

***The Usage of American and British English in  
Finnish, Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic  
International Baccalaureate Classes***

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## 1. Abstract

The purpose of my thesis is to research the usages and preferences of Nordic International Baccalaureate (IB) students with respect to American (AmE) and British English (BrE). The Nordic countries that participated were: Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Finland.

Unfortunately, the results from Sweden came too late and thus there was no time to analyze and include them in the thesis. This thesis is only scraping the very surface of American and British English usage in the Nordic countries, as only one school from each Nordic country (excluding Sweden) took part in this study.

After that I shall also write about the history of the English language in the Nordic countries, as this is an important factor that affects the English usage of the IB students even these days. After that I go on to methodology. I sent out questionnaires (appendix 1) to each Nordic school and the teachers were asked to ask their students to fill out the questionnaires and then they were sent back to me for further analysis. The results are displayed in figures and tables in the results section.

After this I discussed the findings and then proceeded to conclusions. The results show that the majority of each Nordic class prefer American English more than British English. There are several reasons for these results, for example: media, teachers etc.

## 2. Introduction

The United States and Great Britain share many things, such as history, culture and of course language. However, as George Bernard Shaw put it: America and Britain are two nations *divided* by a common language. He also noted that “The Americans and the British are destined never to understand each other, but doomed to forever try.” In her book “Brit-Think, Ameri-Think”, Jane Walmsley (Walmsley 2003: 2-19) says that between America and Britain there is a Great Philosophical and Cultural Divide, which is obscured by the familiar lingo. According to McCormick (McCormick 2001: 11-12), The US and the UK share the common language, but the word “common” is deceptive, because American and British English have been diverging ever since Webster’s *An American Dictionary of the English Language* came out in 1828 (Algeo 1988, p.3-4, McCormick 2001, p.11-12, Walmsley 2003 p.2,19).

The differences and relationship have puzzled many people, so it made me wonder how American (AmE) and British English (BrE) have affected the Nordic International Baccalaureate (IB) students? The reason for choosing the Nordic countries is that I study at the university of Oslo and I come originally from Finland. I also graduated from a Finnish IB class in 2003. In addition, the Nordic countries share similar culture and many people are fluent in English. Thus it is fascinating to see whether all Nordic IB students (that participate into my study) prefer one variety over the other or not or perhaps they mix the varieties (Algeo 1988, p.3-4, McCormick 2001, p.11-12, Walmsley 2003 p.2,19).

There are some important factors that might influence the students’ choices, like the notion of “proper English”. Many Americans regard BrE as more formal and proper than AmE, while the British in turn consider AmE as more relaxed and informal. This is often due to comments of differences in pronunciation (Biber 1987: 99).

Algeo (Algeo 1988: 5) argues that there seems to be an unstated and illogical assumption that British English is the norm for the English language, as it was the historical homeland for the language. He continues to disagree with this common assumption by stating that a unified standard for the English language ceased to exist by the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Algeo 1988, p.5).

The notion of “proper English” lives on. Many have tried to speak for and against BrE as well as AmE. Is there such a thing as ‘bad’ or ‘good’ English? Is American or British English more proper? The claims have gone both ways (Finnegan 2001, p.359-369).

The English language has always been one of the battlegrounds of Anglo-American rivalry, a fascinating window on to the tensions of the “special relationship”. Divided by a common language, each generation has made the enjoyable discovery that the English of England is different from the English of America, arguing and joking about it according to the mood and politics of the time (McCrum et al. 1986 et al. 1986, p.235-237).

As pioneers, the first Americans had to make up new words, some of which seem very common now, but were under the attack of the British at the time as “barbarous English”. Words like: lengthy, calculate etc. The Americans adopted many words from the Indians, German, Dutch, French and Spanish. These new usages made Samuel Johnson make this comment: “the American dialect, a tract of corruption to which every day language widely diffused must always be exposed.” The magazine *Punch* wrote:” if the pure well of English is to remain undefiled no Yankee should be allowed henceforth to throw mud into it.” Could this notion of “properness” affect the English usage of IB-students even today? (McCrum et al. 1986 et al. 1986, p.235-237)

Both countries are influential world powers and thus it made me wonder: Which variety is more influential in the Nordic countries? The differences stretch to many linguistic areas and are numerous, although minor, in the sense that they seldom disturb conversation (Algeo 1988, p.32).

However, I chose to do my research in lexis and grammar, as these are the most fruitful areas of differences in AmE and BrE. They are also easier to test, than for example pragmatics. The analyses are necessarily explorative and not meant to provide definite results; rather, they are to increase the attention on and further the understanding of certain types of questions (Berns et al. 2007 et al. 2007, p.90).

I chose AmE and BrE among the varieties of English, because they are the biggest, most common, most influential and best known to Nordic people. Marianne Hundt (Hundt 1997: 135) claims in her research on BrE and AmE that AmE is the most influential variety today and goes on quoting Quirk who describes AmE as “the linguistic centre of gravity for the English speaking world”. She also claims that the predominance of American influence is expected to lead to a levelling of differences the growing internationalisation of the world English. According to Hundt, American acts as an “accelerator of change” within British English, not the other way around (Hundt 1997, p.135).

One hears often as a language student of “Americanization” of English, yet rarely of “Britishization” of the English language. While reading my material for the master’s thesis, I found only one instance of this term, which was for the phrase “have got to”. Mair (Mair

2002: 111) argues in his essay that: “They say that *have got to* was spearheaded by BrE, but there is hardly any other evidence that the grammar of international standard English is converging on current British norms. “ (Mair 2002, p.111)

According to Hundt and Mair, American English has claimed its place as the most influential variety of English, but does this come across in the results from the IB students also?

Both AmE and BrE belong to the “inner circle” of Braj Kachru’s model of Global English from 1989. English is moving to an era where speakers of English as first language will lose influence as most communication will be among those from other circles, thus the English language’s ownership is becoming pluralistic and cannot be no longer deputed solely in relation to the inner circle, so the norms of inner circle can be challenged (Davies 2007, p.45-48).

English is the most taught language in virtually every country of the European Union. Formerly it was taught primarily for integrative purposes with the expectation that learners would become proficient enough in English solely to interact with British subjects. As this is no longer tenable in multilingual and multicultural Europe, where English is a *lingua franca* for interactions between and among speakers of various non-English language backgrounds, the broad and encompassing goal for classroom learning is the communicative competence that is useful with other English learners and users like themselves within and beyond Europe (Berns et al. 2007, p.23-25).

Foreign language instruction may be either mandatory or optional depending upon the country. In 13 EU countries learning English is mandatory. Across Europe, education through the medium of another language is available in private and public schools. Known variously as bilingual, multilingual, dual language, immersion, content and language intergrated/CLIL depending upon the setting and the form in which it is implemented, English is well represented, serving as both a medium and a subject of instruction. IB is a good example of the CLIL environment and I chose to focus on IB, because I knew that they were fluent enough in English to participate to my study and complete the questionnaire (Berns et al. 2007, p.23-25).

I could have chosen to study another age group, but it was easier to collect samples from these students. In addition, young people are always on top of all the new trends and changes, even linguistically. They are also the next generation and they will set the standard in language as well as other areas of life.

### **3. Background information on English language in the Nordic countries**

In order to understand the choices the Nordic IB students make today, one must understand the history of English language in each Nordic country. The language of the British Isles was little used outside its shores between 1375 and 1550, when the English were prosperous and commercially independent. English language gained influence in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries across the English Channel. It began in Germany in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century and continued into the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century English language had gradually spread further across Europe to the extent that it had become “esteemed an essential” in Russia and Scandinavia as well as Germany (Berns et al. 2007, p.17-18).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century English assumes a stronger presence in Europe, and not solely due to British influence. The United States’ part in ending the First World War and its new standing as a world power has attributed to a linguistic innovation introduced in 1919 with the Peace Treaty of Versailles. Up to that time, treaties had been written in French in keeping with its traditional role in the domain of diplomacy; the Versailles treaty had both English and French versions. The influence of the US became more marked after 1945, and American English eventually became a significant feature of secondary education and eventually primary education in Europe after the 1950’s (Berns et al. 2007, p.17-18).

Further developments in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also strengthened the hold of English in Europe. Among them were the influx of American and British popular music in the 1960s and more widespread use of English among scientists in the 1970s. The UK also joined the Common Market in the 1970s, thus increasing Britain’s role in the displacement of French as the only official language of the Market’s successor, the European Union. More generally, it was in the latter half of the 1980s that English was given a larger role in multinational companies, a practice that expanded during the 1990s (Berns et al. 2007, p.17-18)..

In 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe, as in most other regions of the world, English is used for a variety of purposes and serves its speakers in a range of functions and domains. It dominates in the fields of science and technology, diplomacy and international relations, sports and international competitions, media, business and commerce, design and fashion, travel and tourism, the entertainment industry, and higher education (Berns et al. 2007, p.17-18).

### **3.1. English language in Iceland**

#### **3a.) Short history of English language influence in Iceland**

In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, when Iceland was settled, there was little influence between Iceland and Britain. Most loanwords from English came from religion from Old English, e.g. *kirkja* = *church*. Also some other words from merchandise that was brought from their travels, e.g. *sokkur* = *sock*. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, English sailors started to visit Iceland for fishing and trading. This period was so influential, that it is called “the English century” in Icelandic history, because it left many loanwords to Icelandic in the areas of fishing, trading and merchandise. The Hanseatic league drove the English away from Iceland in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and they dominated Iceland until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, thus the contact between the British and the Icelandic people was very limited (Görlach et al. 2002, p.82-84).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Iceland was a colony of Denmark, Danish was the main source of impact. However, English language influence in social life increased in Europe and so the majority of the English loanwords found their way to Icelandic through Danish. Towards the end of the century there was an increase in the contact with Iceland and English speaking countries. Emigration to Canada and the US in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and trade and other business contacts with Britain increased as well. Travelling to Britain and the US to work and study became more usual. Also the interest to English language increased in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Görlach et al. 2002, p.82-84).

During the World War II, there was very much influence directly from the British, because Iceland was occupied by the British troops in 1940. The US took part in the war and when the British troops left, the US army has maintained its military bases there since 1951 (Görlach et al. 2002, p.83-84).

After the war, the direct contact between the troops and the Icelandic population greatly reduced. However, ever since the war, there has been an increasing influence from the English language. There were many marriages between the Icelandic and British or American soldiers. Many of these who were married still keep contact with Iceland, even though they have moved from Iceland to Britain or the US. Many Icelanders attend universities in Britain and the US these days and travel frequently. There has also been a steady flow of English speaking tourists to Iceland (Görlach et al. 2002, p.83-84).

### **3b.) Types of English language influence in Iceland**

There is a huge influence from British and mostly American films and other types of entertainment. A large part of the country was able to listen to American broadcasting from the military base and in the 1950s and 60s it was possible to watch American military television too, until the Icelandic authorities demanded a restriction of the transmissions for cultural and political reasons. During the occupation, many English words found their way into the language e.g. words for food, clothing, music and entertainment. Later many words relating to sports, seafaring, aviation and computing found their way to the Icelandic language as well (Görlach et al. 2002, p.83-85).

There are some stylistic differences to the usage and intake of English words as loanwords. English is used in colloquial speech, technical terms or specialized terms of some sort. Most of this type of borrowing began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from different sorts of sports, computer science, music, dancing and even narcotics. The younger population use English expressions and loanwords in slang: e.g. the phrase: “come on”. However, neologisms are preferred in writing and other formal language use. The majority of English is only attested in speech, thus it is restricted to the spoken language. It is mostly heard in the colloquial register, slang and youth language (Görlach et al. 2002, p.83-89).

It is quite rare to find them in written language. Anglicanisms are also more prominent in other domains e.g. technology, entertainment, however these are generation bound. Synonyms made up of an Anglicanism and Icelandic neologisms are frequent. The Anglicanisms are being used colloquially or in informal situations and slang, while neologisms are preferred for more formal purposes, especially in writing and in formal speech as in lectures. English words and expressions become outdated fast, with fields such as clothing, cosmetics, music and entertainment (Görlach et al. 2002, p.83-89).

No quantitative studies are carried out to find out how many loanwords there are in the Icelandic language. No dictionaries of foreign words have been published. Anglicanisms are rarely entered in general Icelandic dictionaries, because of the language policy. It is impossible to give an accurate number of English loanwords in Icelandic. New words are introduced all the time, but they are short-lived. Some of these are replaced by neologisms (Görlach et al. 2002, p.87).

### **3c.) Language purism in Iceland**

In small countries, the people tend to be more aware of foreign influence to their language. In Iceland this has always been the case. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the spirit of European enlightenment was reflected in the creation of numerous Icelandic neologisms for new and foreign terms in fields that were more or less new in Iceland. In 1779, an association was established with the goal of removing all foreign words and phrases from the language. The battle was mainly directed towards Danish, as there was not much English influence in Iceland at the time (Görlach et al. 2002, p.84-85).

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century a Danish-Icelandic dictionary was written; in order for Icelanders to express themselves better in Icelandic. The first English-Icelandic dictionary came out in 1896, where very few loanwords were used, except those that came from Old English. Official Language Council was established in 1964: The Icelandic Language Council. The aim of the council is to keep the language intact and free from foreign influence by using native words and neologisms from native stems and affixes rather than loanwords. Public institutions are to follow this and public media is supposed to model good language usage. They have published recently terminological dictionaries that include works on computer science and technology, maths, physics, aviation, and pedagogy. In addition they have opened a word bank on the internet (Görlach et al. 2002, p.84-85).

### **3d.) English language in Icelandic schools**

The first English textbook for schools in Iceland was written in 1863. English has been a part of the compulsory education in Iceland for decades. It used to be the second foreign language, after Danish, which started around the age of 12. Recently this order has changed and now English language teaching starts at the age of 10. In schools there is a big emphasis on the British English variety with some reference to American English. English language has the strongest influence on Icelandic now of all languages, not only because of education in schools, but because of daily contact with English through music, films, foreign magazines, TV, computers etc. Most Icelanders have knowledge of English, even children before they start school mainly from media (Görlach et al. 2002, p.88).

### **3e.) The future of the English language in Iceland**

As discussed above, there are two opposite forces battling in Iceland. On one hand, the constantly increasing influence from Anglo-American world through TV, films, computer games, internet etc. On the other hand: a widely accepted language policy of purism and a long tradition of the formation of neologisms by native means. There is no sign of English impact decreasing in future; it is only likely to intensify more. Most people use English, to some extent, in their daily lives, at least passively and great many actively. They read manuals, magazines, and books, watch TV, go to movies, use computer etc. Majority of films and TV are in English in Iceland (as it is the case in all of the Nordic countries), and they are subtitled not dubbed which enhances the language learning even more (Görlach et al. 2002, p.104).

After this short introduction to English language in Iceland, it is interesting to test and see what the IB youngsters prefer, American or British English? Is their English affected by the older generations that were influenced by the American and British troops, or does the British English taught in schools shape their English or perhaps they are affected by the language purism in Iceland some way?

## **3.2. English Language in Norway**

### **3a.) Short history of English language influence in Norway**

The language contact started during the Viking Ages, which lead to extensive lexical borrowing. After the introduction of Christianity, even more English words entered the Norwegian language. As the Hanseatic League rose to power, the contact between the British and the Norwegians diminished, because contact with the continent was more important to the Hansa league (Görlach et al. 2002, p.57).

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more words came about because of the technical and industrial revolution for measure, textiles, financial transactions, food and drink, clothing, social life of privileged classes, leisure-time activities like card games and sports and maritime life. , which all reflected British dominance in world trade and shipping. There were also new inventions that came from the US and the UK, which usually carried a new English word, invented to point to the new invention (Görlach et al. 2002, p.57-59).

Otto Jespersen compiled a list of English words in 1902 and divided them into domains followingly: public sphere, life of the upper classes (especially clothing), sports, card games, the railway, agriculture, maritime, literary, and other cultural terms. A number of these domains indicate changes in society, such as terms associated with industrial life and various sport activities (Görlach et al. 2002, p.58).

Aaste Steene studied the language situation immediately after the World War II in 1945. She also divided the new words into several categories: sports and games, transport, travel, holiday-making, the sea, ships, sailors, trade, dress, fashion, personal appearance, food, drink, hospitality, cultural life, religion, politics, society. Sports and games was the dominant category, covering more than fifth of the categories. The amount of soccer terms, suggested that this sport was becoming popular, as it did. Mechanization and motorization of the shipping fleet required also a new terminology. A number of Steene's categories indicate the increase in dominance of the USA in matters both technical and cultural such as motor trade and air travel, photography and film. Later on words associated with music and dancing had a small but important impact on Norwegian and the power of American cultural expressions is evident. Dominance of USA was becoming stronger and stronger in Norway (Görlach et al. 2002, p.58).

The bulk of the English vocabulary in Norwegian came in however after 1945. One dictionary estimates that 80-90 % of all the post-war Norwegian words of foreign origin can be traced back to English influence. Exposure to English language is very high, through education, travel, tourism, TV, movies, pop music, magazines, books, internet, science and lifestyle (Görlach et al. 2002, p.58-59).

Norwegian immigration to the US resulted also into some new words, associated with the States. More words entered Norwegian language from AmE than from BrE after the World War II. This reflects the increasingly dominant role of the US as a world power, in terms of economy, politics and culture (Görlach et al. 2002, p.57-60).

As with Icelandic, the influence of British English was much greater in the beginning of the language influence history and then American English took over.

### **3b.) Language purism in Norway**

Purist ideas have a relatively long history in Norway, mostly towards the Latinate, and in the case of Nynorsk, against Danish and German derived vocabulary. After the war, the increase of English language influence caught the Norwegians' attention. In 1960's and 70's Alf Hellevik spoke of linguistic invasion. Recently two campaigns were established in order to protect the Norwegian language from the increasing and harmful influence of English language: The first one was the "Aksjonen for språklig miljøvern" the campaign for the protection of the linguistic environment, which was launched in 1990 by the Norwegian language council. The second was a list of Norwegianized spellings, which was issued in 1996. There are also other types of encouragements for the Norwegians to use Norwegian instead of English, for example Norwegian businesses, which have a Norwegian name, are sponsored by the government. There is for example a coffee shop chain called Kaffe og Krem (direct translation: Coffee and Cream) and a tanning salon chain called Brun og Blid that enjoy this sponsorship (direct translation: Brown and Happy) (Görlach et al. 2002, p.60-61).

### **3c.) Amount of English elements in Norwegian**

Only a few attempts have been made to measure the English elements in Norwegian. One dictionary of foreign words from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century from Hansen contains just over 200 English entries, which is less than 2% of the total. In another dictionary, the percent is less than 0, 5%, which illustrates the problem of quantifying lexical influence. In more recent dictionaries by Berulfsen and Gundersen, 7%, in another Bokmålsordboka: 3,4 %. There are English loanwords which are also disappearing from Norwegian. Many words are no longer used because the object, concept, or phenomenon has gone out of use or are no longer of public interest. Also because there are many slang expressions, they tend to go out of fashion and be replaced. In addition, the policy to introduce Norwegian substitutions and calques for English loanwords has caused many to disappear (Görlach et al. 2002, p.62).

