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# **The Framing of a Preferred Variety of English by Pre-Service Primary School Teachers of English as a Foreign Language**

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## **Abstract**

The article presents a mixed-method study on how the preferred variety of the English language was framed by pre-service primary school teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The group of pre-service primary school teachers (further referred to as “participants”) was recruited at a large university in Norway and matched with the respective control group of non-teacher students enrolled in the English course at the same university. The participants and controls were asked to write a reflective essay on their preferred variety of the English language. The corpus of the participants’ and controls’ essays was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The results of the quantitative analysis revealed that British English was preferred by 47% of the participants, who framed it via the frames “Films/TV”, “Sounds”, “Spelling”, “Teacher”, and “Visit”. Those findings were further discussed in the article.

**Keywords:** framing, EFL, ELF, pre-service teachers, varieties of English

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## **1. Introduction**

This article relates to the general theme of the present journal volume, namely it is embedded in the research agenda associated with the varieties of the English language. The article describes a mixed-method study that investigates how pre-service primary school teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) frame their reflections on the Inner Circle varieties of the English language that they prefer. In accordance with Kachru (2006), the Inner Circle varieties of English are associated with those countries that refer to “the traditional bases of English – the regions where it is the primary language” (Kachru 2006, 242), e.g. the UK, the USA, Australia, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand. Following Kachru (2006), the Inner Circle varieties of English involve American English, Australian English, British English, Canadian English, Irish English, and New Zealand English. In the

present article, however, Kachru's (2006) concept of the Inner Circle is extended by Scottish English that is considered on a par with the aforementioned varieties (Gilquin 2018; Trudgill and Hannah 2017).

Presumably, the issue of the preferred varieties of the English language feeds into a broader research and didactic context in EFL studies associated with English as a lingua franca (ELF), the relationship between ELF and the Inner Circle varieties of English, and the role of Standard English and ELF in the teaching and learning of English. As posited by Preisler (1999), whereas the notion of Standard English has been essential in EFL teaching and learning, especially in the teaching of pronunciation in EFL, there is an increased tendency to employ ELF pronunciation amongst non-native learners of English (Pakir 2009). It should be specified that ELF is considered a contact language used among interlocutors who do not share a common first language (L1) (Walkinshaw, Mitchell, and Subhan 2019), and "for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication" (Seidlhofer 2004, 211). In order to illustrate the definition of ELF in Norwegian contexts of EFL teaching and learning, let us briefly consider anecdotal evidence of ELF at a regional university in Western Norway, where a Norwegian L1 lecturer teaches English literature, a French L1 instructor teaches English grammar, and a Romanian L1 lecturer reads the course in English culture and civilization. As evident from this piece of anecdotal evidence, three non-native speakers of English teach EFL to pre-service primary school teachers of English who are not English L1 speakers either. Arguably, this situation where English is used as ELF (i.e., lingua franca) maps onto a critical question associated with the consideration of the choice of the variety of English that is preferred by Norwegian L1 pre-service primary school teachers of English. It remains to be elucidated whether or not pre-service primary school teachers whose L1 is Norwegian would prefer to communicate, study, and, presumably, teach in ELF, or in a variety of the Inner Circle that serves as a Standard variety of English.

Whilst there is a substantial line of prior literature on the preferred varieties of English by adult EFL learners (Bikelienė 2015; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit 1995; Gibb 1999; Larsson 2012; McKenzie 2007), the state-of-the-art research on the Inner Circle varieties of English that are favoured by pre-service primary school teachers is underrepresented (Lee, Lee, and Dražati 2019; Tsang 2019). This study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of this research issue. The present study involves two novel aspects. First, the novelty of the study is associated with a group of pre-service primary school teachers whose L1 is Norwegian. Whereas there is previous research that addresses the preferences for British and American varieties of English by Norwegian L1 secondary school EFL learners (Rindal 2010), there are no prior studies which focus specifically on the Inner Circle varieties of English that are preferred by pre-service EFL primary school teachers whose L1 is Norwegian. Another novel aspect of the study involves the application of the framing methodology that is anchored in

the view of framing in applied linguistics proposed by Pennington and Hoekje (2014), and Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019).

Further, this article is structured as follows. First, an outline of previous research on the preferred varieties of English within the field of EFL studies will be provided. Second, an overview of framing in EFL studies will be discussed. Third, the present study will be introduced. Fourth, the article will be concluded by outlining linguo-didactic implications that are relevant to EFL teaching and learning of pre-service primary school teachers in Norway.

### **1.1 The preferred varieties of English in EFL contexts: literature review**

Previous studies in applied linguistics examine the issue of the preferred varieties of the English language in EFL contexts in Austria (Dalton-Puffer, Kaltentböck, and Smit 1995), Indonesia (Lee, Lee, and Drajadi 2019), Japan (McKenzie 2007), Korea (Gibb 1999), Lithuania (Bikelienė 2015), Malaysia (Abdullah 2007), Norway (Rindal 2010), and Sweden (Larsson 2012). Specifically, Abdullah (2007, 301) indicates that Malaysian university lecturers and academics seem to prefer either American English (AmE) or British English (BrE). However, BrE appears to be the preferred variety in terms of grammar, pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary. Similarly to Abdullah (2007), Bikelienė (2015) reports that the majority of EFL learners whose L1 is Lithuanian explicitly express their preference for one of the two major varieties of the English language, namely either AmE or BrE. Bikelienė (2015) indicates that Lithuanian L1 EFL learners' preference for BrE and AmE is equally distributed. These findings have been ascertained by means of a questionnaire as well as by a set of tasks aimed at eliciting the preferred variety of the English language (Bikelienė 2015).

