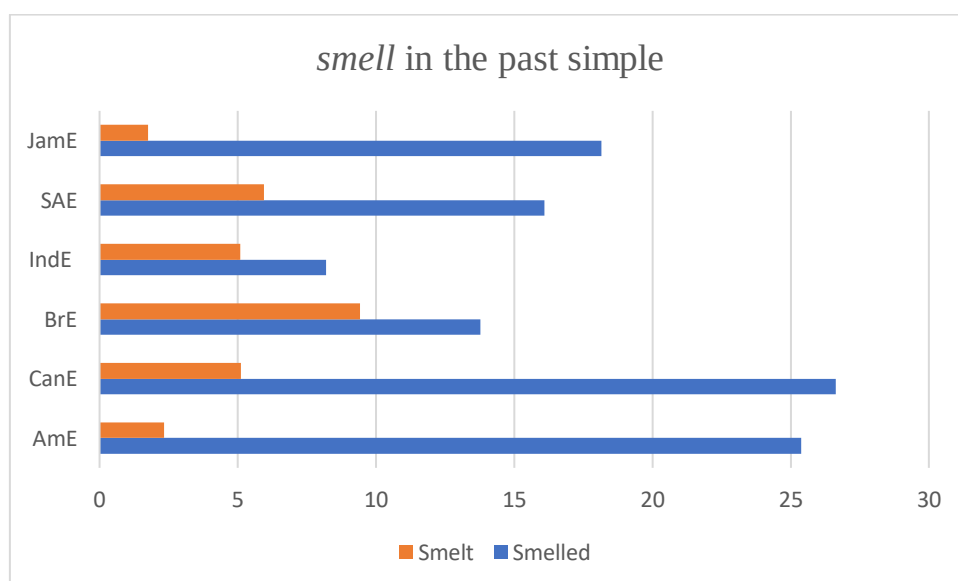


Figure 13: *smell in the past simple*

#### 4.1.6.2. *Past participle*

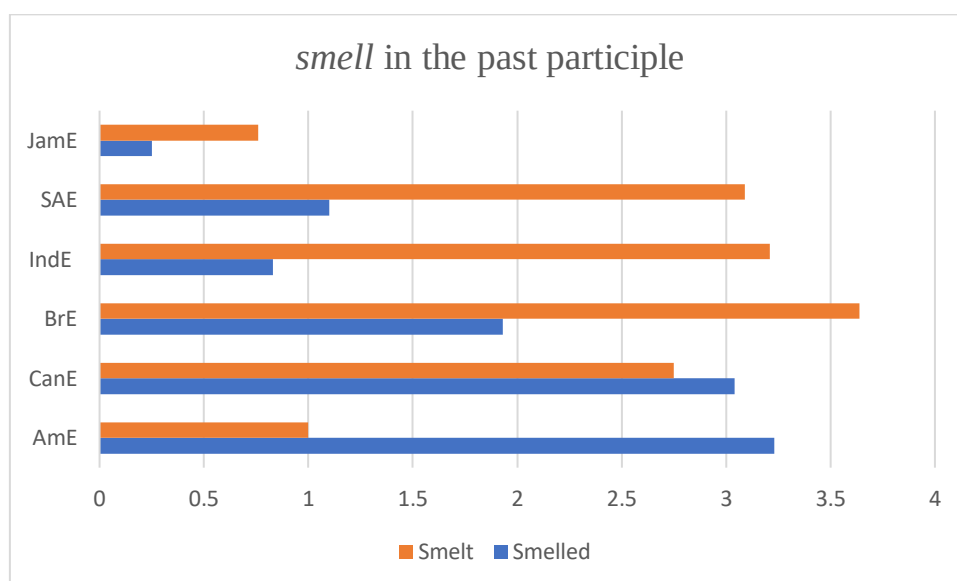


Figure 14: *smell in the past participle*

#### 4.1.7. *Leaned vs leant*

*Leaned* is used over *leant* in all six varieties and in both the past simple and the past participle tenses. BrE and SAE are the only varieties showing the use of *leant*, while it is not attested at all in the past participle in JamE. This contrasts with the considerable usage of *leaned*, which is used more than in any other variety. In general, it is a low frequency verb and has very low absolute frequencies.

