UNIVERSIDAD DE JAÉN
Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación

Trabajo Fin de Grado

Standard versus non-standard varieties of English: a linguistic and sociolinguistic approach

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Junio, 2017

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Chapter 1: Introduction

During my stay at England for one full academic year I became familiarized with a kind of English I had never heard before. It was a non-standard variety of English known as 'Mackem', which is spoken in and around the city of Sunderland, in the North East. Its speakers seemed proud of their speech, but soon I discovered that other English speaking people looked down on this 'dialect', as they called it. As a speaker of Andalusian, a non-standard variety of Spanish myself, this intrigued and motivated me to learn more about non-standard varieties of English and the negative attitudes attached to them.

The objective of this paper is to examine the differences between some varieties of the English language and to determine if there are any objective claims that can be made in favour of either the standard or the non-standard varieties. In order to do so, two different analyses on varieties will be carried out: from a purely linguistic point of view, as well as from a sociolinguistic point of view.

In chapter 2, the concept of language 'variety' is discussed, with a focus on the English language. The distinction between 'standard' and 'non-standard' varieties, how varieties become 'standardized' and why are also addressed.

Chapter 3 consists of a series of linguistic analyses of some relevant varieties of English that are spoken around the globe. The variety's grammar, syntax, spelling and pronunciation are described in order to see how much do varieties actually differ from one another.

Chapter 4 consists of a sociolinguistic approach to the differences between standard and non-standard varieties of English and the attitudes that both linguists and non-linguists associate with each.

Finally, chapter 5 is devoted to some conclusions that can be extracted from the previous chapters, as well as to the limitations of this End of Bachelor's Project and future lines of research.

Key words: varieties, linguistics, socio-linguistics, standard, non-standard.

Chapter 2: Varieties of English

2.1. The concept of "variety"

'Variety' is the term designated by language scholars to label a subdivision within a language (McArthur 2002). The cause for these subdivisions is not always the same. Geographical or regional varieties are different because they are spoken in different parts of the world. This applies to the differences between varieties of the same language as it is spoken in different countries (British and American English, for example), but also between cities inside the same country (Yule 2010) and even between different areas of the same city.

Social varieties on the other hand are related to use and social class. For example, it is usually the case that a speaker from a higher social class will not use the language in the same way as a speaker from a lower class does. Other social areas, such as different jobs, also have their own varieties: the language used in, say, legal English is considerably different from that of advertisement English. It is important to take into account that Social varieties can also be subdivided in Geographical varieties, allowing the distinction between British legal English and American legal English, for example (McArthur 2002).

A variety, then, can be described to be a given form of a language as it is used by its speakers. There can be apparent differences between varieties, be it at the level of pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary, yet they will always represent the same base language. It could be argued then that, from a purely linguistic point of view, all varieties of the same language are equally valid and worthy. However, as it will be explained later, things change drastically when looked at from a sociolinguistic point of view.

Two other terms which are useful to understand varieties are 'accent', which is "how speakers pronounce words" (Meyerhoof 2006: 27) and identifies an individual speaker's regional or social origins (Yule 2010); and 'dialect', which refers to "distinctive features at the level of pronunciation and vocabulary and sentence structure" (Meyerhoof 2006: 27). These two are essential components of every variety:

all varieties are dialects, and all varieties have an accent. Consequently, all speakers speak a dialect with a certain accent.

However, they are both commonly misused as synonyms for regional varieties, especially the term 'dialect', which tends to be used with negative connotations outside the field of linguistics (Meyerhoof 2006). The reason for this is the existence of the so-called 'Standard' varieties, in this case, Standard English.

2.2. Standard varieties and Standard English

Standard English (SE) is the variety that has been socially accepted to be a reference against which all other varieties of English are assessed (Freeborn 1993). It is the variety used in education, the news and administrative and commercial affairs. It is also the variety not only taught to native speakers in school but also to learners of English as a Second or Foreign Language. It is important to specify that SE can be described in terms of its vocabulary, spelling and grammar, but not in terms of pronunciation or accent (Yule 2010: 240). In theory, it is possible to speak SE using any accent, even though it is true that SE is often associated with a particular accent known as 'Received Pronunciation' (RP), used by the higher classes of the centre of London as well as public TV and radio news. It is therefore also known as 'the Queen's English', 'Oxford' or 'Oxbridge English' and 'BBC English'.

2.2.1. Defining Standard English

The concept of SE "is a confused and confusing one" (Bex & Watts 1999: 86), so much that some linguistics such as Trudgill (1994) prefer to describe it in terms of 'what it is not' instead. First of all, SE is not a language on its own, but a variety of the English language. It is not uncommon for non-linguists to think that SE is *the* English language in its truest, purest form. The truth is that "English – like all other languages – comes in many different forms" (Trudgill 1994: 1), one of which is SE.

SE is also not an accent, as stated above, nor does it relate exclusively to the RP accent that is considered the 'standard' for English pronunciation. "It is widely agreed that while all RP speakers also speak Standard English, the reverse is not the case" (Bex and Watts 1999: 118). Non-native speakers of English, no matter how thick their accent

is, are as capable of speaking proper SE as native speakers are as long as they follow its grammatical and syntactical rules and use the appropriate vocabulary.

SE is also not a style, in the sense that it is not strictly either 'formal' or 'informal' usage of the language. SE is in the end a variety used by speakers, and since "there is no such thing as a single-style speaker" (Bex and Watts 1999: 119), its users can move along the scale of register just like speakers of other varieties can. SE speakers can be as polite or impolite as they want, as register is mainly dictated by the situational context of the conversation and not the language or variety used.

Finally, SE is not related to any given topic. While it is true that SE is often associated with education, or economic and political affairs due to its use in schools, or news and the government respectively, SE is well suited to be used for any other topic such as sports, cooking, videogames, etc.

What SE really is can be described as a "social dialect or sub-variety without an associated accent or geographical region but associated with power and the upper classes" (Bex and Watts 1999: 200). Every variety of the same language has a common origin, and their differences are just the representation of how native speakers from different regions or in different contexts use this language. "[SE] is actually an idealized variety, because it has no specific region" (Yule 2010: 240), but is instead associated to the upper socio-economic classes of English speaking-countries. This also means that SE is not the same in every English speaking-country, as social varieties can further be subdivided into geographical ones. Thus, one can differentiate between British Standard English, American Standard English, or Australian Standard English to name but a few.

Chambers (1986: 2) goes even further to describe 'standard dialect' as "the grammar and core vocabulary of educated usage" and 'standard accent' as "the pronunciation [. . .] of people whose speech is not highly localized". The lack of a link with any given region is actually a characteristic of standard varieties.

2.2.2. From variety to standard

For one variety to become 'standard' it has to undergo 'standardization' (Bex and Watts 1999: 117), which can be described as "the imposition of uniformity upon a class of objects". For languages, the main process of standardization is 'codification': the

"description of the language in dictionaries and grammars that conserves and bolsters the standard language" (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 193). The result of this process is the slowing down of the language's linguistic development. Although its development never comes to a full stop, a false perception of the Standard Language (and the language as a whole) as a static, unalterable entity is created.

