

**VARIAÇÃO E COMPETÊNCIA SOCIOLINGÜÍSTICAS NO ENSINO DE INGLÊS
COMO LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA**

**VARIACIÓN Y COMPETENCIA SOCIOLINGÜÍSTICA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL
INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA**

**VARIATION AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE TEACHING**

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RESUMO: Desde Currie (1952) usou o termo ‘sociolinguística’ e reivindicou seu status de disciplina autônoma, seu desenvolvimento e influência sobre outras áreas da pesquisa linguística nos últimos anos dentro e, principalmente, fora da Espanha. Nessas fronteiras têm sido muito consideráveis. Um dos aspectos destacados pela Sociolinguística desde o início é a heterogeneidade social e linguística da linguagem. Portanto, se a variabilidade estrutural e regular é característica do uso normal da língua e também é a chave para entender os mecanismos de mudança linguística, o conhecimento e o domínio dessa variação linguística presente na comunidade também são muito importantes. intimamente ligado ao grau de competência sociolingüística do falante, de modo que todo aluno de ILE língua estrangeira deve estar ciente disso e, portanto, deve ser contemplado em materiais de ensino e de texto.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Variação linguística. Competência sociolingüística. Ensino ILE.

RESUMEN: Desde que Currie (1952) empleó el término ‘sociolingüística’ y reivindicó su estatus como disciplina autónoma, su desarrollo e influencia sobre otras esferas de la investigación lingüística durante los últimos años dentro y, principalmente, fuera de España, han sido muy considerables. Uno de los aspectos que la Sociolingüística ha destacado desde sus mismos albores es la heterogeneidad social y lingüística del lenguaje. Por ello, si la variabilidad estructural y regular es característica del uso normal de la lengua y constituye además la clave para la comprensión de los mecanismos del cambio lingüístico, el conocimiento y dominio de esta variación lingüística presente en el seno de la comunidad también está muy estrechamente ligado al grado de competencia sociolingüística del hablante, con lo que todo aprendiz de una lengua extranjera debe ser consciente de ella y, por ello, ha de ser contemplada en la docencia y los materiales de texto.

PALABRAS-CLAVE: Variación lingüística. Competencia sociolingüística. Enseñanza ILE.

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ABSTRACT: *Since Currie (1952) first used the term 'sociolinguistics' and claimed its status as an autonomous discipline, its development and influence over other areas of linguistic research in recent years have been very considerable within and, mainly, outside of Spain. The social and linguistic heterogeneity of language constitutes one of the most highlighted aspects in Sociolinguistics since its emergence as a discipline. Therefore, if regular and structural variability is characteristic of the normal use of the language as well as the key to understanding the mechanisms of linguistic change, similarly, the knowledge and command of this kind of linguistic variation present within the community is also very closely linked to the speaker's degree of sociolinguistic competence, so that every foreign language learner must be aware of its existence and, therefore, must be contemplated in EFL teaching and text materials.*

KEYWORDS: *Linguistic variation. Sociolinguistic competence. TEFL.*

Introduction: applied linguistics, sociolinguistics and foreign languages

Research on learning and teaching foreign languages has been characterized since the beginning by the adoption of multidisciplinary perspectives and interdisciplinary treatment, successfully combining linguistics with psychology, pedagogy, education, neurobiology, sociology or anthropology (see RICHARDS, 1974; VAN ELS *et al.*, 1977; BELL, 1981; RUTHERFORD, 1984; ELLIS, 1985; 2012; STERN, 1983; DAVIES; CRIPER; HOWATT, 1984; COOK, 1993; RAMAT, 2002; ROBINSON; ELLIS, 2008; ELLIS; LOEWEN; ANCIÃO; ERLAM; PHILP; REINDERS, 2009; LASAGABASTER; DOIZ; SIERRA, 2014; LAMBELET; BERHELE, 2015; GABRY-BARKER; GA-AJDA, 2016; HABRAT, 2018; among others). This multidisciplinaryity has allowed important advances in the exploration of language learning processes and in the knowledge of their functioning, actors and factors to be able to apply it in their teaching since the pioneering works in Applied Linguistics such as those of Lado (1957; 1964), Selinker (1972), Corder (1967; 1973) or Krashen (1981; 1982). Anyway, from its various proposals, there was a prolific debate that is still far from developing a globalizing and integrating theory that tries to explain the learning of additional languages (L2/FL).