### **3d.) Stylistic differences**

As in most European countries, early English loans were of technical kind, because the main motives for borrowing from English seems to be to introduce new things, concepts or phenomena and these came often from English-speaking countries. The use of English loanwords contribute to some stylistic devices to the texts, they appeared more technical, professional, authoritative, objective and precise. Nowadays these loanwords are also linked to prestige in language. They are often used in advertising and promoting new trends and ideas. Here the stylistic effects are viewed as modern, urban and international. Also teenagers and slang use this for these reasons (Görlach et al. 2002, p.61-62).

### **3e.) English language in Norwegian schools**

It was first made compulsory as the second foreign language in secondary schools with the Education Act of 1869. In 1935, it became the first foreign language. This accelerated a shift in emphasis from German to English. English played an important role in the democratization process in Norway in the primary education in 1950's, under the slogan 'English for everyone', which meant that there was at least seven years of compulsory English in school for everyone and usually more than that. Today, a majority of Norwegians have had English training. Increasingly, Norwegians become educated abroad, often in an English speaking country. International education is highly valued in Norway and during the 1980's some Norwegian schools and universities started to offer international qualifications modelled on the British and American systems (Görlach et al. 2002, p.63).

### **3f.) Usage of English language in Norway**

Most Norwegians use English daily. The English language has immersed in many areas in Norway: culture and entertainment, music, sports, oil industry, daily press, media and internet. Age is an important factor, which has to do with the intensity of how much contact Norwegians have with English language. Young people in are in the lead with their internet usage (Görlach et al. 2002, p.76-77).

### **3g.) The future of English language in Norway**

After the war, borrowing has been increasing steadily and there are no signs of dramatic reversal. Also the rather high exposure to pop culture and media speeds up borrowing. However, many loanwords tend to disappear quickly as trends change so quickly (Görlach et al. 2002, p.79).

English had a similar start in Norway as in Iceland. It is interesting to see how the history and the language purism have affected the Norwegian IB students.

### ***3.3. English Language in Finland***

It was difficult to find material about the English language in Finland, because I am writing my thesis in the States. Thus I interviewed my old teacher, Jukka Hurskainen, via e-mail about English language in Finland. He is the IB-coordinator in my old school Joensuu Lyseon Lukio upper secondary school in Finland. This school also participated to my study.

According to Hurskainen, the Finnish school system went through a drastic change, which started in the North of Finland and was completed by the mid-1970s in Helsinki. With that change the old dual school system (kansakoulu-oppikoulu) was replaced with the new comprehensive school system (peruskoulu). In Joensuu, for instance, this took place in 1974.

In the old primary school (kansakoulu) language teaching did not start until in the 1960s, with the introduction of English. In the countryside it was taken care by English teachers that commuted from one school to another. In bigger schools they had English teachers of their own. In the old middle school and high school (keskikoulu, lukio) language teaching were mostly classical languages in the 1800s: apart from Finnish and Swedish, Latin and Russian were taught.

Then, after Finland became independent in 1917, Latin was replaced with German as the major language in schools. After the World War II, the influence of German diminished, because Germany lost the war, and it was replaced with English as the leading foreign language in Finnish schools. Thus English became the first foreign language a little bit later on than in e.g. Norway and Iceland.

At the time of the educational changes, the Finns were mostly influenced by British English. The influence of American English came later, with the influence of American films and TV series as well as music.

### **3b.) Language purism in Finland**

I was interested on language purism, because at least it was a big factor in Iceland and Norway and still is. However Hurskainen says that, as far as "language purism" is concerned, he does not think it ever occurred in Finland with respect to English, you could say it is quite the opposite: Finns tend to use English very freely: in the names of products, companies and shops. When you think of French, for instance, the situation is quite different: both in France and in Canada they have legislation that bans the use of English in many contexts.

The media seems to be one of the most influential areas in the lives of teenagers within the Nordic countries. However, Finland did not have a strong language purist movement, as in Iceland and Norway, so Finns might be affected more strongly by English than other Nordic countries. It will be intriguing to see if the Finnish IB-students today have been affected by the history of English language in Finland, because Finland does not share the same linguistic purism movement as e.g. Iceland and Norway.

### **3.4. English language in Danish schools**

English and Danish are related languages and thus share many words. The Danes invaded England in the 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries and influences the vocabulary and grammar of English language. Thus the influence was from Danish to English, the opposite from other Nordic languages. However in the beginning, the influence of English has changed its direction now and its influence is very strong on Danish rather than the other way around (Wikipedia, entry for 'Danish Language' and The Free Dictionary, entry for 'English Language').

The Danish begin English language learning at the third grade of elementary school. In 1903, the language line in secondary education was split into two, a classical line preserving extensive teaching in Latin and Greek and a modern language line in which Latin and Greek were replaced by English, German, and French as the main subjects. Nowadays, English is taught as the first foreign language (Danish Ministry of Education, entry for 'Education' and Wikipedia, entry for 'Secondary Education in Denmark').

## **4. Background information on the English language in the US and the UK**

### ***4.1. Short history of English language in the US***

The English language came to the US with the settlers from Britain in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1776, the English language was very similar across the Atlantic. A diarist made this comment about Americans “in general they speak better English than the English do. No country or colonial dialect is to be distinguished here.” As pioneers, the first Americans had to make up new words, some of which seem very common now, but were under the attack of the British at the time as “barbarous English”. Words like: lengthy, calculate etc. The Americans also adopted many words from the Indians, German, Dutch, French and Spanish (McCrum et al. 1986, p.235-6).

As the Americans gained independence, they started to think about their connections to Britain and wanted to show their independence in many ways. One way manifested itself in the language. They wanted to make English their own language, not something that was just another tie to Britain (McCrum et al. 1986, p.236).

The American Revolution marked the turning-point in the making of this new, American kind of English. The rebels wanted to announce their separation from the old country in every department of life. Many politicians understood the power of language in shaping the national consciousness, e.g. Thomas Jefferson invented his own words (McCrum et al. 1986, p.236).

Many prominent Americans wanted to take part in this battle for American English. One who fought for it and left his footprints to American English was the lexicographer, Noah Webster, the most famous of all American dictionary-makers and a tireless champion of American English. He devoted his life to championing the cause of the American language, its spelling, grammar and pronunciation. He wanted to standardize AmE. Webster went as far as to say that he wanted to call American English something else than English (McCrum et al. 1986, p.240-151).

The people who settled in America imported most of their books and many of their ideas from Europe, which was due to the fact that the Old World was a superior civilization and also because of the greatness of English literature and learning. The influence of Webster’s little book about spelling was enormous, which we can still see in

the American English spelling today with words such as honor vs. honour. These spelling differences are also tested in my questionnaire (Appendix 1). Webster published many books and one of his goals was to show with all his works that American English was distinctively unique from British English (Cable et al. 2002, p.366-369).

#### **4.2. Characteristics of American English**

American English is known for its high degree of uniformity and the reason for this is that Americans tend to move a lot and they mingle constantly. Certain mobility characterizes the American people, which merge the differences of language together. Archaism is another feature often attributed to AmE; the preservation of old features of the language that has gone out of use in the standard speech of Britain. American pronunciation as compared with that of London is somewhat old-fashioned, e.g. the preservation of /r/ and flat /a/ are two such that were abandoned in southern England at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In many little ways AmE is a reminiscent of an older period of the language (Cable et al. 2002, p.356-359).

AmE has kept a number of old words or old uses of words no longer used in Britain, e.g. mad, rare. Americans have kept the picturesque word “fall” as the natural word for the season. The choice between “fall” and “autumn” is also tested with the questionnaire in its vocabulary section (see appendix 1). These archaic features are due to that transplanting of a language, which results to arrested development and conservatism. In language development this slower development is often regarded as a form of conservatism and it is assumed as a general principle that the language of a new country is more conservative than the same language when it remains in the old habitat (Cable et al. 2002, p.356-359).

It is a well-recognized fact in cultural history that isolated communities tend to preserve old customs and beliefs. To the extent, then that new countries into which a language is carried are cut off from contact with the old we may find them more tenacious of old habits of speech. Thus AmE is more conservative than the English of England. Although rural speech of England is just as conservative as that of America This is an thought-provoking fact, because when it comes down to the notion of “proper English”,

which is discussed more deeply below, BrE is viewed as the “proper English”, even though AmE is more conservative of the two variants (Cable et al. 2002, p.360-364).

### **4.3. British English vs. American English**

*“An Englishman’s way of speaking absolutely classifies him”*

*Henry Higgins, in My Fair Lady, by Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner*

There has been an ongoing battle between the two main English variants, since the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Accusations have been made against the other variants on both sides of the Atlantic. Many teachers preferred British English while teaching English to their students, because BrE was, and perhaps still is, viewed as the standard variant of English and maybe even as the “better” English. Is there such a thing as “proper” or “better” English?

British English is the older variety, and traditionally BrE has enjoyed more prestige, at least in Europe and in former British colonies, than AmE. Until not so long ago, AmE was considered less educated, less cultured, and less beautiful than BrE. Teachers in many European countries were not allowed to have an American accent, and high-school students who returned from a year in the US were sometimes punished with low grades by conservative teachers (Tottie 2002, p.1-2).

This attitude seems mostly to have disappeared even if there are still traces of it. Another reason for the predominance of BrE is simply one of publishing traditions: Britain has a long tradition of producing textbooks and dictionaries and of marketing them all over the world, whereas there have been relatively few American textbooks and dictionaries written for audiences worldwide (Tottie 2002, p.1-2).

The result is a curious situation: the majority of the world’s native speakers of English are Americans, about 240 million people and they make up the majority of the 400 million native speakers, compared with about 57 million BrE speakers. Much more AmE is heard in films, and on TV, and more AmE is used in international business, computing and science. Yet the textbooks for non-native speakers that are used in schools in many countries are still mostly oriented toward BrE, sometimes presenting AmE as an aberration, often just in the form of a collection of words to learn (Tottie 2002, p.1-2).

Many people who speak British English feel that American English is taking over as a form of global communication, and they may be right. Many consider AmE to be rather sloppy, and they are concerned that American spelling may dominate and somehow contaminate their language. Americans often accept these attitudes uncritically and consider BrE to be the proper or real English. But the differences between AmE and other varieties do not result from sloppiness. Since US gained independence from Britain much earlier than most other former colonies, AmE has had more time to develop separately from BrE than other varieties (Davies, p.240-241).

From the late 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the Americans were often accused of corrupting the English language by introducing new and unfamiliar words. Americans were later on ridiculed often in movies, where there was the dumb American from south with his broad southern accent. Many AmE words have made their way into British use and their number appears to be increasing rather than diminishing. Often they have had to make their way against long and bitter opposition (Cable et al. 2002, p.390-397)

Noah Webster claimed that: “As an independent nation, our honor requires us to have a system of our own, in language as well as government. Great Britain should no longer be *our* standard; for the taste of her writers is already *corrupted* and her language on the *decline*.” (Finnegan 2001, p.367).

On the other side of the Atlantic, Henry Alford made a plea for the Queen’s English in 1863. He said that Americanisms would ruin the English language. This view was commonly held in Britain and among the literati in America. He said that Americanisms would deteriorate the language as well as the people. There were also critics who rejected the usage of “Americanisms” which are widely used still today: e.g. initiate pants, presidential, etc. (Finnegan 2001, p.384-385).

The year 1952 was the benchmark for growing liberality in attitudes toward usage of English variants. More recent views, which are generally held nowadays, are that there is no “better” English. George Philip Krapp noted that there is no such thing as “correct English” and that there are rather “kinds of English”. Also Charles Carpenter Fries argues that all varieties of English are correct. (Finnegan 2001, p.388-394).

However, as I mentioned before, even Americans themselves regard BrE as more formal and proper than AmE, while the British in turn consider AmE as more relaxed and informal. This is often due to comments of differences in pronunciation. This notion of “proper English” might be a factor for some IB students to choose one variety over another;

however the students were not aware of the purpose of the questionnaire, before completing it (Biber 1987, p. 99).

#### **4.4. American and British dominance**

When ever one variety of English has been more dominant in the world, it can be linked to the state of the world at the time. The Great Britain had greater influence in the world before the World Wars, than the US. The UK was shaken after the war politically, economically and socially. The US stepped up to the plate and after the wars the US has become more influential than the UK, for many reasons and in many areas of life. The area, which I am interested in for this thesis is of course the English language. How did the US become so influential?

There are many reasons for this. I shall try to list the most important ones here. The US is the “mother of exiles” and so as the immigrants hold contact with their old home countries, AmE spreads even further. Also the United States’ vital interests are economic success home and abroad, access to important natural resources, support for its ideological views, respect for its military power and assistance in the time of crisis and these interests make the US globally connected to the rest of the world and this also strengthens its power in the world (Mauk et al. 2002, p.13-63, 99-131).

The US fears of centralized power and foreign entanglements and that has traditionally shaped American foreign policy; today these values find expression in the intermingling of domestic and foreign policy institutions and the tendency toward unilateralism. American foreign policy is carried out through certain instruments, including diplomacy, the United Nations, the international monetary structure, economic aid, collective security and military deterrence. All of which promote American English around the world (Lowi et al. 1990, p.362-388).

The US is also very wealthy and has many natural goods to sell. The US and the UK are also known for its high level of education, especially in higher education. Many students stay in the States for some time studying in its many universities. A degree from the States or the UK is highly valued in Europe and it will again leave a mark on the student’s speech. The US media is also huge and very influential. The US produces thousands of newspapers and they are sold overseas or can be read online by anyone (Mauk et al. 2002, p.13-41, 245-286).

TV shows and programs which are broadcasted in the Nordic countries are mostly American and with subtitles, which promotes the AmE learning. Also music and different sports from the States are followed by the Nordic countries. (Mauk et al. 2002, p.269-286).

Jane Walmsley (Walmsley 2003: 115-118) talks ironically of media in the States and Britain:

*“First, there are lots of it. Americans believe in superabundant choice, and see no reason why TV should be an exception to the rule. Second (and as a result), it is competitive, with dozens of channels chasing a limited-if large-number of viewers. Success depends on attracting attention. And what about British TV... Brits confuse TV in general (and the BBC in particular) with morality in general and goodness in particular. They are never sure where entertainment fits in, let alone commerce....and grapple hopelessly with these issues every time the license fee comes up for renewal. To resolve the confusion, they have set up “watchdog” bodies (rough equivalents to America’s FCC) to monitor broadcasting and make sure that no one enjoys it too much. Part of their job is to limit competition (i.e. the number of stations on the air) and to interfere as much as possible with the ones they’ve got. Brit-TV executives pride themselves on intellectual and creative integrity. They are, they claim, above the ignoble American scramble for ratings. But what really annoys Brit-TV moguls is the thought that “formula” American programs- often high on lip gloss and low on IQ- have consistently swept the boards in Britain. Brit-viewer has not proved immune to the charms of Baywatch. This seems like a betrayal, but does nothing to change programming policy in Britain. It merely proves that viewers’ flesh is contemptibly weak.” (Walmsley, p.115-118)*

The fact that many viewers in the Nordic countries are attracted to the American “formula” programmes is true also. Even though they get their share of British programmes, it is the American ones that rule the majority of TV programs.

However Tottie (Tottie 2002: 245) points out that, even though AmE seems to be the dominant alternative these days, AmE has a battle to fight on its home grounds. As long as the US remains country committed to receiving immigrants from other countries, there will be a steady influx of speakers of other languages (Tottie 2002, p.245).

However, there is no doubt that AmE is conquering the world and is becoming a model for teaching in an increasing number of non-English speaking countries. As is always the case with languages that become successful and dominant (eg.Latin, Chinese, Russian etc. in the past) this happens not because these languages are inherently easier to learn or in any way superior to other languages, but for the economic, political and cultural

reasons. American dominance in the world of finance, science, computers and movies has led to a linguistic dominance as well (Tottie 2002, p.245).

#### ***4.5. Reasons for differences between American and British***

There are several reasons underlying behind the differences between American and British English. One reason is the sheer distance between the two countries. The differences started to emerge as the early settlers came to the States and had very little to no contact with Britain, as the modern technology was unheard of for hundreds of years to come. Archaistic features and literature from Britain kept AmE from straying too far from BrE until the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, people like Noah Webster speeded the change along between the two varieties. He even predicted that American English would be as different from British English as Dutch, Danish and Swedish are from German, or from one another (Davies 2007, p.2).

Other differences result from the fact that languages change over time no matter what and since the separation, AmE has changed differently from BrE, along their own lines. BrE and AmE probably reached their greatest divergence just before the World War II and since that time have been getting closer or at least better understood by the other country (Davies 2007, p.2).

Industrial revolution initiated the need for many new words. The US no longer conformed to the British standard with new words. Each country had its own engineers and designers, who gave new creations their particular names. Hundreds of new terms were needed. With the countries so far apart there was really no need for the US to follow British usage. The differences increased as time went on, even though more people were travelling back and forth across the Atlantic by then. Many educated people were aware of the differences in terminology, but no great effort was made to unify the terms. The differences between AmE and BrE gradually increased, until greater communication between the countries in the 1940s turned the tide. A good example of how far apart the languages had become is apparent in the list of railway terms. Despite all of the communication going on between UK and US today, it is amazing that new words being coined in one country is represented by another word in the other country, e.g. mobile phone in the UK, cell phone in the US. This example is included in my questionnaire (appendix 1, mobile phone vs. cell phone) (Davies 2007, p.3).

According to Tottie (Tottie 2002: 146,147), the vocabulary of a language must of necessity change in order to be able to handle new phenomena and new circumstances. Old words are used with new meanings, and new words are coined or borrowed from other languages. Grammar does not have to change in the same way to reflect a changing reality, and that accounts for the fact that there are far fewer grammatical differences between AmE and BrE than there are differences in vocabulary. The grammatical differences may be more subtle than the lexical ones, but they do exist, and it is interesting for the perceptive reader and listener to be able to diagnose a text on the basis of its grammar. If grammar doesn't have to change, we may ask ourselves why there are any grammatical differences at all between AmE and BrE (Tottie 2002, p.146-147).

There are many reasons for these changes: There were original dialect differences among the settlers who came to America at different periods of time, who spoke Irish English, Scots and other dialects of BrE, and these differences have sometimes been preserved. There has also been influence from other languages like: German, Scandinavian, Yiddish etc. but that is a much less important factor. Sometimes grammar changed for no clear reason. British English is now influenced by American English, and several grammatical features that used to be regarded as typical of AmE are now no longer exclusively American (Tottie 2002, p.147).

## **5. English in the Media**

Media is one of the biggest influences in young people's lives, when it comes to language. In Europe, the media are well established and available in all forms – to a greater or lesser extent – to most Europeans. English appears to be equally established and available in all media forms. In the music world of Europe, songs in English, even performed by Europeans, sound more “stylish” to young people. The status English has in music is well illustrated by its dominance in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2001. In that year, this event, which brings performers from all European countries together, was conducted that year exclusively in English, except for the singer representing France (Berns et al. 2007, p.30-35).

Exposure to English via entertainment media goes beyond music; the television and film industries contribute to opportunities for Europeans to have contact with English. Increasingly, the world market for these cultural products is concentrated around Hollywood. According to a 1999 United Nations Development Program/UNDP, scarcely 30% of Hollywood's revenue in 1980 came from abroad compared with 50% nearly 20

years later. In 1996, 70% of the film market in Europe was claimed by the US. The European Audiovisual Observatory (2001) noted that in the year 2000 the market share of American films had again risen in 15 countries EU countries, while that of European films had fallen to 22,5% with stung national variations (Berns et al. 2007, p.30-35).