> Standard languages typically act as powerful symbols of national culture and national identity, and are perceived not as varieties of a language but as autonomous, separate entities with their own histories and a special aesthetic, 'pure' value. (Milroy & Milroy 1993: 15)

In reality, language and its standard varieties are always changing and evolving, even today, as standardization is after all a process which never finishes. Standard varieties, despite valuing and aiming for uniformity, will never reach a point of completion. (Burridge 2010; Milroy & Milroy 1993).

2.3. Non-standard varieties

All other varieties that still exist but did not follow the process of standardization are considered to be 'non-standard varieties' of the language. However, non-standard varieties are actually used by far more speakers than SE does. In a study on Canadian English, Dollinger (2011) reckoned that "about 36% of the Canadian population (36.02% by the math) are, in theory, middle class and, therefore, likely speakers of 'Standard Canadian English". Similarly, Trudgill and Hannah (2002) estimated that "British standard RP accents are spoken by only 3–5% of the British population".

The previous examples relate to varieties of English spoken by native speakers (NSs) of English, but it has been shown that today "[non-native speakers (NNSs)] of English now outnumber their native-speaker counterparts" (Luo 2016: 2), which means that non-native non-standard varieties account for the most spoken varieties all around the globe.

Chapter 3: Some relevant English varieties and their differences

This section aims to give a summary of the most well-known varieties of English used nowadays, and to point out the phonetic, grammatical and syntactic features that make each one of them different from the others in order to show just how much do varieties differ from one another. The first varieties analysed are those considered the standard for English Language Teaching (ELT) all over the world: British English (BrE) and American English (AmE). These two will be compared against each other first. Afterwards, varieties from different former British colonies and also from different regions within England will also be analysed in contrast to the two previous standard varieties, BrE and AmE.

3.1. British English and *English* English

As mentioned before, the standard variety differs from one English speaking country to another. 'British Standard English' (BrE), however, is the one usually found in most materials for learners of English as a Second or Foreign language, or in many other English texts meant for an international audience. Despite the fact that BrE and RP are not necessarily always related, the use of BrE with an RP pronunciation is recognised as a variety on its own, known as '*English* English' (EngEng) (Trudgill & Hannah 2008). Most features having to do with vowel sounds, grammar and syntax will be omitted in this section as they are considered the features of SE. Instead, they will be shown and explained when contrasting other varieties against EngEng. The features and examples explained in this section are taken from Svartvik & Leech (2006) and Trudgill & Hannah (2008).

EngEng is a 'non-rhotic' or '*r*-less' variety. This means that in syllables that contain a long vowel sound followed by an 'r', the /r/ sound is dropped. The word 'car', for example, is pronounced as /kɑ:/ in EngEng instead of /kɑ:r/ (Svartvik & Leech 2006). As most non-rhotic varieties do, EngEng presents both 'linking' and 'intrusive' /r/. The linking /r/ breaks the previous rule when the syllable ending in 'r' is also the final syllable of the word and is followed by another word beginning with a vowel sound. Thus, 'car engine' is pronounced as /kɑ:**r** ˈendʒɪn/. Meanwhile, the intrusive /r/

often appears between two words when the first one ends with a vowel sound and the second one begins with another vowel sound. For example, the word patterns 'draw up' and 'idea and' would be pronounced /drɔːrʌp/ and /aidɪərənd/ respectively.

EngEng also presents a feature known as 'glottaling', which consist in the use of a glottal stop sound /ʔ/ instead of the consonant sound /t/ in certain positions, usually before a vowel sound. The word 'party', for example, is pronounced /ˈpɑːʔi/ instead of /ˈpɑːti/.

3.2. American English and North American English

There exist two main varieties of English in North America: the one spoken in the United States, known as USEng, and the one spoken in Canada, known as CanEng. Since they share most of their characteristics, linguists use the broader term 'American English' or, more specifically, 'North American English' (NAmEng) to refer to both varieties together as one. This variety has four times as many native speakers as BrE does, and it is as well the most populous native-speaker variety and largest target-variety to be learned and imitated through the world (Svartvik & Leech 2006). The features and examples explained in this section are taken from Svartvik & Leech (2006) and Trudgill & Hannah (2008).

Unlike EngEng, NAmEng is a 'rhotic' or '*r*-full' variety, which means that the sound /r/ is always pronounced. Therefore, 'car' is pronounced /kɑːr/.

While EngEng distinguishes between short and long vowel sounds, all vowels are pronounced the same length or with a much smaller, almost unnoticeable difference in NAmEng. NAmEng also uses a slightly different set of vowels than EngEng. To show some examples, the vowel /ɒ/ is more open in NAmEng, while /ʌ/ is more closed. The vowel sounds /ɑː/ and /ʌ/ from EngEng are replaced with /a/ and /ʊ/ respectively in NAmEng. For example, the words 'dance' and 'glass' are pronounced /dans/ and /glas/ instead of /dɑːns/ and /glɑːs/, while 'bus' and 'run' are pronounced /bʊs/ and /rʊn / instead of /bʌs/ and /rʌn/.

The consonant sound /l/ is always velarized into its 'dark' counterpart /ɫ/, regardless of its position. Glottaling does not happen, and the /t/ sound is always pronounced.

Some words that carry the stress on the second syllable in EngEng do so in their first syllable instead in NAmEng. 'Address', while pronounced /əˈdres/ in EngEng is pronounced /ˈædres/ in NAmEng. However, on words of foreign origin that carry the stress on the first syllable in EngEng, the stress is changed to the last syllable in NAmEng. 'Adult', from French, is pronounced /ˈædʌlt/ in EngEng, but /əˈdʌlt/ in NAmEng.

Some irregular verbs are regularised in NAmEng, mainly those whose irregular past and past participle forms end in 't', such as 'burnt/burned', 'dreamt/dreamed' or 'spelt/spelled'. The modal verb 'shall' is almost always replaced by 'will' or, in the case of first person questions, 'should'. A NAmEng speaker would say 'should I open the window?' instead of 'shall I open the window?', and 'I will clean it' instead of 'I shall clean it'.

There many differences in spelling between EngEng and NAmE words. In table 1, the underlined parts of words signal these differences:

EngEng	NAmEng
cancelled, traveller	canceled, traveler
colour, humour	color, humor
mould, smoulder	mold, smolder
encyclopaedia	encyclopedia
amoeba	ameba
judgement	judgment
centre, theatre	center, theater
defence, licence	defense, license
colonise, organise	colonize, organize
catalogue, monologue	catalog, monolog
connexion	connection
enrol, fulfil	enroll, fulfill

waggon	wagon
amongst, amidst	among, amid

Table 1. American English spelling (Trudgill & Hannah, 2008, pp. 83-85)

As shown in table 1, most NAmEng spellings are simplified versions of the EngEng norm. Significant differences are present in the form of missing consonants or vowels where there are at least two together in the EngEng spelling, such as 'canceled', 'mold' and 'amid' instead of 'cancelled', 'mould' and 'amidst'. Another reoccurring difference is the substitution of an EngEng consonant for a different one in NAmEng: 'c' for 's' in 'defense' and 'license'; 's' for 'z' in 'colonize' and 'organize'; or 'x' for 'ct' in 'connection'.