##### 4.1.7.1. *Past simple*

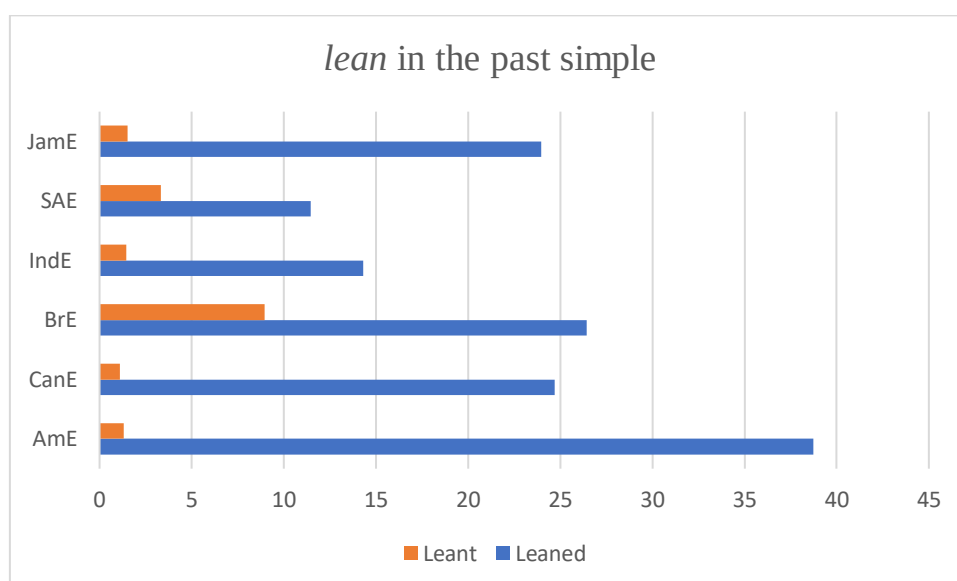


Figure 15: *lean in the past simple*

#### 4.1.7.2. Past participle

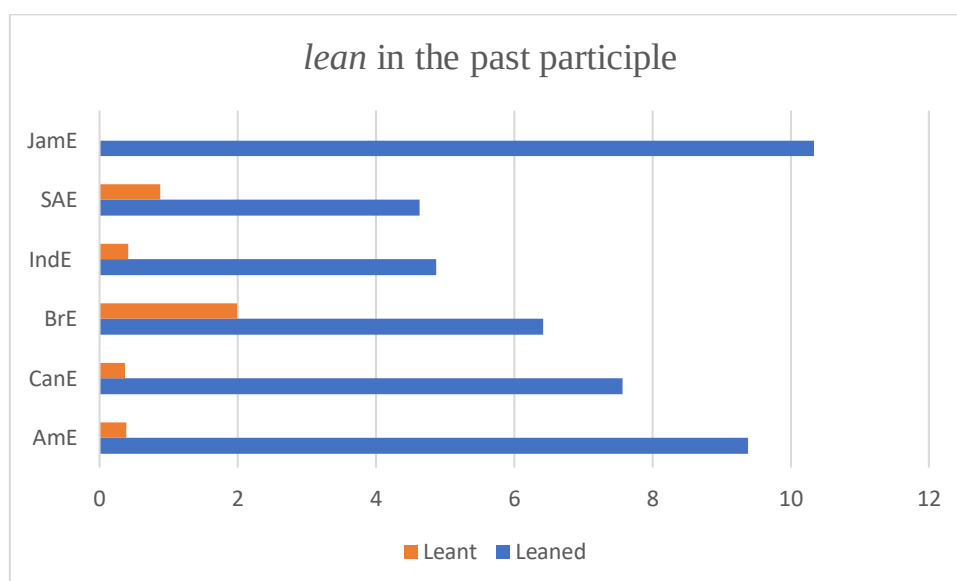


Figure 16: *lean in the past participle*

#### 4.1.8. Leaped vs leapt

Both *leaped* and *leapt* follow a similar pattern in the past simple and the past participle. The first thing that stands out is the considerable use of *leapt* over *leaped*, being the only verb showing a clear preference for the irregular form. *Leapt* is used in both tenses considerably more in BrE than in any of the other varieties, followed by SAE. This suggests that the verb itself is not used much outside Britain. *Leapt* is used more in the past simple across all the varieties, although the difference in AmE is negligible. In the past participle, IndE and JamE favour the regular verb ending but again, the difference is negligible. This contrasts with the other verbs in this study as AmE and CanE tend to the use of the regular form.

