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LEXICAL PREFERENCES OF UZBEK EFL LEARNERS: A COMPARISON OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN ENGLISH

Avazjon Aminjonov,
PhD, senior lecturer at Kokand university.
aaaminjonov@kokanduni.uz
ORCID: 0009-0000-2138-9842

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British english, American english, lexical variation, world englishes, exposure, Uzbekistan, EFL learners.

ANNOTATION

This study examines Uzbek EFL learners' preferences for British English and American English vocabulary and relates these choices to classroom norms and everyday exposure. In Uzbekistan, many English textbooks and teaching materials are based on British English, but learners often encounter American English through social media and entertainment. A voluntary online questionnaire was completed by 167 English major undergraduates at Kokand University. The vocabulary section included 20 paired items, and participants selected the word they use most often. Across 3,340 selections, American English forms were chosen slightly more often (1,812; 54.25%) than British English forms (1,528; 45.75%), although preferences differed sharply by item. A paired-samples t-test was applied to the multiple-choice vocabulary task at the item level (20 pairs) and did not show a significant overall difference across items, $t(19) = 0.92$, $p = .371$. Attitude items showed moderate agreement that students hear American English more often on social media ($M = 3.14$) and that teachers mostly use British English ($M = 3.31$), while perceived ability to notice differences was closer to neutral ($M = 2.89$). Overall, the findings point to hybrid lexical use shaped by parallel input streams. Pedagogical implications focus on raising awareness of lexical variation and teaching practical strategies for maintaining consistency in assessed academic writing.

Introduction. English operates as a primary language of international education, scientific communication, and digital participation. As a result, learners in many EFL contexts encounter English not as a single standardized system but as a set of competing norms. Among the most visible standardized models are British English (BrE) and American English (AmE), which differ systematically in spelling, lexical selection, and some aspects of pronunciation. These differences rarely block comprehension, yet they matter in pedagogical settings because they affect classroom evaluation, academic writing conventions, and learners' perceptions of what counts as "correct" or "professional" English.

Uzbekistan offers a particularly relevant context for examining these issues. English has expanded in educational and professional importance, and university programs increasingly promote English for academic mobility and international engagement. At the same time, the input ecology of Uzbek learners has changed. In Uzbekistan, English textbooks and curricular materials are commonly based on BrE norms, and teacher training and assessment practices often align with British-oriented standards. However, learners now consume substantial English input through social media, streaming platforms, gaming, and other digital environments, where AmE lexical patterns are prominent. This dual exposure creates conditions for hybrid lexical repertoires in which learners select words from both varieties depending on familiarity, register expectations, and perceived clarity.

Lexical choice is a useful window into this hybridity. Vocabulary items such as holiday/vacation, lorry/truck, or pavement/sidewalk serve as recognizable markers of variety, and they are frequently taught explicitly in EFL classrooms. Yet learners' actual preferences may depart from teaching models. When learners mix BrE and AmE vocabulary in academic writing, using, for example, *colour* together with *apartment*, teachers may interpret the text as inconsistent, even when meaning is clear. Such evaluation practices can influence students' confidence and their strategic decisions about "one-variety" consistency. For this reason, documenting real lexical preferences can help align teaching practices with learners' linguistic realities.

The present study is grounded in three complementary frameworks. First, the World Englishes paradigm conceptualizes English as pluricentric and shaped by sociocultural contexts, particularly in Expanding Circle settings where English is learned for international communication[1]. Second, accounts of English as a global language emphasize the role of global institutions and media in distributing English norms and accelerating contact between varieties[2]. Third, exposure-based and usage-based perspectives in second language acquisition predict that frequent and salient input strengthens learners' lexical representations and increases the likelihood of selecting the encountered form in production[3],[4]. Together, these frameworks predict that Uzbek learners may internalize BrE vocabulary through schooling while adopting AmE lexicon through informal, high-frequency media exposure.

International research in EFL contexts supports this expectation. Studies of language attitudes frequently report that learners associate BrE with prestige, formality, and academic suitability, while describing AmE as easier, clearer, or more familiar due to media influence[5]. Awareness research also suggests that learners may not reliably identify which variety they are using, producing mixed patterns even when they report a preference for one standard[6]. Despite these general insights, empirical evidence from Uzbekistan remains limited. Existing discussions of English in Uzbekistan highlight its expanding educational role[7], but there is still a need for item-level analyses of BrE and AmE lexical preference and for integrated interpretations that connect lexical patterns to learners' exposure and consistency goals.