NAmEng has its own set of vocabulary items, with some words being completely different from their BrE counterparts. These words are usually used to designate new objects or experiences from North America, as well as inventions and customs born from technological and cultural developments. For example, 'elevator' is the American counterpart to the British word 'lift'. The influence of other cultures and languages near North America also influences its vocabulary, with some new terms being, for example, directly taken from Spanish: 'sombrero', 'tornado' and 'tortilla'; or from native Indian languages: 'moose, 'moccasin' and 'squash'. Whenever this happens and two signifiers are created in English, one in BrE and another in NAmEng, to designate the same signified, the NAmEng one tends to become the norm spelling in other varieties. Sometimes, the American alternative finds its way even into British English, partially or fully replacing the original word.

3.3. Australian English and New Zealand English

Both Australia and New Zealand have their own varieties of English, properly known as Australian English (AusEng) and New Zealand English (NZEng), which despite being the standard in their countries, are seen as non-standard by members of other English-speaking communities (Trudgill & Hannah 2008). Although they are not identical, these varieties are still similar enough that a broader linguistic description can cover features

from both. The features and examples explained in this section are taken from Svartvik & Leech (2006) and Trudgill & Hannah (2008).

Like EngEng, both AusEng and NZEng are non-rhotic varieties and present both linking and intrusive 'r', like EngEng. However, the consonant sound /l/ is always pronounced as a 'dark' /ɫ/ in both AusEng and NZEng, just like in NAmEng.

The modal verbs 'should' and 'ought' are used in question tags instead of 'do'. Thus, where an EngEng speaker would add a question tag such as 'did you?' or 'didn't you?', speakers of either AusEng or NZEng would instead add 'should you?' or 'shouldn't you?'

There is a tendency in AusEng and NZEng to use the verb 'got' to use possession instead of the more common verb 'have' that is used in other varieties. A speaker of either variety is more likely to say 'I've got a car' than 'I have a car'. In other varieties, the first sentence would probably be used to express that the speaker has recently acquired a car, rather than to state that they own a car.

The female pronoun 'she' can be used colloquially in AusEng and NZEng to refer to inanimate nouns, and also in impersonal constructions. An example is the sentence 'She'll be right' in the meaning 'Everything will be all right'.

Speakers of AusEng and NZEng use the interjection 'thanks' at the end of requests, instead of 'please'. Thus, where an EngEng speaker would formulate a request such as 'Could you close the window, please?', speakers of either AusEng or NZEng would instead formulate it as 'Could you close the window, thanks?'

Colloquial abbreviations are much more common in AusEng and NZEng than they are in other varieties of English. A few examples are 'cuppa' for 'cup of tea', 'arvo' for 'afternoon', 'defo' for 'definitely', 'towie' for 'tow track' and 'telly' for 'television'.

Just like NAmEng, AusEng and NZEng have their own sets of vocabulary items. Most of their own unique words are related to the autochthonous flora and fauna, or are taken from the many aboriginal languages that existed and still exist in the islands, such as 'boomerang', 'dingo' and 'billabong'. When new words are needed because of technological or cultural developments, AusEng and NZEng sometimes take either the EngEng or NAmEng word, but some other times a third counterpart is created. For

example, 'footpath' is the AusEng and NZEng equivalent for the British 'pavement' and the American 'sidewalk'.

3.4. South African English

The variety of English spoken in the many countries from the South of Africa that are now former British colonies is known as South African English (SAfEng). Like it happens with AusEng and NZEng, this variety is seen as non-standard in other English-speaking countries. The features and examples explained in this section are taken from Svartvik & Leech (2006) and Trudgill & Hannah (2008).

Following EngEng, SAfEng is a non-rhotic variety. However, it does not present either linking or intrusive 'r', unlike EngEng. Vs. NAmEng, the consonant sound 'l' is always pronounced as a 'clear' /l/, that is, it is never velarized into a 'dark' /ł/ sound, regardless of its position.

SAfEng has an all-purpose question tag, 'is it?', that can be used to substitute any affirmative question tags. For example, where an EngEng speaker would use question tags such as 'did you?', 'is he?' or 'have they?', speakers of SAfEng would instead use 'is it?' in all three cases.

A non-negative 'no' can be used in SAfEng as an introductory particle. For example, to the question 'How are you?', a SAfEng speaker may answer 'No, I'm fine, thanks'. The intention of this particle is to negate any assumptions that could have been made in the previous question.

Like AusEng and NZEng, SAfEng has many unique items of vocabulary that come from the aboriginal languages spoken in the continent, and usually refer to concepts of the South African native culture such as 'indaba' (conference), 'sjambok' (whip) or 'dorp' (village). Some words for technological and cultural developments that differ from the other varieties do exist, although these are rare cases. As an example, the EngEng words 'traffic light' and 'cinema' have as their SAfEng counterparts the words 'robot' and 'bioscope' respectively.

3.5. Welsh English

Wales, Scotland and Ireland all have their own languages apart from English: Welsh, Scots and Irish. Although these are rarely used in everyday life today, mostly by older people, they do have their influence on the English language that is spoken in each of these countries. The variety of English spoken in Wales is known as Welsh English (WEng). The features and examples explained in this section are taken from Svartvik & Leech (2006) and Trudgill & Hannah (2008).

It is notable that, unlike the varieties from Scotland and Ireland, there are surprisingly very few items in WEng's vocabulary that come from Welsh.

Like EngEng, WEng is a non-rhotic variety and presents both linking and intrusive 'r'. Like SAfEng and unlike NAmEng, the consonant sound 'l' is never velarized into a 'dark' /ɫ/ sound, but always pronounced as a clear /l/ regardless of its position.

WEng speakers pronounce many vowels differently from EngEng speakers. The differences are shown underlined in the following table:

Example word/s	EngEng pronunciation	WEng pronunciation
d<u>a</u>nce, gl<u>a</u>ss	/d<u>ɑ:</u>ns/, /gl<u>ɑ:</u>s/	/d<u>æ</u>ns/, /gl<u>æ</u>s/
sof<u>a</u>	/ˈso:f<u>ə</u>/	/ˈso:f<u>æ</u>/
c<u>o</u>ndemn	/k<u>ə</u>nˈdɛm/	/k<u>ɒ</u>nˈdɛm/
r<u>u</u>bber	/ˈr<u>ʌ</u>bə/	/ˈr<u>ə</u>bə/
m<u>u</u>sic, t<u>u</u>ne	/ˈmj<u>u:</u>zɪk/, /tj<u>u:</u>n/	/ˈmj<u>ʊ</u>zɪk/, /tj<u>ʊ</u>n/

Table 2. Welsh English vowels (Trudgill & Hannah, 2008, pp. 36-37)

Table 2 shows that WEng tends to substitute the vowel sound /ə/ for stronger vowels which are usually restricted to stressed syllables in EngEng, such as /æ/ in 'sofa', /ɒ/ in 'condemn' and /ʌ/ in 'rubber'. In other cases, long vowels are replaced by different shot vowels sounds. For example, the long /ɑ:/ sound in 'dance' is pronounced as a short /æ/ in WEng, and similarly the long /u:/ sound in 'music' is pronounced as a short /ʊ/.

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In WEng, the voiceless plosive consonants /p/, /t/ and /k/ tend to be strongly aspirated so that the word 'pit' is pronounced /pʰɪtʰ/ instead of /pɪt/. Another interesting feature of WEng is the existence of long consonant sounds. This happens to intervocalic consonants when they are followed by an unstressed syllable. For example, the words 'butter' and 'money' are pronounced /ˈbətʰːə/ and /ˈmənːi/ instead of /ˈbʌtə/ and /ˈmʌni/. In addition, WEng presents the consonant sounds /ɬ/ and /x/ in place-names and Welsh loan-words, such as 'Llanberis' and 'bach', which are pronounced /ɬanbɛtɪs/ and /bɑːx/ respectively .