##### 4.1.8.1. Past simple

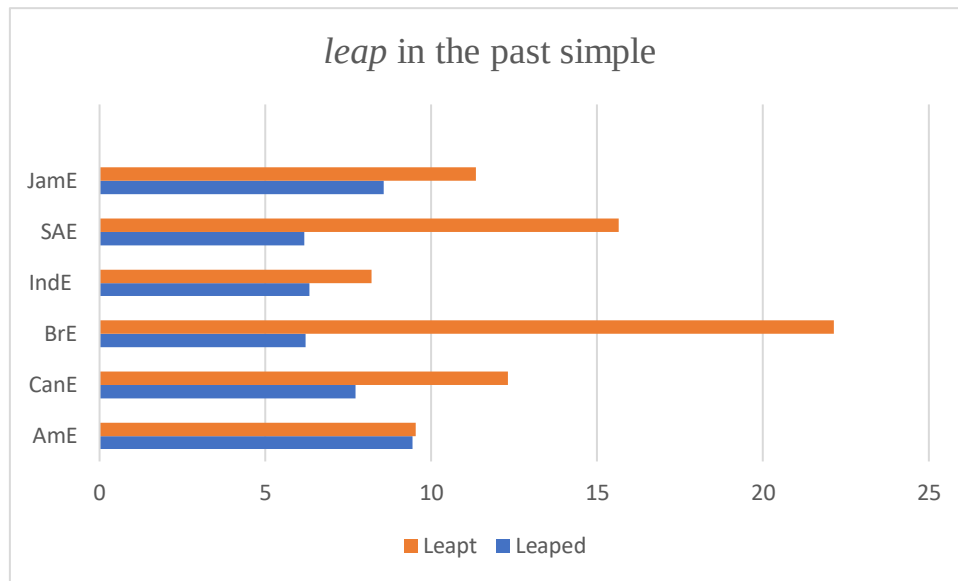


Figure 17: leap in the past simple

#### 4.1.8.2. Past participle

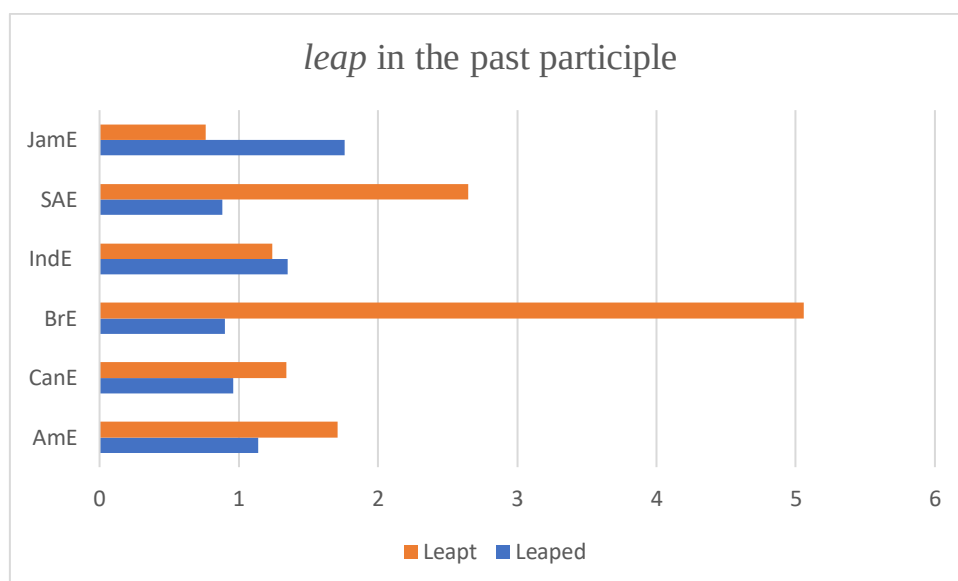


Figure 18: leap in the past participle

## 4.2. The phenomenon across the varieties

The results point to the existence of different attitudes to these verb forms across the varieties. AmE pioneers the use of the *-ed* form in both the past simple and the past participle. It is the variety that presents the greatest difference in use between the regular and the irregular form, with only a few exceptions such as *learn* in both tenses, the past participle form of *spoil* and the past participle form of *lean*. From the eight verbs analysed in this study, the only

example where AmE prefers the irregular form in both the past simple and the past perfect is the verb *leapt*.

After AmE, CanE also shows a clear preference for the regular *-ed* form in line with the American influence. The difference is considerably smaller than in AmE in a number of verbs: *spell*, *spoil* and *leap* in the past simple, *smell* in the past participle form and *burn* and *lean* in both tenses. CanE is leading the change in the use of *learn* in both tenses and *spoil* in the past participle, although the difference is not very significant. The irregular form *leapt* is preferred in both tenses, thus following the American pattern.

BrE prefers the regular *-ed* form in all the past simple forms of the verbs, except *leap* which only has a limited number of instances. In contrast, the past participle form seems to favour the irregular verb ending, on occasions the difference in use is barely significant. It is worth mentioning the verb *leap* as it is more frequent in BrE than in any of the other varieties. These results could indicate that BrE is evolving and is gradually taking up the regular form. However, if this is the case, it will occur over an extended time period so it may be difficult to find any reliable data to prove it.

IndE is the variety which presents the smallest differences in use between the two verb forms. There is not such a clear preference for one form over the other depending on the verb tense, but in general the regular *-ed* form is used over the irregular forms. In itself, IndE is found to follow the BrE practice systematically, except in four occasions where the use of regular and irregular verbs are switched around.

