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Beyond the Norm of Standard English:

A Content Analysis of Standard and Non-Standard Varieties in EFL Textbooks

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Abstract

To achieve the Swedish National Agency for Education's (2022) aim of developing all-round communicative skills, knowledge of the vast diversity of English may be needed. Therefore, this study analyses the representation of standard and non-standard varieties in four EFL textbooks aimed for the English 5 course in Swedish upper secondary school. The study applies the theory of linguistic variation and includes consideration to sociolinguistics in terms of differences within varieties. The methodological approach is based on qualitative ethnographic content analysis, where textbooks are systematically analysed to determine how standard and non-standard English varieties are showcased. The textbook material consists of *Blueprint A Version 1.0* (2002), *Blueprint A Version 3.0* (2017), *Pick & Mix 1* (2013), and *Echo. 5. Main Issues* (2013). The results show a vast representation of standard varieties of English, while non-standard varieties constitute a limited representation. The linguistic variation in regard to standard English is instead observed in the use of slang and informal language within standard varieties such as American English and British English. This demonstrates an outcome in the textbooks of favouring standard varieties over non-standard varieties, which entails implications for the teaching profession in terms of a reliance on teachers to introduce language variation through other channels.

Keywords: EFL textbooks, Linguistic variation, Standard and non-standard varieties, Upper secondary school

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1. Introduction

English is today the world's most widely spoken language (Ethnologue, 2022). Given this fact, it is not surprising that there are various ways of using it. As a result of the widespread globalisation throughout the years, resulting in English becoming a natural *lingua franca* (ELF) of the world, multiple varieties of the language have emerged and continue to expand. However, within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), the spread of new varieties and especially those considered non-standard have long been neglected (Crystal, 2003, p. 148). Standard English, on the other hand, is considered the norm, which has also been the case in textbooks assigned for English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Textbooks are considered the heart of ELT courses (Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020, p. 2). Still, non-standard varieties remain under-represented in teaching materials, even though the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE) expects teachers to increase pupils' opportunities for contact with the outside world (SNAE, 2022, p. 1). Further, it is stated that the pupils should be exposed to different varieties of spoken and written English. For teachers and material designers, it is important to consider the extensive scope of non-standard lexical varieties (Migdadi et al., 2020, p. 107). Hence, it serves a purpose to investigate how textbooks showcase linguistic variation, and, in particular, their representation of standard and non-standard varieties of English. Moreover, the study aims to discuss the potential implications for ELT of favouring particular varieties over others.

This essay will be organised in the following way. In the background section, World Englishes through Kachru's (1985) Three Circles Model, followed by standard and non-standard varieties in their everyday usage and in the English classroom will be explained. Subsequently, a brief overview of linguistic variation within the English subject will be given. This serves to account for the changing viewpoints that have emerged on the perceptions and attitudes towards different varieties of English. Thereafter, the role of linguistic variation in EFL textbooks will be covered. The previous research will provide a basis for understanding the terms and notions on which this study is based. Moreover, the method- and material section covers the study's procedure of investigation, which is grounded in content analysis. An overview of the material used in the study and the process of selection will also be covered here. Afterward, the theoretical framework linguistic variation will be explained and how it is applied in this study. The results and analysis are presented in tandem, and these findings will be discussed thereafter in relation to the research questions. The implications for the teaching profession in terms of potentially favouring specific varieties over others will be discussed in the final section of this

essay. Finally, the study will be summarised by closing words, weaving together the main points of the essay.

2. Background

2.1. World Englishes

As a result of the diversity of varieties in the multilingual settings surrounding us, the term "World Englishes" has emerged as a field of study in linguistics. Widely recognised for the development of the so-called Three Concentric Circles Model is Kachru (1985), who divided the uses of the English language into different zones. Firstly, the Inner Circle is concerned with the countries that use English as their first language, such as the United Kingdom and the United States. The Inner Circle is recognised as norm-providing, i.e. it serves as a model for standardisation and how English should be used in various domains.

Secondly, The Outer Circle covers areas where people use English as a Second Language (ESL), such as India, Ghana, Nigeria, and the Philippines. Kachru (1985, pp. 13, 17) defines the varieties in these regions as institutionalised and norm-developing. The English language in these regions originates from long periods of colonisation, and many varieties in ESL countries have linguistic features that distinguish them from standard English (Mollin, 2006, p. 44). For example, they may differ in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Schneider, 2017, p. 40). The linguistic norm and the linguistic behaviour in this circle do not always align. On the one hand, the circle is partly influenced by the exonormative standards of the Inner Circle. On the other hand, it is characterised by developing its own endonormative norms and characteristics (Kachru, 1985, p. 17). As a consequence of colonisation, speakers of different languages have come into contact and developed pidgins and creoles in many of these countries (Migdadi et al., 2020, p. 105). A pidgin is a simplified language developed as a means of communication by speakers with different languages, while a creole is when this pidgin becomes a native language in a community. In the U.S., it is assumed that the social dialect African American Vernacular English (AAVE), historically, is an English-based creole in the last stages of decreolisation (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, pp. 112-113, 117). When one language influences another language, Kachru (1985, p. 16) uses the term "interference varieties" and

argues that some of these varieties are so widespread that they should be considered as distinct varieties of English instead of processes towards achieving native proficiency.

Finally, the Expanding Circle includes areas where English is used as a Foreign Language (EFL). This circle is referred to as norm-dependent and includes, for instance, Sweden. It is characterised by its speakers learning English in educational contexts to communicate with speakers from other countries.