Whereas Lithuanian L1 EFL learners prefer AmE and BrE (Bikelienė 2015), Gibb (1999) has found that EFL students in Korea seem to exhibit preferences for AmE. Gibb (1999) explains the preference for this variety of English by the position and status of AmE in the workforce in South Korea. Gibb (1999, 31) indicates that an EFL student's future career "might be a significant factor in determining university students' attitudes to varieties of English". It is inferred from Gibb's (1999) investigation that the dominant and prestigious position of AmE in the job market influences Korean L1 EFL students' attitudes towards this variety of the English language. Similar findings are reported by McKenzie (2007), who notes that Japanese L1 EFL learners demonstrate positive attitudes towards AmE as a prestige-related variety of the English language. McKenzie (2007) suggests that Japanese EFL learners prefer AmE.

In a contrastive study that aims at examining pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of English in Indonesia and Korea, respectively, Lee, Lee, and Drajadi (2019) have discovered that Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers, unlike their Korean

counterparts, exhibit awareness of the varieties of the English language. According to Lee, Lee, and Dražati (2019) these findings are explained by a substantial dialectal diversity and a complex linguistic situation in Indonesia that appears to be facilitative of the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the varieties of the English language.

In contrast to Gibb (1999) and McKenzie (2007), Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit (1995) indicate that BrE is traditionally preferred by adult EFL students in Austria. In particular, Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit (1995) report that two thirds of the participants in their study prefer BrE. It is argued that the Austrian EFL learners' preference for BrE is explained by a relative geographical closeness between Britain and Austria which plays a facilitative role in the EFL learner's sojourn to the UK. At the same time, the geographical distance between Austria and the US maps onto less frequent visits of Austrian EFL learners to the US, hence only 17% of the participants seem to favour AmE (Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit 1995).

Whilst Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit (1995), Gibb (1999), and McKenzie (2007) focus on the preferred varieties of English by adult EFL learners, Rindal (2010) seeks to establish the attitudes towards AmE and BrE by Norwegian L1 adolescent learners of English. Rindal (2010) indicates that Norwegian EFL learners consider BrE the most prestigious variety in terms of pronunciation. Arguably, BrE has a higher status than AmE in Norway (Rindal 2010, 255). However, Rindal (2010, 255-256) observes that

American cultural hegemony can still be argued to have impact on the L2 situation in Norway by contributing to the allocation of formal/informal functions for the varieties; BrE is the variety most associated with school, while AmE is more informal and oriented away from school.

Similarly to Rindal (2010), Larsson (2012, 130) aims at establishing whether or not Swedish L1 EFL students prefer BrE and/or AmE. The focus of the study conducted by Larsson (2012) is on the preferred variety of English in terms of spelling. Larsson (2012) posits that BrE appears to be the preferred variety as far as Swedish L1 EFL students' spelling is concerned. Additionally, the findings in Larsson (2012) have revealed that the students are generally consistent in their choice of one variety of the English language.

## **1.2 Framing in EFL studies: literature overview**

Framing is theorised to involve a selection of certain aspects of reality in order to promote a particular aspect of the situation and its causal interpretation (Entman 1993). In unison with Entman (1993), Brugman, Burgers, and Vis (2019) indicate that the functions of framing are "to emphasize specific problems, causal relation-

ships, moral evaluations, and/or solutions” (2019, 1). According to a widely cited contention expressed by Entman (1993),

[f]rames, then, define problems – determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values; diagnose causes – identify the forces creating the problem; make moral judgments – evaluate causal agents and their effects; and suggest remedies – offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects. A single sentence may perform more than one of these four framing functions, although many sentences in a text may perform none of them. And a frame in any particular text may not necessarily include all four functions. (Entman 1993, 52)

Framing has been extensively employed “as a productive analytic perspective in countless social and institutional arenas” (Coupland 2012), e.g. discourse studies (D’Angelo et al. 2019; Entman 1993), education (Rodden et al. 2019; Windschitl 2002), and applied linguistics (Kapranov 2018; Pennington 1999; Pennington and Hoekje 2014; Pennington and Rogerson-Revell 2019). Based upon the groundbreaking research study by Pennington (1999) that applies framing to discuss a case study of the bilingual EFL/Cantonese classroom in Hong Kong, Pennington and Hoekje (2014) elaborate upon the application of framing and framing methodology to the teaching and learning of EFL in general. Specifically, they introduce the concept of sociocultural context frames in EFL. It should be noted that sociocultural frames in the sense formulated by Pennington and Hoekje (2014) seem to be evocative of similar ideas that are found in Entman (1993), who refers to framing as a problem definition that is determined by cultural values.

According to Pennington and Hoekje (2014), sociocultural context frames are applicable to EFL instruction, EFL as a disciplinary field, and the EFL profession. Seen through the lenses of framing, EFL is thought to involve such actors as EFL learners, instructors, researchers, and administrators (Pennington and Hoekje 2014). It is evident from Pennington and Hoekje’s (2014) approach that sociocultural context frames in EFL are associated with social and political dynamic structures that incorporate global and local forces. These frames represent values, practices, and requirements for EFL teaching and learning that can be regarded individually and in terms of their dynamic interactions (Pennington and Hoekje 2014).