To address this gap, the present study examines lexical preferences of Uzbek EFL learners at Kokand University using a controlled paired vocabulary choice task and complementary attitude measures. The design also includes an open-ended question to capture learners' rationales in their own languages. The study is intended not only as an empirical contribution but also as a model text for academic writing and research methods courses, demonstrating transparent use of descriptive statistics, careful interpretation, and alignment between theory, methods, and claims.

[1] Kachru, B. B. (1985). Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle. In R. Quirk & H. G. Widdowson (Eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures.*
[2] Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language*.
[3] Ellis, N. C. (2002). Frequency effects in language processing: A review with implications for theories of implicit and explicit language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition.*
[4] Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*.
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[7] Hasanova, D. (2007a). Broadening the boundaries of the Expanding Circle: English in Uzbekistan.

The study is guided by four research questions: (1) What is the overall distribution of BrE and AmE lexical choices among Uzbek EFL learners in a paired vocabulary task? (2) Which lexical items show the strongest variety preferences? (3) What attitudes do learners report regarding exposure, awareness, and writing consistency? (4) How can the findings be interpreted conservatively in relation to BrE-based instruction and AmE-rich informal exposure in Uzbekistan?

Literature review. Prior empirical research on British English and American English in EFL contexts has focused on what learners prefer, how well they recognize variety-based differences, and whether they remain consistent in production. A recurring finding is that the "classroom norm" and the "media norm" do not always align. In many educational systems, teaching materials and assessment practices are aligned with BrE conventions, while learners' out-of-class input frequently contains AmE vocabulary, spelling, and pronunciation. Because BrE and AmE differences are especially salient at the level of individual lexical items (e.g., autumn/fall, rubbish/trash), learners may acquire some words through school and others through entertainment media, which can foster mixed patterns even when teachers encourage one standard. Consequently, recent studies increasingly treat BrE and AmE choice as a question of exposure and context, rather than a simple preference for one "correct" form over another.

Studies that directly measure BrE and AmE preference commonly show that learners' choices are pragmatic and exposure-driven. Koceva et al., working with university EFL learners, connect variety preference to everyday exposure (including online media) and emphasize that learners can be unsure which forms are most appropriate in academic settings[8]. In Turkey, Yaman reports that ELT students did not converge on a single variety in self-reports and that their stated preferences were accompanied by mixed usage. Taken together, these findings suggest that when learners meet both BrE and AmE in their input, "preference" often reflects perceived familiarity and usability rather than long-term norm allegiance. This pattern is directly relevant to lexical choice tasks, where learners may select whichever label feels most accessible at the moment of responding.

A second line of research highlights uneven awareness of BrE and AmE differences, which makes consistency difficult. Yaman reports that, despite generally positive awareness, students tended to use a mixture of the two varieties by combining them in practice, and none of the participants used only one variety in the recorded pronunciation component. Similarly, Lindell, focusing on vocabulary and spelling, reports habitual mixing across items, implying that variety knowledge is often word-specific rather than system-wide[9]. In practical terms, learners may identify some pairs (e.g., lift/elevator) with confidence but fail to recognize others, and they may not treat spelling and lexis as a linked "variety package." This helps explain why EFL learners can simultaneously claim a preference for one variety while producing forms from both, particularly under time pressure or when writing without explicit monitoring.

Evidence for hybrid use becomes especially clear in studies that examine actual usage rather than only attitudes. Alftberg reports that Swedish secondary-school pupils tended to use AmE more than BrE in both vocabulary and pronunciation and that all participants mixed British and American features, even though BrE was the normal school variety[10]. In a different sociolinguistic environment, Okoh shows that although BrE remains the official educational norm in Ghana, students commonly use BrE and AmE together and have limited awareness of lexical differences in regular practice[11]. These studies are consistent in two respects: learners frequently blend BrE and AmE items within the same individual repertoire, and exposure to media and everyday contact with American cultural products is repeatedly proposed as a key driver of this blending. Importantly, the existence of hybrid usage does not imply deficit; rather, it indicates that learners manage multiple norms simultaneously, often without explicit guidance on when a particular choice matters.