However, as with the music channel, Music Television (MTV), which is geared towards the youth and young adults has gone through a change in the last five years. All the Nordic MTV's are now run in their own languages, e.g. in Danish in Denmark and in Norwegian in Norway. The English shows in MTV are also subtitled these days. This change came about, when the German music channel VIVA, which is aired in German with German language music, became more successful in Germany, than the English language MTV (Berns et al. 2007, p.30-35).

Language dubbing and subtitling are also practised differently depending upon the country. Larger countries like France and Germany consider the investment in dubbing English-language films worthwhile. Thus, contact via television with exclusively English language offers a rare occurrence. Smaller countries, e.g. the Nordic countries regard dubbing as "cultural barbarism". This means that TV is an important source of contact with foreign languages (Berns et al. 2007, p.30-35).

Music, television and film are not the only media influenced by American cultural products and by English. The internet, radio and print media all of which are similarly rich in opportunities for contact with English, especially for teenagers (Berns et al. 2007, p.30-35).

The internet is undoubtedly the fastest-growing communication tool know to the world. The personal computer has reached a high degree of prominence in Europe, particularly in the northern countries. This increasingly important medium is obviously an opportunity for contacts with English language. Although, compared to the first years of the internet, the dominance of the English language on the web has been decreasing as other countries enter the new medium. Estimates in 2001 said that more than 50% of the internet content is in English now. However, English-language search engines (e.g. Google, Yahoo) are used widely, more so than local counterparts (Berns et al. 2007, p.30-35).

Radio has a large number of formatted programs broadcast for specific target groups. These programs are especially designed to attract young audiences and they offer mainly current popular music, a large majority of which has English lyrics (Berns et al. 2007, p.30-35).

English language press, also has a presence in Europe. International press is easy to find in bookstores, shops and kiosks e.g. The Times and The Wall Street Journal. You can also find magazines in English for women, teens etc (Berns et al. 2007, p.30-35).

## 6. Differences relevant for this thesis

There are a numerous differences between the two varieties and I chose to limit my research to: vocabulary, spelling, do-periphrasis, prepositions, verb form and verb complementation, subject-verb concord and adverbial placement. Below, I am explaining why I chose to study these elements of language and also refer to research and material written previously about these differences. The differences are not straightforward, which means that alternatives are not used exclusively by one variety. I talk of AmE and BrE alternatives, but one must bear in mind that the alternatives are used in both varieties.

### 6.1. Vocabulary

With vocabulary, I chose ten simple and common words, which should be known by all the IB students. These vocabulary differences are quite marked differences between the two varieties, which means that the words are used only or predominantly in one variety, which made them suitable for the questionnaire and the research. These phenomena or concepts exist in both America and Britain but different words are used to refer to them, such as *mobile phone* vs. *cell phone* etc. But speakers usually know the other variant. According to Tottie 2002, vocabulary is the greatest area of differences between AmE and BrE (Tottie 2002, p.69-70, 102).

As in my research, Tottie (Tottie 2002: 100) also refers to the lexemes *vacation* (AmE) vs. *holiday* (BrE) and *maybe* (AmE) vs. *perhaps* (BrE). She uses corpora to determine the frequencies of these particular lexemes, to see whether or not the common views are true. She demonstrates that *vacation* is only slightly more frequent in AmE by 59% than *holiday* by 41%. In British English the frequencies are much more straightforward: *holiday* had the frequency of 91% and *vacation* the remaining 11% (Tottie 2002, p.97-99). These four lexemes are words with the same basic meaning in BrE and AmE but with difference in style, connotation or frequency (Tottie 2002, p.100).

With the lexemes *perhaps* and *maybe*, Tottie (Tottie 2002:99) looked also for the differences in speech and writing in AmE and BrE. *Perhaps* is a word typical of the

written language in both AmE and BrE. What is especially striking here is that Americans seem to make very little use of *perhaps* in speech if at all (Tottie 2002, p.99).

## **6.2. Spelling**

The spelling differences are also quite marked on the two sides of the Atlantic. A well-known difference between AmE and BrE is that the past tense and participle forms often differ for such verbs as burn, learn, smell, spell etc. Quirk et al. point out that the regular d-form is especially AmE and the t-form especially BrE. In addition, Stig Johansson's (Johansson 1979: 205-207) results show that: 1) The t-form is almost completely lacking from AmE 2) The t-form is the preferred choice in BrE, though d-forms are also frequent 3) And finally, the d-forms and their frequency in BrE depends on the particular verb (Johansson 1979, p.205-207).

## **6.3. Do-periphrasis**

This is another element, which is well known and characterizes the two variants. According to Algeo (Algeo 1988: 16-17), in British use, "have" as a main verb may have the characteristics of an auxiliary in questions, negations and contractions, all of which are rare in AmE (Algeo, p.16-17).

The Do-periphrasis is a common element of comparison between AmE and BrE. It is normally pointed out that the lexical verb construction with do-periphrasis is more characteristic of AmE than of BrE. I have included some of Stig Johansson's (Johansson 1979: 195-215) examples from his elicitation experiment in to the questionnaire (e.g. Do you have a dog vs. Have you got a dog). The dominant alternative to the auxiliary-verb construction in the AmE group is the use of the do-periphrasis and in the BrE group the *have got* group, this construction was hardly ever used by the AmE group in Johansson's experiment (Johansson 1979, p.195-215).

Tottie (Tottie 2002: 153) supports Johansson's (Johansson 1979:195-215) view by claiming that, constructions without *do* are definitely unusual in AmE. Do-support is more common in AmE. The more informal BrE often prefers periphrastic construction (i.e. constructions with an auxiliary) with "have got" with the same meaning (Tottie 2002, p.153).

## **6.4. Prepositions**

Algeo (Algeo 1988: 14-15) claims, that the most significant prepositional differences are in the choice of one preposition over another in particular contexts. That is, idiomatic use or collocational probabilities of the prepositions. Prepositions have a large number of differences between BrE and AmE in both form and use (Algeo 1988, p.14-15).

Prepositional usage is mostly similar, but shows some differences between AmE and BrE. Sometimes different prepositions are used in otherwise identical constructions in AmE and BrE. Starting with indication of place, one of the most conspicuous differences is that in the US you live usually *on* a street and in Britain usually *in* a street (Tottie 2002, p.171-175).

## **6.5. Verb form and Verb complementation**

According to Algeo (Algeo 1988: 18-18, 24), verbs, verb phrases and verb complementation are one of the richest area of differences in grammar between BrE and AmE. Both the number of variations and the frequency of their use seems to be extraordinarily high (Algeo 1988, p.18-19, 24).

The term “aspect” is used mostly to denote the progressive and the perfect aspect in English, as in “I am reading” or “I have eaten”. The use of the progressive form usually signifies that an action is ongoing and not completed; the perfect is used to signify recent completion. The progressive is much more common in AmE, especially in conversation, than in BrE. Whereas, the perfect aspect is more common in BrE than in AmE, especially in newspaper language. Spoken AmE often uses the past tense whereas BrE would have the present perfect, particularly in the sentences containing the adverbs: ever, never, already, just or yet. The tendency is especially pronounced with “already” and much weaker with “yet”. AmE also uses the past tense, where BrE would use the pluperfect (Tottie 2002, p.160-161).

The preterite is used above all to refer to foregrounded events, especially in narrative contexts, where the preceding context will provide the past-time anchoring usually required by the preterite; the present perfect, on the other hand, is often used of backgrounded events, especially to events which are temporally isolated in the context. Also the clause type and text type affects the choice (Elsness 1997, p.233).

Elsness (Elsness 1989: 170-171) talks about the differences in the usage of present perfect (PERF) and preterite (PRET) in his two researches. Elsness found out that, if reference is clearly identified to the past time, then the speakers on both sides of the Atlantic agree that PERF is unacceptable and that PRET is the verb form to be used (Elsness 1989, p.170-171).

However, usually American English speakers prefer to use the preterite and British English speaker the present perfect (Elsness 1989, p.169, Elsness 1997, p.83).

Elsness' (Elsness 1989: 176-177) elicitation experiment shows that in the most clear-cut cases the PERF/PRET distribution follows the expected lines in both AmE and BrE: if the temporal reference is specified as being past time clearly separate from zero, PRET is selected, if the reference is to time extending up to zero, PERF is used in both varieties. In many cases where the temporal reference is more vague, the elicitation test has revealed a marked tendency for PERF to be judged more acceptable and PRET less so in BrE compared with AmE (Elsness 1989, p.176-177).

Elsness' (Elsness 1997: 83, 227) elicitation test also shows that there is a statistical difference in the elicitation test for AmE and BrE in half of the cases. A majority of the constructions are less acceptable in AmE, which are accepted in BrE. This suggests that the influence of AmE to BrE is stronger than vice versa (Elsness 1997, p.83, 227).

In the most clear-cut cases, if the temporal reference is specified as being to past time clearly separate from the deictic zero-point, the preterite is selected. If the reference is to time extending up to the deictic zero-point, the present perfect is used in both varieties. However, the difference becomes clear when the temporal reference is vague, e.g. just, already, yet, always, never, ever, etc (Elsness 1997, p.216-219).

## **6.6. Subject-verb concord**

The concord of the verb with its subject, particularly a collective noun (e.g. government, family, etc.) is also a source of variations between AmE and BrE. Both common and proper nouns referring to business firms, sports teams, governmental bodies and organizations generally may take either a singular or a plural verb. American English generally prefer to use the singular as in *The family is eating* and British English the plural as in *The British airways are concerned* (Algeo1988, p.21-23).

Stig Johansson (Johansson 1979: 203-205) found out in his elicitation experiment, that in British English, singular and plural verbs were interchangeable with collective noun subjects, whereas AmE almost always goes with singular verb. When a collective noun subject in BrE antecedes *who/whom/they/them* it has plural concord; when it antecedes *which/it*, it has singular verb concord (Johansson 1979, p.203-205, Tottie 2002, p.149-150).

### **6.7. Adverbial placement**

When adverbs are used as adverbials they are sometimes placed in a different position in the sentence in AmE than they would be in BrE. When there is an auxiliary, adverbs of frequency tend to follow the auxiliary and precede its full verb in BrE. In AmE, this placement is also the norm, but in addition, you often get pre-auxiliary placement. This type of variation mostly occurs with three kinds of adverbs: temporal adverbs: always, soon, now, never and adverbs expressing the speakers attitude or “stance”: honestly, certainly, really, probably and linking or conjunctive adverbs: therefore, however, thus, then, consequently (Tottie 2002, p.170-171).

Adverbs can freely be placed before and after an auxiliary in AmE, whereas post-auxiliary position is normal in BrE. The choice is governed by complex interplay of factors (Johansson 1979, p.199-200).

The difference between Ame and BrE adverb placement may not be as great as has sometimes been claimed; the type of text where you see major differences is newspaper language. It is also worth noting that both acceptability and usage with pre-auxiliary placement vary a good deal depending on which adverb or which auxiliary is used and whether the sentence is negative or affirmative. In addition, if there is more than one auxiliary, there are three possible slots for the adverb (Tottie 2002, p.170-171).

## 7. Methods

I began working on my thesis, by gathering my referential material and read through it. After this I used my material to construct the questionnaire (appendix 1). After it was approved by my supervising professor, I went ahead and contacted IB schools in each Nordic country via e-mail. In this e-mail I stated what was the purpose of my study, which is to compare the IB students' usage/preference of American and British English. I also noted that if the students were willing to participate, then they should not know the purpose of the study before they fill out the questionnaire.

This would eliminate the factor that the students would try to answer according to only one of the varieties. When looking at the questionnaire, one notices that the students must also have knowledge of the language of the country in which they live in, in order to complete the questionnaire. I informed the teachers that the students who participate should have good knowledge of the language or preferably have it as their mother tongue.

I chose American and British English of all the English varieties, because British English is the variety of English of which all the other varieties sprung from. The reason for picking American English is that it is becoming/is the most dominant English variety at the moment and because it is the variety with most speakers.

After contacting several IB schools in the Nordic countries, I found one school from each country that were willing to participate. The following upper secondary schools participated: Vardafjell videregående skole from Norway, Menntaskólinn við Hamrahlíð from Iceland, Joensuu lyseon lukio from Finland and Grenaa Gymnasium & HF from Denmark. I tried to get all five Nordic countries to take part, but unfortunately the results from Sweden came too late and thus I did not have the time to analyze their results and include them into my thesis. In this thesis, I talk of "all Nordic countries", even though there are only four included.

The students are from International Baccalaureate classes and between the ages of 16 to 19. The reason why I chose to contact IB classes instead of regular upper secondary school classes, is that with IB students I was sure that they would be able to complete the questionnaire, because of their good English language skills and thus I would get enough results to analyze and hopefully state something about the usage/preference of IB students in Nordic countries. The questionnaires were filled out in their respective schools under the supervision of an English teacher, during the autumn of 2008 and spring of 2009. After the

questionnaires were filled out the teachers were allowed to tell the students what the questionnaire was about and the questionnaires were sent to me for further analysis.

I chose to concentrate in lexis and grammar for my thesis, because these elements are easier to test than for example pragmatic issues. Grammar and lexis are also areas with most differences between American and British English, even though differences between the two varieties are all in all minor.

For the lexis part of the questionnaire, I chose very common and simple words, that all of the IB students should know e.g. fall/autumn, vacation/holiday etc. I read the *Hippocrene Dictionary and Phrasebook: British-American, American-British* and it was full of words and expressions which the IB students would not perhaps know e.g. shingle ( BrE: pebble beach), patsy (AmE: naive person) etc. These words are clearly not suitable for this type of questionnaire. (McCormick 2001, p.62, 100; Tottie 2002, p.146-147).

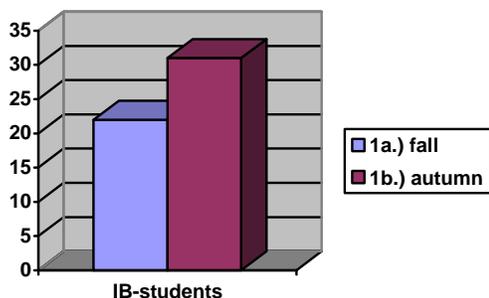
I checked the commonly held views of AmE and BrE against two sources:

- 1.) Literature on American and British English and previously conducted research on their differences (see the whole references list)
- 2.) Two corpora, I chose to use the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). I used these two corpora, because of their big size and their general nature. I did not need a specialty corpus.

As I searched the corpora, I always searched all the alternative spellings, e.g. postbox, post-box and post box. When the results yielded thousands of answers, I took 200 random instances and then went through them manually and looked where they were used in the meaning of the word, that I was looking for, e.g. *fall*, this lexeme yielded many results and so I went through 200 random instances and found all the results, where it was used to describe the season.

I analyzed the results by going through every answer in each questionnaire manually and then I put the data on the computer and made tables and figures on Excel. I also calculated the percentages for each answer. The results are constructed so that the first alternative is the American English one and the second is British English, as demonstrated here:

1. "haust" ( <b>Icelandic</b> )	IB-students	Results as Percentages
1a.) fall ( <b>AmE</b> )	22	42%
1b.) autumn ( <b>BrE</b> )	31	58%



## 8. Informants

I contacted regular schools that had International Baccalaureate (IB) classes. There are IB schools all over the world that are entirely for IB-students. I had a talk with my old teacher, Jukka Hurskainen (IB-coordinator in Joensuu, Finland) and he made a very valid point by saying that it is better to contact “regular” upper secondary schools that have IB classes, because I needed students that had some knowledge of the language of the countries that they live in, e.g. Norwegian in Norway etc. Because the students that would participate would need to use the language of the Nordic countries in order to complete the questionnaires that I send out to them. I did not contact schools that are only for IB students, because many of the students do not know the language of the country in which they live in, because their parents move a lot and so they do not stay in one country for long.

The IB is: “The **International Baccalaureate (IB)**, formerly the International Baccalaureate Organization or IBO is an international educational foundation, founded in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland. This organization governs and administers three programs of curricula for elementary (primary), middle, and high (or secondary) school levels which are, by design, international in nature, that is: able to be offered and acceptable for university entrance qualification, in countries throughout the world. Furthermore, curriculum content is intended to be free of the sort of national bias one might find in national curricula taught in individual countries.”(Wikipedia, entry for ‘International Baccalaureate).

There are two ways of referring to the IB classes. One can refer to them as: IB1(first year of upper secondary school), IB2 and IB3 (finishing year of upper secondary school) or as: pre-IB(first year), IB1 and IB2(finishing year of upper secondary school). I use the pre-IB etc. term, because that is what we use in Finland. It is referred to as “pre-IB”, because some countries do not have the first year and the upper secondary education in these countries is only for 2 years.

The informants are from Vardafjell videregående skole from Norway, Menntaskólinn vid Hamrahlíd from Iceland, Joensuun lyseon lukio from Finland and Grenaa Gymnasium & HF from Denmark. These schools are regular upper secondary schools that offer the students the option of attending IB class, if they pass an entrance exam. It was my intention in the beginning to include all Nordic countries, but unfortunately I received the completed questionnaires from Sweden too late and did not have the time to analyse them and include them in my thesis. Even though Sweden is not a part of my thesis, I talk about Nordic countries, because it is easier and faster to write.

The students that participated from Menntaskólinn vid Hamrahlíd from Reykjavik, Iceland are pre-IB, IB1 and IB2 students and they are between the ages of 14 to 19 years. There were a total of 55 students participating from Iceland.

There was only one class participating to my study from Joensuun Lyseon lukio from Joensuu, Finland. They are all pre-IB students and between the ages of 15-17 years. There were a total of 24 students that took part in my thesis from Finland.

The Norwegian students were from Vardafjell videregående skole from Haugesund, Norway and they are pre-IB and IB1 students of ages between 16-18 years. There were a total of 42 students from Norway that took part in the study

The Danish students are from Grenaa Gymnasium & HF School from Grenaa, Denmark. They are pre-IB, IB1 and IB2 students and there were a total of 22 students that took part in the study.