Like SAfEng, WEng has an all-purpose question tag, 'isn't it?', that can be used to substitute any negative question tags. For example, where an EngEng speaker would use question tags such as 'didn't you?', 'isn't he?' or 'haven't they?', speakers of WEng would instead use 'isn't it?' in all three cases. WEng speakers use the adverb 'too' as a substitute of 'either' in negative statements. For example, 'I can't do that, too' instead of 'I can't do that, either'.

3.6. Scottish English

The variety of English spoken in Scotland is known as Scottish English (ScotEng). The features and examples explained in this section are taken from Svartvik & Leech (2006) and Trudgill & Hannah (2008).

ScotEng has fewer vowel sounds than any other English variety:

Example word/s	EngEng pronunciation	ScotEng pronunciation
p<u>a</u>m, p<u>a</u>lm	/pæm/, /pɑːm/	/p<u>a</u>m/ for both
p<u>oo</u>l, p<u>u</u>ll	/pʊl/, /puːl/	/p<u>u</u>l/ for both
c<u>o</u>t, c<u>au</u>ght	/kɒt/, /kɔːt/	/k<u>ɔ</u>t/ for both

Table 3. Scottish English vowels (Trudgill & Hannah, 2008, pp. 95-96)

As can be seen in table 3 above, the reason for this is that one single vowel is used in ScotEng where speakers of EngEng would use two different vowels. As an example, both 'pam' and 'palm' are pronounced exactly the same in ScotEng, since both EngEng vowel sounds /æ/ and /a:/ are pronounced as /a/ instead.

Like NAmEng, ScotEng is a rhotic variety, the consonant sound /l/ is always pronounced as a 'dark' /ɫ/ and all vowel sounds are pronounced with approximately the same length. However, all vowel sounds except for /ɪ/ and /ʌ/ are subject to the *Scottish Vowel Length Rule*, which dictates that all vowels sounds are longer when they appear before the consonant sounds /v/, /ð/, /z/, /r/ and when they appear at the end of a word, even if a suffix is added. For example, the /i/ vowel in the word 'leave' is pronounced as a long /i:/, but not in the word 'lead'. Similarly, the /e/ vowel in 'pair' is a long /e:/ sound unlike in the word 'pale'.

Like EngEng, ScotEng presents glottaling. There is a distinction between /w/ and /ʍ/ in ScotEng, so that the word 'witch' is pronounced /wɪtʃ/, while 'which' is pronounced /ʍɪtʃ/. The consonant sound /x/ appears in some specifically ScotEng words such as 'loch' and 'dreich/, which are pronounced /lɔx/ and /drix/.

The main verb 'have' does not need support from the modal verb 'do' in ScotEng. For example, whereas an EngEng speaker may ask 'Did you have a good time?', a ScotEng speaker would instead say 'Had you a good time?'

Like NAmEng, the auxiliary verb 'shall' is always replaced by 'will', even in first person questions. A ScotEng speaker would say 'Will I open the window?' instead of 'Shall I open the window?'

There is a tendency in ScotEng not to contract the negative element 'not'. A ScotEng speaker is more likely to say 'Is he not going?' than 'Isn't he going?'

Certain stative verbs such as 'want' or 'need' can be used in the progressive aspect in ScotEng. For example, a ScotEng speaker can say 'I'm wanting a cup of tea' or 'I'm needing a cup of tea' instead of 'I want a cup of tea' or 'I need a cup of tea'.

Differences in items of vocabulary between ScotEng and other varieties are due the influence of Scots. There are also some phrases and idioms which are specifically Scottish and cannot be found in other varieties.

3.7. Irish English

The variety of English spoken in Ireland is Irish English (IrEng). There are actually two sub-varieties known as North Ireland English, which has its origins in Scots, and South

Ireland English which comes from BrE. However, both varieties do share a number of features and are quite similar. The features and examples explained in this section are taken from Svartvik & Leech (2006) and Trudgill & Hannah (2008).

Like NAmEng, IrEng is a rhotic variety. However, opposite to NAmEng, the consonant sound 'l' is always pronounced as a 'clear' /l/; it is never velarized into a 'dark' /ɫ/ sound, regardless of its position.

Like NAmEng and ScotEng, the auxiliary 'shall' is very rare, and is usually replaced by 'will' in IrEng.

There is in IrEng a calque from Irish that consists in the use of the adverb 'after' followed by a progressive form where other varieties would use a perfective form. For example, an IrEng speaker could say 'I'm after seeing him' instead of 'I have just seen him'.

Cleft sentences are very common in IrEng, and can be used with copular verbs, a feature absent from other varieties. For example, an IrEng speaker could say 'It was very ill that he looked' instead of 'He looked very ill'.

Progressive verb forms are more frequent in IrEng than in other varieties, and can be used with many stative verbs. For example, an IrEng speaker could say 'This is belonging to me' instead of 'This belongs to me.'

When there is a sequence of tenses that would require one of them to be past perfect in other varieties, IrEng uses the past simple instead. For example, an IrEng speaker would say 'If he saw her, he would not have done it' instead of 'If he had seen her, he would not have done it'.

The verb 'do' can be used as an auxiliary verb in IrEng to express an action that is habitual. For example, an IrEng speaker could say 'I do be writing' with the meaning 'I do habitually write'.

The verb 'let' can be used in IrEng with second person imperatives. For example, an IrEng speaker could say 'Let you stay here' with the meaning 'Stay here'.

Indirect questions in IrEng can be formed without a subordinator such as 'if' or 'whether', in which case they also retain inversion of the sentence order typical of direct

questions. For example, an IrEng speaker could say 'I wonder has he come' instead of 'I wonder if he has come?'

There is a tendency in IrEng to use ellipted verb phrases such as 'I am', 'It is' or 'He did not' to answer questions instead of simply replying 'yes' or 'no', an influence from the Irish language.

Items of vocabulary that are unique for IrEng come either as borrowings of the Irish language or as the preservation of archaic forms, such as 'bold', 'cog' and 'yoke' with the meanings 'naughty', 'cheat' and 'gadget'. Distinctive of IrEng is also the use of the words 'back', 'below', 'over' and 'up above' to refer to the four cardinal directions 'West', 'North', 'East' and 'South' respectively.

3.8. Southern British dialects: Cockney English

Other varieties of English worth analysing are those found in the different parts of England. From a general perspective, a difference can be made between southern dialects and northern dialects. The former are traditionally associated with prestige varieties and accents such as RP. Southern accents are considered by most speakers to be more pleasant, articulate and prestigious, but also colder, less friendly. The latter, on the other hand, are worse perceived as far as 'correctness' is concerned, but northern accents are considered 'warmer' and friendlier by most speakers (Svartvik & Leech 2006). These are sub-varieties of BrE, and thus they share many features. The ones explained here are the features that differ from the standard EngEng usage.

Amongst the southern varieties, Cockney English is the most well-known. 'Cockney' is a term used to refer broadly to a traditional working-class London accent, as it means 'a working-class Londoner'. The features and examples explained in this section are taken from Milroy & Milroy (1993) and Svartvik & Leech (2006).