In this same vein, SAE follows the same pattern as BrE except in the past participle form of *spell* and *burn* where the regular form is preferred over the irregular one. In some verbs the difference is greater than in BrE whilst in others it is similar or smaller. The difference in use between the two forms does not change much either from verb to verb. This variety does not have many noteworthy features apart from the fact that it is quite faithful to the BrE variety.

JamE follows the American and Canadian pattern, although the difference is not as significant as in the two inner circle varieties. In this regard, it is worth highlighting three verb forms: *dream* in the past simple and *burn* and *smell* in the past participle forms. The irregular forms of these three verbs are used more or do not present as big a difference in use in AmE and CanE. They are also the only verbs in which JamE prefers the regular *-ed* form. In the past participle form of *lean*, JamE has no instances of the irregular form *leant*, thus preferring the use of the regularised form *leaned*. It also prefers the irregular form *leapt* in the past simple in line with AmE and CanE but shows the highest use of the regular form and the lowest use of the irregular form when it comes to the past participle tense. For this last verb, there are only

seven instances of the regular form and three of the irregular form so these data is not very reliable.

To conclude, it seems clear that AmE, CanE and JamE are those which show a clearer preference for the use of the regularised forms in both the past simple and past participle. AmE does appear to be leading the change to the regularised verb form. This contrasts with the more balanced distribution found in BrE, SAE and IndE. In general, BrE also tends to prefer the *-ed* ending but the difference is not as great as in the former three varieties. SAE and IndE present a more balanced use of both forms as well as the differences being much smaller than those present in AmE, CanE and JamE. This suggests that BrE has more of an influence on IndE and SAE than AmE. In most cases, the inner circle languages are the ones which present the greatest difference in use whereas in the outer circle varieties the difference is less noticeable and does not follow such a predictable pattern. This can be attributed to the fact that these languages are subject to a more diverse influence.