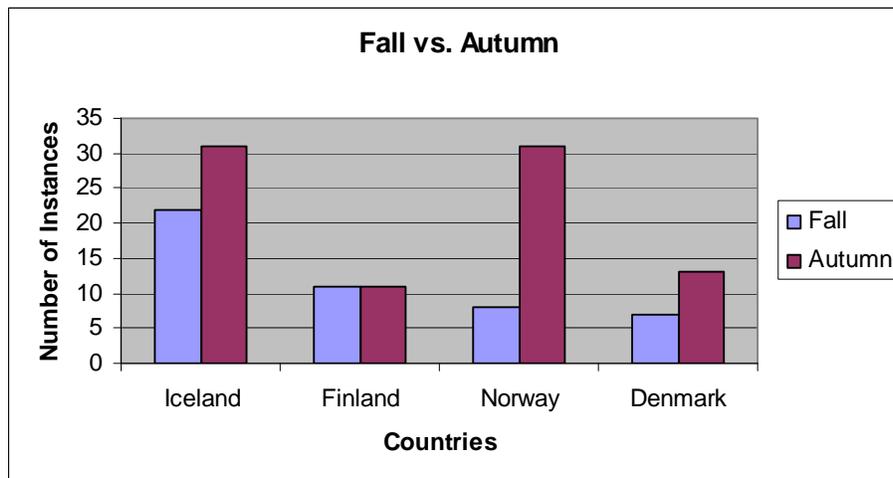
## 9. Results

### 9.1. Results from the Nordic IB-students

#### Part 1:

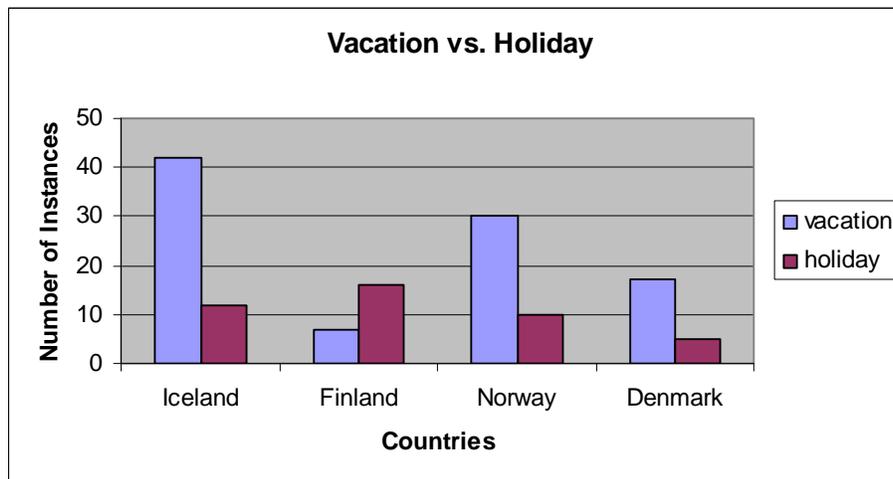
#### Fall vs. Autumn

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
1a.) fall	22	42%
1b.) autumn	31	58%
Finnish IB-students		
1a.) fall	11	50%
1b.) autumn	11	50%
Norwegian IB-students		
1a.) fall	8	21%
1b.) autumn	31	79%
Danish IB-students		
1a.) fall	7	35%
1b.) autumn	13	65%



## 2. Vacation vs. Holiday

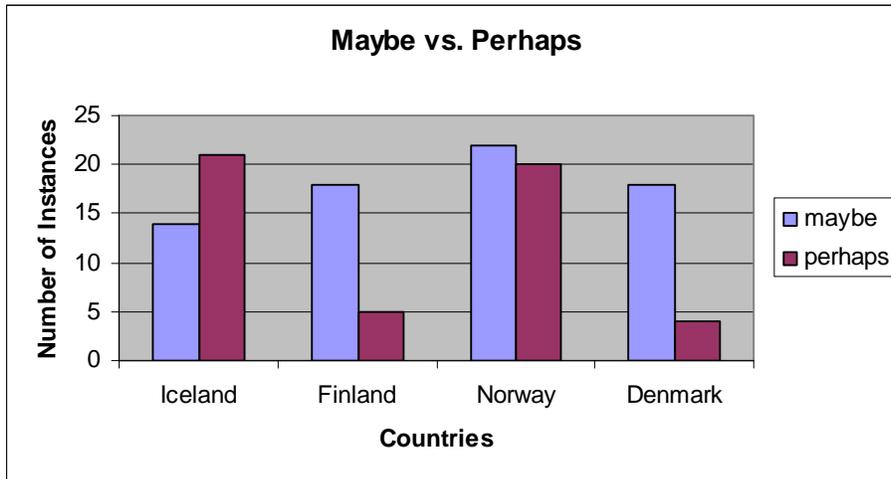
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
2a.) vacation	42	78%
2b.) holiday	12	22%
Finnish IB-students		
2a.) vacation	7	30%
2b.) holiday	16	70%
Norwegian IB-students		
2a.) vacation	30	75%
2b.) holiday	10	25%
Danish IB-students		
2a.) vacation	17	77%
2b.) holiday	5	23%



## 3. Maybe vs. Perhaps

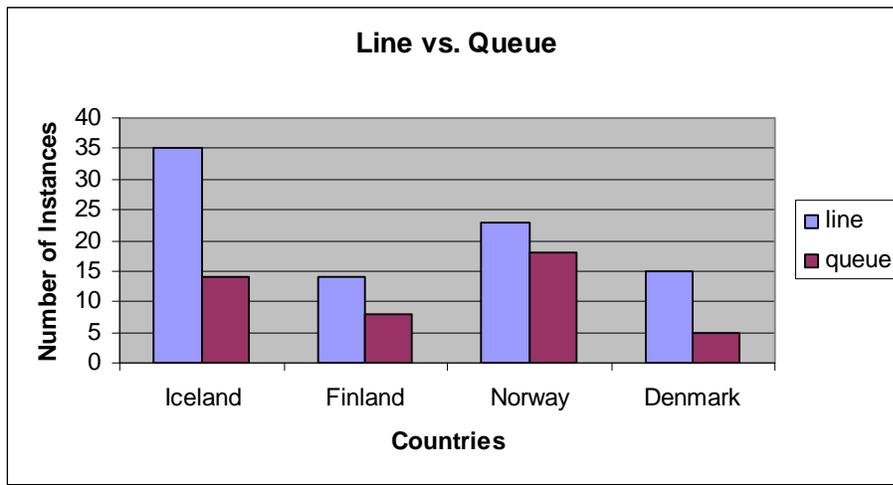
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as percentages
3a.) maybe	14	40%
3b.) perhaps	21	60%
Finnish IB-students		
3a.) maybe	18	78%
3b.) perhaps	5	22%

Norwegian IB-students		
3a.) maybe	22	52%
3b.) perhaps	20	48%
Danish IB-students		
3a.) maybe	18	88%
3b.) perhaps	4	12%



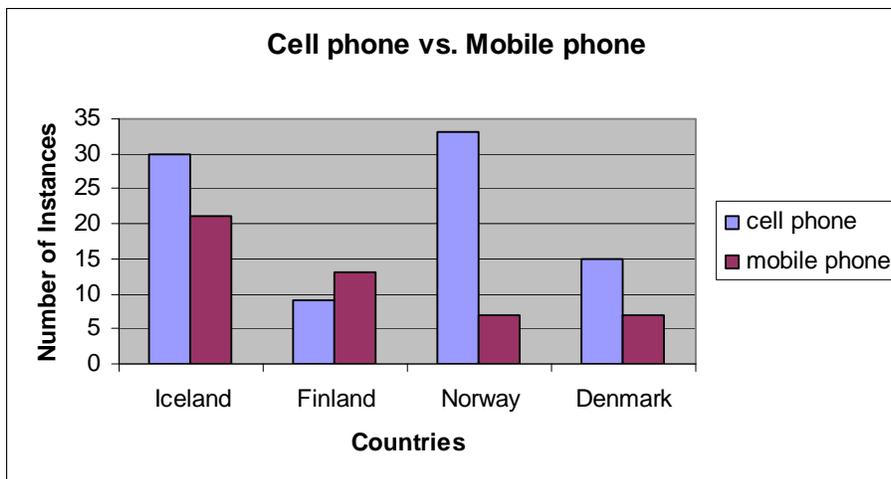
#### 4. Line vs. Queue

Country	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
Icelandic IB-students		
4a.) line	35	71%
4b.) queue	14	29%
Finnish IB-students		
4a.) line	14	64%
4b.) queue	8	36%
Norwegian IB-students		
4a.) line	23	56%
4b.) queue	18	44%
Danish IB-students		
4a.) line	15	75%
4b.) queue	5	25%



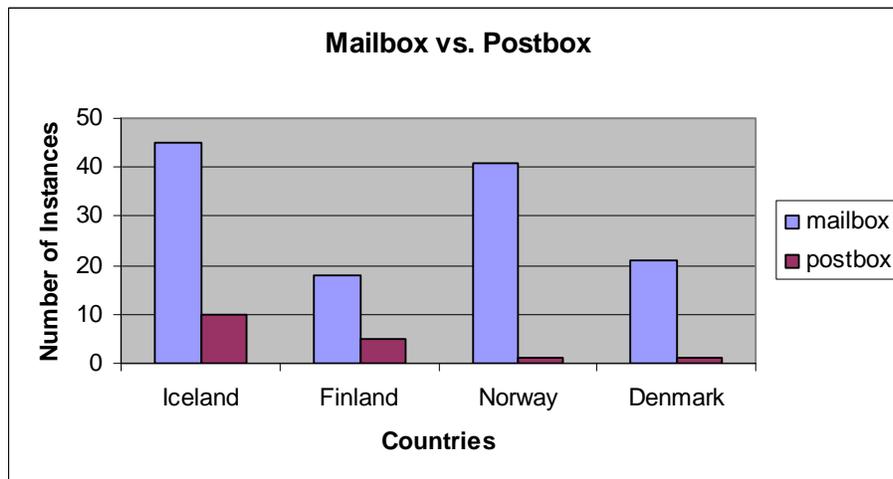
### 5. Cell phone vs. Mobile phone

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as percentages
5a.) cell phone	30	59%
5b.) mobile phone	21	41%
Finnish IB-students		
5a.) cell phone	9	41%
5b.) mobile phone	13	59%
Norwegian IB-students		
5a.) cell phone	33	83%
5b.) mobile phone	7	17%
Danish IB-students		
5a.) cell phone	15	68%
5b.) mobile phone	7	32%



## 6. Mailbox vs. Post-box

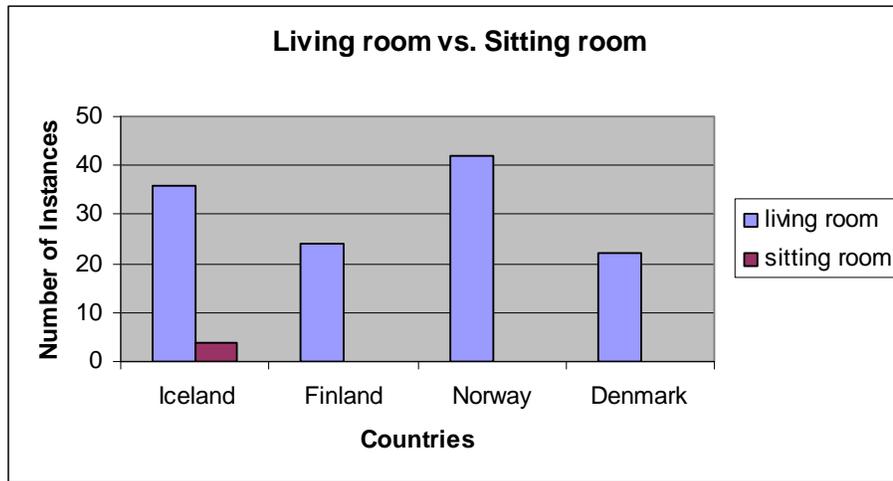
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
6a.) mailbox	45	82%
6b.) post-box	10	18%
Finnish IB-students		
6a.) mail box	18	78%
6b.) post box	5	22%
Norwegian IB-students		
6a.) mail box	41	98%
6b.) post box	1	2%
Danish IB-students		
6a.) mail box	21	95%
6b.) post box	1	5%



## 7. Living room vs. Sitting room

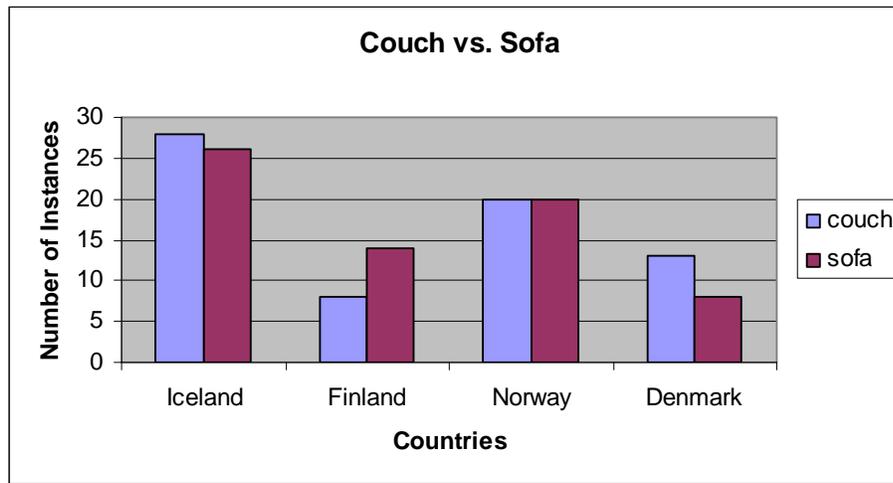
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
7a.) living room	36	90%
7b.) sitting room	4	10%
Finnish IB-students		
7a.) living room	24	100%
7b.) sitting room	0	0%

Norwegian IB-students		
7a.) living room	42	100%
7b.) sitting room	0	0%
Danish IB-students		
7a.) living room	22	100%
7b.) sitting room	0	0%



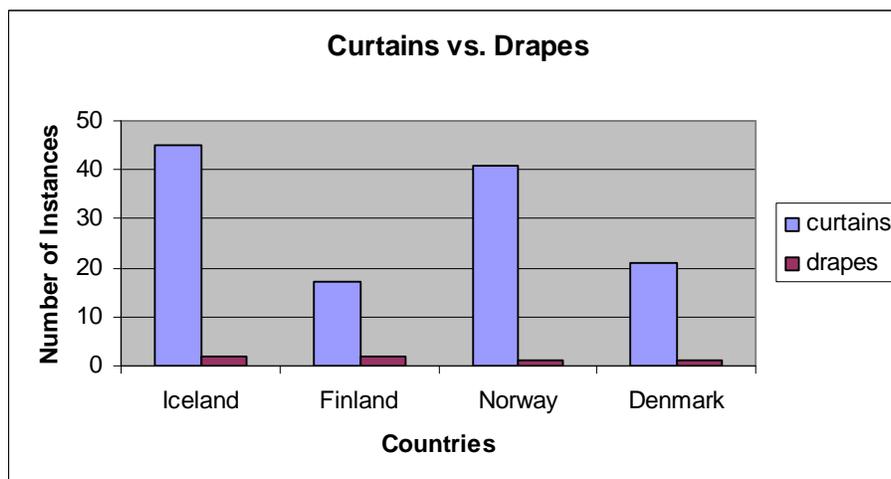
### 8. Couch vs. Sofa

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
8a.) couch	28	52%
8b.) sofa	26	48%
Finnish IB-students		
8a.) couch	8	36%
8b.) sofa	14	64%
Norwegian IB-students		
8a.) couch	20	50%
8b.) sofa	20	50%
Danish IB-students		
8a.) couch	13	62%
8b.) sofa	8	38%



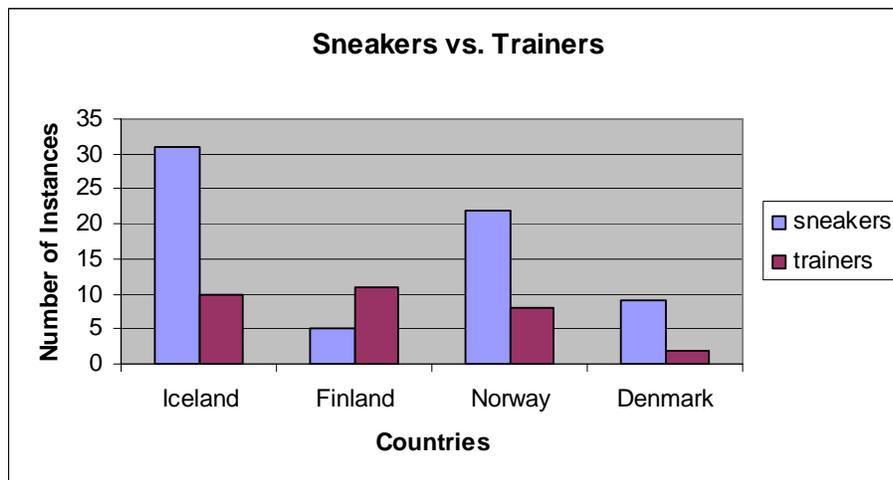
### 9. Curtains vs. Drapes

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
9a.) curtains	45	96%
9b.) drapes	2	4%
Finnish IB-students		
9a.) curtains	17	89%
9b.) drapes	2	11%
Norwegian IB-students		
9a.) curtains	41	98%
9b.) drapes	1	2%
Danish IB-students		
9a.) curtains	21	95%
9b.) drapes	1	5%



## 10. Sneakers vs. Trainers

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
10a.) sneakers	31	76%
10a.) trainers	10	24%
Finnish IB-students		
10a.) sneakers	5	31%
10a.) trainers	11	69%
Norwegian IB-students		
10a.) sneakers	22	73%
10a.) trainers	8	27%
Danish IB-students		
10a.) sneakers	9	82%
10a.) trainers	2	18%

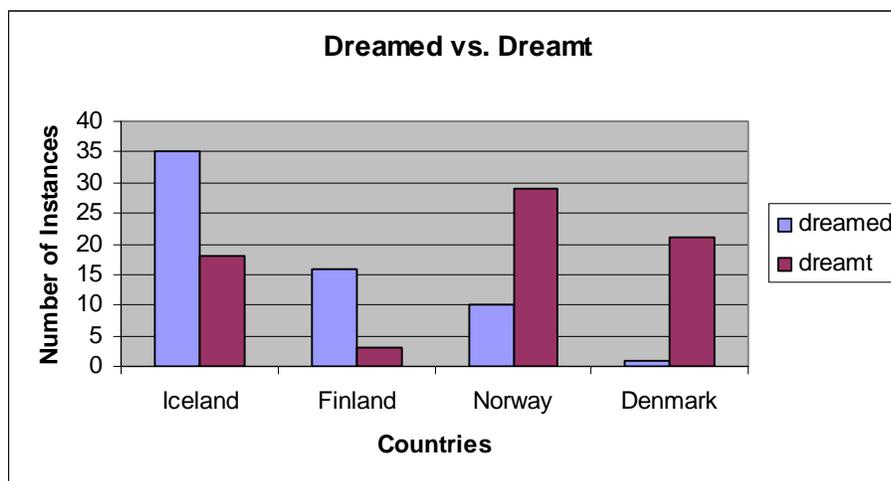


## Part 2:

### 1. Dreamed vs. Dreamt

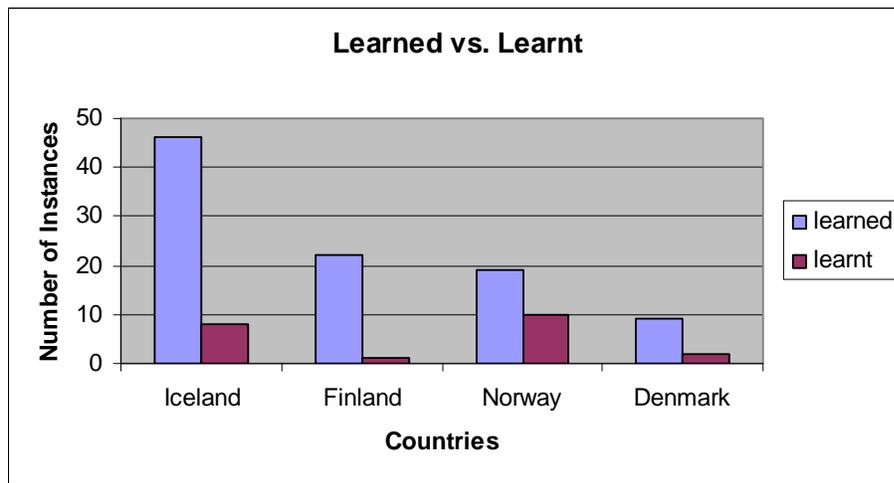
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
1a.) dreamed	35	66%
1b.) dreamt	18	34%
Finnish IB-students		
1a.) dreamed	16	84%
1b.) dreamt	3	16%

