



## TWO VARIETIES, ONE CLASSROOM: SOCIOLINGUISTIC ATTITUDES AND LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE AMONG UZBEK EFL LEARNERS

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**Annotatsiya:** *Ushbu maqola O'zbekistondagi ingliz tili o'rganuvchilarining Britaniya va Amerika ingliz tiliga bo'lgan munosabati, o'quv muassasalarida ta'lim berish amaliyoti va ikkala nav o'rtasidagi farqlar bo'yicha bilimlari haqidagi asl so'rovnoma ma'lumotlarini taqdim etadi. 55 nafar ishtirokchi qatnashgan birinchi so'rovnoma va 71 nafar ishtirokchi qatnashgan ikkinchi bilim testi Britaniya ingliz tili rasmiy ta'lim standartlari ustunligini tasdiqlaydi, Amerika ingliz tili esa norasmiy media orqali tobora ko'proq ta'sir ko'rsatmoqda. Natijalar til o'rganuvchilar uchun ishlab chiqilgan interaktiv ta'lim veb-saytini yaratishga asos bo'ldi.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *Til variatsiyalar, EFL, ijtimoiy tilshunoslik, Britaniya ingliz tili, Amerika ingliz tili, O'zbekiston, til munosabati, ta'lim veb-sayti*

**Аннотация:** *В данной статье представлены оригинальные данные опроса об отношении узбекских учащихся к британскому и американскому вариантам английского языка, практике преподавания в учебных заведениях и знаниях о различиях между двумя вариантами. Первый опрос с участием 55 респондентов и второй тест знаний с участием 71 респондента подтверждают доминирование британского английского в качестве стандарта формального образования, тогда как американский английский оказывает всё большее влияние через неформальные медиа. На основе полученных результатов был разработан интерактивный образовательный веб-сайт для изучающих язык.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Языковые разновидности, EFL, социолингвистика, британский английский, американский английский, Узбекистан, языковые установки, образовательный вебсайт.*

**Abstract.** *This article presents original survey data examining the attitudes, institutional experiences, and linguistic knowledge of EFL learners in Uzbekistan regarding British and American English. Two instruments were administered: a 20-item attitudinal survey (n=55) and a 15-question knowledge quiz (n=71). Findings confirm that British English retains dominance as the formal educational standard while American English exerts growing informal influence through digital media. Learners navigate both*



*varieties with considerable competence but exhibit systematic gaps in pronunciation and spelling awareness. The study further presents a purpose-built interactive educational website designed to directly address the identified knowledge gaps, treating both varieties as equally legitimate and contextually appropriate resources for Uzbek EFL learners.*

**Keywords:** *language variety, EFL, sociolinguistics, British English, American English, Uzbekistan, learner attitudes, educational technology, overt prestige, covert prestige*

## INTRODUCTION

The question of which variety of English to teach — British or American — has long occupied language educators in non-native English-speaking contexts. In Uzbekistan, the issue carries particular weight. Following independence in 1991, English rapidly emerged as the most strategically important foreign language in the national education system (Hasanova, 2007), with British English adopted as the formal pedagogical standard through institutional partnerships with the British Council (Bezborodova, 2022). Yet simultaneously, the proliferation of American digital media, streaming platforms, and social networks has created a parallel informal learning environment that exposes Uzbek learners to American English on an unprecedented scale (Androutsopoulos, 2014).

The result is a sociolinguistic landscape in which learners formally acquire one variety while informally absorbing another — a tension that has received limited empirical attention in the Central Asian EFL context. Existing research has addressed variety preferences in higher education broadly (Bezborodova, 2022) and the history of

English teaching in Uzbekistan (Hasanova, 2007; 2019), but no study has combined quantitative attitudinal data with direct knowledge testing to map the actual contours of learner awareness.

The present study addresses this gap through two original instruments: a 20-item attitudinal and background survey (n=55) and a 15-question knowledge quiz (n=71), both administered to university-level EFL learners in Uzbekistan. The findings are further translated into a practical output — an interactive educational website titled *British vs American English: A Comprehensive Guide* — designed to address the specific knowledge gaps identified by the data. The article is structured according to the IMRAD framework, presenting methodology, results, and discussion in sequence, before describing the website as an evidence-based pedagogical response.

The research is guided by two core questions: first, what are Uzbek EFL learners' attitudes toward British and American English and which sociolinguistic patterns do these attitudes reflect? Second, what specific areas of knowledge about variety differences do



learners command well, and where do systematic gaps persist?