Drawing upon the prior studies (Pennington 1999; Pennington and Hoekje 2014), Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) extend the notion of framing to a wider context of EFL theory and pedagogy. Specifically, they relate framing to a variety of EFL contexts that involve the teaching and learning of pronunciation. Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) argue that framing can be used to illuminate a complex dynamic relationship between language learning and language pedagogy. In particular, Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) investigate how framing can be applied to the teachers’ curricular goals and planning in their teaching of English pronunciation, decisions about pronunciation

models, and priorities as far as the acquisition of pronunciation by EFL learners is concerned.

In a recent study on framing in EFL, Kapranov (2018) employs Pennington and Hoekje's (2014) approach to framing in order to explore the concept of a primary school teacher's identity in Norwegian EFL contexts. In particular, by means of applying the notion of sociocultural context frames that were developed by Pennington and Hoekje (2014), Kapranov (2018, 343) has found that pre-service primary school teachers of English frame the identity of an EFL teacher via the frame "Role Model". This frame is reflective of the ritualised role of an EFL teacher that is expected in Norwegian sociocultural contexts. The frame "Role Model" is suggestive of the essential qualities of a "good" EFL teacher, who is regarded as an influencer, knowledge developer, and motivator.

## 2. The present study

As previously mentioned in the introduction, the focus of the present study is on the framing of the preferred varieties of the Inner Circle of English by pre-service primary school EFL teachers whose L1 is Norwegian (henceforth, "participants"). The study is contextualised within a university course in English phonetics that is offered at a large university in Norway. The university course in phonetics is designed as a part of the programme for future EFL teachers, and, concurrently, is opened to the non-teacher students of English. The course in phonetics is based upon the book *English Phonetics for Teachers* by Nilsen and Rugesæter (2015) that involves a chapter on the peculiarities of AmE and BrE. Additionally, the book *English Phonetics for Teachers* (Nilsen and Rugesæter 2015) systematically addresses the issue of AmE and BrE pronunciation by means of providing transcriptions in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in AmE and BrE, respectively. Other varieties of the English language, e.g. Australian English (AuE), Canadian English (CaE), Irish English (IrE), and New Zealand (NZE) are not discussed in the book.

Based upon previous literature in applied linguistics, there are several assumptions in this study. The first assumption involves a contention formulated by Rindal (2010), who indicates that "BrE is the variety most associated with school, while AmE is more informal and oriented away from school" (Rindal 2010, 255). Extending this contention further, it is assumed in the present study that the participants, who are future teachers of English, are expected to exhibit preferences for BrE in contrast to the control group (i.e., EFL non-teacher students who are enrolled in the same course in phonetics as the participants at the same university). In concert with Rindal (2010), it is hypothesised in this study that the participants' preferences for BrE would be associated with their future profession, as well as with the participants' focus on the teaching and learning of English at

school. Arguably, the participants' preferences for BrE would be suggestive of their teaching career aspirations.

The second assumption involves an observation formulated by Kaplanov (2012; 2013), who suggests that the preferred variety of English is associated with the previous sojourn and/or sojourns to the country where the preferred variety of English is spoken. Following this observation, the second assumption considers a possible impact of the participants' and controls' previous exposure to their preferred varieties of English in the form of a stay, a visit and/or study in the country where the variety is used by English L1 speakers.

Taking these two assumptions into consideration, the following main research aims of the study are formulated:

1. To identify how the participants and their respective controls frame their preferred Inner Circle varieties of the English language.
2. To juxtapose the participants' framing with those of the controls.
3. To examine whether or not the participants' and controls' framing is associated with the future teaching profession, with a previous sojourn to the country where the preferred variety is spoken, or the combination of the above-mentioned variables.

## 2.1 Participants

In total, 38 adult university EFL learners took part in the study, 19 participants and 19 controls. The group of participants (4 males, 15 females,  $N = 19$ , mean age = 23,6 y.o., standard deviation = 3,5) was comprised of 19 pre-service primary teachers of English. The group of participants was matched in gender and number with the control group (4 males, 15 females,  $N = 19$ , mean age = 20,4 y.o., standard deviation = 2) comprised of EFL students, who were not future teachers. Norwegian was reported to be L1 for all participants and their respective controls. Two English L1 students and one balanced English/Norwegian bilingual student were factored out from the study.

The participants and the controls signed the Consent form allowing the author of the article to collect and process their written reflections on the preferred variety of English. The participants' and controls' real names were coded to ensure confidentiality. The codes P (as in "Participant") and the number (e.g., P1, P2, P3 ... P19) were used to code the participants, whilst the controls were coded as C (as in "Control") and the respective number (e.g., C1, C2, C3 ... C 19).



## 2.2 Procedure

The participants and their respective controls were instructed to write a short reflective essay between 250 and 350 words on the topic “My Preferred Inner Circle Variety of the English Language”. The essay writing was done individually at home by each participant and the respective control. The participants and the controls had 10 days to write their reflections and send them electronically to the author of the article.

## 2.3 Corpus

The corpus consisted of 38 short essays (10 639 words in total) written by the participants and their respective controls. The descriptive statistics of the corpus were computed in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and summarised in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** The descriptive statistics of the corpus

N	Statistical measure	Participants	Controls
1	Number of people in the group	19	19
2	Total number of words	5 534	5 105
3	Mean number of words	291	269
4	Standard deviation	94	124
5	Range (minimum – maximum)	92 – 522	98 – 528

## 2.4 Methods

A mixed-method framing methodology was used in the study. The theoretical premises of the methodology were embedded into the framing approach to EFL studies as postulated by Pennington and Hoekje (2014). Following the approach by Pennington and Hoekje (2014), the methodology of the qualitative framing analysis in the study involved the procedure developed by Dahl (2015). In accordance with Dahl (2015), the corpus was manually examined for the presence of key words, recurrent phrases, stereotyped expressions, and sentences that provided thematically reinforcing clustering. Then, the manual procedure was verified by means of the computer-assisted count of the most frequent words in the corpus by means of the software program WordSmith (Scott 2012). Table 2 below illustrates the frequency counts in WordSmith (Scott 2012) by presenting 25 most frequent words per 1000 words that were identified in the participants’ and controls’ essays.