Norwegian IB-students		
1a.) dreamed	10	26%
1b.) dreamt	29	74%
Danish IB-students		
1a.) dreamed	1	5%
1b.) dreamt	21	95%



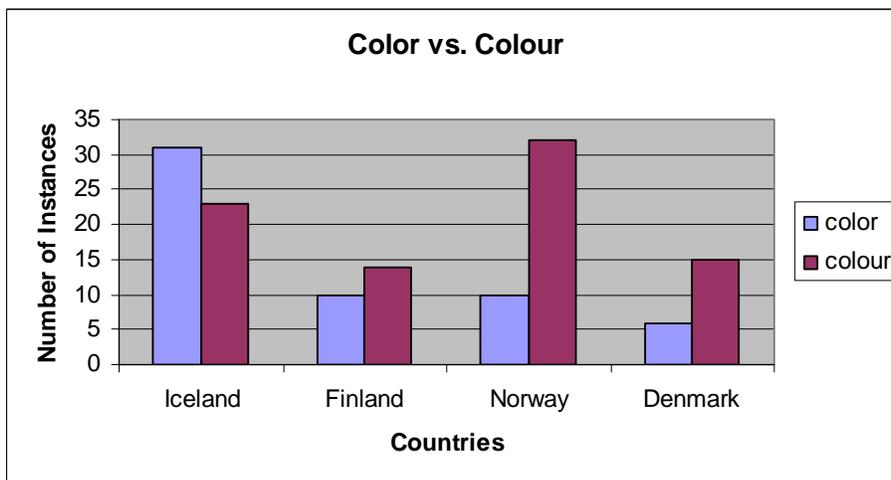
## 2. Learned vs. Learnt

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
2a.) learned	46	85%
2b.) learnt	8	15%
Finnish IB-students		
2a.) learned	22	96%
2b.) learnt	1	4%
Norwegian IB-students		
2a.) learned	19	66%
2b.) learnt	10	34%
Danish IB-students		
2a.) learned	9	82%
2b.) learnt	2	18%



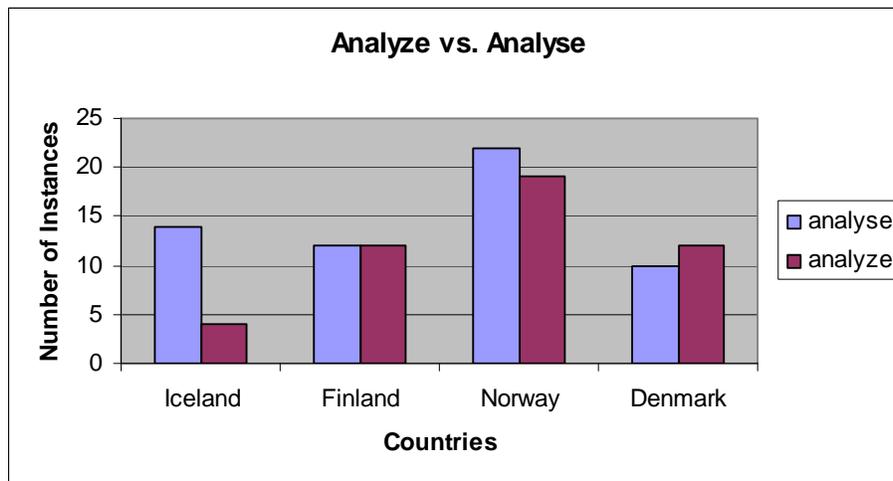
### 3. Color vs. Colour

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
3a.) color	31	57%
3b.) colour	23	43%
Finnish IB-students		
3a.) color	10	42%
3b.) colour	14	58%
Norwegian IB-students		
3a.) color	10	24%
3b.) colour	32	76%
Danish IB-students		
3a.) color	6	29%
3b.) colour	15	71%



#### 4. Analyze vs. Analyse

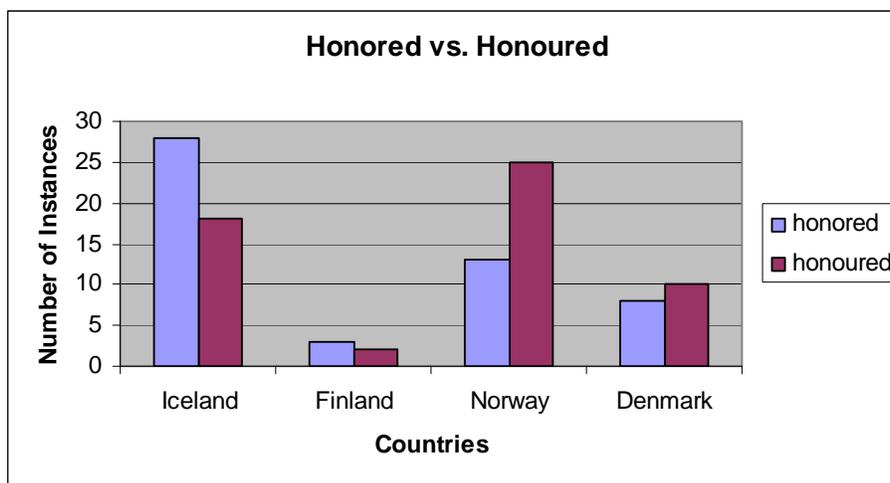
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
4a.) analyze	14	78%
4b.) analyse	4	22%
Finnish IB-students		
4a.) analyze	12	50%
4b.) analyse	12	50%
Norwegian IB-students		
4a.) analyze	22	54%
4b.) analyse	19	46%
Danish IB-students		
4a.) analyze	10	45%
4b.) analyse	12	55%



#### 5. Honored vs. Honoured

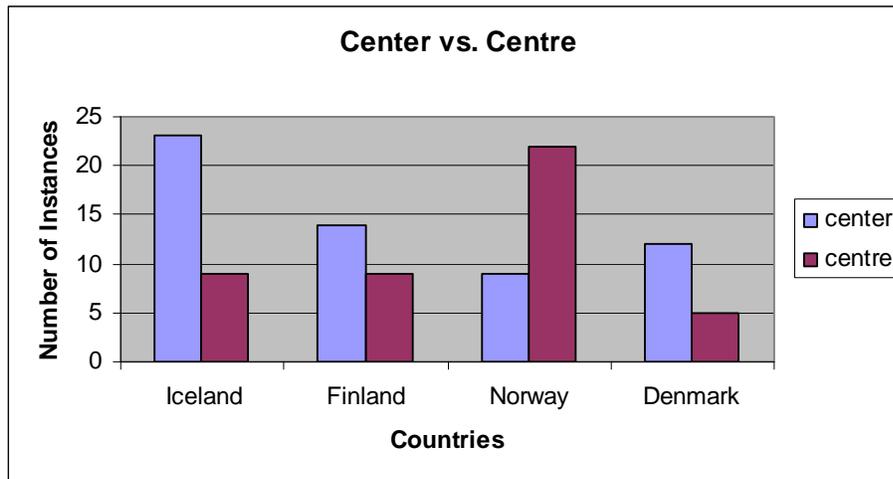
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
5a.) honored	28	61%
5b.) honoured	18	39%
Finnish IB-students		
5a.) honored	3	60%
5b.) honoured	2	40%

Norwegian IB-students		
5a.) honored	13	34%
5b.) honoured	25	66%
Danish IB-students		
5a.) honored	8	45%
5b.) honoured	10	55%



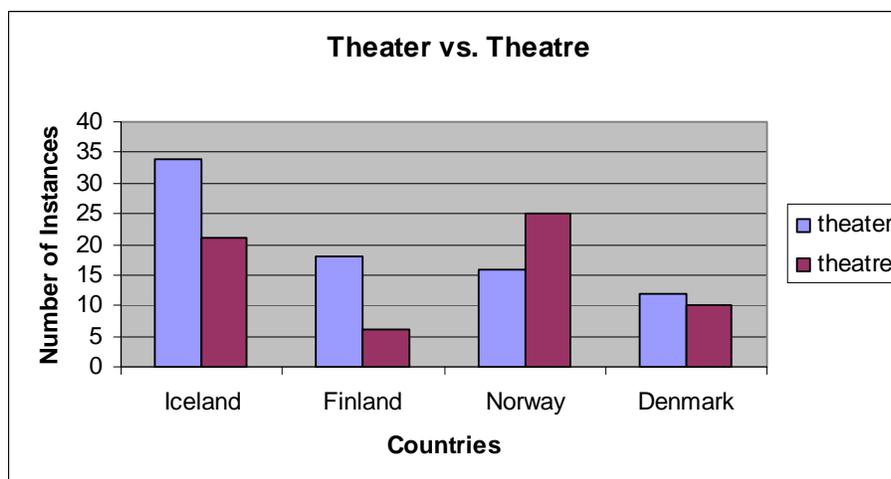
### 6. Center vs. Centre

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
6a.) center	23	72%
6b.) centre	9	28%
Finnish IB-students		
6a.) center	14	61%
6b.) centre	9	39%
Norwegian IB-students		
6a.) center	9	29%
6b.) centre	22	71%
Danish IB-students		
6a.) center	12	71%
6b.) centre	5	29%



### 7. Theater vs. Theatre

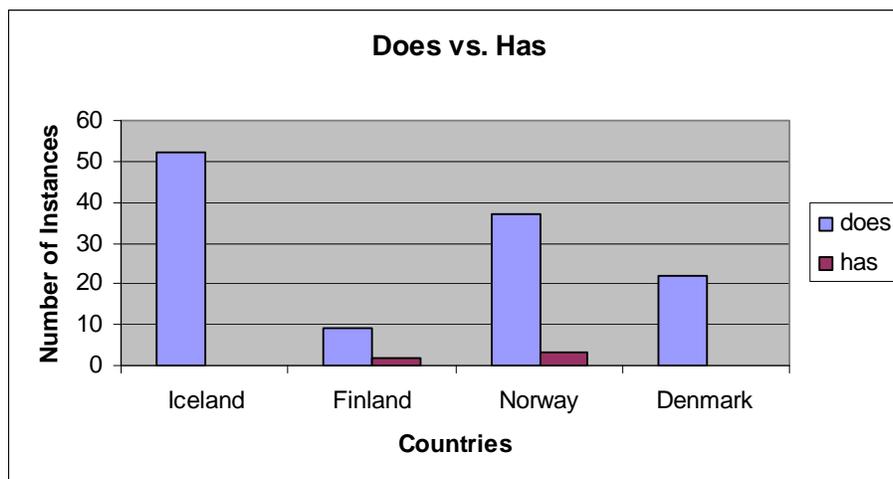
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
7a.) theater	34	62%
7b.) theatre	21	38%
Finnish IB-students		
7a.) theater	18	75%
7b.) theatre	6	25%
Norwegian IB-students		
7a.) theater	16	39
7b.) theatre	25	61%
Danish IB-students		
7a.) theater	12	55%
7b.) theatre	10	45%



**Part 3:**

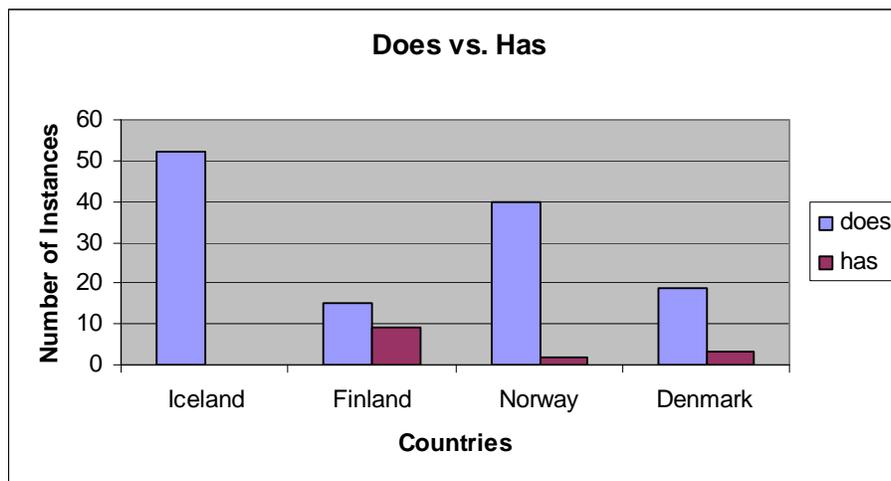
**1. Does that car have four doors? vs. Has that car got four doors?**

Icelandic IB- students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
1a.) Does that car have 4 doors?	52	100%
1b.) Has that car got 4 doors?	0	0%
Finnish IB-students		
1a.) Does that car have 4 doors?	9	82%
1b.) Has that car got 4 doors?	2	18%
Norwegian IB-students		
1a.) Does that car have 4 doors?	37	93%
1b.) Has that car got 4 doors?	3	7%
Danish IB-students		
1a.) Does that car have 4 doors?	22	100%
1b.) Has that car got 4 doors?	0	0%



**2. He does not have a dog. vs. He has not got a dog.**

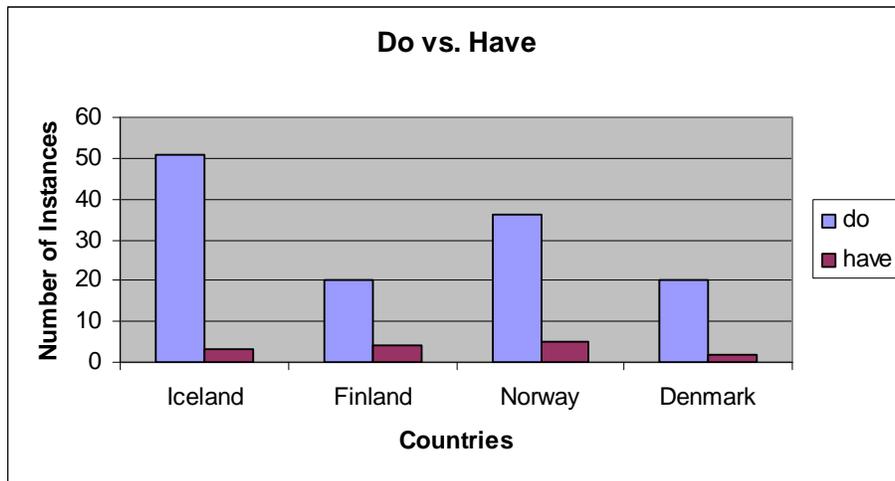
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
2a.) He does not have a dog.	53	100%
2b.) He has not got a dog.	0	0%
Finnish IB-students		
2a.) He does not have a dog.	15	63%
2b.) He has not got a dog.	9	37%
Norwegian IB-students		
2a.) He does not have a dog.	40	95%
2b.) He has not got a dog.	2	5%
Danish IB-students		
2a.) He does not have a dog.	19	86%
2b.) He has not got a dog.	3	14%



**3. Do you have money? vs. Have you got money?**

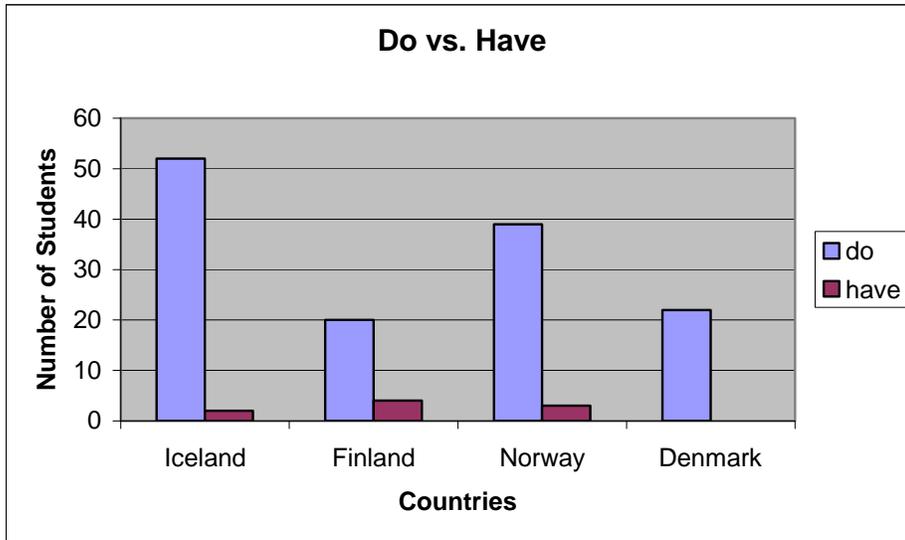
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
3a.) Do you have money?	51	94%
3b.) Have you got money?	3	6%
Finnish IB-students		
3a.) Do you have money?	20	83%
3b.) Have you got money?	4	17%

Norwegian IB-students		
3a.) Do you have money?	36	88%
3b.) Have you got money?	5	12%
Danish IB-students		
3a.) Do you have money?	20	91%
3b.) Have you got money?	2	9%



#### 4. Do you have children? vs. Have you got children?

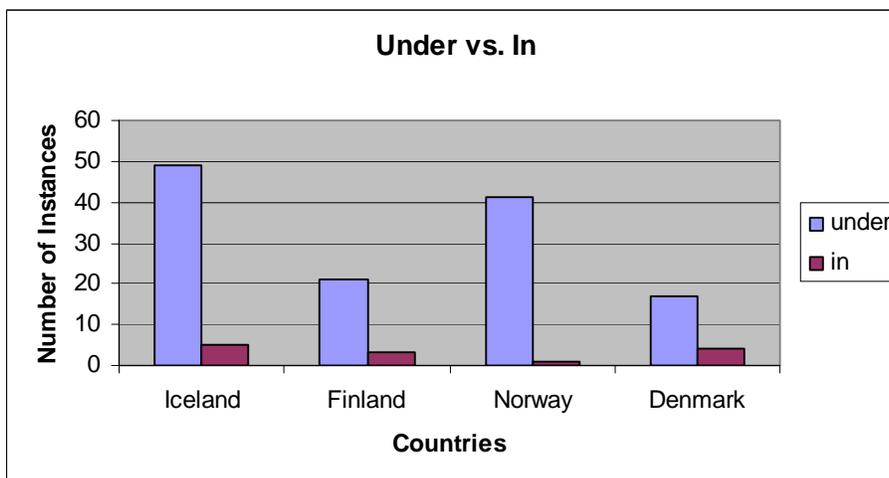
Icelandic IB-students	Number of students	Results as Percentages
4a.) Do you have children?	52	96%
4b.) Have you got children?	2	4%
Finnish IB-students		
4a.) Do you have children?	20	83%
4b.) Have you got children?	4	17%
Norwegian IB-students		
4a.) Do you have children?	39	93%
4b.) Have you got children?	3	7%
Danish IB-students		
4a.) Do you have children?	22	100%
4b.) Have you got children?	0	0%