## METHODS

The study employed a quantitative survey design with two separate instruments, both distributed digitally and completed on a voluntary basis. Ethical considerations were observed throughout; participation was anonymous and no identifying information was collected.

The first instrument, Survey I, consisted of 19 closed questions and one open-ended question targeting four domains: participant background (educational level, years of study, primary learning context), institutional teaching context (variety taught, teacher pronunciation, textbook type, examination norms), media exposure and spelling habits, and attitudinal perceptions of both varieties. A total of 55 participants completed Survey I. The sample was predominantly undergraduate university students (90.9%), with a smaller proportion of school students (5.5%) and English teachers (3.6%). The majority (50.9%) had studied English for three to five years, placing most respondents at an intermediate to upper-intermediate proficiency level.

The second instrument, Survey II, was a knowledge-based quiz consisting of 15 multiple-choice questions with objectively correct answers. Questions were organised across six thematic categories: vocabulary (Q1–Q5), spelling (Q6–Q9), grammar and usage (Q10–Q11), pronunciation (Q12), exam variety awareness (Q13–Q14), and cultural

knowledge (Q15). A total of 71 participants completed the quiz. The difference in sample size between Survey I (n=55) and Survey II (n=71) reflects the fact that the two instruments were distributed independently and at different points in the data collection period; participation in one did not require participation in the other. Unlike attitudinal instruments, the quiz permitted quantitative performance analysis at the category level, enabling direct identification of knowledge strengths and gaps.

Attitudinal findings are interpreted through Trudgill's (1972) framework of overt and covert prestige, which distinguishes between the institutional status associated with a variety and the informal social value it carries through popular culture and everyday communication. This framework has been applied to EFL contexts broadly (Mugglestone, 2007) and provides a theoretically grounded basis for interpreting the divergence between learners' formal preferences and their informal exposure patterns.

## Results

### *Survey I: Institutional Context and Attitudinal Patterns*

Findings from Survey I confirm a clear institutional dominance of British English in Uzbekistan's formal educational settings. As presented in Table 1, nearly half of participants (49.1%) reported British English as the primary variety taught at their institution, while only 9.1% identified American



English. Mixed practice was the most common pattern for teacher pronunciation (47.3%) and textbook use (50.9%), suggesting that even in British-oriented institutions, classroom reality is

considerably more pluralistic than policy implies. Notably, examination norms remained firmly British: 47.3% of participants reported their exams followed British English standards.

Table 1. Institutional Teaching Context (n = 55)

Variable	British English	American English	Mixed / Both
Primary variety taught	49.1%	9.1%	32.7%
Teacher pronunciation	43.6%	9.1%	47.3%
Textbooks used	38.2%	5.5%	50.9%
Examination norms	47.3%	4.6%	27.3%
Explicitly taught differences	38.2% (Yes)	9.1% (Never)	52.7% (Sometimes)

Of particular significance is the finding that only 38.2% of participants reported being explicitly taught the differences between British and American English, with the majority (52.7%) indicating this happened only sometimes and 9.1% reporting it never occurred. This systematic gap in explicit instruction has direct implications for learner knowledge, as confirmed by Survey II.

Table 2. Attitudinal Findings: Perceptions of British and American English (n = 55)

Question	British English	American English	No Preference
Personal preference	41.8%	32.7%	25.5%
Sounds more formal	65.5%	23.6%	10.9%
Sounds more modern/global	18.2%	56.4%	25.4%
AmE becoming dominant among youth	Agree: 67.3%	Unsure: 23.6%	Disagree: 9.1%

The attitudinal data in Table 2 reveal a pattern consistent with Trudgill's (1972) distinction between overt and covert prestige. British English is overwhelmingly perceived as the more formal variety (65.5%), reflecting its institutional authority and association

with academic examinations. American English, by contrast, is perceived as more modern and globally connected (56.4%), a finding consistent with its dominance in digital media and popular culture. Personal preferences are more evenly distributed — 41.8% preferred British



English, 32.7% American English, and 25.5% expressed no preference — indicating that formal dominance has not translated into exclusive affective loyalty. Perhaps most strikingly, 67.3% of participants agreed that American English is becoming more dominant among young people in Uzbekistan, suggesting that learners themselves perceive a generational shift already underway.