The EngEng diphthong /eɪ/ is pronounced /ai/ in Cockney English. For example, a Cockney speaker would pronounce the words 'rain', 'plain' and 'Spain' as /rain/, /plain/ and /spain/ instead of /reɪn/, /pleɪn/ and /speɪn/.

Cockney English presents 'h-dropping', which consists in the dropping of the initial /h/ sound of words. For example, a Cockney speaker would pronounce the words 'hammer', 'heat' and 'hall' as /ˈæmə/, /iːt/ and /ɔːl/ instead of /ˈhæmə/, /hiːt/ and /hɔːl/.

Cockney English also presents 'th-fronting', a process whereby the dental consonant sounds used in EngEng for the spelling 'th' are replaced with their labiodental counterparts. The sound /θ/ found in words such as 'think' and 'thirty' is replaced with the /f/ sound, while the sound /ð/ found in words such as 'bother' is replaced with the /v/ sound. Thus, a Cockney speaker would pronounce these words as /fɪŋk/, /ˈfɜːti/ and /ˈbɒvə/ instead of /θɪŋk/, /ˈθɜːti/ and /ˈbɒðə/.

Cockney English has a distinctive feature of lexis known as 'rhyming slang', a word play where the intended word is replaced by a phrase that rhymes with it. For example, Cockney speakers may use the slang term 'Bristol City' with the meaning of 'titty'. The rhyming slang then may become shortened, dropping all words after the first one so that the rhyme disappears. Thus, the previous example could be reduced to just 'Bristol', while the meaning of 'titty' remains the same, and can even take plural from as 'Bristols' for 'titties'. Another example would be 'take a butcher's', the shortened version of the slang 'take a butcher's hook' which means 'take a look'.

3.9. Southern British dialects: Estuary English

Another example of a southern dialect is Estuary English. This variety is spoken around London and in the southeast of England. Estuary English is said to be influenced by Cockney 'from below' and by RP 'from above', so it shares features with both accents. The Estuary accent has been experiencing a widening social and geographical spread for some years now. Some linguists affirm that it is indeed undergoing the process of standardization, and that Estuary English could therefore become 'the new RP' in a distant future (Svartvik & Leech 2006). The features and examples explained in this section are taken from Milroy & Milroy (1993) and Svartvik & Leech (2006).

Estuary English presents a syllabic /l/ sound. This means that when the usual /l/ consonant sound that is found in EngEng appears after a vowel, it is instead pronounced as a vocalic sound which may be /w/, /ʊ/ or /o/. For example, an Estuary English speaker would pronounce the word 'milk' as /mɪwk/ instead of /mɪlk/.

In Estuary English, whenever a word ends with '-y' after a consonant, it is pronounced as the long vocalic sound /iː/ instead of the short /i/ sound found in EngEng. For example, an Estuary English speaker would pronounce the word 'pity' as /ˈpɪtiː/ instead of /ˈpɪti/.

The most prominent features of Cockney English that are not present in Estuary English are the 'h-dropping' and 'th-fronting'.

3.10. Southern British dialects: West Country English

The last southern variety to be analysed is West Country English, spoken in the region of South West England. In this variety, initial fricative consonant sounds such as /s/ and /f/, which are voiceless, can be replaced by their voiced counterparts /z/ and /v/. For example, a West Country English speaker may pronounce the words 'soup' and 'father' as /zuːp/ and /ˈvɑːðə/ instead of /suːp/ and /ˈfɑːðə/. Like Cockney English, West Country English presents 'h-dropping'. The features and examples explained in this section are taken from Milroy & Milroy (1993) and Svartvik & Leech (2006).

Subject and object pronouns use is inverted in West Country English. This means that, where an EngEng speaker would use 'he', 'she' or 'they', a West Country English speaker would instead use 'him', 'her' and 'them' and vice versa. For example, instead of 'he called' and 'that is her book', a West Country English speaker would say 'him called' and 'that is she book'.

The verb 'to be' has one single form, 'be', in West Country English, in contrast to the multiple forms 'am', 'is' and 'are' which are present in other varieties, along with just one negative form, 'ben't'. For example, a West Country English speaker would say 'I be eating' and 'They ben't lying' instead of 'I'm eating' and 'They're not lying'.

3.11. Northern British dialects

Northern English varieties are spoken by nearly half of England's population not only in the north, but also in industrial cities such as Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle and large parts of the Midlands (Svartvik & Leech 2006). There are different sub-varieties of Northern English, with Geordie and Mackem being the most well-known, but they all share enough features that it is possible to carry out a broader analysis of all their features together. Many of these are features that were previously found in older versions of Standard English, but became non-standard as a consequence of the codifying activities of the eighteenth-century grammarians (Milroy & Milroy 1993: 212). While this may mean that northern accents have not caught up with some of the

changes that the English language went through, northerners still take pride in their local speech (Svartvik & Leech 2006: 133). So much in fact that some linguists dare affirm that "of all the varieties of English remaining within England at the beginning of this new Millennium it is Northern English, especially its distinctive accents, that will survive the longest" (Beal et al 2011; Wales 2006: 211). The features and examples explained in this section are taken from Milroy & Milroy (1993) and Svartvik & Leech (2006).

Like in NAmEng, the vowel sounds /ɑː/ and /ʌ/ from EngEng is replaced with /a/ and /ʊ/ respectively in Northern English. There is also a tendency in Northern English to pronounce diphthong as pure vowels sounds.

Some irregular verbs in Northern English have the same form for both past and past participle. For example, the SE verbs 'break, broke, broken' and 'bite, bit, bitten' are instead conjugated 'break, broke, broke' and 'bite, bit, bit' in Northern English. Others instead have their past and past participle forms swapped. For example, the SE verbs 'see, saw, seen' and 'run, ran, run' are instead conjugated 'see, seen, saw' and 'run, run, ran' in Northern English. Finally, some others have their past participle form as their present form with the added ending '-en'. For example, the SE verbs 'put, put, put' and 'forget, forgot, forgotten' are instead conjugated 'put, put, putten' and 'forget, forgot, forgetten' in Northern English.

Some verbs that are regular in SE become irregular in Northern English, while the opposite is also true. For example, the SE verbs 'treat, treated, treated' and 'say, said, said' are instead conjugated 'treat, tret, tret' and 'say, sayed, sayed' in Northern English.

Whenever the verb 'do' and its negative form 'don't' are used in Northern English as auxiliaries in question and negations, the alternative northern forms 'div' and 'divvent' are used instead. For example, a Northern English speaker would say 'Ye div, divvent ye?' instead of 'You do, don't you?'

The 3rd person singular verb forms with the ending '-s' are also employed with 3rd person plural concord in Northern English, even with the verbs 'be' and 'have' and their corresponding 3rd person singular forms 'is' and 'has'. For example, a Northern English speaker would say 'Things has changed' instead of 'Things have changed.'

The modal verb 'may' is not utilized at all in Northern English. Instead, 'can' is used to express permission, whereas 'might' is used to express possibility. For example a Northern English speaker would say 'Can I open the window?' and 'It might rain' instead of 'May I open the window' and 'It may rain.' Like in many other varieties, 'will' is used instead of 'shall' in Northern English.