**Part 4:**

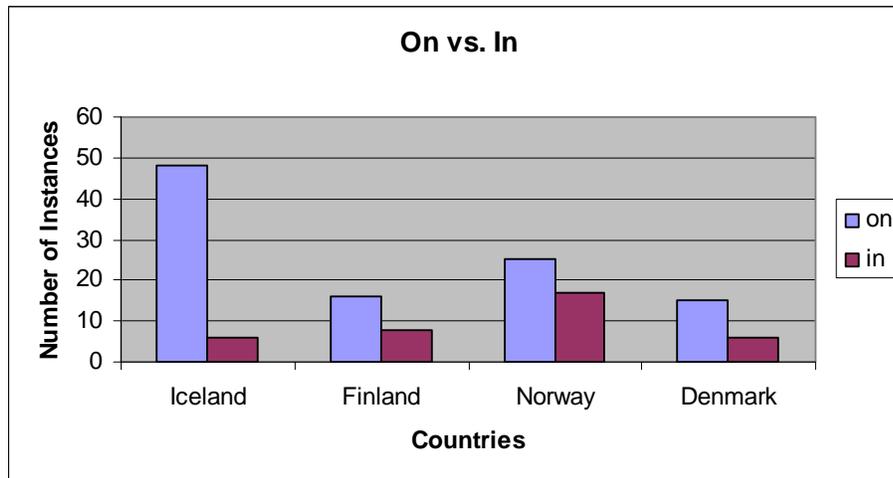
**1. Under/In these circumstances, I cannot stay.**

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
1a.) under	49	91%
1b.) in	5	9%
Finnish IB-students		
1a.) under	21	88%
1b.) in	3	12%
Norwegian IB-students		
1a.) under	41	98%
1b.) in	1	2%
Danish IB-students		
1a.) under	17	81%
1b.) in	4	19%



**2. I live on/in Walnut Street.**

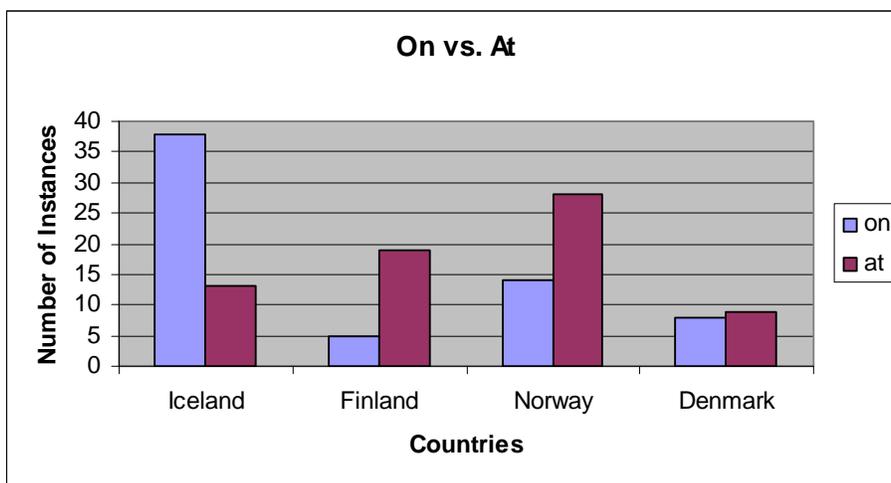
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
2a.) on	48	89%
2b.) in	6	11%
Finnish IB-students		%
2a.) on	16	67%
2b.) in	8	33%
Norwegian IB-students		%
2a.) on	25	61%
2b.) in	17	39%
Danish IB-students		
2a.) on	15	71%
2b.) in	6	29%



**3. On/at the weekend Susan liked to read books.**

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
3a.) on	38	75%
3b.) at	13	25%
Finnish IB-students		
3a.) on	5	21%
3b.) at	19	79%

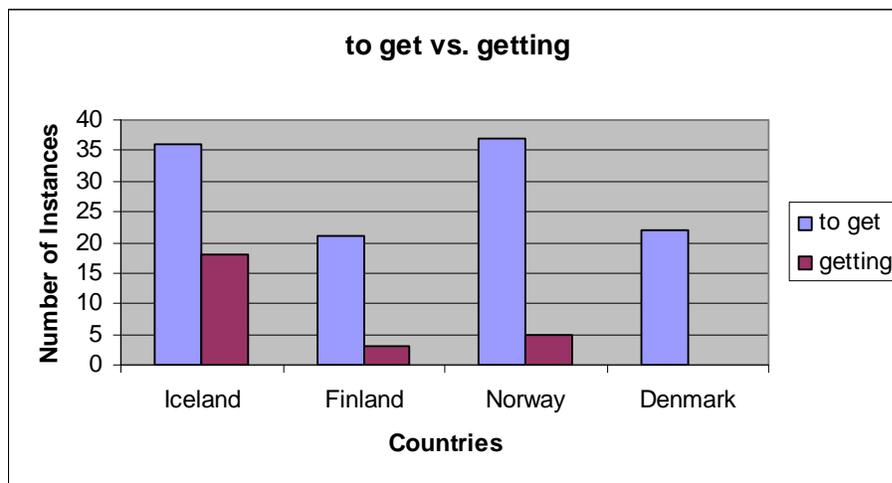
Norwegian IB-students		
3a.) on	14	33%
3b.) at	28	67%
Danish IB-students		
3a.) on	8	53%
3b.) at	9	47%



**Part 5:**

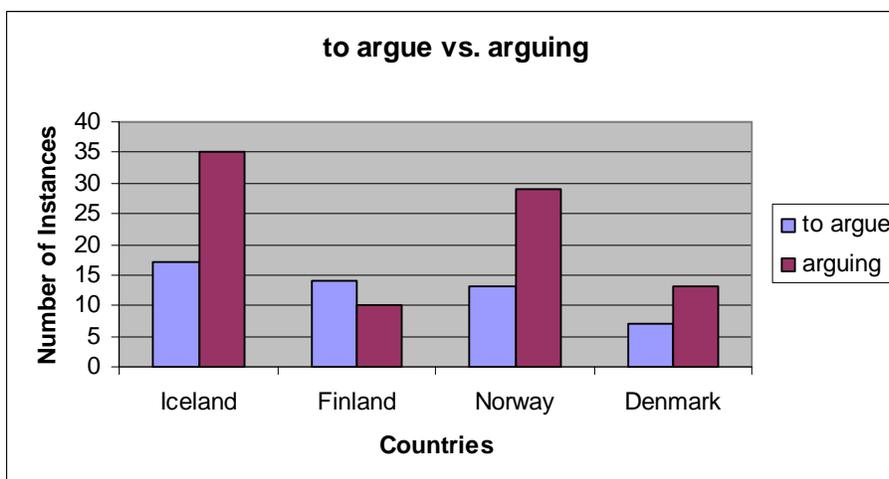
**1. I hate to *get vs. getting* up in the morning**

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
1a.) to get	36	67%
1b.) getting	18	33%
Finnish IB-students		
1a.) to get	21	88%
1b.) getting	3	12%
Norwegian IB-students		
1a.) to get	37	88%
1b.) getting	5	12%
Danish IB-students		
1a.) to get	22	100%
1b.) getting	0	0%



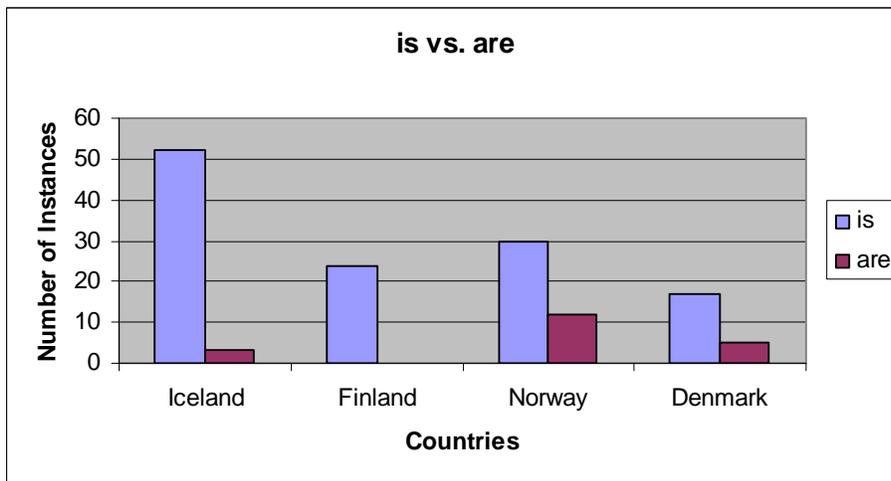
**2. The whole family started *to argue vs. arguing*.**

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
2a.) to argue	17	33%
2b.) arguing	35	67%
Finnish IB-students		
2a.) to argue	14	58%
2b.) arguing	10	42%
Norwegian IB-students		
2a.) to argue	13	31%
2b.) arguing	29	69%
Danish IB-students		
2a.) to argue	7	35%
2b.) arguing	13	65%



3. Lisa's family *is vs. are* nice.

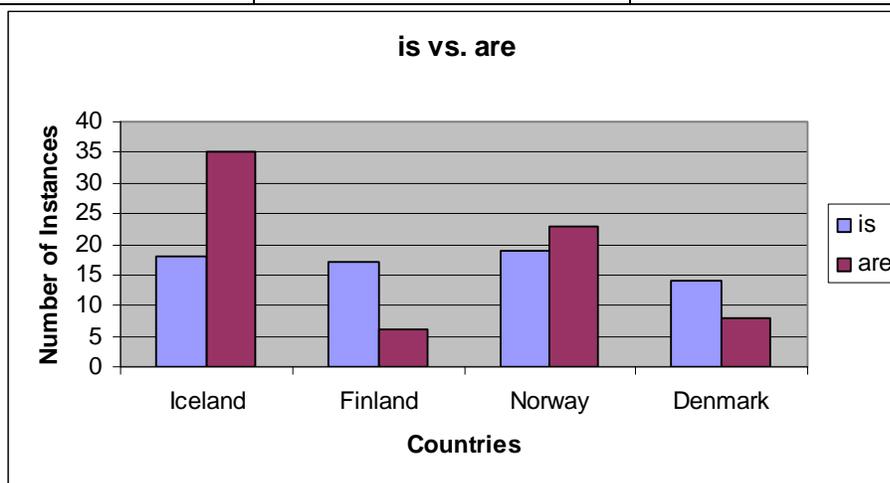
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
3a.) is	52	95%
3b.) are	3	5%
Finnish IB-students		
3a.) is	24	100%
3b.) are	0	0%
Norwegian IB-students		
3a.) is	30	71%
3b.) are	12	29%
Danish IB-students		
3a.) is	17	77%
3b.) are	5	23%



4. British Airways *is vs. are* going places in the UK.

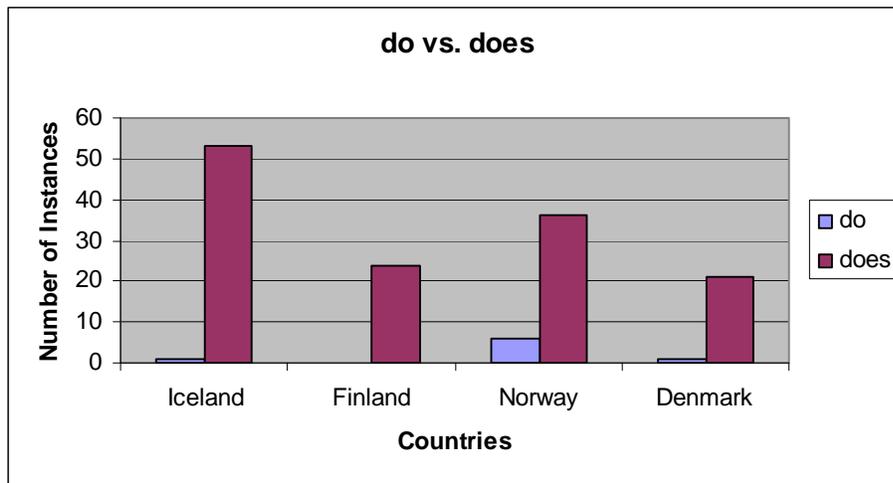
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
4a.) is	18	34%
4b.) are	35	66%
Finnish IB-students		
4a.) is	17	74%
4b.) are	6	26%

Norwegian IB-students		
4a.) is	19	45%
4b.) are	23	55%
Danish IB-students		
4a.) is	14	64%
4b.) are	8	36%



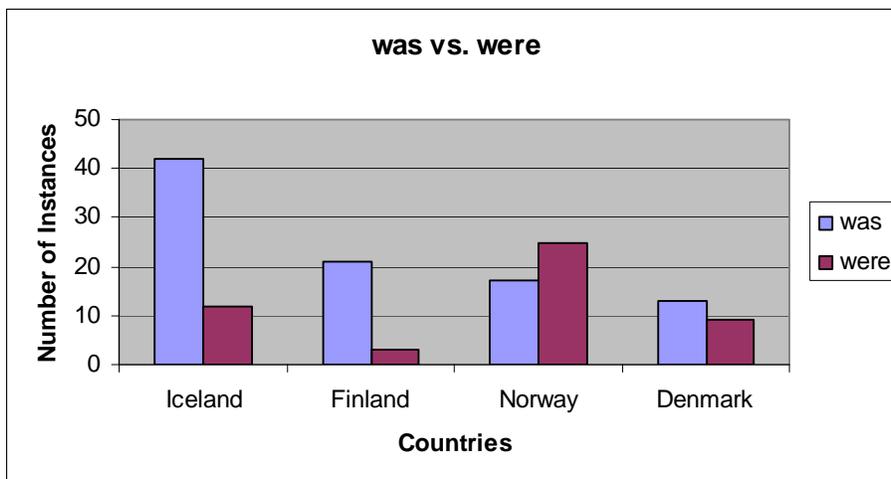
**5. The City of London *do vs. does* not take the blame.**

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
5a.) do	1	2%
5b.) does	53	98%
Finnish IB-students		
5a.) do	0	0%
5b.) does	24	100%
Norwegian IB-students		
5a.) do	6	14%
5b.) does	36	86%
Danish IB-students		
5a.) do	1	5%
5b.) does	21	95%



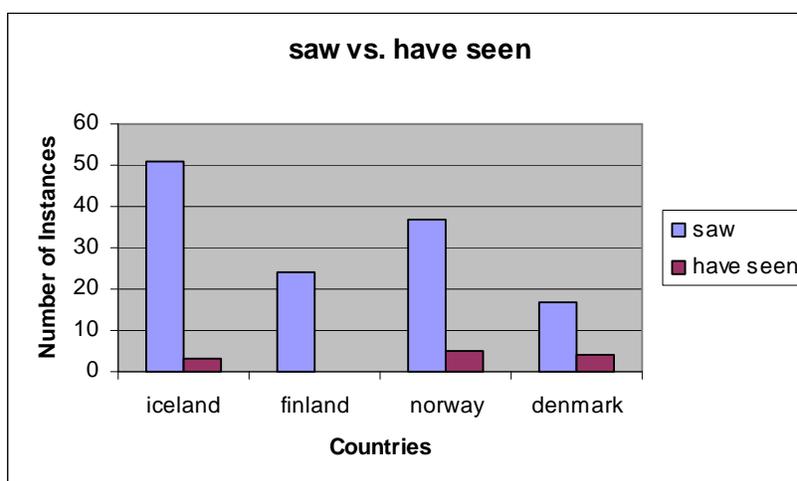
6. The audience *was vs. were* enjoying every minute of the show.

Icelandic IB-students		Results as Percentages
6a.) was	42	78%
6b.) were	12	22%
Finnish IB-students		
6a.) was	21	88%
6b.) were	3	12%
Norwegian IB-students		
6a.) was	17	40%
6b.) were	25	60%
Danish IB-students		
6a.) was	13	59%
6b.) were	9	41%



**7. Yes, John is here. *I have just seen him vs. I just saw him.***

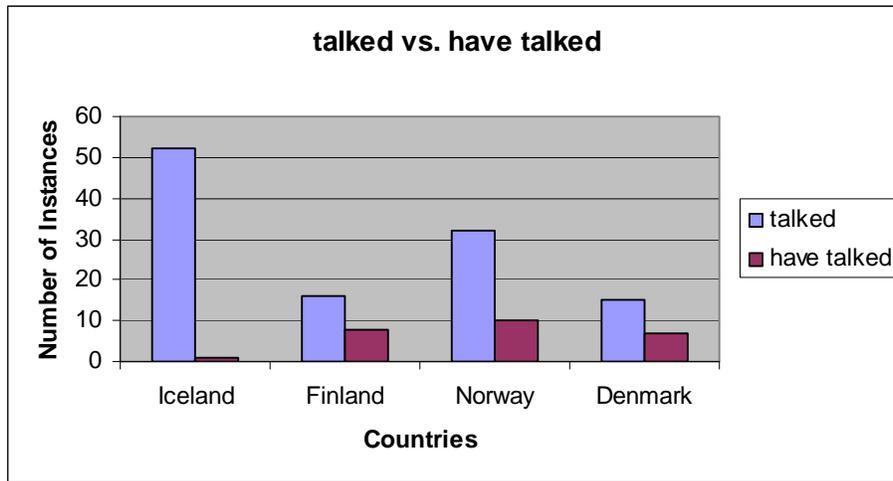
Icelandic IB-students	Number of Instances	Results as Percentages
7a.) I just saw him.	51	94%
7b.) I have just seen him	3	6%
Finnish IB-students		
7a.) I just saw him.	24	100%
7b.) I have just seen him.	0	0%
Norwegian IB-students		
7a.) I just saw him.	37	88%
7b.) I have just seen him.	5	12%
Danish IB-students		
7a.) I just saw him.	17	81%
7b.) I have just seen him.	4	19%



**8. I know Mary is around somewhere – *I have just talked to her vs. I just talked to her***

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Instances	Results as Percentages
8a.) I just talked to her	52	98%
8b.) I have just talked to her.	1	2%
Finnish IB-students		
8a.) I just talked to her.	16	67%
8b.) I have just talked to her.	8	33%

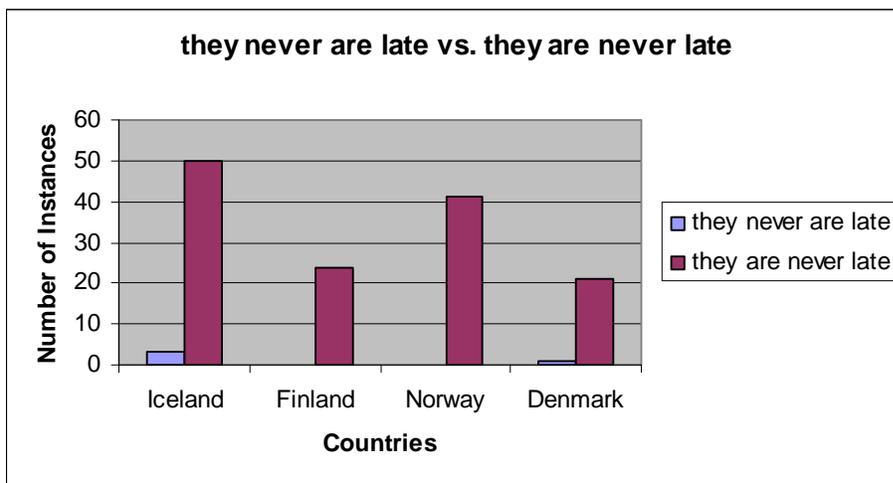
Norwegian IB-students		
8a.) I just talked to her.	32	76%
8b.) I have just talked to her.	10	24%
Danish IB-students		
8a.) I just talked to her.	15	68%
8b.) I have just talked to her.	7	32%