Uzbekistan is a timely and under-researched context for this topic because it combines strong institutional norming with rapidly expanding digital exposure. Hasanova describes English in Uzbekistan primarily as a foreign language linked to educational mobility and global participation, with external norms shaping teaching and learning[12]. In Uzbek public schools and universities, English textbooks and academic conventions have traditionally followed British-oriented models, while students' everyday English input includes substantial American media content. Recent work on language ideologies and teaching practices in Uzbekistan also reports that teachers may treat British English as the curricular default[13]. This dual environment creates a realistic possibility of "split input": BrE-aligned instruction in formal settings co-existing with AmE-heavy exposure in informal, high-frequency media contexts. Such conditions are ideal for investigating whether lexical choices reflect curricular norms, exposure frequency, or learners' desire for consistency in writing.

Despite the growing international literature, three gaps motivate the present study. First, many BrE and AmE investigations emphasize pronunciation attitudes, while fewer focus on everyday paired lexical items that appear in student writing and classroom communication. Second, hybrid use is frequently reported, but it is not always quantified through a structured lexical-choice task that allows item-by-item comparison between BrE and AmE alternatives. Third, empirical evidence from Uzbekistan remains limited, even though the Uzbek EFL ecology is likely to produce precisely the kind of mixed norm orientation documented in other Expanding Circle settings. By combining a vocabulary-choice task with Likert-scale items on exposure, awareness, and consistency, the present study responds to these gaps and offers contextually grounded evidence on how Uzbek EFL learners negotiate BrE and AmE lexical options.

Methodology. The participants of this study were 167 undergraduate students majoring in English at Kokand University, Uzbekistan. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary, and students were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. All collected responses are used solely for academic research purposes. Regarding age, the participants had a mean age of 19.85 years. In terms of gender distribution, the sample was predominantly female (155 females and 12 males), reflecting the general gender composition of English language programs in the local context. With respect to English language proficiency, participants reported an overall level that generally fell between the B1 and B2 bands on the CEFR-based scale. Concerning the length of English language study, the participants reported a mean duration of 3.18 years of English learning experience.

Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire created in Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections: (1) demographic information, (2) vocabulary preference between British and American English lexical items, and (3) attitudes toward English varieties and sources of exposure to English. The vocabulary section included 20 paired British and American lexical items, requiring participants to select the form they most frequently used. Attitudinal items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). An open-ended item asked respondent to indicate an overall preferred variety and to briefly justify that preference in their own words. The survey included Uzbek/Russian/English responses, which were retained for qualitative interpretation.

The questionnaire link was distributed to students electronically. Students completed the survey individually. Participation was voluntary, and the survey introduction informed participants that they could withdraw at any time without consequences. No grades, incentives, or penalties were connected to participation. The survey collected no identifying information beyond demographics, and responses were used exclusively for academic research reporting.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the paired vocabulary task (Section 2) and for the Likert-scale items (Section 3). To meet the requirement of using an SPSS t-test only for the

[8] Koceva, A., Kostadinova, D., & Tabutova, T. (2023). British English versus American English preference by university students of EFL.
[9] Lindell, C. (2014). *British or American English? An investigation of awareness of the differences in British and American vocabulary and spelling.*
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[12] Hasanova, D. (2007b). Teaching and learning English in Uzbekistan.
[13] Hasanova, D., & Vokhidova, N. (2025). English in Uzbekistan: Language ideologies and teaching practices.

multiple-choice section, a paired-samples t-test was performed on the Section 2 vocabulary data at the item level (with each lexical pair treated as one case; n = 20 pairs). This approach allows an inferential comparison of BrE and AmE preference across items using only the provided totals. The Likert-scale items were reported descriptively using means only, and the open-ended responses were coded thematically in Uzbek, Russian, and English to contextualize the numerical patterns.

Results. Across the second section of the questionnaire, the paired vocabulary task produced 3,340 selections in total. American lexical forms were selected 1,812 times (54.25%), whereas British forms were selected 1,528 times (45.75%). Figure 1 shows the overall distribution. A paired-samples t-test conducted for the vocabulary task indicated that this overall difference was **not statistically significant** (p = .371). Therefore, the difference is modest and should not be interpreted as a wholesale shift toward AmE. Instead, the totals suggest that the cohort has a mixed lexical repertoire in which both standards are available. From a World Englishes perspective, such hybridity is expected in Expanding Circle contexts where learners orient to external norms but also adapt to practical input conditions, as reported by Kachru.