**Table 2.** 25 most frequent words in the corpus

Participants			Controls		
Rank	Frequency	Item	Rank	Frequency	Item
1	164 (5,5%)	English	1	144 (5%)	I
2	122 (4,1%)	I	2	143 (5%)	English
3	60 (2%)	British	3	92 (3,2%)	American
4	50 (1,7%)	like	4	74 (2,6%)	British
5	49 (1,7%)	accent	5	59 (2%)	my
6	45 (1,5%)	my	6	48 (1,7%)	language
7	45 (1,5%)	American	7	40 (1,4%)	words
8	40 (1,3%)	sound	8	38 (1,3%)	variety
9	35 (1,2%)	variety	9	30 (1%)	like
10	34 (1,1%)	Scottish	10	29 (1%)	accent
11	30 (1%)	language	11	22 (0,8%)	pronunciation
12	28 (0,9%)	words	12	21 (0,7%)	pronounced
13	26 (0,9%)	word	13	21 (0,7%)	example
14	21 (0,7%)	pronounced	14	20 (0,7%)	me
15	20 (0,7%)	example	15	19 (0,7%)	sound
16	19 (0,6%)	between	16	19 (0,7%)	think
17	18 (0,6%)	favourite	17	18 (0,6%)	sounds
18	18 (0,6%)	vowel	18	16 (0,6%)	speak
19	18 (0,6%)	find	19	15 (0,5%)	prefer
20	18 (0,6%)	different	20	15 (0,5%)	varieties
21	17 (0,6%)	accents	21	15 (0,5%)	favourite
22	17 (0,6%)	pronunciation	22	15 (0,5%)	word
23	16 (0,5%)	you	23	14 (0,5%)	people
24	16 (0,5%)	Irish	24	13 (0,5%)	understand
25	16 (0,5%)	speak	25	11 (0,4%)	say

The frequency counts illustrated by Table 2 involved the so-called “raw” frequency count per 1000 words that served as a basis for the qualitative framing analysis. In addition, the corpus was manually examined for the presence of appraisal elements associated with attitudes, feelings, and values used to construe engagement and intensity. Those elements were verified by means of the computer-assisted count of the frequently used words in WordSmith (Scott 2012). Based upon the aforementioned methodological procedures, the labeling of the frames was executed by the

author of the present article. The labeling was double-checked by an independent specialist in discourse studies, who confirmed the framing.

## 2.5 Results

The analysis of the corpus has yielded qualitative and quantitative data that are summarised in Tables 3–5. In particular, Table 3 presents the quantitative distribution of the preferred varieties of the English language.

**Table 3.** The quantitative distribution of the preferred varieties of the English language

N	The preferred variety of English	Participants	Controls
1	American English	16 %	42 %
2	Australian English	11 %	5 %
3	British English	47 %	42 %
4	Canadian English	0 %	5 %
5	Irish English	5 %	5 %
6	New Zealand English	0 %	0 %
7	Scottish English	21 %	0 %

The results of the qualitative framing analysis are summarised in Table 4. This table reflects the qualitative distribution of the frames in the corpus.

**Table 4.** The distribution of the frames among the preferred varieties of the English language

N	The preferred variety of English	Participants' framing	Controls' framing
1	American English	“Ease” “Films/TV” “Music” “Visit”	“Ease” “Family” “Film/TV” “Music” “Spelling”
2	Australian English	“Sounds”	“Sounds” “Visit”
3	British English	“Films/TV” “Sounds” “Spelling” “Teacher” “Visit”	“Films/TV” “Sounds” “Teacher” “Visit”

4	Canadian English	--	“Family”
5	Irish English	“Sounds” “Visit” “Fascination”	“Visit”
6	New Zealand English	--	--
7	Scottish English	“Fascination” “Films/TV” “Sounds” “Visit”	--

The quantitative count of the total occurrence of frames in all varieties per group is calculated in SPSS (2018) and illustrated by Table 5.

**Table 5.** The descriptive statistics of the occurrence of frames in total per group

N	Statistical measure	Participants	Controls
1	Number of people in the group	19	19
2	Mean number of frames per group	2,7	3,5
3	Standard deviation	0,9	0,7
4	Range (minimum - maximum)	1 – 4	2 – 5

The statistical analysis of the frames in all preferred varieties of English per group conducted by means of the paired sample t-test has indicated that the occurrence of the frames “Ease”, “Film/TV”, “Music”, “Teacher”, and “Visit” is not significant at  $p < 0,05$ . However, it is evident from the paired sample t-test that the occurrence of the frame “Sounds” in the participants’ preferred varieties of English is significant (e.g., the  $t$ -value is 4,97494, the  $p$ -value is  $< 0,00001$  and the result is significant at  $p < 0,05$ ). The occurrence of the frames “Family” and “Fascination”, respectively, has been excluded from the paired sample t-test on the grounds that the frame “Family” occurred only in the corpus of the essays written by the controls and the frame “Fascination” has been identified exclusively in the participants’ essays.