**Part 6:**

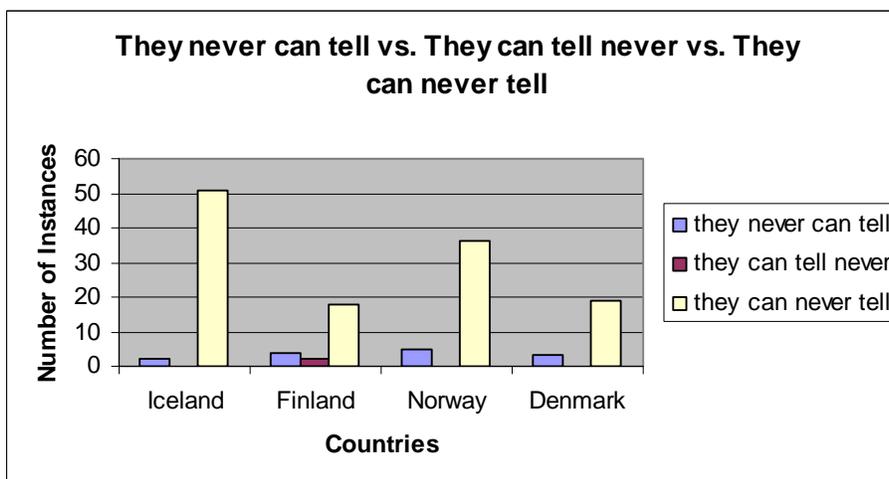
**1. Place the adverbial “NEVER” to the sentence**

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
1a.) they <b>never</b> are late	3	6%
1b.) they are <b>never</b> late	50	94%
Finnish IB-students		
1a.) They <b>never</b> are late.	0	0%
1b.) They are <b>never</b> late	24	100%
Norwegian IB-students		
1a.) They are <b>never</b> late	41	100%
Danish IB-students		
1a.) They <b>never</b> are late.	1	5%
1b.) They are <b>never</b> late	21	95%



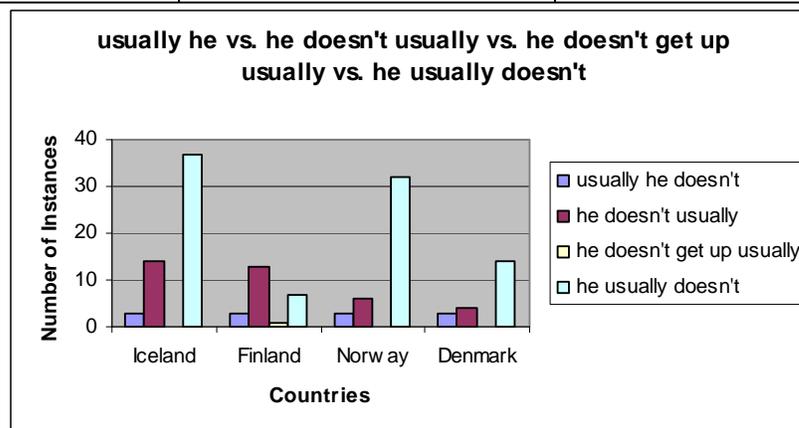
**2. Place the adverbial “NEVER” to the sentence**

Icelandic IB students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
2a.) the never can tell	2	4%
2b.) they can never tell	51	96%
Finnish IB-students		
2a.) They never can tell.	4	17%
2b.) They can never tell.	18	75%
2c.) They can tell never.	2	8%
Norwegian IB-students		
2a.) They never can tell.	5	12%
2b.) They can never tell.	36	88%
Danish IB-students		
2a.) They never can tell.	3	14%
2b.) They can never tell.	19	86%



### 3. Place the adverbial “USUALLY” to the sentence

Icelandic IB-students	Number of Students	Results as Percentages
3a.) <b>Usually</b> he doesn't get up before 7 o'clock.	3	6%
3b.) He doesn't <b>usually</b> get up before 7 o'clock.	14	26%
3c.) He <b>usually</b> doesn't get up before 7 o'clock.	37	67%
Finnish IB-students		
3a.) <b>Usually</b> he doesn't get up before 7 o'clock.	3	12.5%
3b.) He doesn't <b>usually</b> get up before 7 o'clock.	13	54%
3c.) He doesn't get up <b>usually</b> before 7 o'clock.	1	4%
3d.) He <b>usually</b> doesn't get up before 7 o'clock.	7	29%
Norwegian IB-students		
3a.) <b>Usually</b> he doesn't get up before 7 o'clock.	3	7%
3b.) He doesn't <b>usually</b> get up before 7 o'clock.	6	14%
3c.) He <b>usually</b> doesn't get up before 7 o'clock.	32	78%
Danish IB-students		
3a.) <b>Usually</b> he doesn't get up before 7 o'clock.	3	14%
3b.) He doesn't <b>usually</b> get up before 7 o'clock.	4	19%
3c.) He <b>usually</b> doesn't get up before 7 o'clock.	14	67%



## 9.2. Results from the British National Corpus (BNC) and Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)

The number in bold font is the highest result/highest frequency

<b>1. Vocabulary:</b>	<b>BNC</b>	<b>COCA</b>
1a.)Fall	3*(out of 200 random instances)	83*(out of 200 random instances)
1b.)Autumn	<b>3864</b>	<b>4736</b>
2a.)Vacation	290	9976
2b.)Holiday	<b>7632</b>	<b>12855</b>
3a.)Maybe	10023	<b>104037</b>
3b.)Perhaps	<b>33578</b>	84573
4a.)Line	10*(out of 200 random instances)	34*(out of 200 random instances)
4b.)Queue	<b>997</b>	<b>653</b>
5a.)Cell phone	22	<b>5655</b>
5b.)Mobile phone	<b>118</b>	401
6a.)Mailbox	<b>50</b>	<b>1428</b>
6b.)Post-box	46	23
7a.)Living room	<b>725</b>	<b>12324</b>
7b.)Sitting room	433	691
8a.)Couch	487	<b>8231</b>
8b.)Sofa	<b>924</b>	4679
9a.)Curtains	<b>3191</b>	<b>3383</b>
9b.)Drapes	203	1016
10a.)Sneakers	30	<b>200*</b> (out of 200 random instances)
10b.)Trainers	<b>82*</b> (out of 200 random instances)	3*(out of 200 random instances)

<b>2. Spelling:</b>	<b>BNC</b>	<b>COCA</b>
1a.)Dreamed	<b>731</b>	<b>4631</b>
1b.)Dreamt	272	551
2a.)Learned	<b>5230</b>	<b>44771</b>
2b.)Learnt	2153	208

3a.)Color	115	<b>75779</b>
3b.)Colour	<b>11345</b>	759
4a.)Analyze	116	<b>5333</b>
4b.)Analyse	<b>1290</b>	74
5a.)Honor	86	<b>18644</b>
5b.)Honour	<b>2654</b>	297
6a.)Center	510	<b>109335</b>
6b.)Centre	<b>22872</b>	2737
7a.)Theater	44	<b>20467</b>
7b.)Theatre	<b>5767</b>	6767

<b>3. Questions</b>	<b>BNC</b>	<b>COCA</b>
1a.)Does it have?	<b>129</b>	<b>608</b>
1b.)Has it got?	83	9
2a.)Does not have	<b>1104</b>	<b>3505</b>
2b.)Has not got	43	20
3a.)Do you have?	1033	<b>10030</b>
3b.)Have you got?	<b>1860</b>	713

<b>4. Choosing adverbials</b>	<b>BNC</b>	<b>COCA</b>
1a.)Under these circumstances	126	<b>545</b>
1b.)In these circumstances	<b>521</b>	224
2a.)Live on X street	4	<b>29</b>
2b.)Live in X street	<b>14</b>	2
3a.) On the weekend	79	<b>523</b>
3b.) At the weekend	<b>710</b>	71

<b>5. Verbs</b>	<b>BNC</b>	<b>COCA</b>
1a.)To get up	<b>585</b>	<b>2716</b>
1b.)Getting	393	1576
2a.)Started to argue	5	21
2b.)Started arguing	<b>11</b>	<b>37</b>

3a.)Family is	<b>496</b>	<b>3320</b>
3b.)Family are	258	652
4a.)Airways is	<b>16</b>	<b>58</b>
4b.)Airways are	4	19
5a.)The city of * do	1	1
5b.)The city of * does	1	7
6a.)Just saw	<b>70</b>	<b>1138</b>
6b.)Just have seen	46	97
7a.)Just talked	<b>25</b>	<b>443</b>
7b.)Have just talked	3	7

<b>6. Adverbial placement</b>	<b>BNC</b>	<b>COCA</b>
1a.)They never are late	0	0
1b.)They are never late	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
2a.)They never can tell	22	58
2b.)They can tell never	0	0
2c.)They can never tell	<b>26</b>	<b>90</b>
3a.)Usually is	73	550
3b.)Is usually	<b>2906</b>	<b>4717</b>
3c.)Usually does not	6	56
3d.)Does not usually	35	48

## 10. Discussion

### 10.1. Vocabulary

The first section of the questionnaire tested the Nordic IB students' vocabulary preferences. The lexemes tested here have usually two alternatives with the same meaning (e.g. fall (AmE) vs. autumn (BrE)), although both alternatives are usually known in both varieties. In addition, the alternatives are not used exclusively on one side of the Atlantic. The first alternative presented, in this discussion section and throughout the thesis, is always considered as the American English alternative (e.g. fall) and the second as the British English alternative (e.g. autumn).

#### 10.1.1. Fall vs. Autumn

The majority of the Nordic IB-students preferred the British English alternative *autumn*; even though there were students that used the AmE alternative *fall* in each country. The only exception was the Finnish IB-students, where there was a tie between the alternatives and *fall* was chosen equally as often as *autumn*. The difference between choosing *autumn* over *fall* was not so big in Denmark and Iceland; however in Norway the difference was more significant with only 8 students choosing *fall* and 31 students *autumn*.

#### 10.1.2. Vacation vs. Holiday

With these alternatives, the American English lexeme *vacation* was much more popular than the British English *holiday* in Iceland, Norway and Denmark. In Finland, the BrE alternative *holiday* was preferred by the majority of the students.

#### 10.1.3. Maybe vs. Perhaps

The American English alternative *maybe* was preferred very strongly in Finland and Denmark. In Norway *maybe* was slightly more preferred than *perhaps* with the small

difference of 2 students. In Iceland the BrE alternative *perhaps* was the most popular choice, even though many used the American one.

#### **10.1.4. Line vs. Queue**

The majority of all Nordic countries chose the AmE alternative *line*, although the level of preference varied between the countries. In Finland and Norway the difference was not very big, but in Iceland and Denmark the difference was more considerable.

#### **10.1.5. Cell phone vs. Mobile phone**

There were 33 Norwegian IB students, who preferred the AmE alternative *cell phone*, whereas only seven Norwegians chose the BrE alternative, which indicates a high preference of the AmE version. The majority of Danish and Icelandic students also chose the AmE alternative *cell phone*. By contrast, Finland is the odd one out by leaning towards the BrE alternative *mobile phone*.

#### **10.1.6. Mailbox vs. Post-box**

The majority of all of the Nordic IB-students preferred the American English alternative *mailbox* to the British English *post-box*. However, the Icelandic and Finnish students chose to use the BrE alternative more often than the Norwegian and Danish students, where only one student in each country had preferred *post-box*.

#### **10.1.7. Living room vs. Sitting room**

First I must refer to my findings from BNC and COCA corpora. According to the results from the corpora, *living room* is the preferred term in both varieties. However, as I have noted before I talk of AmE and BrE alternatives, even though many terms are used in both varieties. This was however a very clear-cut case. All of the Nordic IB-students preferred

exclusively the alternative *living room*, which has been more common in AmE than BrE. There were only 4 Icelandic students that chose *sitting room*.

#### **10.1.8. Couch vs. Sofa**

Iceland and Denmark preferred the AmE alternative *couch* slightly more and Norwegian students preferred both alternatives equally. The Finnish students preferred the British English alternative *sofa* considerably stronger than *couch*.

#### **10.1.9. Curtains vs. Drapes**

All the Nordic countries preferred the AmE alternative *curtains*. There were only one Norwegian and Danish student that preferred *drapes* and two Finnish and Icelandic students that preferred it.

#### **10.1.10. Sneakers vs. Trainers**

As we saw with the lexeme pairs: *vacation vs. holiday*, *cell phone vs. mobile phone* and *couch vs. sofa*, where Iceland, Norway and Denmark preferred the American English version, the same goes with this pairing, as they also preferred the AmE alternative *sneakers*. By contrast, the Finnish students preferred the British English alternative with the pairings mentioned above and also here by indicating a stronger preference of the British English alternative *trainers*.

### **10.2. Spelling**

#### **10.2.1. Dreamed vs. Dreamt**

The Icelandic and Finnish students prefer the American English alternative *dreamed* very strongly, whereas the Danish and Norwegian students prefer the British English *dreamt* strongly.

### **10.2.2. Learned vs. Learnt**

In contrast with the spelling pair above (*dreamed* vs. *dreamt*), all the countries prefer the American English alternative of spelling *learned* very strongly.

### **10.2.3. Color vs. Colour**

With this spelling case, the Icelandic students are the odd ones out and they prefer the AmE spelling *color* slightly stronger, whereas the rest of the Nordic countries prefer the BrE spelling *colour* in different degrees. Finland prefers it slightly more and Norway and Denmark prefer it very strongly.

### **10.2.4. Analyze vs. Analyse**

The Norwegian students chose the AmE spelling *analyze* slightly more, whereas the Icelandic students preferred it very strongly. The Finnish students chose both spelling alternatives as often and the Danish students preferred the BrE spelling *analyse* slightly more.

### **10.2.5. Honored vs. Honoured**

As with the spelling of *color/colour* the Icelandic students again preferred the AmE spelling *honored*. The Finnish students preferred it also, but the difference between the choices was not considerable. The Norwegians preferred the BrE spelling *honoured* very strongly and the Danish students preferred it a little bit more over the AmE spelling.

### **10.2.6. Center vs. Centre**

Iceland and Denmark preferred the AmE spelling *center* and so did Finland, but not as strongly. Only the Norwegian students preferred the BrE spelling *centre* very strongly.

### **10.2.7. Theater vs. Theatre**

This is lexeme with similar spelling difference as with the case above *center* vs. *centre* and the results are the same. The majority of Icelandic, Danish and Finnish students chose the AmE spelling alternative of *theater* and the majority of the Norwegian students chose the BrE spelling *theatre*.

## **10.3. Do-periphrasis vs. Have got-construction**

### **10.3.1. Does that car have four doors? vs. Has that car got four doors?**

This was a quite clear-cut case as well, as all of the Nordic IB-students preferred the American alternative of constructing a question with the do-periphrasis. There were only two students from Finland and three students from Norway that chose to use the British English “have got” construction.

### **10.3.2. He does not have a dog. vs. He has not got a dog.**

With this sentence as well, all the countries preferred the do-periphrasis, however there were some differences to the degree of how many students chose to use it. Iceland, Norway and Denmark preferred it very strongly, whereas with the Finnish students, it was almost a tie with the constructions as the do-periphrasis was chosen by 15 students and the have got-construction by 9 students.

### **10.3.3. Do you have money? vs. Have you got money?**

Also with this construction, the majority of all the Nordic IB-students chose to use the do-periphrasis. However, this case was not as clear-cut as in the two cases above, because there were some students from each country that used the BrE ‘have got’ construction, whereas in

the previous case of :”Does that car have four doors? Vs. Has that car got four doors?”, there were only a few students from Finland and Norway that used the BrE construction.

#### **10.3.4. Do you have children? vs. Have you got children?**

This is thought-provoking, because this sentence is almost identical to the one above, however it yielded different results. All countries preferred the AmE do-periphrasis strongly. However, there were two students from Iceland, four from Finland and three from Norway that had chosen to use the BrE ‘have got’-construction. It is also interesting to see that there were no Danish students that had chosen to use the BrE construction.

### **10.4. Adverbials**

#### **10.4.1. Under/In these circumstances, I cannot stay.**

With the first adverbial choice, the majority of all students in every country chose to use the alternative, which is viewed as the American English alternative *under*. However, there were few students from each country that chose to use the British English alternative *in*.

#### **10.4.2. I live on/in Walnut Street.**

With these adverbial alternatives, the choices were not as clear as above, even though all countries leaned again more towards the American English alternative *on* again. Excluding the Icelandic students, who strongly preferred the adverbial *on*. In all the other countries there were great many who chose the British English alternative *in* instead.

#### **10.4.3. On/at the weekend Susan liked to read books.**

It is intriguing to see that with these adverbials, Finland, Norway and Denmark mostly chose the British English alternative *at*. However with Denmark, the difference was not big

and the students chose to use the AmE alternative *on* almost as often as *at*. By contrast, the Icelandic students preferred the AmE alternative *on* very strongly.

## **10.5. Verb form**

### **10.5.1. To get up vs. Getting**

The results from the BNC and COCA corpora show that the infinitive form *to get* is more common in both varieties. All the Nordic countries preferred the verb, which is viewed as the alternative more commonly used in sentences in the States *to get*. However there are differences, to what degree they prefer it. There were no students in the Danish class that had chosen to use the British English alternative *getting*, whereas there were five Norwegian and three Finnish students that had chosen *getting* instead of *to get*. Although *to get* was chosen by the majority of students in Iceland, there were still 18 students that chose to use the progressive form *getting* instead.

### **10.5.2. To argue vs. arguing**

It is intriguing to notice, that with this next pair, all the Nordic countries except Finland, prefer the British English form *arguing* considerably stronger. The Finnish students have chosen the AmE form *to argue* slightly more than *arguing*.

## **10.6. Verb concord**

### **10.6.1. Family is vs. Family are**

With this case of verb concord, all the Nordic countries preferred the American English alternative of using the singular verb. The Finnish students chose to use the AmE alternative exclusively, but there were some students in Norway, Iceland and Denmark that chose to use the plural verb form *are* which is viewed as the British English alternative.

### **10.6.2. Airways is vs. Airways are**

The results are very different with this pairing, because the noun is changed from *family* to *airways*. Iceland and Norway prefer the British English plural *are* and Finland and Denmark the American English *is*. Even though there were no Finnish students that preferred the BrE alternative with the noun *family*, it is intriguing to see that with the noun *airways* there is a minority of students (6 students) that chose the BrE alternative.

### **10.6.3. The city do vs. the city does**

With this noun, the majority of all the Nordic IB-students preferred the BrE form of plural verb form *does*. There were no students from Finland, who chose the singular verb, however there was one student from Iceland and Denmark and six from Norway that chose to use *do*.

### **10.6.4. The audience was vs. The audience were**

With this noun the tables have been turned again. The majority from Iceland, Finland and Denmark chose the AmE verb form *was* and the Norwegian students chose the BrE verb form plural *were* slightly more.

## **10.7. Preterite vs. Present Perfect paired with the adverbial just**

### **10.7.1. I just saw him vs. I have just seen him**

The majority of all the students preferred the American English alternative of using preterite *saw* with the adverbial *just* very strongly. There were no students from Finland that chose the present perfect, but there were from three to five students from each of the other countries that preferred the present perfect *have seen*.

### **10.7.2. I just talked to her vs. I have just talked to her.**

Even though the majority of all Nordic countries preferred the American English alternative, the preterite *talked* more than the present perfect, still there were much more students, who chose the BrE alternative than with the case above.