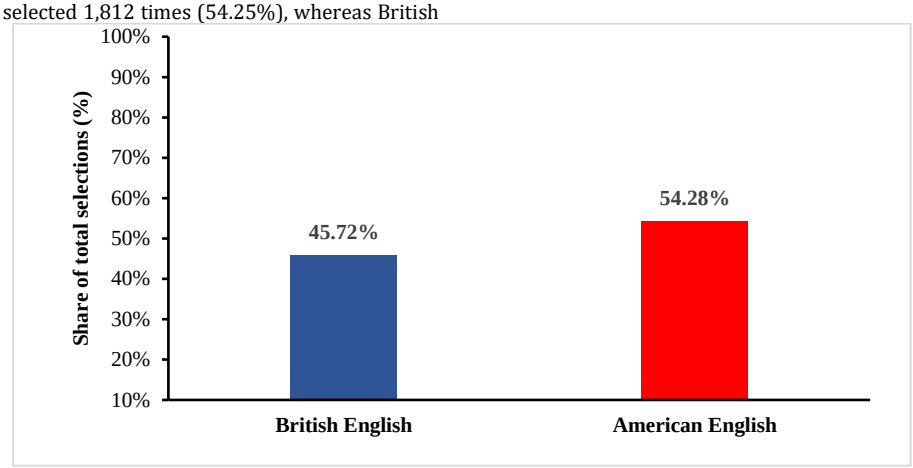

Figure 1. Overall lexical selections across 20 paired items (*N* = 3,340, 167 participants × 20 items)

Table 1 presents item-level counts and percentages for each BrE and AmE pair. The distribution varies considerably by item, with some pairs showing strong AmE majorities, others showing strong BrE majorities, and a smaller number showing relatively balanced choices.

Table 1. Item-by-item lexical choices for British and American English vocabulary

BrE items	BrE count and (%)	AmE items	AmE count and (%)	Most selected variety
flat	73 (43.7%)	apartment	94 (56.3%)	AmE
lorry	61 (36.5%)	truck	106 (63.5%)	AmE
holiday	115 (68.9%)	vacation	52 (31.1%)	BrE
queue	93 (55.7%)	line	74 (44.3%)	BrE
trainers	74 (44.3%)	sneakers	93 (55.7%)	AmE
aubergine	32 (19.2%)	eggplant	135 (80.8%)	AmE
rubbish	73 (43.7%)	trash	94 (56.3%)	AmE
nappy	110 (65.9%)	diaper	57 (34.1%)	BrE
chemist	98 (58.7%)	drugstore	69 (41.3%)	BrE
timetable	51 (30.5%)	schedule	116 (69.5%)	AmE
rubber	53 (31.7%)	eraser	114 (68.3%)	AmE
hoover	8 (4.8%)	vacuum cleaner	159 (95.2%)	AmE
torch	26 (15.6%)	flashlight	141 (84.4%)	AmE
bin	95 (56.9%)	trash can	72 (43.1%)	BrE
pushchair	84 (50.3%)	stroller	83 (49.7%)	BrE
pavement	37 (22.2%)	sidewalk	130 (77.8%)	AmE
sweets	105 (62.9%)	candy	62 (37.1%)	BrE
wardrobe	127 (76.0%)	closet	40 (24.0%)	BrE
boot	78 (46.7%)	trunk	89 (53.3%)	AmE
autumn	135 (80.8%)	fall	32 (19.2%)	BrE

Household and everyday objects formed the most polarized cluster toward AmE. Vacuum cleaner (95.2%) almost completely replaced hoover (4.8%). This result is pedagogically important because hoover is a high-salience BrE word frequently taught as a "classic" example of variety difference, yet it appears not to be entrenched among these learners. One explanation is that vacuum cleaner is more transparent semantically and is likely encountered repeatedly in global media content (e.g., tutorials, home videos, cleaning-related videos). Ellis and Nation reports that exposure-based theory predicts that repeated encounters combined with semantic transparency facilitate stronger entrenchment. Similarly, flashlight (84.4%) dominated torch (15.6%). In many digital contexts, flashlight is the default label (including phone settings and gaming interfaces), which may reinforce AmE usage even for learners in BrE-oriented classrooms.