Much has been written, for example, since contrastivist theories showed at the time that L1 interference could be the source of errors made by an L2/FL apprentice, or that later studies showed that many of the errors are also part of the development of L2 itself - such as those committed by a child during the acquisition of their mother tongue or even interlingua. But many others have nothing to do with L1 or L2, but with strictly extralinguistic factors of various types. Several works have highlighted the importance of Sociolinguistics, for example, in the learning and teaching of foreign languages or second languages (see SHUY, 1969; WHERRITT, 1981; JANICKI, 1982;

WOLFSON; JUDD, 1983; PRESTON, 1989; GASS, 1989; BAYLEY; PRESTON, 1996; MCKAY; HORNBERGER, 1996; HERNÁNDEZ CAMPOY, 1997A; 1997B; SCHEU; HERNÁNDEZ-CAMPOY, 1998; PREISLER, 1999; HERNÁNDEZ CAMPOY; SCHEU, 2001; 2005; SEIDLHOFER, 2004; KIRKPATRICK, 2007; HORNBERGER; MCKAY, 2010; BAYYURT, 2013; GEESLIN; LONG, 2014; O BEAULIEU; WOLL; FRENCH; DUCHEMIN, 2018).

The concept of "competence" initially introduced by Chomsky (1965) concerned a person's generally unconscious linguistic knowledge about his own language, that is, the system of rules he masters to be able to produce and understand an infinite series of sentences and recognize possible grammatical errors and ambiguities. But learning the language of a given culture is not just learning many words in this L2/FL, nor how to build an infinite variety of grammatically correct phrases in that L2/FL, but learning an additional language is also learning to talk and interact in the same way that a native under the rules of communicative interaction and values typical of his socio-cultural system. Thus, in addition to grammatical/linguistic competence, sociocultural, pragmatic, discursive, strategic and communicative emerged. With this motivation, and by analogy with the term Chomskiano, Hymes (1966; 1972) introduced the concept of 'communicative competence': learning a language is not only focusing on mastering its grammar, phonology and vocabulary, but also knowing how to use it properly in the society in which she is used as a native. The speaker must know when to speak and when not, what variety and when, what linguistic formulas to use, what style to suit the situation, and how to be courteous, rude, friendly or hostile accordingly. Therefore, the acquisition of communicative competence can be established in the same terms as the acquisition of grammatical competence. What happens is that such communicative competence feeds on the social experience itself and, therefore, needs more time to be acquired (HYMES, 1972, p. 278).

Likewise, if, during the process of acquiring linguistic competence in the grammar of the mother tongue, children also acquire communicative competence, also, in learning a foreign language, the language students, despite having it in their mother tongue, they have to acquire communicative competence, in addition to the linguistic language, in the foreign language they learn if they want to use it effectively and appropriately to sound natural as it stands out in Wolfson and Judd (1983), Gass (1989), Scheu y Hernández- Campoy (1998), Hernández-Campoy and Scheu (2001; 2005), Beaulieu, Woll, French, Leif and Duchemin (2018), among others. This implies the acquisition of cultural values that underlie the L2 / FL community's discourse to use them properly in any situation and to interpret, with precision, what is said, since the rules for the correct use of speech change considerably from one society to another

(WOLFSON; JUDD, 1983, p. 3-4). This context of language in use - of greater interest in performance studies than competence - which began to spread from the end of the 1960s led to the application of a more communicative dimension of the language in a foreign/second language classroom, taking from the grammar the place of high privilege it always had when it came to teaching or learning a language (POULISSE, 1990, p. 6).

Objectives

Sociolinguistics located and described the symmetry between social variation and linguistic variation in terms of sociolinguistic variation, correlating non-linguistic factors, such as situational context and sociodemographic parameters with linguistic constituents. But if structural and regular variability is characteristic of normal language use and is also the key to understanding the mechanisms of linguistic change, the knowledge and mastery of this linguistic variation present within the community is also closely linked to the speaker's degree of sociolinguistic competence, with which each student of a foreign language must be aware and, therefore, must be covered by teaching.