#### **4.3. The phenomenon across tenses: the past simple vs the past participle**

The past simple is considerably more regularised than the past participle form. As exceptions, both IndE and JamE prefer the irregular form *dreamt* in the past simple and all the varieties use *leapt* over *leaped* in this same tense.

Regarding the past participle, there is more variety, even though, on the whole, the regular *-ed* ending is favoured over the irregular one. BrE and SAE are the varieties with no clear preference for one form or the other. IndE and JamE have two verbs which prefer the irregular ending and CanE and AmE just one, *leap*.

IndE and JamE follow the same pattern regarding regular or irregular verbs, they both prefer the irregular verbs *dreamt* and *leapt* in the past simple. These varieties and these two verbs are the only two that present this pattern of having an irregular past simple but a regular past participle.

Whilst the *-ed* verb ending is becoming increasingly popular, the past simple appears to be leading the trend although the number of instances might play a part in this. The past participle is used more than the past simple in the first five verbs – *spell*, *dream*, *learn*, *spoil* and *burn* – but less in the remaining three – *smell*, *lean* and *leap*.

#### **4.4. The phenomenon depending on the frequency of the verb**

The two verbs which have the highest frequency are *learn* with 181.789 instances and *burn* with 36.886 instances, the latter considerably lower than the former. As for the ones with the lowest frequency, *lean* has 3.817 instances and *leap* 4.794.

In all the six varieties and in both tenses, *learned* is favoured over *learnt*. The difference in use between the two forms is considerable in all the varieties but it really stands out in AmE and CanE and, on the other hand, IndE is the one that presents the smallest difference. *Burned* is favoured over the irregular form *burnt* in the past simple in all the varieties and also in the past participle form in the inner circle varieties - AmE, CanE and BrE-, whereas *burnt* is used more than *burned* in the past participle of the outer circle varieties. *Burn* is the only verb in which this pattern occurs, it is also worth noting that out of the 36.886 instances of this verb, 27.449 instances are in the past participle suggesting that it is much more widely used than the past simple.

*Lean* shows a clear preference for the regular form *leaned* and shows a similar difference in use between *leaned* and *leant* over all the varieties. The largest differences being found in AmE in the past simple form and in JamE in the past participle form. *Leap* is significantly different from the other seven verbs that have been analysed as all the varieties prefer the irregular form in the past simple and all but IndE and JamE prefer the irregular form in the past participle. BrE and SAE are the two varieties which have any significant use of this verb, its use in the other four varieties is not relevant. This could be the cause of its irregularity, as it is a very low frequency verb which is only used in two of the varieties, and, therefore, is not subjected to much influence from other varieties.

These results suggest that the *-ed* regular form is taking the place of the once irregular forms, mainly due to the influence held by America, this can be seen in that *learn*, the verb which has by far the most instances, is almost completely regularised. The analysis of the verb *burn* seems to suggest that the *-ed* form is indeed becoming predominant and that it is the inner circle varieties that are leading this change, headed by America. This conclusion is further supported by the analysis of the two lower frequency verbs – *lean* and *leap* – which are quite inconsistent and could show that the change has not yet taken place as they do not present the distribution of *learn* and *burn*.