Public-space and mobility vocabulary also showed strong AmE preference for particular items. Sidewalk (77.8%) exceeded pavement (22.2%), and truck (63.5%) exceeded lorry (36.5%). These items are frequent in entertainment media, especially in American-produced content, and they are common in online discourse about travel, transport, and daily life. Nevertheless, the margin for apartment/flat was smaller (56.3% vs. 43.7%), suggesting that some BrE items remain robust, perhaps due to classroom instruction or because flat is also used in international contexts. This mixed pattern supports a conservative claim: learners' lexical repertoires integrate both varieties rather than adopting AmE uniformly.

Education and schedule-related items show a different pattern. While schedule (69.5%) strongly exceeded timetable (30.5%), several education-related words leaned BrE, such as holiday (68.9%) over vacation (31.1%) and wardrobe (76.0%) over closet (24.0%). Two explanations are plausible and not mutually exclusive. First, BrE-based textbooks used in Uzbekistan may reinforce specific classroom items, making them more accessible in academic contexts. Second, some BrE forms may be socially evaluated as more "formal" or more appropriate for written work, encouraging learners to retain them even if they hear AmE alternatives. According to Garret, such evaluative mechanisms are consistent with attitude research emphasizing prestige and institutional ideology.

The dataset also reveals pairs where pragmatic constraints may shape preference beyond variety exposure. Eraser (68.3%) exceeded rubber (31.7%). In BrE, rubber is a common school term for eraser, but it carries an additional meaning in other contexts that may cause learners to avoid it. Similarly, drugstore (41.3%) and chemist (58.7%) shows BrE preference but not overwhelming dominance, possibly reflecting that drugstore is frequent in media yet chemist is reinforced in instruction. These examples illustrate why lexical preference cannot be reduced to a simple BrE-versus-AmE competition; lexical items are embedded in semantic networks and pragmatic associations that affect what learners feel comfortable producing.

Third section of the questionnaire assessed learners' perceived exposure and attitudes toward British and American English. **As shown in Figure 2 below**, the mean responses (1–5) for the five Likert statements indicate moderate agreement that learners hear American English on social media (Q21: M = 3.14) and that teachers mostly use British English (Q22: M = 3.31). Learners also showed mild agreement that they prefer the vocabulary they encounter more frequently (Q23: M = 3.34). In contrast, noticing lexical differences between British and American English was closer to the midpoint (Q24: M = 2.88), indicating only moderate confidence in distinguishing the two varieties. Finally, views on maintaining one consistent variety in writing were mixed, with the mean slightly below the midpoint (Q25: M = 2.93).

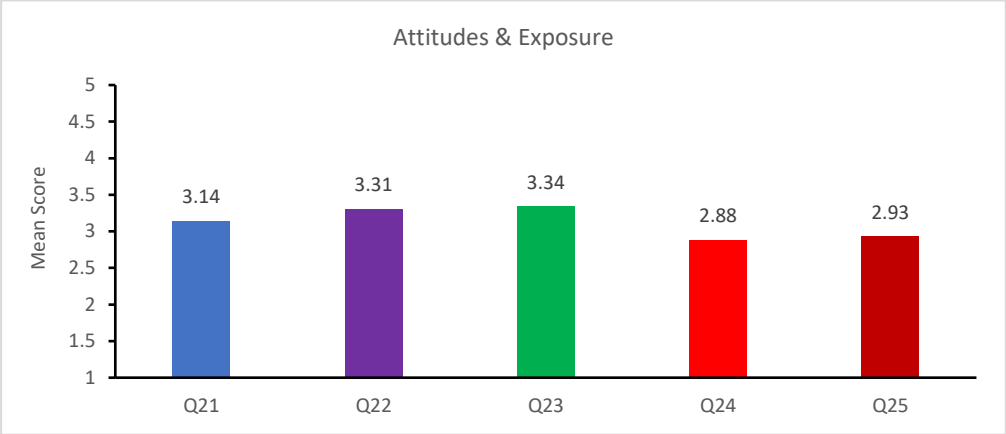

Figure 2. Mean Likert-scale scores on attitudes and exposure items

The open-ended responses provide a richer account of learners' variety orientations. Many responses were short labels (e.g., "British," "American English"), while others provided explicit rationales in Uzbek, Russian, or English. Thematic coding identified four dominant rationales: (a) BrE as formal/academic/exam-aligned, (b) AmE as clear/easy/familiar, (c) pronunciation salience, especially rhotic /r/, as an identity marker, and (d) flexibility across situations.