## 2.6 Discussion

As previously mentioned, it has been assumed in this study that the participants would exhibit preferences for BrE in contrast to the control group. The results of the qualitative data analysis indicate that this assumption is supported, since 47% of the participants prefer BrE. The participants’ preference for BrE is in concert with the previous research literature. In particular, the present findings are in line

with the study conducted by Rindal (2010), who has found that Norwegian EFL learners tend to prefer BrE. Indirectly, the results of this investigation support other studies (Bikelienė 2015; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit 1995) that report EFL students' preference for BrE in a number of countries that belong to the so-called Expanding Circle of English (Kachru 2006), e.g. Austria and Lithuania, respectively.

Another assumption in this study involves the contention that a previous sojourn to the country where the participants' preferred variety of English is spoken plays a facilitative role in determining the choice of the variety (Kapranov 2012; 2013). Judging from the results of the qualitative framing analysis, this assumption is supported. Specifically, the frame "Visit" is reflective of the role of the participants' previous sojourns to the UK, USA, Ireland, and Scotland in developing their preference for AmE, BrE, IrE, and ScE, respectively. Since the occurrence of the frame "Visit" is not significant between the groups, it can be argued that the frame "Visit" is similarly distributed between them. In other words, these two groups are not different in terms of the impact of the sojourns to the countries of the Inner Circle of English upon the preference for a variety of English.

It is evident from the results of the data analysis that the participants exhibit preferences for the following varieties of the English language: BrE (47%), ScE (21%), AmE (16%), AuE (11%), and IrE (5%). As seen in Table 3, the participants have no preferences for CaE (0%) and NZE (0%), respectively. Following these findings, the discussion will further focus upon BrE, ScE, AmE, AuE, and IrE. These varieties of the English language will be discussed in conjunction with how the participants frame them in their reflective essays. Additionally, the participants' framing will be contrasted with that of the control group.

### 2.6.1 The framing of British English

As seen in Table 3, 47% of the participants prefer BrE. They frame it by means of the frames "Films/TV", "Sounds", "Spelling", "Teacher", and "Visit". Notably, 42% of the controls prefer BrE and structure their preferences via the frames "Films/TV", "Sounds", "Teacher", and "Visit". These findings are suggestive of the participants' and controls' preferences for BrE based upon media products in BrE, acoustic properties of BrE, the use of BrE by their former school teachers, and previous sojourns to the UK.

As mentioned in section 2.5 of this article, the occurrence of the frame "Sounds" is significant in the corpus of reflective essays written by the participants. This finding is suggestive of the participants' focus on phonetic and prosodic features of their preferred variety of the English language. The participants' framing of BrE by means of the frame "Sounds" is in concert with the study by Abdullah (2007), where BrE pronunciation (alongside with other variables) seems to form

a basis of the EFL learners' preferences for that variety of English. As far as BrE as a preferred variety is concerned, the participants in the present study typically frame it via the frame "Sounds", e.g.

- (1) My favourite variety of English is British English, the typical London accent. That is the accent I think of when I think of British English. I really like the intonation and the flow of the accent and I think it's one of the most beautiful variety of the English language. (...) I think the accent is very pretty and gracious and makes people sound smarter as well. (Participant P12, female)

In addition to the phonetic and prosodic properties of BrE as the preferred variety, the frame "Sounds" in (1) involves an emotional dimension and evaluative appraisal, e.g. "(...) the accent is very pretty and gracious and makes people sound smarter (...) (Participant P12). Similarly, another participant posits that BrE "sounds more normal and classy, like it is proper English" (Participant P2, female). The qualitative analysis of the frame "Sounds" reveals that BrE is perceived as formal and prestigious. These findings are in concert with Graedler (2014), who reports a positive attitude towards English in Norway, "where it is perceived as a positive or superior linguistic resource, as a world language with prestigious value" (Graedler 2014, 308).

Judging from the findings, a substantial qualitative difference between the groups of participants and controls consists in the participants' framing of BrE by means of referring to the British spelling conventions. For instance, Participant P12 argues: "When I write in English I always write in British English, or so I try" (Participant P12, female). Whilst the frame "Spelling" is not quantitatively representative (it is mentioned by 5% of the participants), it is, nevertheless, possible to suggest that the presence of this frame supports Larsson (2012) with its focus on the preferred variety of English in terms of spelling. However, whereas Larsson (2012) observes that BrE spelling seems to be preferred by Swedish L1 EFL students, the data in the present study indicate that BrE spelling is preferred by the participants and AmE spelling appears to be favoured by the controls. In concert with Larsson (2012), it is possible to note that the participants and their controls are consistent in their choice of one variety of English as far as their spelling preferences are concerned. In particular, the participants consistently make references to BrE spelling, whereas AmE spelling does not appear to be mentioned by them.

The frame "Films/TV" is suggestive of the role of the British media in the participants' and controls' preferences for BrE. The presence of the frame "Films/TV" is, perhaps, not surprising, given that British films, TV programmes and series are regularly broadcast by the majority of Norwegian television channels. The preference for BrE that implicitly eventuates from the British films and television is illustrated by one of the participants, who indicates that "We have

a close cultural connection to the United Kingdom. When I was young, British programming was the prominent foreign television content on Norwegian TV” (Participant 3, male). However, the explicit reference to the role of British TV in the participant’s preference for BrE is found in excerpt (2) below:

- (2) I prefer British English, first of all London accent. For example, Jamie Oliver’s accent and his accompanying use of London slang are distinctive features of his talk. When he is cooking for a TV-audience he may use the word “bash” (colloquial speech) instead of whisk, bake or stir. For me, this is my favourite accent. It is full of affectionate touches and encouraging phrases. (Participant 11, female)

As seen in (2), the frame “Films/TV” involves, predominantly, such features, as pronunciation (e.g., “(...) London accent. For example, Jamie Oliver’s accent (...)”) and vocabulary (e.g., “(...) he may use the word “bash” (colloquial speech) instead of whisk (...)”). These elements in the frame “Films/TV” are in line with the previous study conducted by Abdullah (2007), who suggests that the preference for BrE by EFL learners tends to be associated, predominantly, with pronunciation and vocabulary. Additionally, the frame “Films/TV” lends indirect support to the research findings that have been reported by Rindal (2010), who argues that Norwegian L1 learners of English experience substantial exposure to American and British media products. It is inferred from Rindal (2010) that the learners’ exposure to mass media in AmE and BrE, respectively, maps onto the learners’ preference for one of these varieties.