## 4.5. The phenomenon across different text types: level of formality

### 4.5.1. Spell

| GENERAL            | Past simple |       | Past participle |       |
|--------------------|-------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
|                    | Spelled     | Spelt | Spelled         | Spelt |
| Absolute figures   | 1750        | 823   | 2798            | 1641  |
| Normalised figures | 13,47       | 6,33  | 21,53           | 12,63 |

Table 3: spell across all text types

| BLOG               | Past simple |       | Past participle |       |
|--------------------|-------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
|                    | Spelled     | Spelt | Spelled         | Spelt |
| Absolute figures   | 804         | 341   | 1068            | 608   |
| Normalised figures | 13,77       | 5,84  | 18,3            | 10,42 |

Table 4: spell in informal blogs

#### 4.5.2. Dream

| GENERAL            | Past simple |        | Past participle |        |
|--------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
|                    | Dreamed     | Dreamt | Dreamed         | Dreamt |
| Absolute figures   | 3145        | 2080   | 4150            | 1212   |
| Normalised figures | 24,2        | 16     | 31,94           | 9,33   |

Table 5: dream across all text types

| BLOG               | Past simple |        | Past participle |        |
|--------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
|                    | Dreamed     | Dreamt | Dreamed         | Dreamt |
| Absolute figures   | 1355        | 868    | 2008            | 561    |
| Normalised figures | 23,21       | 14,87  | 34,4            | 9,61   |

Table 6: dream in informal blogs

#### 4.5.3. Learn

| GENERAL            | Past simple |        | Past participle |        |
|--------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
|                    | Learned     | Learnt | Learned         | Learnt |
| Absolute figures   | 43400       | 12084  | 47842           | 17745  |
| Normalised figures | 333,98      | 92,990 | 368,16          | 136,55 |

Table 7: learn across all text types

| BLOG             | Past simple |        | Past participle |        |
|------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
|                  | Learned     | Learnt | Learned         | Learnt |
| Absolute figures | 22261       | 6068   | 24019           | 8370   |



|                    |        |        |        |        |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Normalised figures | 381,37 | 103,95 | 411,48 | 143,39 |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|

Table 8: *learn* in informal blogs

These data show that there is not any actual text-type variation in the use of these verbs. However, it further corroborates that there is a clear preference for the regular *-ed* ending regardless of whether a web page or a blog is involved.

Regarding the individual verbs, *spelled* in the past simple is used slightly more in blogs than in general web pages but all the other forms, *spelt* in the past simple and *spelled* and *spelt* in the past participle are more frequent in general web pages. *Dream* in the past simple is more widely distributed in general web pages along with the past participle form in blogs. *Learn* is used more in blogs than in general web pages in both tenses and forms.

The results of this analysis further validate the conclusions reached in the previous sections, which conclude that the regular *-ed* ending is systematically preferred across all the varieties. BrE, AmE and CanE are three of the top four varieties included in the corpus along with AusE. The clear preference for the regular form in AmE and CanE along with the less significant differences in BrE mean that the overall preference follows the same pattern.

#### 4.6. Discussion

The previous analyses point to the likely existence of an on-going process of Americanisation, at least regarding the irregular dual past tense forms. AmE is certainly leading the change as the variety pioneering the use of the regular *-ed* form while at the same time avoiding the irregular ones. This pattern is closely followed by CanE and, to a lesser extent, JamE. BrE combines both forms with SAE being quite faithful to BrE. IndE appears to be relatively faithful to BrE but, at the same time, is quite similar to JamE, which follows the AmE pattern. Due to the nature of this study, there have been relatively few analyses carried out so it would be necessary to include more variables to be able to correctly identify the pattern followed by IndE. In all the varieties, the regular form is taking preference over the irregular forms.

The influence held over the world by the United States of America is clear, the number of AmE speakers considerably surpasses that of any other English variety, its political influence and power is noticeable together with its businesses and companies, especially those related to technology and international communication. American TV shows and series also play their part in expanding AmE.

CanE remains mostly faithful to AmE, in large part due to its geographical closeness and historical background. The Canadian variety was established by the Loyalists who fled the United States after the American Revolution and the BrE influence was negligible and stemming from influences from other varieties such as Irish or Scottish. CanE presents a wider use of the irregular forms than AmE, which may be explained by the two areas with a BrE influence, the Maritime provinces and Newfoundland.