2.2. Standard and non-standard varieties of English

What Kachru's explanatory framework shows is that English is used differently in different parts of the world. Moreover, even within the Inner Circle, substantial variation can be observed. Therefore, in order to further understand this diversity, the notions of standard and non-standard varieties of English, respectively, need to be addressed here. The *Cambridge Dictionary* (n.d.-e) defines standard English as "a variety of language that is used by governments, in the media, in schools and for international communication". In these instances, some scholars (Mesthrie, 2009, p. 19; Oaks, 2021, p. 5) argue for some kind of recognised practice to be established, especially in ELT. In terms of language pedagogy, a framework for both pupils and teachers is needed for upholding legitimate and valid assessments (Oaks, 2021, p. 6). As for the Inner Circle being norm-providing, and serving as a convenient foundation for prestige and correctness (Al-Mutairi, 2019, p. 86), it is not surprising that standard English has consolidated this role. Additionally, according to *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (n.d.-b), the standard form is "the English that with respect to spelling, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary is substantially uniform though not devoid of regional differences". This shows that even traditional English-speaking countries from the Inner Circle do not represent a unified consensus of standardisation, since there are factors that cause variation. For example, the two major standard varieties, American English (AmE) and British English (BrE), have both different spellings and pronunciations of certain words as well as separate word choices to denote the same meaning and concepts. Notably, pronouncing /r/ after vowels, or the *a* (/e/) equivalently in e.g. *vase* and *days* is a benchmark for AmE but not BrE (Crystal, 2002, pp. 264-265). However, there are some grammatical features that distinguish standard English from non-standard English. Non-standard Englishes are variants that do not follow the same rules and conventions that standard English is predicated upon. These varieties can be viewed as specific accents and dialects, like Cockney and Scottish English, but also varieties in their own

right such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Black South African English (BSAE), and Singaporean English (Singlish). Though sometimes used interchangeably, accents refer to differences in pronunciation, and dialects to a wide range of language features (Kortmann & Upton, 2004, pp. 26-27), which is why linguists prefer to use the term “varieties”. A prominent feature that characterises most non-standard varieties of English is the use of double negation, such as "You've not heard of that nothing" (Filppula, 2004, pp. 81-82). Another feature that is common in non-standard varieties is the subject-verb concord, such as *was* with both singular and plural subjects (Filppula, 2004, p. 89; Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, p. 3). A sentence like "Oh, my mother and father was born and reared in Dublin" (Filppula, 2004, p. 89) contradicts the rules and conventions that characterise the prescribed usage of subject-verb agreements (Estling Vannestål, 2015, p. 89).

Within all varieties of English there are different degrees of informal language. A very high degree is commonly referred to as slang (*Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.-d). Migdadi et al. (2020, p. 112) even suggest that slang can be identified as a variety in itself as they write that "slang as a non-standard variety represents informal speech". However, it is categorised that slang constitutes a phenomenon that is utilised within standard and non-standard varieties alike, albeit to varying degrees. An observed nuance in the degree of informality is acknowledged by Trudgill and Hannah (2017, p. 3), as exemplified in the sentences "[t]he old man was bloody knackered after his long trip" and "Father were very tired after his lengthy journey". It should be noted that both are written in non-standard varieties, though they showcase different *styles*, a term referred to in sociolinguistics to describe the relative formality ascribable to different situations. Ultimately, language choices are based on the *register*, meaning that different contextual circumstances affect the linguistic features applied in speech and writing (Hunston, 2002, p. 167; Mesthrie, 2009, p. 70).

2.3. Standard and non-standard English in the classroom

The global diversity of English is explored by Crystal (2003), who, throughout the years, has conducted extensive research in the field of linguistics. For instance, in his book *English as a Global Language*, he explains that grammar teaching in schools has traditionally focused on standard English as a basis for learning. Since grammar is mainly associated with the written language, standard English has maintained its prominence as the primary approach to teaching (Crystal, 2003, pp. 148-149). Still to this day, standard English is the variety that all native

speakers learn at school, but in terms of speaking, Trudgill and Hanna (2017, p. 2) assess that merely 15 percent of England's population use it. There is thus a distinction between standard and non-standard English in written and spoken language. Writing is a more detailed process that allows pupils to reflect on their choices and make necessary adjustments (Mesthrie, 2013, p. 185). Besides, the teaching of English has long been grounded in a prescriptive basis, i.e. the idea that there are proper and correct guidelines for how the language should be used. By contrast, the descriptive approach aims to analyse how languages are actually used and comprehend the reasons behind and effects of different variations (Crystal, 2002, p. 29). It is also noted that

> [t]hese days, there are signs of a compromise position being worked out, as far as school teaching is concerned. Educators are trying to get children to develop a sense of the variations which exist in English, at the same time pointing out the value of learning those styles which carry extra prestige within society. (Crystal, 2002, p. 29)

This results in certain implications for EFL teaching and learning, especially for countries being norm-dependent in relation to the standard English of Kachru's Inner Circle. As the quote suggests, English language education ought to teach pupils not only proper academic usage but also expose them to different forms of linguistic variation. This view is further developed by Mollin (2006, p. 52), who, with reference to the Expanding Circle, writes that if "speakers use English mainly for lingua franca communication, English teaching should prepare them more for this than for communication with native speakers". Thus, there are diverse perspectives on how to prepare pupils for international language communication. Furthermore, Harmer (2015, p. 3) reinforces this viewpoint by using the expression "Native-speaker reference books". He acknowledges that textbooks based on this native-speaker norm may, surely, be suitable for native-speaker usages, though as models for learners, especially pupils learning English as a *lingua franca* (ELF), they do not constitute the same efficiency. Harmer argues that both ESL and EFL speakers learn English as a means of communication to be used between speakers from different language backgrounds.