The modal verb 'mustn't' is used in Northern English instead of 'can't' in sentences with the meaning 'the evidence forces me to conclude that… not.' For example, a Northern English speaker would say 'The elevator mustn't be working' instead of 'The elevator can't be working.' Similarly, the modal verb 'mustn't' is replaced in Northern English with 'haven't got to' in sentences with the meaning 'it is necessary not to.' For example, a Northern English speaker would say 'Ye haven't got to do that' instead of 'You mustn't do that.'

The modal verbs 'can' and 'could' can be employed in Northern English with the meaning 'be able to', even when there is already another modal in the verb phrase. This is unlike most other varieties in which grammar dictates that there cannot be more than one modal verb per verb phrase. For example, a Northern English speaker would say 'He must can do it' instead of 'He must be able to do it.'

The adverb 'never' acts as an emphatic negative in Northern English, rather than as an absolute negative like in SE. For example, if a Northern English speaker says 'The men never turned up' they are referring to one specific time, and thus the men could have appeared in other instances.

There is a tendency in Northern English to use the uncontracted form of auxiliary verbs 'cannot', 'be not', 'have not', 'do not', and 'will not' instead of their contracted forms. In addition, one alternative form of 'will not' distinctive of Northern English is 'winnet', although this is rare and archaic.

For some speakers of Northern English the functions of 'been' and 'being' are reversed. For example, a Northern English speaker could say 'Where I had being digging' and 'Their death is just been prolonged' instead of 'Where I had been digging' and 'Their death is just being prolonged.'

Positive tags can follow positive statements and even positive questions in Northern English, and they do so without a pause or comma, in order to ask for

information concerning the statement. A Northern English speaker would probably say 'Ye could say it could ye?' instead of 'You could say it, couldn't you?' Similarly, negative tags can follow a negative statement in Northern English, following one out of two different patterns depending on the intention of the tag. If the pattern of the negative tag is *auxiliary + subject + 'not'*, its purpose is to ask for information. For example, 'She can't come, can she not?'. On the other hand, if the pattern is *auxiliary + n't + subject + 'not'*, its purpose is to ask for a confirmation of the negative, as in 'She can't come, can't she not?'

Northern English set of personal pronouns is different from that of SE, so much in fact that the following table (table 4) is often used by linguists to showcase this difference:

	Subject		Object		Possessive	
	SE	NE	SE	NE	SE	NE
1st Sg	I	I	me	Us	my	me
1st Pl	we	us	us	We	our	wor
2nd Sg	you	ye	you	You	your	your
2nd Pl	you	yous	you	yous/yees	your	your
3rd Sg M	he	he	him	Him	his	his
3rd Sg F	she	she	her	Her	her	her
3rd Sg N	it	it	it	It	its	its
3rd Pl	they	they	them	Them	their	their

Table 4. Northern English personal pronouns (Milroy & Milroy, 1993, p.205)

Northern English utilizes some unique pronouns not found in EngEng, such as the first person plural possessive form 'wor'; the second person subject pronouns 'ye' and 'yous', singular and plural respectively; and the two alternative forms for the second person plural object pronoun, 'yous' and 'yees'. Another peculiarity is the use of the same form in both varieties for a different pronoun function in each. For example, the EngEng first person singular form 'me' acts as an object pronoun in EngEng, but as

possessive in Northern English. The form 'us' is only used in EngEng as the first person plural object pronoun, whereas in Northern English it can appear as either the first person singular object pronoun or plural subject pronoun.

In compound subjects, the object pronoun may be used in Northern English as the subject, whereas the subject pronoun is always used in SE. For example, a Northern English speaker may say 'Me and my brother' and 'Her and her friend' instead of 'I and my brother' and 'She and her friend.'

Reflexive pronouns in Northern English are forming by adding the endings '-self' or '-selves' always to the possessive form, unlike SE in which 3rd person reflexive pronouns are created from the object form.

	Reflexive	
	SE	NE
1st Sg	myself	meself
1st Pl	ourselves	worselves
2nd Sg	yourself	yourself
2nd Pl	yourselves	yourselves
3rd Sg M	himself	hisself
3rd Sg F	herself	herself
3rd Sg N	itself	itselfs
3rd Pl	themselves	theirselves

Table 5. Northern English personal pronouns (Milroy & Milroy, 1993, p.206)

The differences can be found in the first person, third person singular masculine and third person plural forms, as shown in table 5. Northern English employs its unique possessive forms 'me' and 'wor' to create the reflexive pronoun just like how EngEng uses its possessive forms 'my' and 'our'. However, the 3rd person forms are derived in Northern English also from the possessive forms, 'his' and 'their' in this case, while their EngEng counterparts come from the object forms 'him' and 'them' instead.

When the pronoun 'one' is a noun substitute it is always preceded by the indefinite article 'a' in Northern English. For example, a Northern English speaker would say 'I would like a one' instead of 'I would like one.'

In Northern English, nouns of quantity often have plurals without '-s', also known as 'zero plurals'. For example, a Northern English speaker would say 'six month', 'ten year' and 'twenty pound' instead of 'six months', 'ten years' and 'twenty pounds.'

Double comparatives and superlatives, a feature present in older versions of SE, still exists in Northern English. This means that adjective phrases such as 'more safer' and 'most safest' are possible in Northern English.

'But' can be used in Northern English instead of the conjunction 'though' at the end of sentences. For example, a Northern English speaker would say 'I'll manage but' instead of 'I'll manage though.'

Some prepositions have a different use in Northern English than the one they have in SE, as can be seen in table 6:

Prepositions	
SE	NE
from/by	Off
about	On
in (place)	At
at (time)	On
used to	used with
of (agent)	by

Table 6. Northern English personal pronouns (Milroy & Milroy, 1993, p.211)

Due to these differences in meaning, many collocations that use prepositions differ between EngEng and Northern English. For example, a Northern English speaker would say 'He died by poisoning', 'Tell me on it' and 'I go out on weekends' instead of 'He died of poisoning', 'Tell me about it' and 'I go out at weekends.'

3.12. Differences amongst varieties

The degree to which varieties differ from one another depends on the specific varieties that are being compared, but the data from this section shows that there are differences nonetheless, and that English is not spoken or written the same everywhere. In fact, the English language is not the same in different regions inside a country, as the cases of Southern and Northern British English dialects prove, and when travelling from one city to another one can find differences in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and spelling.

Studies have shown that one of the main aspirations of learners of English as a Second Language (L2) is "to sound like a native speaker" (Groom 2012: 55). Taking into account that all the varieties analysed in this section are in fact varieties spoken by NSs of English, people who speak English as their mother tongue or first language, a question arises: what does a NS of English sound like?

There is one variety which is generally associated with NSs of English: SE, more specifically Standard BrE (Freeborn 1993). It is for example the variety taught to students of English as L2 or Foreign Language (EFL) at schools and academies in countries where English is not the mother tongue. Some of these institutions take pride in claiming to teach 'the British accent' (Murphy 2016). But in the same way that SE is held in high regard, all other varieties are discriminated and not even considered to be English by many (Mooney & Evans 2011). In other words, non-linguists often have negative attitudes towards non-standard varieties of English.

Chapter 4: Sociolinguistic attitudes towards varieties

From a purely linguistic point of view there are no objective reasons to claim that any variety is inherently better than the others, as irrespective of how different they may be from one another, they are still actual representations of the same language: "Referring to varieties of English as 'better' or 'worse' is – of course – vexing and technically inaccurate" (Mooney & Evans 2011: 205).