Unlike the frames “Films/TV”, “Sounds”, and “Spelling”, the literature (Abdullah 2007; Bikelienė 2015; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit 1995; Gibb 1999; McKenzie 2007; Rindal 2010) does not report a case of EFL learners’ framing of their preferred variety of English by means of referring to the varieties of English spoken by their former school teachers. Interestingly, the participants and controls frame BrE by means of the frame “Teacher”, whereas AmE is not framed by them as such. The participants’ framing of BrE via the frame “Teacher” is illustrated by excerpt (3) below:

- (3) Personally, I prefer the British variety of English. This is partly due to the fact that the English teacher I had in primary school taught us the British variety, as her husband was from Manchester. I also like dialects that can be found in the UK, I feel like they differ more from one another than the American accents. It reminds me of the many different dialects of Norwegian, which I’m quite fond of. (Participant P7, male)

It is evident from (3) that the participant’s preference for BrE originates from primary school, where the participant’s teacher used BrE. Additionally, it is seen

in (3) that the participant prefers BrE on the grounds of the British dialects, e.g. “I also like dialects that can be found in the UK, I feel like they differ more from one another than the American accents” (Participant P7). The participant draws analogies between the linguistic contexts in Norway and the UK, both of which are characterised by a significant dialectal diversity. This finding is evocative of the observation by Simensen (2014), who suggests that Norwegian EFL learners seem to be well aware of the existence of varieties of the English language, since they are routinely exposed to the dialectal variety of the Norwegian language, their L1 (Simensen 2014, 14). Moreover, the present findings are in unison with the results of the study conducted by Lee, Lee, and Drajeti (2019), who suggest that a substantial dialectal diversity in one’s L1 is facilitative of the pre-service EFL teachers’ perceptions of the varieties of the English language.

As evident from Table 4, the frame “Teacher” has also been identified in the reflective essays written by the control group. For instance, Control C5 writes: “I think one of the reasons why I prefer British English is that it is what I learned in school from a young age” (Control C5, female). This finding echoes Rindal (2010), who argues that in Norway “BrE is the variety most associated with school” (Rindal 2010, 255).

Another variable involved in the framing of BrE by the participants and controls is associated with their previous sojourns to the UK, in particular, to England. This variable is present in the frame “Visit”. For instance, one of the participants posits that “one of the reasons I prefer it is due to the fact that I lived in London for a year, and I absolutely loved it over there” (Participant P2, female). This finding is in concert with Kapranov (2012; 2013), who has found that the preference for the variety of English tends to be associated with a previous sojourn to the country where that particular variety is spoken. Furthermore, the present findings appear to reinforce the results of the study conducted by Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit (1995), who report that EFL learners’ frequent visits to the UK based upon geographic proximity between Austria and the UK are facilitative of the EFL learners’ preferences for BrE in contrast to AmE.

## 2.6.2 The framing of Scottish English

As evident from the previous studies (Abdullah 2007; Bikelienė 2015; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit 1995; Gibb 1999; Larsson 2012; McKenzie 2007; Rindal 2010), ScE does not seem to be a preferred variety in the countries of the Expanding Circle of English (Kachru 2006). However, it follows from the data that 21% of the participants in the present study prefer ScE. They frame this variety of the English language by means of the frames “Fascination”, “Films/TV”, “Sounds”, and “Visit”. Furthermore, the literature (Abdullah 2007; Bikelienė 2015; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit 1995; Gibb 1999; McKenzie 2007; Rindal 2010)



does not indicate that EFL learners' preferences for a particular variety of English are associated with such variable as fascination. In the present data, however, the frame "Fascination" is involved in the participants' preference for ScE, e.g.

- (4) Scottish English would be my favourite variety of the English language. When studying abroad, I ended up in the borderline area between highlands and lowlands in Scotland. The dialect spoken there were not the thickest dialect, and most of the time it was no problem understanding it. Even before heading out to study in a different country, I was fascinated by the dialect. The Irish variety also caught my fancy, however as I ended up in Scotland, my fascination for Scottish English only grew. The melodic way they talk, and how one can find traces of old Norwegian or Norse. Some of the similar words between Scottish and Norwegian include kirk [kirk] (in Norwegian: kirk), and bairn [be:rn, bern] (in Norwegian: barn). (Participant P6, female)

Notably, the frame "Fascination" is embedded into the frames "Visit" and "Sounds", as evident from (4), e.g. "when I was studying abroad, I ended up in the borderline area between highlands and lowlands in Scotland" (Participant P6), where the participant's "fascination for Scottish English only grew. The melodic way they talk, and how one can find traces of old Norwegian or Norse" (Participant P6). Presumably, the participant's fascination is associated with the traces of Old Norse in ScE. Specifically, the participant mentions several Scottish words of Old Norse origin, e.g. *kirk* and *bairn*, respectively. Interestingly, it is not the first instance of the participants' parallels with Norway and Norwegian linguistic contexts in their framing of the preferred varieties of the English language (see subsection 2.6.1). Furthermore, it should be noted that the references to the Norwegian language and Norwegian dialects in the framing of the preferred variety of English are encountered exclusively in the corpus of the participants' reflective essays.