2.4. Linguistic variation within ELT in Swedish upper secondary school

Throughout the years, English Language Teaching (ELT) in Swedish upper secondary school has undergone several reforms. As a result, the views and acceptance of language varieties have shifted, reflecting an increasingly positive attitude towards varieties not considered standard. The Swedish curriculum introduced in 1970 (National Swedish Board of Education [NSBE], 1983) imposed considerable emphasis on the normative British Received Pronunciation (RP), which is traditionally considered the variety with the highest prestige, although it is spoken today by only 2% of England's population (Crystal, 2022). Pupils at upper secondary schools were, for instance, not to be taught American English pronunciation (NSBE, 1983, p. 127), which aligns with the fact that schools and universities in Europe have traditionally taught primarily standard British English (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, p. 5).

During the 1990s, the concept of linguistic variation in the English subject began to emerge. Through education in upper secondary school, pupils were supposed to "acquire such language skills that they can, will, and dare to use English in various situations in contact with English-speaking people" (SNAE, 1993, p. 33, my translation). At the turn of the millennium, Gy2000 entered the Swedish educational system, and emphasis was placed on the expanding English-speaking world. In order to achieve a passing grade in, e.g., the former English B course, today known as English 6, the pupils were required to "understand the content in clear speech, also with dialectal colouring" (SNAE, 2000, p. 85, my translation).

Today, the English syllabus (SNAE, 2022, my translation) consolidates, through the aim section, an obligation to develop pupils' "all-round communicative ability". This is attributed to reception, which includes "spoken English at varying speeds, also with elements of sociolectal and dialectal variation, and texts from different media". Hence, linguistic variation is a vital part of ELT. There is an emphasis to broaden the perspectives on the world and increase opportunities for contacts (SNAE, 2022, p. 1). Nevertheless, teachers and material designers need a common framework upon which to base their teaching, often resulting, as noted, in standard English being the primary foundation in ELT (Crystal, 2003, p. 148; Schneider, 2017, p. 35).

2.5. English varieties in EFL textbooks

A prerequisite for an appropriate textbook in English teaching is that it exposes pupils to different varieties of English. That is the viewpoint of Tajeddin and Pakzadian (2020, p. 4), who examined how different varieties are represented in English textbooks. The researchers sought to address an existing gap in the research field of English varieties and, based on Kachru's (1985) Three Circles of English, observe the extent to which the different circles are covered. Their study shows that EFL textbooks continue to under-represent varieties that do not primarily originate from Kachru's Inner Circle. As learners of English, there is an extensive diversity of varieties that pupils could be exposed to (Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020, p. 2), especially given today's wide usage of social media (Migdadi et al., 2020, p. 107). Despite this fact, when it comes to learning and academic writing, educators must, for practical reasons if nothing else, often be consistent in which particular variety to choose. For material designers, such as authors and publishers of textbooks, it is therefore important to also identify non-academic varieties in order to give learners opportunities to practise recognising and differentiating between distinct varieties of English. However, Kachru (1985, p. 17) states that pedagogical literature is based on the Inner Circle and is, therefore, considered norm making. It would seem, then, that while the diversity of English varieties keeps expanding, their representation remains limited in EFL textbooks.

3. Aim

This study aims to investigate the representation of linguistic variation and standard and non-standard varieties in textbooks assigned for the English 5 course in the Swedish upper secondary school, and discuss the implications of potentially favouring specific varieties over others in EFL teaching and learning. Hence, the investigation will include a textbook analysis to observe whether any varieties are more widely represented in comparison to others. Based on this aim the following questions will be addressed:

- How is linguistic variation showcased in EFL textbooks for the course English 5?
- In what ways are standard and non-standard English varieties represented in the textbooks?

4. Method and material

4.1. Content analysis

In addressing the research questions, a qualitative approach to the material is applied. The methodology of this study is grounded in an approach known as content analysis, and, in accordance with which, four EFL textbooks are systematically analysed to determine how standard and non-standard varieties of English are showcased. As Bryman (2016, p. 284) explains, content analysis is essentially rooted in a quantitative approach. However, content analysis can also be conducted through a qualitative approach in the sense that the analysis of documents focuses on discovering underlying themes in the data (Bryman, 2016, p. 563). In the case of this study, an investigation of how the varieties are showcased is presented, making use of a holistic approach to the data. This means that an overall assessment of the content in the textbooks is applied, including the accompanying audiotracks of conversations and monologues. In terms of performing a qualitative content analysis, Altheide and Schneider's (2013, p. 2) model of ethnographic content analysis is applied. When using this method, the researcher must initially become familiar with the context in which the material is situated. After that, the researcher establishes categories, i.e. a coding that guides the data collection. In my case, this involves searching for linguistic features that differ from standard English, such as non-standard grammar and vocabulary. Finally, the researcher connects the findings and interprets the content. When performing ethnographic content analysis, the researcher alternates between the processes of concept development, sampling, data collection, data coding, data analysis, and interpretation (Altheide & Schneider, 2013, p. 5). While predetermined categories may initially guide the study, new categories are expected to emerge in the process from the observed data and the researcher derives meaning from these.