## **10.8. Adverbial Placement**

### **10.8.1. Place the adverbial “never” to sentence “they are late”**

It is claimed that in American English the placement of adverbials is freer and in British English the adverbial tends to come right after the auxiliary verb. The majority of all the Nordic students went for placing the adverbial right after the auxiliary. However, there were a few students in Iceland and Denmark that placed the adverbial more freely in front of the verb *are*, which is viewed as more American English.

### **10.8.2. Place the adverbial “never” to sentence “they can tell”**

With this sentence, the placement of the adverbial was freer. However, all the Nordic countries preferred most to place the adverbial right after the auxiliary *can*. In addition, there were some students that placed the adverbial before the auxiliary and even after *tell*.

### **10.8.3. Place the adverbial “usually” to sentence “He doesn’t get up before 7 o’clock”**

The placement of this adverbial was even freer, just because there were more slots to place the adverbial. The majority of Icelandic, Norwegian and Danish students placed the adverbial more freely as in American English before the auxiliary verb *do*, whereas most of the Finnish students placed the adverbial after the auxiliary, which is the norm in British English.

## 11. Conclusions

Before I start the last section of the thesis, I would like to emphasise once more that even though I write of the American and English alternatives and views, it is important to remember that the alternatives are not solely used on one side of the Atlantic. Whether it is about grammatical or vocabulary choices, it is not correct to say that one alternative is used solely in American and British English. Some alternatives might be used interchangeably in both varieties and some alternatives are more clearly American or British English.

However, I chose to refer to the alternatives as the American English alternative or the British English alternative, because it makes it easier and faster to write as long as the reader keeps it in mind that the distinctions are not clear and that alternatives can be used by both varieties.

I used two corpora to look at the differences between American and British English: The British National Corpus (BNC) for British English and the Corpus of Contemporary English (COCA) for American English.

### 11.1. Vocabulary

The students did not know the purpose of the questionnaire beforehand and so, I noticed that it was common that the students had written down one alternative (e.g. autumn) and then hesitated and wrote another alternative instead (e.g. fall), even though both alternatives are correct. This might be a sign of schizoglossia, i.e. linguistic insecurity, which means that there are two language varieties and one is seen proper and the other as incorrect. In these cases, one variety is seen as "bad" and its speaker might want to correct some uses that are representative of it for some of the prestigious one. Those negative attitudes usually make the speakers be ashamed of the language that doesn't have prestige, either openly or indirectly (by using linguistic characteristics, such as pronunciation, of the other language) (Wikipedia, entry for 'Schizoglossia').

It was gripping to see that both BNC and COCA preferred the British English alternative *autumn* to American English *fall*. Also the Nordic students preferred this alternative. There might be an upcoming trend to prefer the BrE alternative, which has also affected the students already. Although literature points to the fact that AmE uses *fall* instead of *autumn*.

I discussed earlier in section 6 about Tottie's (Tottie 2002: 98-100) findings on lexemes *vacation* and *holiday* and I found out the same as Tottie 2002, when I searched the

two corpora with the lexemes *vacation* and *holiday*. In the COCA corpus, I found that there were many instances of both lexemes, yet *vacation* was slightly more used. There were only 290 instances of *vacation* in the BNC, whereas there were 7632 instances of *holiday* (Tottie 2002: 98-100).

When it comes to the IB students, the Norwegian, Danish and Icelandic students preferred the American English *vacation*, whereas the Finnish students preferred the British English *holiday* more. The Finnish students chose the British English alternative in this vocabulary section of the questionnaire four times out of ten and in one case it was a tie between the BrE and AmE alternative. The Finnish students chose the British English alternatives most often of all the Nordic students in the vocabulary section. This might be due to their teacher, who is my old teacher, who speaks British English. The Finnish students also preferred the BrE alternative with these lexeme pairings: *cell phone/mobile phone*, *couch/sofa* and *sneakers/trainers*. When comparing these lexemes with BNC and COCA, I found out that the frequencies support the commonly held views of AmE and BrE vocabulary choices.

Tottie (Tottie 2002: 98-100) made a research on the lexemes *maybe/perhaps* on corpora. She found out that there is a difference between American and British English usage of these lexemes in speech and writing. In AmE speech there is only 3% of all cases that *perhaps* is used, where as in writing the number rises to 70%, which means that in AmE writing *perhaps* is more common than *maybe*. In contrast, *perhaps* is more common in speech and writing in British English. In speech it was found in 60% of all cases and in writing in 83% of cases (Tottie 2002, p.98-99).

In addition, I found out that with BNC *perhaps* has more instances and with COCA the lexeme *maybe* has more instances. This confirms the common view that *perhaps* is used more in BrE and *maybe* in AmE.

The majority of Icelandic students chose *perhaps* (AmE) and in the other countries the majority chose *maybe* (BrE). This might be due to the fact about written and spoken language that Tottie (Tottie 2002: 98-100) pointed out. The questionnaire was written and thus even though the Icelandic students would prefer *maybe* in their everyday speech, they chose to use *perhaps* in this case as the questionnaire was written. In all, the majority of the Icelandic students chose to use the British English alternative in two cases of the ten vocabulary questions (Tottie 2002: 98-100).

The majority of Danish and Norwegian students chose the British English alternative only once. What could be the reason for this? One reason might be that their respective English language teachers use American English. Another reason is that some of the students have been living in the States and the UK for some time. Finland is a little isolated geographically and linguistically, so this might contribute to the fact that the Finnish IB students prefer the BrE alternatives as much as the AmE alternatives, in addition to their teacher who speaks BrE.

When it comes to the rest of the vocabulary section, the majority of all countries preferred the American English alternative. These lexeme pairings were: *line/queue*, *mailbox/post box*, *living room/sitting room* and *curtains/drapes*. My findings with the COCA and BNC corpus support only one commonly held view, which was with this pair: *line/queue*. When it comes to the other pairings where the majority of all Nordic students preferred the American English alternative, the corpora findings suggest that the AmE alternative is more frequent in both BNC and COCA, which might indicate towards a trend to prefer the AmE alternative in both varieties, and thus this is also reflected in the choices of the Nordic IB students.

I was surprised to see that the students chose to use the American English alternative with vocabulary choices, where the British English vocabulary alternative was closer to their mother tongue than the American English vocabulary alternative. These lexemes were: cell phone vs. mobile phone. Which is in Norwegian: mobiltelefon and in Danish: mobiltelefon. Another lexeme pairing is: mailbox vs. post-box. The majority of all students in each country chose the AmE alternative, even though in Norwegian it is: postkasse, in Icelandic: postkassi, in Danish: postkasse and in Finnish: postilaatikko.

The last lexeme pairing was couch vs. sofa. With this pairing there were many more that had chose to use the British English alternative *sofa*, but the majority in Iceland and Denmark chose *couch*. In Norway, it was a tie between the lexemes and in Finland *sofa* was selected by the majority of students. In Norwegian it is: sofa, in Danish: sofa, in Icelandic: sofi and in Finnish: sohva. This just goes to show, how dominant American English is. Even though the words of their mother tongue are closer to the British English alternative, the majority of the IB-students still used the American English alternative.

## 11.2. Spelling

The results from the spelling section were very gripping. With the vocabulary section Norway and Denmark preferred the American English version nine times out of ten and the Finnish and Icelandic students chose the British English version more often than the AmE alternative. With the spelling section, however, the tables have been turned. The majority of Icelandic students chose the American English spelling every time and the Finnish students chose the British English spelling only once. By contrast, the majority of Danish students chose the British English spelling in four times of seven and the majority of Norwegian students chose the British English spelling five times out of seven.

What is striking is that the majority of all countries chose to spell *learned* with the –ed ending and not with –t, however the majority of Norwegian and Danish students spelt *dreamt* with –t suffix. I found out from BNC and COCA, that both corpora had more instances of the –ed suffix with *learned* and *dreamed*. One could have expected higher frequencies of the –t suffix for *learnt* and *dreamt* in the BNC, but the –ed suffix was much more frequent. As with some of the lexeme pairings, this might be an indication towards a change in spelling traditions in British English by conforming into the American English way of spelling. In addition, the results from BNC and COCA supported the commonly held views of American and British spelling with *color/colour*, *analyze/analyse*, *honor/honour*, *center/centre* and *theater/theatre*.

Otherwise, the majority of Danish and Norwegian students are consistent with their spelling. They both spell *colour* and *honour* with –u and the majority of Norwegian students spell both *theatre* and *centre* with –er ending and the Danish with –re ending.

It is quite intriguing that the majority of Danish and Norwegian students preferred the AmE vocabulary choices, but prefer the BrE spelling more than AmE spelling. This might be due to their English teachers as some correct their students, when they spell in the American way. Another reason could be that they are more prone to be conservative, as this questionnaire was a written one and not an oral questionnaire.

### **11.3. Do-periphrasis vs. have got-construction**

With the case of do-periphrasis vs. have got-construction one can see the dominance of the American English over the British English. The majority of all Nordic students preferred the do-periphrasis in all four questions. Even as I searched the two corpora, the results show that: “Does it have? vs. Has it got?” and “Does not have. Vs. Has not got.”, the do-periphrasis was much more frequent in both corpora. However, as I entered the search: “Do you have? Vs. Have you got?”, I found out that the do-periphrasis was more common in the COCA corpus and the have got-construction in the BNC corpus. These findings from the corpora and from the Nordic IB-students might indicate a change in British English, where do-periphrasis might become as common as the have got-construction.

### **11.4. Adverbials**

The majority of Icelandic students chose to use the American English alternative of adverbials in all three cases, whereas the majority of Finnish, Norwegian and Danish students chose the AmE adverbial twice and the BrE adverbial once. I searched the BNC and COCA for these sentences with these adverbials and found out that the commonly held views of these adverbials and American and British English are supported by the data found from the corpora. The majority of students seem to lean towards the adverbials used more in American English in these cases, as they do with other sections of the questionnaire.

### **11.5. Verb form; infinitive vs. present progressive**

According to Algeo (Algeo 1988: 22), the infinitive is more common in such sentences as “I hate *to get up* in the morning.” and “The whole family started *to argue*.” in British English, where as the present progressive is more common in American English i.e. *getting, arguing* etc. The majority of the Finnish students preferred to use the present progressive in both cases (*getting, arguing*), but the Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic students preferred the present progressive with the verb *getting* and the infinitive form with the verb *to argue*. Thus the Finnish students preferred the American English alternatives and the other countries’ students were divided as they used the AmE alternative with the first sentence and the BrE alternative with the second. This was an interesting result, but there was only two questions and there should have been more in order to reveal some tendencies (Algeo 1988: 22).

This area of verb forms is also very vague in the sense that even though previous material point to this tendency that AmE and BrE prefer one verb form over the other, it is not a clear-cut case at all. Both verb forms are of course used in both varieties. I searched the BNC and the COCA corpora for these verb forms and it was striking to find out that the infinitive *to get up* was much more frequent in both AmE and BrE than the present progressive *getting*. In contrast *started arguing* was much more common in both BNC and COCA, than the infinitive *started to argue*. These findings might indicate a change in the English language, as do the results from the IB students, as the majority of Danish, Norwegian and Icelandic students had the same preferences as the corpora indicate. Perhaps, this preference points to the fact that these verb forms are more common in these particular sentences, and so they have a little to say of AmE and BrE preferences.

### **11.6. Subject-verb concord**

I tested the area of subject-verb concord in the questionnaire with four sentences. According to Algeo (Algeo 1988: 23-24) and Johansson (Johansson 1979: 203-205), in British English the singular and plural verb forms are interchangeable with collective noun subjects, whereas in American English the singular verb form is almost always used. The majority of Finnish and Danish students preferred the American English alternative of singular verb form in three out of four cases. It was only with the sentence “*The City of London do/does not take the blame.*” that the majority of all countries preferred the British English alternative of plural verb form. The majority of the Icelandic students chose the AmE alternative in half of the cases and the British English alternative in the other half of the cases. The majority of Norwegian students chose the BrE alternative in three out of four cases. The majority of all countries chose the AmE alternative with the collective noun subject *family* (Algeo 1988: 23-24, Johansson 1979: 203-205).

I searched the two corpora for these four instances and found out that both corpora have more frequencies for the American English alternative of the singular verb form, however as I mentioned earlier British English use the singular and plural verb forms interchangeably.

It is intriguing that just by changing the noun from e.g. *family* to *airways* derives different results from the IB-students. The Norwegian students chose the British English alternatives more often than the other Nordic students. There was also a strong correlation with the collective noun subject and what the students preferred. The majority of all students preferred the singular verb form with the noun *family*, whereas the majority

preferred the plural form with the subject *city of London*. The reason for this might be that the students think that the noun *family* is more of a unit than the *city of London*, which consists of millions of people. I would not go as far as to say that since the subject refers to Britain, that that would be the reason for the students to prefer BrE.

### **11.7. Preterite vs. Present perfect**

According to Johan Elsness (Elsness 1997: 216-219), when time reference is clearly identified to past time, both AmE and BrE use preterite. However, when time reference is vague, especially with adverbs e.g. *just, already* etc, then BrE tends to use present perfect and AmE preterite (Elsness, p.216-219).

The majority of all students in each country preferred using the preterite with these two sentences: “I have just seen him./I just saw him.” and “I have just talked to her./I just talked to her.” I again searched the two corpora and found out that both of them had more instances for the preterite verb forms than the present perfect. This might be an indication towards an upcoming change or just a trend, which means that both varieties begin to prefer the preterite, even though the time reference is vague.

In addition, Elsness (Elsness 1997: 83, 227) pointed out that: his elicitation test also shows that there is a statistical difference in the elicitation test for AmE and BrE in half of the cases. A majority of the constructions are less acceptable in AmE, which are accepted in BrE. This suggests that the influence of AmE to BrE is stronger than vice versa (Elsness, p.83, 227).

### **11.8. Placing adverbials**

As discussed earlier, when there is an auxiliary, the adverbs of frequency follow the auxiliary and precede the full verb in British English. This is also the norm in American English, but in addition to this one can place the adverbs more freely into the sentences (Tottie 2002, p.170-171).

Now, when looking at the results from the Nordic students, it is clear that the majority of students in each country prefer the BrE placing of the adverbials, although as I pointed out, this is also the norm in AmE, but I am referring to this as the BrE alternative. Most of the students agreed on placing the adverbial after the auxiliary with the smaller sentences: “They are late.” and “They can tell.” However, it became trickier, when the

sentence got longer: “He doesn’t get up before 7 o’clock.” and there were more possible slots for the adverb. In this case the adverb was placed more freely as in AmE by the majority of students in Iceland, Norway and Denmark. Only the Finnish students stuck with the BrE alternative.

### **11.9. Summary of conclusions**

In general, the majority of all Nordic students chose the American English alternative in most cases. There were in total 35 cases in the questionnaire that the students completed. The majority of the Icelandic students chose the AmE alternative more than the other Nordic countries. They chose the AmE alternative in 28 cases and the BrE alternative in 7 cases. Next it was the Danish students, who chose the AmE alternative 25 times and the BrE alternative ten times. The majority of Finnish students chose the BrE alternative as many times (10 times) as the Danish students.

However, there were two times, where the students had chosen the BrE and AmE alternative equally as many times and thus the AmE alternative was chosen 23 times. The majority of Norwegian students chose the AmE alternative the least amount of times of all the Nordic students, as they chose it 21 times and the BrE alternative in 13 cases.

There are many reasons for these results from the Nordic countries’ IB classes. One is that their teachers might prefer/use one variety over the other. Another reason is the backgrounds of the students: They might have been living in the UK or the States for a while and thus they use one of the varieties more than the other. The media (the internet, TV and radio) plays a big role in the lives of young people and these days the media is dominated by American English. Also the entertainment industry affects the youngster’s English usage. Music and movies are mostly in American English, even though British English has a lot to offer too. In addition, the history of each Nordic country affects these young students. As discussed earlier, the Nordic countries were influenced by British English at first more heavily and as travelling became more frequent and the USA became stronger as a country after the Second World War, the American English variety became the biggest influence in English in the Nordic countries.

However, some teachers viewed the British English as the “proper” English for a long time and even though this has changed in time in schools, it still lingers in the minds of native and foreign speakers of English.

This thesis is hardly representative of all the Nordic IB students and their preferences and usages of American and British English, as there were only one class from each country and the class sizes that took part in this thesis varied from 22 to 55 students.

As I wrote this thesis, I noticed that there were instances that might indicate a change in British English towards using American English alternatives. It would be intriguing to study these findings deeper and see if there is any truth to them.

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## Appendix 1:

The questionnaire for the Nordic IB-students

**Please answer these questions first:**

Age:

Gender:

Have you lived in other countries than Norway for over two months?

If so, where and how long?

Altogether, how many years have you studied English?

### 1. Fill in the blanks in English:

*example: Mary and John went to Spain in July.*  
*Juli*

1. It is getting colder. I think that \_\_\_\_\_ is coming.  
**høst**
2. They went to France for their \_\_\_\_\_.  
**ferie**
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Maria is angry with you for some reason.  
**kanskje**
4. There was a long \_\_\_\_\_ of people waiting outside !  
**kø**
5. Please turn off your \_\_\_\_\_ .  
**mobiltelefon**
6. He went to check the \_\_\_\_\_ .  
**postkasse**
7. Come into the \_\_\_\_\_ .  
**dagligstue**
- 8 . Have a seat on the \_\_\_\_\_ .  
**sofa**
9. It's so sunny today. Can you please pull the \_\_\_\_\_ over the windows?  
**gardiner**

10. John, put on your \_\_\_\_\_. We are going jogging.  
**joggesko**

**2. Fill in the blanks in English, in the right form of the verb or the word:**

example: The dog was running around.  
*løpte*

1. Mark \_\_\_\_\_ of summer last night.  
**drømte**

2. I \_\_\_\_\_ how to spell my name in Japanese yesterday.  
**lærte meg**

3. This \_\_\_\_\_ really suits you!  
**farge**

4. Peter, can you \_\_\_\_\_ this sentence?  
**analysere**

5. They \_\_\_\_\_ him by giving him a medal.  
**æret**

6. I will meet you in the city \_\_\_\_\_.  
**sentrum**

7. There is a play in the \_\_\_\_\_, that I would like to see tomorrow.  
**teater**

**2. Translate these sentences into English:**

1. Har den bilen fire dører?

2. Han har ikke en hund.

3. Har du penger?

4. Har du barn?

**5. Put in the most suitable preposition (circle your choice, please choose only one):**

1. *Under/ In* these circumstances, I cannot stay.

2. I live *on/in* Walnut Street.

3. *On/at* the weekend Susan liked to read books.

**5. Put in the most suitable verb form (circle your choice, please choose only one):**

1. I hate to *get/getting* up in the morning.

2. The whole family started *to argue/arguing*.

3. Lisa's family *is/are* nice.

4. British Airways *is/are* going places in the UK.

6. The City of London *do/does* not take the blame.

7. The audience *was/were* enjoying every minute of the show.

8. Yes, John is here. *I have just seen him/ I just saw him*.

9. I know Mary is around somewhere – *I have just talked to her/ I just talked to her*

**6. Place the adverbial**

1. Where would you place this adverbial/word: "**NEVER**" in these sentence, please indicate with an arrow:

1a.) They are late.

1b.) They can tell.

2. Where would you place this adverbial/word: "**USUALLY**" in this sentence, please indicate with an arrow:

2b.) He doesn't get up before 7 o'clock.

**Finally, write in your own words what you think this questionnaire is about?**