The qualitative data analysis indicates that ScE is framed by the participants via the frame "Film/TV". It is evident from the data that the TV series *Outlander*, which is set in Scotland, partially explains the participant's preference for ScE, e.g.

- (5) In this essay I will write about Scottish English because that is my favourite variety of English. (...) That may be because of the series "Outlander" where almost every one speaks Scottish with some old Scottish words as well. However, the actors in that series are not the first Scottish-speaking actors I have seen on tv. Bottom line is that I love Scottish English. (Participant 9, female)

In addition to the frames "Fascination" and "Films/TV", the participants frame ScE by means of the frame "Visit". In particular, the frame "Visit" appears to be concomitant with the frame "Sounds", as illustrated by excerpt (6) below:

- (6) My favourite variety of the English language is Scottish English. I prefer it because I lived there and spoke it myself. But what I particularly like is that it is a rhotic variety. They pronounce their r's in a beautiful rounded and rolling way. Their short vowels can make them hard to understand, but they are fun once you've got used to it. They also use fun words like *ach* and *loch* that almost sound German. I experienced that myself, when in Aberdeen they do not say *oh*, but *och* with *x*. It is almost like in German *ach*. (Participant 17, female)

In (6), the participant's preference for Scottish English rests with her sojourn there, as well as with the emotional component associated with the sounds of ScE, .e.g. "They pronounce their r's in a beautiful rounded and rolling way" (Participant 17, female). As far as the frame "Visit" is concerned, it can be assumed that the participants' preference for ScE might be associated with the geographical proximity between Scotland and Western Norway, where the majority of the participants are from. Even though this assumption is putative, previous research findings reported by Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit (1995) offer an analogy that can be applicable to the present data. Specifically, Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit (1995) indicate that the majority of Austrian EFL learners prefer BrE due to a relative geographical closeness between Britain and Austria. Arguably, such a variable could potentially play a role in the participants' preferences for ScE, given that Western Norway and Scotland are geographically close.

### 2.6.3 The framing of American English

Apart from BrE and ScE, 16% of the participants prefer AmE. This variety of the English language is framed by the participants by means of the frames "Ease", "Films/TV", "Music", and "Visit". The framing of AmE by the controls involves such frames as "Ease", "Family", "Film/TV", "Music", and "Spelling". In addition to the qualitative differences in terms of the framing, the quantitative distribution of AmE differs between the groups of participants (16%) and controls (42%). Notably, in the case of the controls, the quantitative distribution of the preferred variety seems to follow the pattern established in the previous studies. Similarly to the control group in the present investigation, Lithuanian L1 EFL learners' preferences are nearly equally distributed between AmE and BrE (Bikelienė 2015). Abdullah (2007) has found a similar distribution of AmE and BrE in the preferences exhibited by Malay L1 EFL students. In the present data set that involves the controls, the quantitative distribution is equal between AmE (42%) and BrE (42%). These findings provide support to the research conducted by Abdullah (2007) and Bikelienė (2015) as far as the non-teacher EFL students are concerned. However, the results of the quantitative distribution in this study

in terms of the participants' first and second most preferred varieties of English, i.e. BrE and ScE, respectively, are in contrast to the prior literature.

There is another finding in the present study that appears to be in contrast to the research conducted by Gibb (1999) and McKenzie (2007), who suggest that EFL students in South-East Asia exhibit preferences for AmE as a variety of English that is associated with the job market and career choices. As far as the framing of AmE in this study is concerned, neither the participants nor the controls frame AmE as their preferred variety through the lenses of future careers. Instead, the participants structure their preferences for AmE via the frames "Ease", "Films/TV", "Music", and "Visit", e.g.

- (7) First off I have to say that my English is greatly influenced by American pop-culture. When it comes to music, film and tv I have watched and listened to a lot of it. And this is also how I learned to pronounce a lot of the difficult words. I deliberately watched shows with no subtitles to understand the context of certain words I didn't fully understand. In movies or tv shows there are a lot of different dialects, but I have tried to stick to a more general American accent more similar to the California type dialect. What I like about the American accent is the clearness of it. When comparing it to British dialects, the Americans, in my opinion, speak much clearer and they are easier to understand. (Participant P5, male)

As evident from (7), the participant frames AmE via several frames, e.g. "Ease", "Films/TV", and "Music". It is seen in (7) that the frame "Ease" involves the key words "clearness" and "ease", respectively. Specifically, the participant notes that AmE speakers are easier to understand, since AmE sounds "clearer". Presumably, the participant's "ease" of speaking and understanding of AmE originates from American mass media and pop culture, since the participant indicates that "When it comes to music, film and tv I have watched and listened to a lot of it" (Participant P5). This finding is evocative of the previous literature on the role of English in Scandinavia (Kapranov 2012; McArthur 2003), where the presence of the English language forms a part of the individual's daily routine that involves pastime (e.g. music, TV, the Internet, etc.). Similarly to the participants, the control group appears to frame AmE via the frame "Ease", e.g. "I also consider the American variety easier than the British, but this is probably because of the greater exposure to the American variety" (control C18, male). Analogous to the participants, the control group seems to frame AmE via the triad of frames "Ease", "Films/TV", and "Music". However, in several cases, the controls add the frame "Family" to the afore-mentioned triad of frames, e.g.