Sociolinguistic competence is an integral component of communicative competence that has pragmatic and sociolinguistic knowledge to achieve linguistic and socially appropriate use (see MIZNE, 1997; YU, 2006; YA, 2010; PAULSTON; KIESLING; RANGEL, 2012; KRAMSCH, 2014; GEESLIN; LONG, 2014; O MEDE; DIKILITAS, 2015). But this sociolinguistic competence has always been based on a linguistic competence built on models of standard variety, both dialectal and accent. Thus, although a foreign language learner has a great knowledge of the rules of the non-native variety in the different spectrum of competences (grammatical, sociocultural, pragmatic, discursive, strategic or communicative), knowing how to function perfectly in the different communicative situations practiced in that metalanguage, this it is still the language of the classroom - and the official national standard variety - so that when they leave this bubble for the real world they encounter a sociolinguistic and dialectal variation where non-standard vernacular varieties predominate:

The first thing that happens to an English learner as soon as he arrives in the British Isles is that he discovers (with great disenchantment) what little he understands about the English he hears. On the one hand, because people speak faster than expected. On the other hand, because the English that most British people speak is different from what he learned. In addition to being surprised by

the differences in pronunciation, you will also notice differences in grammar and vocabulary (HUGHES; TRUDGILL, 1979, p. 1)⁴.

Therefore, as Kramersch (2014) indicates, "[...] there has never been so much discrepancy between what is taught in the classroom and what students will need in the real world after they leave the classroom. In the last few decades, this world has changed to such an extent that language teachers are no longer sure what they should teach or real world situations for which they should prepare their students".⁵

The main objective of this work, therefore, is to emphasize that a sociolinguistic perspective that contemplates socioeconomic reading and dialectal variation, sensitive to non-standard diversity and highlighting the great differences between unreal and real language, is indispensable for the teaching of foreign languages. It will be exemplified by the case of the English language as it is the most widely taught and learned foreign language today.

Sociolinguistic variation and teaching English as a foreign language

One of the aspects that sociolinguistics has insisted on since its creation is the fact that languages are variable entities at the same time that they are socially and linguistically heterogeneous. Thus, Sociolinguistics located and described the symmetry between social variation and linguistic variation in terms of sociolinguistic variation using extralinguistic sociodemographic and style factors. But if structural and regular variability is characteristic of the usual use of language and is also the key to understanding the mechanisms of linguistic change, the knowledge and mastery of this linguistic variation present within the community is also closely linked to the speaker's degree of sociolinguistic competence, with which each student of a foreign language must be aware of it and, therefore, must be contemplated in teaching, as highlighted by Shuy (1969), Wherritt (1981), Preston (1989), Bayley and Preston (1996), Rickford (1996), Hernández-Campoy (1997a; 1997b), Mompeán-González and Hernández-Campoy (2000); Kirkpatrick (2007), Hornberger and McKay (2010), Bayyurt (2013) or Geeslin and Long (2014), and in the context of English as a lingua franca

⁴ Lo primero que le ocurre a un aprendiz de inglés en cuanto llega a las Islas Británicas es que descubre (con gran desencanto) lo poco que entiende del inglés que oye. Por una parte, porque la gente habla más rápidamente de lo esperado. Por otra, porque el inglés que habla la mayoría de los británicos es distinto del que él ha aprendido. Además de sorprenderle las diferencias de pronunciación, también percibirá diferencias en gramática y vocabulario. (HUGHES; TRUDGILL, 1979, p. 1, traducción nuestra).

⁵ "nunca ha habido tanta discrepancia entre lo que se enseña en el aula y lo que los estudiantes necesitarán en el mundo real una vez que hayan salido del aula. En las últimas décadas, ese mundo ha cambiado hasta tal punto que los profesores de idiomas ya no están seguros de lo que se supone que deben enseñar ni de las situaciones del mundo real para las que deben preparar a sus alumnos".