4.2. Material

The four upper secondary school textbooks that have been selected for this study are *Blueprint A Version 3.0* (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017), *Blueprint A Version 1.0* (Lundfall et al., 2002), *Pick & Mix 1* English 5 (Phillips and Phillips, 2013), and *Echo. 5. Main Issues* (Frato, 2013). The reason for selecting these particular textbooks is twofold. Firstly, they are recommended as working tools for the English 5 course by two upper secondary teachers at separate schools in the geographic region where this study is conducted. Secondly, there is a

personal connection of having witnessed teachers using the textbooks during my own work in the teaching profession and the school placements that have been part of my university education. The study also analyses the recorded audiotracks of each chapter, and these are referenced by including time stamps in the parentheses. In the textbooks *Blueprint A Version 3.0*, *Pick & Mix 1*, and *Echo. 5. Main Issues*, the files consist of recorded texts. However, the CD-ROM that followed *Blueprint A Version 1.0* only includes the listening exercises. To legitimise the choice of still including the listening exercise, the study is not concerned with the quantitative frequency or extent of varieties but rather the holistic assessment and analysis of the content. When listening for linguistic variation in relation to the audiotracks, *Echo. 5. Main Issues* is not quantified in terms of linguistic variation due to the full textbook being narrated by the same person using an ELF accent. It is noteworthy that the authors of *Pick & Mix 1* already published an updated edition as early as in 2020. Though, it is concluded that since the first edition from 2013 is based on the curriculum from 2011, similar to *Blueprint A Version 3.0* (2017) and *Echo. 5. Main Issues* (2013), the content should be in line with the current educational circumstances at the time. *Blueprint A Version 1.0* (2002) is based on the curriculum from 2000. Comparing textbooks that are based on different curricula implies certain risks as the content is adapted to different circumstances. At the same time, since both Gy2000 and the English syllabus of 2022 put emphasis on linguistic variation, the assessment has been made to include *Blueprint A* (2002) and consider it valid for the study. Unfortunately, this study could not meet the 2022 revision of the English syllabus where the phrase "social and dialect features" (SNAE, 2021, p. 3) was changed to "sociolectal and dialectal variation" (SNAE, 2022, p. 5 my translation).

5. Theoretical framework

When analysing the textbooks' content in consideration of standard and non-standard varieties, this study applies the concepts of linguistic variation and sociolinguistic variation to observe and discuss the presence of different varieties in the textbooks. Linguistic variation is present in the analysis of languages and, as Reppen et al. (2002, p. 7) suggest, "a single speaker will use different linguistic forms on different occasions, and different speakers of a language will express the same meanings using different forms". This includes factors such as how vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation differ between varieties of English, which this study is concerned with.

The concept of sociolinguistic variation highlights the differences that may occur within varieties based on factors such as regional differences, age, gender, and social class. When analysing the textbooks, the text types and the register in which they occur are considered. Mougeon et al. (2010, p. 2) describe that the difference between linguistic variation and sociolinguistic variation is the probability of alternating between different linguistic elements depending on the situation. In linguistic variation, the form does not change to the same extent as in sociolinguistic variation, where external factors such as the degree of informality affect language use. In the present study, this is related to slang, informal language, and non-standard expressions that may arise within standard varieties of English.

6. Results and analysis

In this section of the study, the obtained results will be outlined. Since the study sought to investigate in what ways standard and non-standard varieties are represented in the selected textbooks, this section is structured by organising the results into different categories. The five headings are *Standard and non-standard grammar and vocabulary in texts*, *Slang and informal language in texts*, *Standard and non-standard grammar and vocabulary in audiotracks*, *Accents and dialects as linguistic variation in audiotracks*, and *Summary of results section*. On some occasions, for the purpose of making comparisons of linguistic variation, references to both textual and audiotrack material occur in the same paragraphs. For making the reading more fluent, Lundfall et al.'s 2002 version is referred to as *Blueprint A*, and Lundfall and Nyström's 2017 version is named *Blueprint A Version 3.0*. Phillips and Phillips' textbook is called *Pick & Mix* and Frato's textbook is referred to as *Echo. 5*.

6.1. Standard and non-standard grammar and vocabulary in texts

By examining the textbooks' content, diverse outcomes of standard and non-standard varieties of English were shown. The textbooks altogether contain 81 texts, whereof three of them: "Struck by Lightning", "A Voice in the Wilderness Cries out: Come get Me!", and "Asking the Wrong Questions" are included in both *Blueprint A* (2002) and *Blueprint A Version 3.0* (2017). The overwhelming majority, i.e. 79 out of 81 texts (97.53%), have featured standard

varieties of English. The following table illustrates texts that are written in standard and non-standard varieties of English within the textbooks:

Table A – Texts written in standard and non-standard varieties within the textbooks

	Total amount of texts	**Standard varieties (%)**	**Non-standard varieties (%)**
Blueprint A	33	32 (96.97%)	1 (3.03%)
Blueprint A Version 3.0	26	25 (96.15%)	1 (3.85%)
Pick & Mix	10	10 (100%)	0 (0%)
Echo. 5	12	12 (100%)	0 (0%)

As observable, *Pick & Mix* and *Echo. 5* do not include any texts written in non-standard varieties of English. However, some instances of non-standard varieties can be observed in the other textbooks. One of the more visible examples is obtained from a text in *Blueprint A Version 3.0*'s chapter "Black Lives Matter". Lundfall and Nyström (2017, p. 211) name the text “The Help”, included as an excerpt from Kathryne Stocket’s (2009) fictional novel with the same name. The language is written in the variety of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), and the text demonstrates several aspects that do not conform to the rules and conventions of standard English. This is also highlighted by Lundfall and Nyström (2017, p. 216) through the study question where the pupils should contemplate the fact that the narrator does not tell the story in standard English, but in the vernacular English of Ebonics. Grammatically, the text contains instances of the construction of double negation. For example, "they ain't discussing no politic", "She don't make no fuss being in here by herself", and "I ain't got nothing left to do" are some formulations where the creation of double negatives can be identified (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 212-213).