**Survey II: Knowledge Quiz Results**

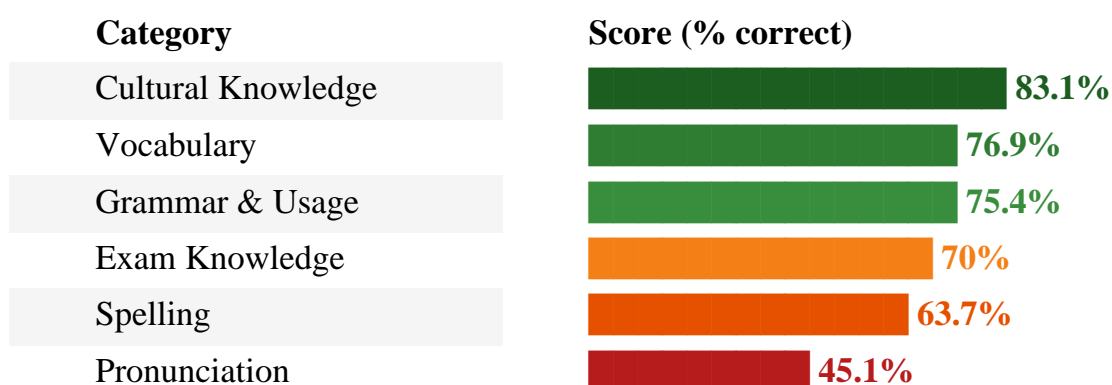
The knowledge quiz revealed a mean score of 10.55 out of 15 (70.3%), with individual scores ranging from 4 to

15. As Table 3 and Figure 1 demonstrate, performance was strongest in cultural knowledge (83.1%), vocabulary (76.9%), and grammar (75.4%), reflecting the emphasis these areas receive in British-oriented instruction. Exam variety awareness produced a mixed result: while 94.3% correctly identified IELTS as British-based, only 45.7% knew that TOEFL is primarily American English-based — a practically significant gap for students preparing for international examinations.

Table 3. Knowledge Quiz Performance by Category (n = 71)

Category	Questions	Avg. Score	Performance
Vocabulary	Q1–Q5	76.9%	✓ High
Grammar & Usage	Q10–Q11	75.4%	✓ High
Cultural Knowledge	Q15	83.1%	✓ High
Exam Knowledge	Q13–Q14	70.0%	~ Medium
Spelling	Q6–Q9	63.7%	~ Medium
Pronunciation	Q12	45.1%	✗ Low
<b>OVERALL MEAN</b>	<b>15 questions</b>	<b>70.3%</b>	<b>10.55 / 15</b>

Figure 1. Quiz Performance by Category — Visual Summary (n = 71)





Note: Bar length proportional to percentage correct. Green = High ( $\geq 70\%$ ); Orange = Medium (50–69%); Red = Low ( $< 50\%$ )

Spelling emerged as a medium-performance category (63.7%), with particular weakness on the defence/defense distinction, where only 49.3% selected the correct American form. This suggests that while learners grasp general spelling principles, they do not consistently apply them to less familiar lexical items. Pronunciation was the weakest category by a substantial margin: only 45.1% correctly identified the British pronunciation of schedule as /ʃedju:l/, with more participants selecting the American form /skedzu:l/ than the correct British one. This finding directly reflects the dominance of American English in the audio-visual media environment that Uzbek learners inhabit daily.

## Discussion

The findings of this study present a coherent and theoretically interpretable picture of English variety use among Uzbek EFL learners. The coexistence of British English as the institutional standard and American English as the informal cultural norm creates a dual-variety environment that learners navigate with considerable skill but incomplete systematic knowledge.

The attitudinal pattern identified in Survey I maps precisely onto Trudgill's (1972) framework of overt and covert prestige. British English commands overt prestige: it is the language of examinations, formal writing, and teacher authority. American English carries

covert prestige: it is the language of entertainment, the internet, and peer communication. This division is not unique to Uzbekistan — it has been observed across numerous EFL contexts (Mugglestone, 2007) — but it is particularly pronounced in a post-Soviet educational system where the rapid adoption of British English as a formal standard post-1991 was followed almost immediately by the digital expansion of American English through popular media (Hasanova, 2007; Androutsopoulos, 2014).

The knowledge gap identified by Survey II is theoretically consistent with this dual-variety exposure pattern. Learners perform strongly in areas that receive systematic classroom attention — vocabulary, grammar, and cultural knowledge — but show significant weakness in pronunciation, which is rarely addressed in formal instruction, and in less familiar spelling distinctions. As Bezborodova (2022) notes, passive recognition of language features does not automatically translate into active productive knowledge. Learners can absorb American pronunciation patterns through media without developing the explicit metalinguistic awareness needed to describe or identify them in a formal context.

The finding that 67.3% of participants perceive American English as becoming more dominant among young people is consistent with the broader



sociolinguistic literature on the global expansion of American English through digital platforms (Crystal, 2019; Androutsopoulos, 2014). The data suggest that this perception is empirically grounded: the spelling and media exposure findings confirm that American English has a genuine and growing presence in the informal linguistic lives of Uzbek learners, even as British English retains its formal institutional authority.