(HARTMANN, 1996; GRADDOL; MEINHOF, 1999; MCKAY, 2010; PREISLER, 1999; GÖRLACH, 2002; SEIDLHOFER, 2004; MOMPEÁN-GONZÁLEZ; HERNÁNDEZ-CAMPOY, 2000; TONKIN; REAGAN, 2003; DZIUBALSKA-KOŁACZYK; PRZEDLACKA, 2008; ROSENHOUSE; KOWNER, 2008; ARCHIBALD; COGO; JENKINS, 2011; O DURHAM, 2014, among others).

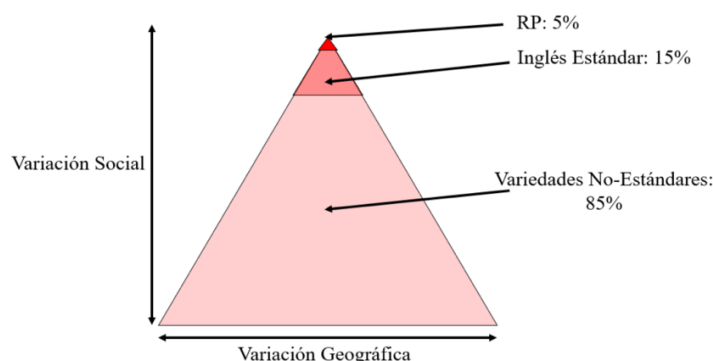
Accent variation

We all speak with a somewhat regional accent that can reveal our geographic and even social origin. It would not be difficult for us, for example, to detect, for example, a Castilian, an Andalusian, a Murcian, a Catalan, a Galician or an Aragonese, through the pronunciation used when speaking, although it involved intelligibility problems for foreigners to learn Spanish since they are not familiar with these accents. Likewise, despite the traditional image conveyed in textbooks with a homogeneous model and pattern, the British Isles are characterized by a rich variety of accents and non-standardized regional dialects, of which any student of English as a foreign language must be at least aware to avoid the apprentice's situation and feelings described by Hughes and Trudgill (1979, p. 1). Dialectology can be of great use to us in this sense in providing data in the classroom mainly related to the main regional varieties of British English, different from the standard not only in pronunciation, but also in grammatical details (see HUGHES; TRUDGILL, 1979; WELLS, 1982; TRUDGILL, 1990; TRUDGILL; CHAMBERS, 1991; CHESHIRE, 1991; MILROY; MILROY, 1993; FOULKES; DOCHERTY, 1999; SCHNEIDER; BURRIDGE; KORTMANN; MESTHRIE; UPTON, 2004; KORTMANN; BURRIDGE; MESTHRIE; SCHNEIDER; UPTON, 2004; KACHRU; KACHRU; NELSON, 2006; KIRKPATRICK, 2010; O BRITAIN, 2007A; 2010, among others). Likewise, in the English-speaking world, the pronunciation varies greatly if we look at the accent characteristics of the American, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and South African states, with their respective internal regional variants, compared to the British Isles. (TRUDGILL; HANNAH, 1982; WELLS, 1982; CHESHIRE, 1991; SCHNEIDER; BURRIDGE; KORTMANN; MESTHRIE; UPTON, 2004; KACHRU; KACHRU; NELSON, 2006; O KIRKPATRICK, 2010).

To further complicate the situation, Britain presents a very peculiar situation as a result of the strong relation between dialects and accents, on the one hand, and of social and regional origin, on the other. Thus, the RP is a non-localized accent, in the sense that it does not reveal any regional origin because it cannot be associated with a particular region. However, the RP

reveals social formation, and this is important for English students: it is the pronunciation that enjoys a manifest prestige, since it is associated with a very specific social and cultural formation that are nothing more than social classes. with sufficiently stable and high economic levels, which allowed them to train in the centers where RP pronunciation is taught (private schools) see TRUDGILL, 1975; 1999; 2001; 2002; 2008; MOMPEÁN; HERNÁNDEZ-CAMPOY, 2000). Following a pyramidal structure as Trudgill (1975, p. 21) pointed out, standard English is used by 15% of the British population, while 85% of Britons are users of non-standard varieties. In turn, the RP accent is spoken by approximately 5% of it, while the remaining 95%, the vast majority, are users of regional accents (see Figure 1; TRUDGILL, 1975; 2001; 2002; 2008). This pyramidal structure of the British sociolinguistic context implies that the higher the speaker's social position, the less regional accent he has, and also less use of local lexical and grammatical forms.