In another text later in the chapter, *Blueprint A Version 3.0* also includes script conversations from Tony Kaye's (1998) film *American History X*. In "Scene B", the dialogue shows a teacher saying "I didn't get no answers 'cause I was asking the wrong questions" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 225). Through the concept of linguistic variation, it is evident that the register in which an utterance occurs can affect grammatical structures. In non-standard varieties, such as AAVE, double negatives are common grammatical features to structure speech (Filppula, 2004, pp. 81-82; Crystal, 2002, p. 31). In standard English, the sentence would rather state "any answers" instead of "no answers". To exemplify, another text in *Blueprint A Version 3.0* titled "Nice to meet you, Ari", showcases standard English language use where double negations do not exist, as in the sentence "I didn't have anything to say" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 9). This text does not include double negation because it would not be suitable for this speech context where the norm is standard English. It showcases the “correct” usage, based on prescriptive standard English guidelines.

In *Blueprint A*, a similar text written in AAVE is included. It is titled "I Owe It to My People" and is an excerpt from John Grisham's *A Time to Kill* (1989). From the perspective of standard English, the text highlights grammatical aspects that, from a prescriptive point of view, would have been considered subject-verb agreement errors. For example, "you's" in "you'd hire some big-shot lawyer to say you's crazy" (Lundfall et al., 2002, p. 188) contradicts the grammatical relationship between the second person singular "you" and the contracted auxiliary verb *to be*, used as *is* in the above sentence. Subject-verb agreement errors also occur in "The Help" as, for instance, in the sentence "[w]hen Miss Hilly gone, Miss Walter say real low, 'I bet you'd love that.'" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 213). Here, both the absence of the verb *to be* before "gone" and the incorrect conjugation of the verb "say" in the third-person singular serve as examples of non-standard grammatical usages of English.

When it comes to vocabulary, some examples of non-standard variety expressions have been identified, albeit to a limited extent. An example of non-standard word usage can be derived from "I Owe It to My People" mentioned above. In the following conversation, we observe somewhat offensive word utterances.

"'White girl! What's he want with a white girl?'

'Aw, you know Lester. Always an uppity nigger.'" (Lundfall et al., 2002, p. 187)

The adjective "uppity", according to *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (n.d.-c), means "aspiring to a rank or position higher than one deserves or is entitled to" and has been used towards Black people and other racial minorities. Furthermore, In *Echo. 5*, the interview "Township Jive" is situated in South Africa where we, on the basis of linguistic variation, know that the non-standard variety Black South African English (BSAE) exists among others (Mesthrie 2013, p. 187). However, based on sentence structure and grammar, the text is written in standard English. Even though the text primarily features standard English, it contains vocabulary from other languages spoken in South Africa. To exemplify, words such as "ubuntu", "vleis", "shebeens", and "takkies" are mentioned by the interviewees Lelethu and Stephanus (Frato, 2013, pp. 78, 82, 83). All these nouns demonstrate evidence of linguistic variation. "Ubuntu" is a spiritual philosophy, and the term has its origins in the Nguni languages of Southern Africa, and it essentially means humanity (*Dictionary.com*, n.d.). "Vleis" means "meat" and stems from the South African language Afrikaans (*Collins Dictionary*, n.d.-a). In regard to "shebeens", it is an unlicensed drinking establishment and derived from the British Isles in connection to the Irish "síbín" which is illegal whiskey (*Merriam-Webster*, n.d.-a). The same goes for "takkies", the tennis shoes spelled as "tackies" in BrE. All of these examples in "Township Jive" represent linguistic variation in terms of vocabulary and various origins of the uttered words. These words were not explained or translated in connection to the text. Instead, Frato (2013, p. 84) included a vocabulary exercise where the pupils should find the meanings themselves. In light of linguistic variation, this showcases an attempt to both include non-standard English vocabulary but also allow pupils to process and contextualise the terms. It demonstrates how non-standard varieties are represented through the author's inclusion of practicing vocabulary not included in standard English. In this case, the author highlights aspects of non-standard varieties in the text's included exercise.

In "Township Jive", we observed examples of linguistic variation in terms of non-standard English vocabulary. The following text in *Echo. 5* is called "Look-Alike Trend among Young Musicians Spreads to Singapore" and is situated in the island nation. Through previous research, it is acknowledged that the non-standard variety of Singaporean English (Singlish) exists (Crystal, 2003, p. 57). However, this variety does not appear in the text as it is written in standard English, and no Singlish expressions are mentioned. While "Township Jive" utilised non-standard English in relation to South African language, no practice of Singlish is pursued in the subsequent working exercises (Frato, 2013, p. 96). Instead, an exercise of formal words

connected to the text is included, which exemplifies one of several cases where standard varieties are favoured over non-standard varieties.

6.2. Slang and informal language in texts

Out of the 78 texts[1] included in the four textbooks, 76 texts are written in standard varieties of English. For instance, *Echo. 5* and *Pick & Mix* do not showcase any instances of non-standard varieties of English. Notable, though, in all of the textbooks, is the frequency of slang terms and informal language within standard varieties. *Pick & Mix*'s opening text named "Culture Shock: Dos and Don'ts in different Countries" demonstrates examples of informal terms such as "whinge", "bloke" and "chick" (Phillips & Phillips, 2013, pp. 10-12). The informal noun "bloke" means "man" (*Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*, n.d.) and is also included in *Blueprint A*'s "Diving In" (Lundfall et al., 2002, p. 63). Although not all of *Pick & Mix*'s nine remaining texts are representative of formal academic English, they are still characterised as standard English varieties. The language of the texts is closely related to their text types, i.e. some are more conversational, while others are more formal. Considering, for example, *Blueprint A Version 3.0*'s "Going Too Far for Gold" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 80-82), included from Max Barry's novel *Jennifer Government* (2003), it is notable that the text is written in standard English. However, it is characterised by several examples of non-standard English in the form of slang and informal language. Going too far for gold in this novel relates to using unconventional methods to increase revenue. The following quote reflects informal language usage that can be observed throughout the text: "'Right. We take out ten customers, make it look like ghetto kids, and we've got street cred° coming out our asses. I bet we shift our inventory° within twenty-four hours.'" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 82). The degree symbols (°) are part of the text and illustrate that the authors explain the expressions in the margins of the textbook. It is noteworthy that both a formal word such as "inventory" and a slang expression such as "street cred" are defined, showcasing sociolinguistic variation within a standard variety of English.