From a sociolinguistic point of view, however, things are not so clear. Sociolinguistics is "the study of the relationship between language and society" (Yule 2010: 254), and sociolinguists study how language is used and perceived by people from different social groups, which differs in terms of age, sex, or social class. Sociolinguistic studies (Ebner 2016; Groom 2012; Murphy 2011) have shown that standard varieties of language are usually perceived to be better or at least more prestigious by both native and not native speakers. This is easily seen in teaching materials of English as a L2 in which all the vocabulary, grammar and structures explained relate to Standard English and the suggested pronunciations are those of Received Pronunciation (Seidlhofer, 2007).

No matter the country, SE is always associated with 'good English' or 'good usage of the language' (Freeborn 1993). The opposite is true as well: non-standard varieties tend to be considered 'bad English' also by non-linguists. This social perception has to do with the use of SE by the highest classes of society:

> Where one variant is widely perceived to be 'better', this very often correlates with more frequent use of this variant by speakers from higher SECs […]. These variants are usually the ones prescribed in standard speech. (Meyerhoof 2006: 161)

4.1. Negative attitudes towards non-standard varieties

Non-standard are oftentimes casually referred to by the term 'dialect', creating the illusion that SE is not a dialect, which is exactly what it is. This usage is responsible for the negative connotations of the word 'dialect' that is used by non-linguists to refer to certain varieties as inferior or incorrect (Groom 2012). Even though nowadays dialect

tolerance among the population has increased, SE has been strongly defended and praised against non-standard varieties, sometimes violently, until not so long ago. During the 1950s, in Great Britain dissertations and newspaper columns were written by the so-called 'language guardians' to try and raise awareness about the importance of using and preserving SE. Not only were 'dialects' considered to be wrong: they were even referred to as 'immoral' (Bex & Watts 1999). The truth is that, even though this distinction is portrayed as an objective criterion, it is actually completely subjective, as there are no linguistic arguments that can be held for the superiority of one given variety over another. Since there is nothing that can be said through SE that any other variety cannot express as well, "referring to varieties of English as 'better' or 'worse' is – of course – vexing and technically inaccurate" (Mooney & Evans 2011: 205).

Non-linguists tend to think of non-standard varieties of English as incorrect or ungrammatical. Their grammar and accent are often considered 'mistakes' or 'wrong' in comparison to those of the standard variety. Meanwhile, "standard forms [...] are assumed to be obviously correct" (Bex & Watts 1999: 20). One interesting exception is vocabulary, which does not seem to carry these negative prejudices.

> "Non-standard vocabulary [is considered] a regional variant that is no better or worse than the Standard English equivalent. Regional forms of morphology and syntax instead are seen as corruptions of grammar." (Milroy & Milroy 1993)

Dollinger (2011) writes that the relationship between standard and non-standard dialects has traditionally been explained as the relationship between a hypernym and its hyponyms. In this simile, the hypernym is the language or dominant dialect, while the hyponyms are the non-dominant dialects. The English language is special in the sense that it allows for two dominant varieties or hypernyms: BrE and AmE. All the other varieties, such as Canadian English, Australian English or Irish English are seen as hyponyms of the two dominant dialects. This traditional view establishes a hierarchy in which BrE and AmE are labelled as the superior and standard versions of the language (Dollinger 2011).

4.2. The reasons why these attitudes exist

Power has always been an important issue for sociolinguists, for it can change the course of a language completely. English would not have achieved the social status of lingua franca it enjoys today if it were not for the power and international influence that the United States have in today's world (Svartvik & Leech 2006). And in the same way that a language used by powerful people acquires more prestige, so does a variety of a language. Sociolinguists recognize prestige as "a complex value that speakers orient to in different ways" as not every person recognizes prestige in the same way. Sociolinguists have thus made a distinction between covert prestige and overt prestige (Meyerhoof 2006: 37).

Covert prestige "refers to cases where speakers' positive evaluation of a variant is genuinely covert or hidden" (Meyerhoof 2006: 37). Studies have shown that sometimes speakers overtly recognize a given variant as being 'better' and even claim to use it, but do in fact not. This may be because subconsciously they actually believe that the variety they do use is better, even if they do not answer so when asked.

Overt prestige on the other hand "is understood to be the prestige associated with a variant that people are highly aware of and which is associated more with the speech of higher-status speakers" (Meyerhoof 2006: 37). This is again the case with Standard English and RP pronunciation and, although stemming from an arbitrary valuation, it is as strong an idea as it has always been. "This view of the standard language is not just held by a few people, but rather forms the basis of a widely held and powerful ideology" (Mooney & Evans 2011: 179) promoted by the same people that benefit from it. Powerful politicians, famous news reporters and show hosts on TV, eminent intellectuals, doctors or judges, to name a few, are all influential people who use Standard English on a daily basis on TV, the radio and newspapers. The constant exposure of the same variety from speakers of high socio-economic status creates a link through which the prestige associated with said speakers is transferred onto the variety: "insisting that the standard variety is better than others is a way of expressing, claiming and maintaining power" (Wolfram & Schilling 1998: 164).

However, the use of a prestigious or non-prestigious variety is not restricted to particular social classes, but has often more to do with the context or situation in which

language is used: "generally, all speakers will use both variants some of the time regardless of their social class […]. What distinguishes the groups is the relative frequency with which they use each variant" (Meyerhoof 2006: 160). The supposedly 'high-class' variety can and is often employed by middle and working-class speakers, yet it is not usually associated with them because the contexts in which they apply it tend not to be public ones, in contrast with the high class examples mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Overt prestige is not restricted to social varieties either: it can be associated with geographical varieties of English too: "inner circle nations [where English is the native language or L1, such as the United Kingdom, the United States or Canada] tend to be regarded as 'authentic' speakers of English", while outer circle nations (where English is a L2, such as India or South Africa) and expanding circle nations (where English is a Foreign Language) "are not considered to have ownership of English that inner circle users have" (Mooney & Evans 2011: 200). Of all the inner circle varieties, British and American English are often considered to be the 'purest' forms of English: the former because of United Kingdom being perceived as the 'origin' of English; the latter because of the United States' powerful socio-economic position.

4.2. A linguistic defence of non-standard varieties

Everybody speaks a dialect, even SE speakers. Dialects are neither good nor bad, they are just different from one another, and all of them do have grammar, even if it differs from that of the standard variety (Trudgill 1994). More importantly, "all dialects of a language are rule-governed systems" (Freeborn 1993: 20). What this means is that all dialects are consistent in the way sentences are formed, even non-standard dialects. Where one variety differs from the others is in the rules applied to form these sentences. Therefore, non-standard dialects are not debased forms of English, but a form of English with a different set of rules than SE. (Freeborn 1993: 20). The non-standard grammatical features shown in the previous sections are not mistakes, but the grammatical rules of those particular varieties that just happen to differ from the rules of SE.