Figure 1 - Sociolinguistic pyramid of English and its varieties in England⁶



Fonte: Trudgill (1974)

In teaching a foreign language, such as English, it is necessary to refer to this characteristic situation of Great Britain, which is not given in other Western countries, such as Germany, the United States or Spain, in which people of the most high and more prestigious social scales see their regional origin through pronunciation, even with accents considered prestigious because they are more linked to certain geographical areas than to specific social sectors. Teaching the RP accent has its advantages and disadvantages (MOMPEÁN; HERNÁNDEZ-CAMPOY, 2000), although the former predominates, no doubt, but every student of English as a foreign language must be aware of this fact. Speaking with the RP accent is a great advantage, since the student traveling anywhere in the British Isles would never have

⁶ We read on the image: y axis – Social variation / x axis – Geographic variation / Subtitles from the top: RP; Standard English; Non-Standard variations.

a problem of "being understood" by, on the one hand, being considered there with the most prestigious English accent, and, on the other hand, being the best known among the British population. But this knowledge only affects the oral comprehension of the natives, since, although everyone understands (remember that it is used in all radio and television), not everyone uses it (5%). This means, therefore, that, from the point of view of the student's oral comprehension, he will only easily understand this 5% of the British population, since the remaining 95% speak with a local accent, which is an inconvenience (TRUDGILL; HANNAH, 1982, p. 9). In addition, another of the resulting problems of particular importance are attitudinal problems, since an important aspect of the complex social psychology of language communities is the emotional response of members of society to the languages and varieties in their social environment. In Britain, speakers with non-standard accents are perceived to be less intelligent and less polite, but more sympathetic, while RP accent users are seen as more intelligent, more polite, but less sympathetic (see GILES, 1978; TRUDGILL, 1975).

On the other hand, another aspect that Sociolinguistics has insisted on is that linguistic communities are heterogeneous both socially and linguistically. Thus, one of its main contributions has been the concept of sociolinguistic variable to define those linguistic uses that are alternative ways of saying the same, although they are socially significant, to denote various types of social differentiation. British English linguistic variables, such as (ng), (t) and (h) in words, for example, singing, butter, and hammer, respectively, have become sociolinguistic variables in the British-speaking communities where they are used: variants [ŋ], [t] and [h] respectively in the RP accent, while in other accents its realization can be [n], [0], [0] or \emptyset . But these studies have also shown that variability is not just a matter of differences between social classes and pronunciation, but also of different pronunciations within the same social classes, depending on the situations. Thus, in the British Isles, for example, although different groups of social classes have different levels of use of the variable (ng), their assessment of the two variants is exactly the same: speakers of all classes tend to change their pronunciation in exactly the same direction, increasing the percentage of use of the form [ŋ], belonging to the prestigious social status RP, as the level of formality in the stylistic context increases, and vice versa.

Grammatical variation

The sociology of language and historical sociolinguistics can be of great use in letting us know that, historically, standard English was - and indeed is - a dialect variety similar to any other in England, although it was established as the model (TRUDGILL, 1999) after being