[1] "Struck by Lightning", "A Voice in the Wilderness Cries Out: Come Get Me!", and "Asking the Wrong Questions" are included in both *Blueprint A* and *Blueprint A Version 3.0* and, therefore, not counted twice.

Language is highly dependent on the context in which it takes place (Mougeon et al., 2010, p. 2). An example of this is recognised in the text "From Outer Space", which is written in a scientific manner. A sentence such as "UFO researchers have interviewed hundreds of people connected with the Roswell incident, all of whom had strange tales to tell" showcases a formal and academic character, especially through the usage of the word "whom" (Phillips & Phillips, 2013, p. 112). In comparison, another text in *Pick & Mix* named "Right Person for the Job?" deals with job applications where more condensed language is used. For instance, "People aged 17 plus required for a company in Bedworth" (Phillips & Phillips, 2013, p. 191) showcases an informal style. To write "17 plus" instead of, for example, "people older than 17 years" is a less formal way of expressing oneself. The phrase is nonetheless considered a standard English variety. However, as indicated throughout this analysis, there are various degrees of formal and informal language depending on the register. In another text in *Blueprint A Version 3.0* named "Plastic now pollutes every corner of Earth", the formal expression "pernicious impact" can be identified (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 32). In a standard variety of English, though in a more informal context, such an utterance may be marked and not belonging to that particular register of speech.

In *Blueprint A Version 3.0*, further examples of non-standard English in the form of slang and informal language are noticeable. The text "Nice to Meet You, Ari" mentioned earlier is written in AmE, which can be understood through the spelling of "favor". However, the text has an informal tone, as indicated by expressions such as "lifeguards sucked" and "a bunch of other guys" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 9-10, 12). According to the *Cambridge Dictionary* (n.d.-a), "bunch" is mainly an informal American expression and is also featured in four other texts in the Blueprint textbooks, namely, "A Voice in the Wilderness Cries Out: Come Get Me!", "Selling the Devil", "Asking the Wrong Questions", and "A Match Made in Cyberspace". This shows how the texts include elements of non-standard English in the form of slang and informal expressions in standard varieties of English such as AmE.

Additional examples of linguistic variation can be recognised in *Blueprint A*'s text "He's a Big Bastard", which is written in the variety of Irish English (IrE). The text takes place in the suburbs of Dublin, which can be inferred from references to the areas of Raheny and Baldoyle. Further, it signals a tone of working-class speech. The structure consists generally of standard English grammar, though some words like "saps" in "[t]he women were saps°: they thought that we wouldn't be interested in women's magazines" stem from IrE (Lundfall et al., 2002, p. 165). In the textbook, the informal noun is explained as "easily tricked people".

Additionally, the text contains non-standard vocabulary such as "manky", i.e. unpleasantly dirty (*Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.-c), and "gick", which refers to an "Irish slang word for 'Shit'" (*Urban Dictionary*, n.d.). Examples such as these can be connected to sociolinguistic variation in the sense that the informality and context in which the text takes place showcase a higher degree of non-standard English.

There are further examples that demonstrate linguistic variation in relation to informal word choices. The following example is found in *Echo. 5*'s "Spring-Break Blog", where the author of a blog post has left Detroit for a vacation in Cancún. The author uses the noun "java" to confirm that the character has received a tan; "my skin is already more java than usual" (Frato, 2013, p. 66). Java is an informal AmE word for coffee, originating from the coffee-producing Indonesian island with the same name (*Collins Dictionary*, n.d.-b). This application of the word shows how the character in the text makes use of a colloquial expression to underline a different meaning. It becomes a marked word choice since the word implies a new meaning not used in its otherwise common manner. In AmE, Java is not only used as coffee from the Indonesian island but as general U.S. slang for any coffee (*Collins Dictionary*, n.d.-b). The character, though, extends the meaning even further, and from a linguistic perspective, this can be connected to the fact that non-standard varieties more easily utilise and create new expressions than standard varieties of English, as the example above demonstrates. The character illustrates how speakers of a language can make linguistic innovations, which prescriptivists preferably repudiate (Mesthrie, 2009, p. 14).

6.3. Standard and non-standard grammar and vocabulary in audiotracks

By observing the audiotracks connected to the chapters in the textbooks, the limited linguistic variation becomes more evident. In total, 41 recordings have been listened to, and 38 of which (92.68%) primarily feature BrE or AmE. This conclusion has been drawn based on specific characteristics of BrE and AmE pronunciations as acknowledged by Crystal (2002, pp. 264-265). The recordings of *Echo. 5* are all narrated by the same narrator throughout the textbook, namely the Swedish actor Niklas Engdahl which is stated in the beginning of the listening material. Therefore, there is only one variety represented, viz., ELF accent. *Pick & Mix* showed the least linguistic variation as all 10 recordings used standard BrE. The Blueprint books generally featured non-standard varieties more than the other textbooks in this study. Both the full recordings of "The Help", and instances of "Asking the Wrong Questions", were based on

AAVE. Additional examples of non-standard varieties were showcased in the audiotrack of *Blueprint A*. In the listening comprehension "Nights of Rage", The African American Reverend Amos King is interviewed, and similar features of AAVE, as recognised in *Blueprint A Version 3.0*, were observed. The character says that "[i]n ever case except one the officer was white" (Lundfall et al., 2002, 3:01-3:06). In "The Help" we can see the same non-standard spelling in the sentence "ever day it's gone be the white lady she waiting on" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 213). In contrast, the following sentence in *Echo. 5*'s "Yours Always" showcases how it should be written in a standard variety; "every day after school I want you to sit down by yourself" (Frato, 2013, p. 10).