BrE as formal, academic, and institutionally supported. A recurrent rationale described BrE as more formal, more elegant, or more appropriate for writing and examinations. Several responses explicitly referenced the educational system, suggesting that BrE is "more commonly taught" or connected to standardized tests. This theme aligns with the known BrE orientation of many Uzbek textbooks and with the broader claim that educational ideologies can sustain an exonormative model in Expanding Circle contexts (Kachru; Hasanova). From an attitude perspective, these comments reflect overt evaluation, in which BrE is associated with prestige and academic legitimacy (Garrett).

AmE as clear, easy, and more frequently heard. Many respondents explained their preference for AmE by referencing clarity and ease of understanding, often stating that AmE is heard "more often" or is "easy to pronounce." This theme resonates strongly with the exposure and frequency items in Section 3 and supports usage-based explanations: learners adopt forms that they encounter repeatedly and that feel cognitively accessible, as argued by Ellis and Nation. Importantly, several respondents did not frame AmE as more prestigious but as more practical and familiar, an orientation consistent with global media influence.

A distinctive subset explicitly mentioned pronunciation, especially the /r/ sound, as a reason to prefer AmE. Learners commented that AmE pronounces letters "clearly," particularly /r/, or that they "like pronouncing r." This suggests that variety preference is not purely lexical; it is part of a broader stance toward accent identity and intelligibility. In pedagogical terms, this theme indicates that discussions of lexical preferences may need to acknowledge how pronunciation models shape learners' sense of what variety feels comfortable and "natural."

Some respondents preferred BrE in formal writing but AmE in informal speaking, or stated that both varieties have their place. Such flexibility aligns with global-English arguments that English is used as a resource in diverse settings and that users often adapt to audience and context, as discussed by Crystal and Seidlhofer[14]. However, the modest awareness score in Section 3 suggests that flexibility may not always be strategic. The combination of limited noticing and moderate commitment to writing consistency implies that some mixing may be unintentional, reinforcing the need for explicit awareness-raising and editing practice in academic writing instruction.

Discussion. The results point to a genuinely mixed lexical profile. When all selections are pooled, American English items are chosen slightly more often than British English items. However, the item-by-item table shows that preferences are not uniform, and some pairs remain strongly British while others are strongly American. This combination is consistent with what many EFL

[14] Seidlhofer, B. (2013). *Understanding English as a lingua franca*.

studies describe as hybrid use, where learners adopt whichever form is more available in their experience rather than committing to a single external norm, as suggested by Alftberg and Lindell.

The paired-samples t-test was applied only to the multiple-choice vocabulary data, as required. Using lexical pairs as the unit of analysis (n = 20), the test did not show a reliable overall difference across items. This outcome is informative rather than disappointing: it reflects the wide spread of item effects. In other words, the dataset contains several very large differences in both directions, and these cancel out when items are treated equally. With the available summary data, it is more accurate to describe the pattern as item-dependent than to claim a strong overall shift toward one variety.

A close look at the strongest differences helps explain why. Highly American-leaning choices such as vacuum cleaner, flashlight, eggplant, and sidewalk are common in global online content, especially entertainment media and platform culture, so they may be encountered repeatedly outside the classroom. Participants also reported moderate agreement that they hear American English more often on social media. Repeated exposure of this kind can make a form feel normal and easy to retrieve during everyday communication, which is exactly the type of mechanism reported in prior work on preference shaped by media input and frequency of contact by Koceva et al.

At the same time, several items strongly favored British English, including holiday, wardrobe, and autumn. This aligns well with the Uzbek instructional environment. In Uzbekistan, English textbooks and many classroom models are traditionally based on British English, and learners moderately agreed that their teachers mostly use British English. Learners therefore receive repeated, explicit reinforcement of British lexical items in formal study settings. Studies in other school-based contexts have also shown that classroom norms can preserve British-oriented choices even when learners consume large amounts of American media as reported by Alftberg and Yaman.

The attitude items also clarify why mixing may persist into academic writing. Participants only slightly agreed that they can easily notice the difference between British and American words, and the mean for wanting to be consistent in writing was below the midpoint. This suggests that many learners may not treat variety choice as something that requires active monitoring, especially during timed writing or when attention is focused on grammar and content. Lindell and Yaman similarly note that awareness is often partial and uneven, which means that learners may know some pairs well but overlook others and unintentionally combine forms.