JamE is also geographically close to AmE but it is interesting to point out that Jamaica's other language, Jamaican Patois, has BrE as its main influence and that both languages form a continuum. Although this variety was once loyal to BrE, it appears to be undergoing a change which is bringing it nearer to AmE. American culture is an important part of everyday life on the island as well as being relatively near and it is inevitable that it will have some effect on the language.

BrE appears to be leading the change in both SAE and IndE. SAE is very faithful to BrE in all aspects, including frequency of use. IndE is not as clear but is still quite faithful to the BrE practice which can be corroborated in spelling, morphology and syntax. A possible cause for this could be the fact that there are numerous IndE varieties which coexist, whereas SAE and JamE only have one variety.

Regarding verb tenses, the past simple prefers the regular *-ed* form with only a few exceptions. IndE and JamE are the two varieties that present a higher level of irregularity. The past participle form is more irregular, although, overall, there is also a preference for the regular *-ed* ending. This could be explained due to the fact that the strong participle forms are often used as adjectives and, therefore, sound more familiar to and are used more by English speakers. In general, the past simple form of the verbs is used less than the past participle form, especially if we take into account the participle adjectives. In this case, it would seem that there is more change and evolution where there is less use of the verb, that is, less use means more regularisation.

Regarding the frequency of the verbs, *learn* is the highest-frequency verb and prefers the regular form *learned* in all cases. *Burn* follows and prefers the regular form *burned* in the past simple but the outer circle varieties prefer the irregular form *burnt* in the past participle. This could be explained by the fact that *learnt* is not used as an adjective whereas *burnt* is quite a common one. *Lean*, in turn, is the lowest frequency verb and also prefers the regular ending. *Leap* is the next and most irregular. From this analysis, there does seem to be any relation between the frequency of the verb and regularisation, although there is more room for regularisation in those verbs with a higher frequency in the present simple.

The analysis depending on the formality of the text does not provide any further insights into the Americanisation of the dual past tense forms. The use of the verb form is not dependent on the level of formality of the text, the regular *-ed* form preferred over the irregular in all text types.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study points to the existence of on-going Americanisation of the English language. This phenomenon complies with the information included in the literature review as well as with different language trends, both current and past. However, it is worth pointing out that this preference started back in Middle English when there was only the BrE variety, so it could be that AmE is simply continuing what was previously established and is more noticeable in this variety due to the number of speakers. Evolution and change characterise the path of any language, in this specific case, the preference for the regular form started back in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

The reasons behind the expansion and success of the English language are clear, and can be put down to a number of factors, starting with the historical military power of the British Empire and ending with the reach of the American influence nowadays. America is characterised by its enormous cultural variety due to immigration and the mixing of many different nationalities. Can AmE be a symbol of unity? Some defend the use of a variety known as International English but it is unlikely that a single variety exists with the millions of people who use the language. Different communicative needs, priorities and situations all call for different characteristics. Language contact does take place rapidly but it will still have less of an impact on smaller, less communicated speech communities. There is still much controversy and disagreement on the topic of varieties of English. Many of the outer circle varieties have an uncomfortable relationship with the language due to their colonial past and also due to what the language symbolises today. In some countries, it is still used as the language of the privileged upper-classes and the inability to speak it can have a negative effect on the lower classes which leads to fewer opportunities.

This study has attempted to study the extent to which Americanisation is affecting the dual past tense forms by analysing eight different verbs in six different varieties. Some of its possible limitations are the limited amount of available data and time, the results would be much more reliable if they were analysed over a longer time frame and included a wider range of data. There are over one hundred different English varieties and dialects around the world

and, to ensure a real interpretation of the extent of Americanisation, it would be necessary to analyse them all, or at least, a considerable number of them.

There are many areas for future research as a result of this study. Different features of AmE could be analysed in other English varieties to see if this phenomenon occurs in all areas or if it is more prone to some specific ones. A wider array of verbs and varieties could paint a bigger picture. A historical analysis between BrE and AmE over a wider time frame could also shed more light on the current trends. Among others, this would also be interesting in the specific case of JamE to discern when the change of attitude from a British-based to an American-based variety occurred.

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