6.4. Accents and dialects as linguistic variation in audiotracks

Several audiotracks showcase linguistic variation in terms of accents and dialects, and one example is observed in "Nights of Rage" noted above. Later in the episode, we are situated in Alabama where the character Marcos Ribera is presented. Marcos speaks with a Spanish accent and states that "I have lots of black friends, lots of white friends, Mexican friends, everything" (Lundfall et al., 2002, 6:23-6:27). The speech is informal as the utterance "lots of" is used (*Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d.-b). Additionally, the pronunciation /χ/ in "Mexican" resembles Spanish pronunciation, and the phoneme is not included in *The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)* for English (n.d.). A Spanish accent cannot be classified as a non-standard variety of English, though it is an example of exposing pupils to various forms of the language.

Although the vast majority of the audiotrack data showcases standard BrE and AmE, the investigation derived instances of linguistic variation otherwise not observable in the written text. To exemplify, in *Blueprint A Version 3.0*'s "A Matter of Life and Death", the character Rodney Carter talks in an accent associated with Scottish. Although one can never, in the analysis, thoroughly confirm an accent, it is possible to observe distinctive features of a variety. In the case of Rodney (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, 2:05-2:50), marked pronunciations corresponded to the accent in words such as "bound" (*English with Collins Dictionary*, 2018a), "blood" (*English with Collins Dictionary*, 2018b), and "drowning" (*English with Collins Dictionary*, 2018c). All three articulations correlate with the way they are pronounced by speakers with Scottish accents.

The audiotracks of "Wonderful Hour" in *Blueprint A* and "A Matter of Life and Death" in *Blueprint A Version 3.0* showcase the difference between accents and dialects. The former includes the dialect of Australian English by interviewing a character in a radio programme. Apart from the pronunciation, the person uses Australian slang as noted in the words "telly" and "comfy" (Lundfall et al., 2002, 3:44-5:12). On the other hand, the vocabulary in "A Matter of Life and Death" is associated with standard varieties of English, though with distinct Scottish pronunciation. This highlights linguistic variation based on separate accents and dialects and the difference between the two.

Moreover, in terms of the Australian dialect, using the word comfy instead of comfortable is more informal, which signals a lower degree of standard English. This can be exemplified in a standard English text from *Pick & Mix* called "The Glamorous Life of a Film Extra", where the sentence "eating popcorn in a comfortable seat" can be identified (Phillips & Phillips, 2013, p. 93). The same applies for uttering "TV" instead of "telly", as in the standard English sentence "I want to be on TV" from the text "Selling the Devil" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 62). Further variation is noticeable in “The Help”, where TV is spelled as “tee-vee” (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, p. 212). However, one single word cannot mark a variety as standard or non-standard. Simply because a non-standard variety includes a formal expression it does not make the variety standard. The language needs to be situated in connection to its register when analysing linguistic variation.

6.5. Summary of results section

To summarise the results section, both representations of standard and non-standard varieties are present in the textbooks although to varying degrees. The vast majority of the texts showcased standard varieties of English, either BrE or AmE, and the two textbooks with the least linguistic variation based on textual data and audiotrack data were *Pick & Mix* and *Echo. 5*. *Pick & Mix* only had standard varieties of English in the texts and the narrators of the texts spoke only British accents. *Echo. 5* included non-standard English within standard varieties in terms of vocabulary from languages spoken in South Africa. However, the linguistic variation was limited in relation to the audiotracks since the recorded texts only had one narrator. Both *Blueprint A* and *Blueprint A Version 3.0* included the non-standard variety of AAVE. Additionally, *Blueprint A* contained examples of non-standard IrE vocabulary in terms of “saps”, “manky”, and “gick” (Lundfall et al., 2002, pp. 165-167). These varieties were not

included in *Pick & Mix* and *Echo. 5*. When non-standard English was represented in the four textbooks, it was mainly through slang and informal language. Depending on the text types and level of formality in terms of register, the various texts showcased these aspects differently. When listening to the accompanying audiotracks of the textbooks, further linguistic variation could be recognised due to noticing accents and dialects otherwise not observable as, for example, the character Rodney Carter in "A Matter of Life and Death" (Lundfall & Nyström, 2017, pp. 130-131).

7. Discussion and conclusion

7.1. Methodological discussion

By using an ethnographic content analysis, the textbook analysis employed a qualitative approach to the data. This method allowed the study to focus on four textbooks and make an overall assessment of the content included in this teaching material. The chosen method proved to be suitable for the purpose of the study and the questions that were set as starting points. Initially, the study was not intended to prioritise the significance of slang and informal language. However, as the results began to be established, these categories, based on ethnographic content analysis, emerged. In this study, the categories were introduced as a result of the limited presence of non-standard varieties. The perspective of linguistic variation was incorporated, but in order to limit the scope of research, non-standard varieties were still the focus of the study.