modified over the centuries by academic people (courtiers, academics, writers, etc.). It is the variety of English commonly used by educated people, used in the press and publications, and the variety generally taught in British schools to native and non-native speakers who will learn English as a foreign language. However, its use does not exceed 15%, as previously noted, with the vast majority (approximately 85%) users of non-standard varieties. Therefore, it is also very common the strangeness shown by English students when hearing or reading statements, generally found in the most common English - and even in the lyrics of songs by Anglo-American pop and rock groups - that are constructed very differently from what was taught through standard English in reference textbooks and grammars (see QUIRK; GREENBAUM; LEECH; SVARTVIK, 1985, for example). They should know that standard English differs from non-standard dialects in multiple grammatical aspects (see WAKELIN, 1972; HUGHES; TRUDGILL, 1979; O'DONNELL; TODD, 1980; EDWARDS; TRUDGILL; WELTENS, 1984; TRUDGILL, 1990; TRUDGILL; CHAMBERS, 1991; CHESHIRE, 1991; MILROY; MILROY, 1993; KORTMANN; BURRIDGE; MESTHRIE; SCHNEIDER; UPTON, 2004; KACHRU; KACHRU; NELSON, 2006; KIRKPATRICK, 2010; O BRITAIN, 2007A; 2010, among others). However, and unfortunately, in the view of Trudgill and Chambers (1991, p. 291), the study of the variation of grammatical forms present in non-standardized dialects in the United Kingdom has been considerably less addressed than that concerning aspects of pronunciation and lexicon, mainly due to the difficulty involved in its treatment and analysis. This grammatical variation in the English language affects all levels, from pronoun and verbal systems, to morphosyntactic forms, such as comparative and superlative, adverbial and prepositional structures (see BRITAIN, 2007b; 2010).

So, for example, if we compare the standard English pronoun system with that of other dialectal varieties, we find numerous differences, as Table 1 summarizes (see HUGHES; TRUDGILL, 1979; EDWARDS; TRUDGILL; WELTENS, 1984; TRUDGILL, 1990; 1999; 2003; O BRITAIN, 2007b; 2010).

Table 1 - Standard English Pronominal system and regional variation

Standard English Pronominal system and regional variation						
Number	Person	Subject Pron.	Object Pron.	Possessive Adj.	Possessive Pron.	Reflective Pron.
Singular	1 ^a	I	me <i>us</i>	my <i>me</i>	mine	myself

	2 ^a	you <i>thou</i>	you <i>thee</i>	your	yours <i>yourn</i>	yourself
	3 ^a mal.	he <i>him</i>	him <i>he</i>	his	his <i>hisn</i>	himself <i>hisself</i>
	3 ^a fem.	she <i>her</i>	her <i>she</i>	her	hers <i>hern</i>	herself
	3 ^a neut.	It/that	it/that	its	its	itself
Plural	1 ^a	we <i>us</i>	us <i>we</i>	our	ours <i>ourn</i>	ourselves
	2 ^a	you <i>ye</i> <i>youse</i>	you <i>youse</i>	your	yours <i>yourn</i>	yourselves
	3 ^a	they <i>them</i>	them <i>they</i>	their	theirs <i>theirn</i>	themselves <i>theirselves</i>

Source: Devised by the authors.

Verbal systems also vary considerably across UK geography. A prominent phenomenon, for example, is the absence of the end -s/es for the third singular person of the verbs present in the East Anglia region, although in several dialects in the north and southwest of England and south of Wales the phenomenon is the otherwise (Table 2) (Rupp and Britain 2019, for example):

Table 2 - Variation in the 3rd person of singular of the present in British English

Variation in the 3rd person of singular of the present in British English		
Standard English	Northern and Southwest dialects	East Anglia dialect
<i>I take a cup of tea</i>	<i>I takes a cup of tea</i>	<i>I take a cup of tea</i>
<i>You take a cup of tea</i>	<i>You takes a cup of tea</i>	<i>You take a cup of tea</i>
<i>He takes a cup of tea</i>	<i>He takes a cup of tea</i>	<i>He take a cup of tea</i>
<i>She takes a cup of tea</i>	<i>She takes a cup of tea</i>	<i>She take a cup of tea</i>
<i>We take a cup of tea</i>	<i>We takes a cup of tea</i>	<i>We take a cup of tea</i>
<i>You take a cup of tea</i>	<i>You takes a cup of tea</i>	<i>You take a cup of tea</i>
<i>They take a cup of tea</i>	<i>They takes a cup of tea</i>	<i>They take a cup of tea</i>

Source: Devised by the authors.