- (8) My favourite variety of the English language is American English because it is easier to speak, it is what I hear most in my daily life, and it reminds me

of my friends and family in Minnesota. When learning English as a foreign language I find it easier to speak American English. I feel like it comes out more effortlessly than other varieties of English. (Control C14, female)

#### 2.6.4 The framing of Australian English

AuE is preferred by 11% of the participants and one representative (5%) of the control group. AuE is framed by the participants as the frame “Sounds”, e.g. “My favourite variety of the English language is Australian, to me they sound quite exotic compared to British English that is more traditional” (Participant P13, female). Another participant, who prefers AuE, posits that “My favourite variety of the English language is Australian English. The biggest difference between British English and Australian English is the way Australians pronounce words (...)” (Participant P1, female).

The representative of the control group whose preferred variety is AuE frames it by means of the frames “Sounds” and “Visit”. The framing of AuE by a qualitatively limited number of frames could be taken to indicate that AuE, as well as NZE, are on the periphery of Norwegian L1 EFL students’ preferred varieties of English. Notably, neither the participants nor the controls exhibit preferences for NZE, whilst their preference for AuE is not significant. These findings are in unison with the previous research study by Kapranov (2016), who suggests that insufficient language exposure to AuE and NZE in EFL contexts in Scandinavia maps onto an epiphenomenal status of these varieties (Kapranov 2016, 51).

#### 2.6.5 The framing of Irish English

IrE is preferred by one participant (5%) and one control (5%), respectively. The participant frames IrE by means of the frames “Fascination,” “Visit” and “Sounds”. Specifically, the participant indicates that “What intrigues me about the Irish variety is that they have distinct pronunciation. I find this quite fascinating” (Participant P19, female). Furthermore, the participant notes:

- (9) I like this variety after I visited Dublin and Belfast. Ireland is a relatively small country, but you can hear the difference between Dubliners and speakers from Belfast. Personally I like the Irish strong r’s that are similar to r’s in US English. But unlike in US, the Irish l-sound is not dark, it sounds like a clear l. (Participant P19, female)

It follows from (9) that the participant’s preference for IrE has eventuated after a trip to Ireland. This finding supports the hypothesis where it is assumed

that the participants' choices of the preferred variety of the English language would be determined, to an extent, by their previous visits to the country where the preferred variety is spoken.

Presumably, a low number of participants (as well as controls) who prefer IrE could also be accounted by the contention expressed by Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit (1995). They suggest that the geographical proximity is a variable that determines the choice of the preferred variety of English. Whilst there is no explicit reference in the corpus to the distance between Ireland and Norway, it could be assumed that the location of Ireland is perceived by the participants and controls as geographically more distant in comparison to England and/or Scotland. Arguably, the geographical distance maps onto the marginal status of IrE in terms of the participants' and controls' preferences.

### 3. Conclusions

The article discusses the framing of the preferred variety of the English language in the corpus of reflective essays written by the group of participants (i.e., pre-service primary school teachers of English) and the control group that consists of EFL non-teacher students. The results of the quantitative analysis of the corpus reveal that the participants prefer BrE and ScE. Specifically, BrE is preferred by 47% of the participants, who frame it by means of the frames "Films/TV", "Sounds", "Spelling", "Teacher", and "Visit". ScE is favoured by 21% of the participants, who frame it via the frames "Fascination", "Films/TV", "Sounds", and "Visit". These findings are novel, since the preference for ScE has not been previously reported in the literature (Abdullah 2007; Bikelienè 2015; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck, and Smit 1995; Gibb 1999; Larsson 2012; McKenzie 2007; Rindal 2010). Arguably, further research on ScE in the Norwegian EFL contexts might offer new avenues to explore in future studies.

These findings support the study conducted by Rindal (2010), who indicates that in Norwegian EFL contexts BrE is associated with school-related activities (Rindal 2010, 255). However, the qualitative data analysis indicates that whilst the participants express preferences for BrE, its framing does not appear to involve an exclusive focus on the teaching and learning of English at school. Concurrently with the participants' preferences for BrE that are indicative of their teaching career and school-related activities (e.g. the frames "Sounds", "Spelling", and "Teacher"), they frame BrE in terms of a range of out-of-classroom activities that involve the English language, such as the frames "Films/TV" and "Visit", respectively. The presence of the frame "Visit" supports the literature in applied linguistics (Kapranov 2012; 2013) that indicates that the preferred variety of English is associated with the previous sojourns to the country where the preferred variety of English is spoken.

It seems possible to generalise that the participants structure their reflective essays on the preferred variety of the Inner Circle of the English language via a set of sociocultural frames in the sense of Pennington and Hoekje (2014). As evident from the data, sociocultural frames in the present study involve such sociocultural variables as communication (e.g. “Ease”, “Family”, “Spelling”, “Teacher”), emotions and aesthetics (e.g. “Fascination”), as well as travel and pastime (e.g. “Films/TV”, “Music“, “Visit”).

The present findings might offer certain linguo-didactic suggestions that would be relevant to EFL programmes designed for pre-service primary school teachers of English. Judging from the findings, it seems possible to suggest that Norwegian L1 pre-service primary school teachers of English:

- i) should be provided with a choice of several Inner Circle varieties of English, especially BrE, AmE, and ScE;
- ii) should be given ample opportunities to practice their preferred varieties of English; and
- iii) should be provided with possibilities to capitalise on their preferred varieties of English in order to facilitate optimal teaching and learning outcomes.

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