> Even though prescriptivists argue that standard language is more 'logical', more 'beautiful' and more 'correct', these are subjective judgements […]. The valuation of standard language over all other varieties is an arbitrary one. (Mooney & Evans 2011: 179)

Grammar always varies from place to place as a natural consequence of the evolution of one single language as it is used by different isolated groups of speakers, but it also varies over time in the same place. This is natural: "all human languages change" (Trudgill 1994: 51), even standard varieties, and "there is nothing very surprising about this sort of change, and nothing undesirable about it either" (Trudgill 1994: 33). From the moment the English language started to get codified in the 18th century, its grammar, vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation have changed, with non-standard usages of the past becoming the new standard, while the old standard rules have become obscure and old-fashioned, and sometimes even abandoned altogether. For example, groups of two, three or even four words that used to be pronounced differently at earlier times are now pronounced the same in Modern English, such as 'knight' and 'night', or the words 'right', 'wright', 'rite' and 'write' (Trudgill 1994). The modern pronunciations cannot be argued to be better nor worse than their old counterparts, and neither should other differences based on regional dialect.

In fact, these changes often occur because of the influence that different dialects have on each other. This leads to a phenomenon known as 'dialect levelling':

> Dialect levelling refers to the gradual erasure or loss of the differences that have traditionally distinguished very local or highly regionalised varieties of a language. As a rule, the process is the result of new or increased mobility of speakers, […]. (Meyerhoof 2006: 239)

These influences are stronger today than they have ever been thanks to the existence of the Internet and the much higher mobility of speakers. This has led to the distinction between 'traditional' and 'mainstream dialects'. Traditional dialects are spoken mostly by old people in rural areas, and are linguistically very different from one another and from SE. These are gradually being replaced by mainstream dialects: dialects spoken mostly by young people in urban areas, and which are linguistically more similar to one another and to SE. The fact that mainstream dialects are more similar to SE is not always because of the standard variety's influence — sometimes it is the other way around. An example of change led by non-standard varieties is the levelling out of

irregularities, such as how SE has accepted the previously non-standard regular forms of some verbs that used to be irregular, such as the verb 'help', which used to have the irregular conjugation 'help, holp, holpen' but is nowadays conjugated as 'help, helped, helped' in SE. The opposite is also true, in the sense that SE, despite its process of codification, is not always more conservative than other varieties. An example is 'double negation' which was a feature in earlier stages of SE and is still present in most dialect, but which is nowadays considered non-standard (Trudgill 1994).

In regards to changes in the English grammar, influence between varieties again plays an important role. There are three main patterns that these changes tend to follow: 'grammaticalization', 'colloquialization' and 'Americanization'. Grammaticalization is the process whereby items of vocabulary gradually develop grammatical forms, as is the case with 'semi-modals' such as 'gonna', 'hafta' or 'gotta' form 'going to, 'have to' and 'got to' respectively. Colloquialization is the process whereby written grammar becomes more colloquial, informal or 'more like speech'. An example would be the increasing appearance in the written medium of informal contracted forms such as 'isn't', 'doesn't' or 'hasn't' which has meant a decrease in use of their un-contracted alternatives 'is not', 'does not' and 'has not' (Leech et al. 2012). Due to the spoken language's more informal nature when compared to the written medium, it is not surprising that changes often occur in oral form first, and over time get implemented into the written form. Finally, grammar in countries other than the US tends to follow American English usage due to the influence that the United States have as the leading economic force over the rest of the world. Even British English varieties are not exempt from this influence (Svartvik & Leech 2006).

It is not rare for certain non-standard features to find its way into the speech of SE either. These are features which are not related to a single variety but can instead be found in any of them: vernacular grammar. Often looked down as uneducated, they are still surprisingly resilient and widespread in popular speech in all English-speaking countries. The following are some examples (Svartvik & Leech 2006):

- 'Ain't' as a general negative form of the verb 'be' or 'have'. For example, 'I ain't stupid' and 'I ain't got time for this' instead of 'I'm not stupid' and 'I haven't got time for this.'

- The use of the 3rd singular form of verbs with the ending '-s' in persons other than the 3rd singular and vice versa. For example, 'You has a car' and 'He have a car' instead of 'You have a car' and 'He has a car.'

- Double negative, a feature found in older versions of SE. For example, 'I don't have no car' instead of 'I don't have a car.'

- With some verbs the past tense form is used where the past participle form would be in SE. For example, 'I have broke the vase' instead of 'I have broken the vase.'

- 'Them' used as a demonstrative pronoun for distant reference with a plural noun, instead of the SE demonstrative 'those'. For example, 'I like them books' instead of 'I like those books.'

Vernacular grammar is just one example of non-linguists' lack of objective knowledge about what SE is and why they value it so much. Speakers whose use these features may be doing so believing to speak SE, without realising they are in fact features of non-standard language.

The following sentence was written by an anonymous participant to answer the question "what do you think about the state of the English language?": "I tend to ignore comments with really bad spelling and little knowledge of grammar as I tend to assume that the content of the post isn't going to be worthhile [sic] deciphering." (Ebner 2016: 4). From this extract it can be seen that the author values form over content, that is, what is said is not as important as how it is said. If most non-linguists consider non-standard features to be 'bad spelling' and 'little knowledge of grammar', it is reasonable to expect them not to care for anything said in a variety other than SE. In addition, The author commits a spelling mistake ('worthhile') despite negatively alluding to 'bad spelling'. This incarnation of the 'language guardian' mentioned before showcases the hypocrisy found in devaluing non-standard speech and writing without objective reasons: if the message of the text is able to be conveyed and understood despite it breaking the rules of the variety it is supposed to be written on, there is no doubt that it could also be as successful if written (or spoken) in any non-standard variety.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, limitations of the study and future lines of research

There exist many different varieties of one single language, either as varieties spoken in different areas of the world or as used by different social classes. All these varieties of English are linguistically equal, in that there are no objective reasons for a given variety to be considered the best representation of English. All of them have grammar, syntax and rules for spelling and pronunciation and are therefore equally valid to express any meaning.

At the same time, however, they are not socially equal, in that not every variety is recognised to have the same prestige by the speakers of English, nor is every variety used with the same purposes and in the same contexts. SE is considered by many non-linguists to be the ultimate form of English and the only correct one, although this variety, like every other, is constantly evolving and changing. Features that are considered standard nowadays were considered non-standard some years ago (or did not even exist). Similarly, features that are considered non-standard now may become part of SE in the future.

English has achieved is status as a lingua franca not because of its linguistic features but because of social reasons having to do with power, and SE has become the standard for the same reason. This showcases the influence that power has in our society and in ourselves as members of it, projecting a whole new shade of meaning onto language. It has made one variety more privileged than the rest, and more desirable by NNS that aim to learn the English language.

This also has an impact on education. Many English teaching materials refer only to Standard English's grammar and vocabulary. Even though many non-linguists consider this is not only the correct choice but the obvious one, a false expectation is created on non-native speakers that they are learning everything they need to be able to communicate with any other speaker of English, without warning them of the differences found not only between every country, but within a country and even a region.

Finally, regarding the linguistic approach to varieties of English, the main limitation in this project is the impossibility to address every single variety that there exists in the world nowadays. The analyses that were carried out were not extremely comprehensive either, as these varieties can be subdivided into smaller ones with their own features.

In the future, it would be interesting and fruitful to carry out a study where speakers of different varieties of English, both standard and non-standard ones, fill a survey answering about their perceptions regarding the status of SE against other varieties. Participants could also be divided into groups according to their age, gender and social class to try and determine how such characteristics alter, if at all, perceptions about language correctness and varieties.

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