7.2. The findings in connection to previous research

The purpose of this study was to investigate the representation of linguistic variation and standard and non-standard varieties, and, in light of previous research, the present study's results showcased similar outcomes. By drawing upon the viewpoint of Trudgill and Hannah (2017, p. 1) the results are not surprising considering that "books are not written in any variety of English other than Standard English". Though this rather disingenuous claim may convey a deliberate underestimation of non-standard varieties' representation, it speaks some truth. The present investigation's results align with Tajeddin and Pakzadian's (2020, p. 2) findings of EFL textbooks primarily focusing on native varieties, and Crystal's (2003, p. 148) acknowledgement

of non-standard varieties being featured only in passing. The textbooks are based on standard English, notwithstanding the extensive diversity of Englishes worldwide (Kachru, 1985, p. 12) and the steering documents' requirement for pupils to encounter sociolectal and dialectal variation (SNAE, 2022, p. 2).

The simple fact that the present study aimed to analyse standard and non-standard varieties and ultimately devoted a section to slang and informal language illustrates the limitation of non-standard varieties. As indicated earlier, standard varieties of English are not only a consequence of formal language (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, p. 3). Speakers of these varieties can use slang and colloquial expressions similarly to non-standard varieties. Nevertheless, even though some instances of non-standard varieties were represented in *Blueprint A Version 3.0* (2017) and *Blueprint A Version 1.0* (2002), non-standard English was represented mainly through informal language.

7.3. The implications of favouring varieties

Kachru introduced the idea of World Englishes and the Three Circles Model in 1985. A decade later, ideas of linguistic variation were embodied in the Swedish educational system (SNAE, 1993, p. 33). At the same time, research shows that standard English not only is the norm (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, p. 2), but, additionally, the primary approach in mainstream teaching and learning (Crystal, 2003, p. 148). Vernaculars have often been downplayed in EFL classrooms (Mesthrie, 2009, p. 38). The reality is interesting, considering the importance of being exposed to multiple varieties of English (SNAE, 2022, p. 3; Migdadi et al., 2020, pp. 107-108). There may be several alternatives other than textbooks that teachers can use in order to include linguistic variation in the classroom. However, if this teaching material indeed forms the foundation of English courses (Tajeddin & Pakzadian, 2020, p. 2), it is notable how much emphasis is allocated to standard BrE and AmE and how the role of non-standard varieties, predominantly, is represented through non-standard expressions, informal language, and slang.

As of the autumn of 2023, new regulations have resulted in all Swedish upper secondary school programmes being university preparatory (SNAE, 2023), a context with significant emphasis on correctness and formal language. Within academia, phenomena such as slang, informal language, and non-standard expressions do not belong as in, for example, student essays (Mesthrie, 2009, p. 71). Notable, then, is the emphasis given to these linguistic aspects instead

of non-standard varieties of English. It is evident that, for teachers and learners, there is an endeavour to apply a native-like approach in the pursuit to become efficient English speakers (Mollin, 2006, p. 52; Harmer, 2015, p. 4). However, if non-standard varieties are marginalised in EFL teaching and learning there is a risk that pupils may not be prepared for the multilingual reality they will encounter, the reality described by the SNAE (2022, p. 1). If learners are to graduate with sufficient skills in their all-round communicative ability, many scholars (Mollin, 2006, p. 52; Migdadi et al., 2020, p. 107; Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, pp. 5-7) argue for an emphasis of also including varieties outside the norm-providing Inner Circle of standard English. As mentioned in the results section, the audiotracks in Frato (2013) are narrated by one person. To include a Swedish narrator instead of a native-born speaker may deviate from the norm of standard English and, perhaps, exemplify an ELF variety the pupils are more likely to encounter. However, in terms of linguistic variation, certain implications for the teaching profession may also arise here. If, for instance, a pupil is visually impaired, the narrator's accent serves as the only variety the pupil is exposed to throughout the textbook. This requires teachers to find other ways to introduce linguistic variation in ELT.

7.4. Closing words

In conclusion, this study was conducted in order to analyse the representation of standard and non-standard varieties of English in Swedish EFL textbooks at upper secondary school. Although some non-standard varieties — mainly African American Vernacular English (AAVE) — could be observed, the main representation of non-standard English was showcased in the form of slang and informal language within standard varieties of British English (BrE) and American English (AmE). These varieties have, based on Kachru's (1985) Three Circles Model, served as norm-providing in terms of being countries where English is spoken as a native language. However, nowadays it is not appropriate to speak of an ownership of the English language, at least not by any single nation (Crystal, 2003, p. 26). English is the world's most widely spoken language (Ethnologue, 2022), and the vast majority speaks non-standard English (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017, p. 2). At the same time, the reality is different in terms of education where standard English remains the primary approach to teaching (Crystal, 2003, p. 148). Perhaps it is this very distinction between oral language and written language that determines the representation of non-standard varieties of English. Material designers would probably not sell too many textbooks if the content resulted in the pupils learning English wrongly. Be that

as it may, the SNAE (2022) still requires teaching to provide new perspectives on the world and facilitate contact with the outside world. This study shows that in order to achieve this goal and expose pupils to linguistic variation, teachers and material designers must go beyond the norm of standard English.

7.5. Suggestion for further research

As an addition to this investigation, the perspectives could be broadened to include interviews with teachers to gain a further insight into their viewpoints of linguistic variation. Different teachers use textbooks in different ways and although non-standard varieties have a limited role in the examined textbooks, interviews could, for example, clarify how much time teachers devote to various chapters and sections. Textbooks as a teaching material may even be excluded from the classroom by some teachers and only used on specific occasions. These insights may contribute to a more thorough analysis of the role of textbooks in the EFL classroom and how they are actually implemented in teaching and learning.

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