These findings carry clear pedagogical implications. The systematic absence of explicit instruction on variety differences — reported by over 60% of participants — leaves learners to acquire this awareness informally through media consumption, which, as the quiz results demonstrate, produces uneven and sometimes inaccurate knowledge. A structured approach that treats both

varieties as legitimate, explains their differences systematically, and contextualises them historically would more accurately reflect the linguistic reality that Uzbek learners already inhabit.

### Practical Output: The Educational Website

In direct response to the knowledge gaps identified by the survey data, an interactive educational website — *British vs American English: A Comprehensive Guide* — was designed and developed as the practical contribution of this research. The website is structured around eight thematic sections corresponding to the major domains of variety difference explored in this study: Home, History, Vocabulary, Spelling, Pronunciation, Grammar, Culture, and Quiz.

Table 4. Website Structure and Correspondence to Identified Knowledge Gaps

Section	Content	Gap Addressed
History	8-stop timeline from 1607 to present	Contextualises all linguistic differences historically
Vocabulary	30+ word pairs in 4 categories with context notes	Directly targets Survey II vocabulary gaps
Spelling	6 systematic spelling rules with 30+ examples	Addresses 63.7% medium spelling performance
Pronunciation	9 phonological features with IPA transcriptions	Addresses 45.1% low pronunciation performance
Grammar	Side-by-side BrE/AmE grammar comparisons	Reinforces strong grammar knowledge (75.4%)
Culture	6 cultural topics with real-world examples	Extends beyond linguistic to sociocultural awareness



Quiz	15 MCQs with instant feedback and score breakdown	Mirrors Survey II; enables self-assessment
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The website's design is governed by three principles drawn directly from the survey findings. First, both varieties are treated as equally legitimate, avoiding the implicit hierarchy that characterises most formal instruction. Second, content is organised systematically by rule and pattern rather than by isolated example, enabling learners to generalise their knowledge to unfamiliar cases — the type of knowledge most clearly absent from the spelling and pronunciation quiz results. Third, the interactive quiz mirrors the structure of Survey II, providing learners with immediate category-specific feedback and enabling self-directed identification of personal knowledge gaps.

The Pronunciation section warrants particular attention. Given that pronunciation produced the lowest quiz scores (45.1%) and receives the least systematic classroom attention, this section presents nine key phonological contrasts — including rhoticity, T-flapping, yod-dropping, and vowel distinctions — with IPA transcriptions and example words for each. This constitutes the type of explicit phonological instruction that informal media exposure cannot provide and that the survey data suggest is largely absent from current classroom practice.

*The website is accessible at:*  
<https://codepen.io/Luna-Irene/pen/myrdGyM>

## CONCLUSION

This study has presented empirical evidence that Uzbek EFL learners are navigating a dual-variety English environment with considerable practical competence but significant systematic gaps in their explicit knowledge of how British and American English differ. Survey data from 55 participants confirm that British English retains institutional authority as the formal educational standard, while American English exerts growing informal influence through digital media — a pattern consistent with the sociolinguistic framework of overt and covert prestige. Knowledge quiz data from 71 participants reveal that this dual exposure produces strong performance in vocabulary and grammar but notable weaknesses in pronunciation (45.1%) and less familiar spelling distinctions.

The primary theoretical contribution of this study is the empirical mapping of the overt/covert prestige distinction onto a Central Asian EFL context, demonstrating that the attitudinal patterns extensively documented in European and Asian EFL research are equally operative in Uzbekistan's rapidly evolving English education landscape. The practical contribution is the educational website designed to directly address the identified gaps, providing the systematic, balanced, and contextually grounded instruction that neither formal classroom practice nor informal media exposure currently supplies.



Several limitations should be noted. The convenience sample, while representative of undergraduate learners at one institution, may not generalise to the full range of EFL contexts across Uzbekistan. Additionally, both instruments were self-reported and administered online on a voluntary basis, which may have introduced selection bias: participants who chose to complete a language quiz are likely to be more motivated and language-aware than the broader learner population, potentially inflating the knowledge scores reported

here. Future research could extend the survey to multiple institutions across different regions and proficiency levels, and consider including compulsory or classroom-administered instruments to reduce this bias. Longitudinal research examining how learner awareness of variety differences develops over time, and whether resources such as the website described here measurably improve explicit knowledge, would make a valuable contribution to the growing body of Central Asian EFL research.

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