From a pedagogical perspective, the most practical response is not to prohibit one variety, but to teach control. Teachers can explicitly explain that both varieties are acceptable in global communication, while assessment in academic writing often expects internal consistency. In practice, this can be taught through small routines that students can apply when drafting and editing, such as choosing a target variety for an assignment, keeping a short list of common BrE and AmE pairs, and running a final check for mixed spellings and vocabulary. Because Uzbek textbooks are largely British-oriented, a British target may be the simplest default for formal writing, but learners should also be taught to recognize high-frequency American items so they can make conscious choices rather than accidental ones.

Conclusion. This study set out to describe how Uzbek EFL learners choose between BrE and AmE lexical items and how those choices relate to instruction and exposure. Across the vocabulary task, AmE forms accounted for a small majority of all selections, yet the item-level profile was clearly mixed. Some lexical pairs were strongly AmE, others were strongly BrE, and a smaller set was closer to balanced. The paired-samples t-test applied to the multiple-choice vocabulary data at the item level did not show a significant overall difference across items, which reinforces the main descriptive conclusion: preferences depend on the word. This pattern makes sense in the local context. Many English textbooks and classroom models in Uzbekistan are based on BrE, and participants tended to agree that their teachers mostly use BrE. At the same time, learners reported that they frequently hear AmE on social media, and open-ended responses repeatedly framed AmE as clearer, easier to understand, and easier to pronounce, especially in connection with the rhotic r sound. BrE, by contrast, was often linked to formality, academic use, examinations, and perceived prestige, as well as to the idea that it sounds elegant. Taken together, the findings portray Uzbek learners as managing two strong input streams, and this produces hybrid lexical behaviour rather than exclusive alignment with one external standard.

The pedagogical implications are therefore practical and classroom-focused. First, teachers can make variety expectations explicit. If a course, textbook series, or assessment system expects BrE, students should be told clearly that consistency matters in formal writing, even though mixing is common in informal speech and online communication. Second, instruction can treat lexical variation as teachable knowledge rather than as error. Short activities can be used to highlight the most frequent BrE and AmE pairs and to show students that both forms are legitimate, but context and audience may determine which is preferable. Third, because many learners reported that they notice differences only sometimes, teachers can train a simple editing routine: students choose a target variety for an assignment, then review their drafts with a checklist that flags high-frequency pairs and common spelling differences. This approach supports accuracy without discouraging exposure to global English. Finally, since learners are likely to keep encountering AmE through media, teachers can incorporate that exposure into learning by using authentic clips or posts and asking students to identify vocabulary markers of variety and to rewrite short passages consistently in one variety. These steps can help learners move from accidental mixing to controlled choice, which is the central skill needed for academic writing.

Limitations and suggestions for future research. Several limitations should be acknowledged. The sample was drawn from one university and was heavily female, which reflects local program demographics but limits generalizability. The vocabulary task used 20 lexical pairs, which provides a clear snapshot of high-salience items but cannot represent the full range of British and American lexical variation. In addition, the available dataset contains item-level totals rather than participant-level responses, so inferential analysis for the vocabulary task was necessarily conducted at the item level. While this meets the requirement to apply an SPSS t-test to the multiple-choice section using only the provided results, it does not test individual differences or allow modelling of how proficiency, years of study, or exposure predict choices. Finally, the open-ended responses were coded carefully across Uzbek, Russian, and English, but qualitative interpretation always involves some judgement, so the thematic summaries should be read as supportive context rather than as precise measurement.

Future research can strengthen the evidence base by collecting participant-level responses and linking lexical choices to detailed measures of exposure and instructional history. With raw responses, researchers could examine whether learners who report heavier social media input show stronger American preferences, or whether students with stronger academic writing experience show higher consistency. Comparisons across multiple Uzbek universities, as well as longitudinal tracking across semesters, would also help clarify whether hybrid lexical behaviour changes with increased proficiency or changing media habits. Finally, classroom intervention studies would be valuable. For example, a short teaching unit on lexical variation and consistency could be evaluated to see whether it increases noticing, improves editing accuracy, and reduces unintended mixing in assessed writing.

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