This leveling presented by non-standard varieties is based on the restrictions of the Northern Subject Rule and the Southern Subject Rule, which also affects the leveling of *was* for all persons, both singular and plural, in the past tense of the verb *to be*. In the first case, usual in the north and southwest dialects, the leveling of *was* occurs when the subject is a noun phrase (*the cats was purring*), or a non-adjacent subject pronoun (*the cats you brought was purring*), while the Southern Subject Rule leveling - \emptyset occurs in the inverse condition: when the subject is an adjacent pronoun (*they was purring*). The leveling of *were* also occurs for all people, both singularly and plurally, as well as partial leveling: they use *was* for all persons, both singular and plural in affirmative constructions, but *were* with negative polarity (see Table 3). The presence of the three patterns occurs in different and distant geographies of the English-speaking world (see Rupp and Britain 2019).

Esse nivelamento apresentado por variedades não padronizadas baseia-se nas restrições do Northern Subject Rule e do Southern Subject Rule, que também afeta o nivelamento de *was* para todas as pessoas tanto do singular como do plural no pretérito do verbo *to be*. No primeiro caso, habitual nos dialetos norte e sudoeste, o nivelamento de *was* se dá quando o sujeito é um sintagma nominal (*the cats was purring*), ou um pronome sujeito não adjacente (*the cats you brought was purring*), enquanto que o Southern Subject Rule o nivelamento - \emptyset se dá na condição inversa: quando o assunto é um pronome adjacente (*they was purring*). Nivelamento a *were* também ocorre para todas as pessoas, tanto singularmente quanto pluralmente, bem como nivelamento parcial: empregam *was* para todas as pessoas tanto no singular como plural em construções afirmativas mas, *were* com polaridade negativa (vide Tabela 3). A presença dos três padrões ocorre em diferentes e distantes geografias do mundo de língua inglesa (vide Rupp y Britain 2019).

Table 3 – Leveling of the past tense of the verb TO BE

Leveling of the past tense of the verb TO BE				
Variable root s/r	Regularization			
Standard English	Leveling of WAS	Leveling of WERE	Mixed leveling	
<i>I was</i>	<i>I was</i>	<i>I were</i>	<i>I was</i>	<i>I weren't</i>
<i>You were</i>	<i>You was</i>	<i>You were</i>	<i>You was</i>	<i>You weren't</i>
<i>He/she/it was</i>	<i>He/she/it was</i>	<i>He/she/it were</i>	<i>He/she/it was</i>	<i>He/she/it weren't</i>
<i>We were</i>	<i>We was</i>	<i>We were</i>	<i>We was</i>	<i>We weren't</i>
<i>You were</i>	<i>You was</i>	<i>You were</i>	<i>You was</i>	<i>You weren't</i>
<i>We were</i>	<i>We was</i>	<i>We were</i>	<i>We was</i>	<i>We weren't</i>

<i>They were</i>	<i>They was</i>	<i>They were</i>	<i>They was</i>	<i>They weren't</i>
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Source: Devised by the authors

The conjugation of irregular English verbs is also subject to considerable variations and even changes in regularization, adopting the dental suffix *-ed*, as regular verbs do (*draw-drew-drawn* > *draw-drawed-drawed*). In other cases, the trend is to reduce the three forms to just two: *do-did-done* > *do-done-done* (see HUGHES; TRUDGILL, 1979; TRUDGILL, 1990; 1999; 2003; O BRITAIN, 2007b; 2010).

These non-standard grammatical aspects seen, which are only a small sample, are the most common according to the sociolinguistic pyramid previously offered, since they are employed by more than 85% of the British population, compared to 15% of the use of the form prestige standard.

Conclusion

Therefore, just as the study of the foreign language facilitates the approach of the speakers and their culture, the knowledge of the foreign culture and society allows us to deepen the understanding of the structure and use of the FL. Precisely, the emphasis on communicative competence in teaching FLs today requires complementing teaching with a sociolinguistic dimension (see DRESSLER; REUTER; REUTER, 1980; HAMMERLY, 1991; SCOLLON; SCOLLON, 1995; PAULSTON; KIESLING; RANGEL, 2012; GEESLIN; LONG, 2014, among many others).

In turn, if structural and regular variability is characteristic of normal use of language, the knowledge and mastery of this dialectical and socioeconomic variation present in the community are also closely linked to the speaker's level of sociolinguistic competence. The incorporation of this sociolinguistic dimension in the teaching-learning of foreign languages will help to better understand certain grammatical structures and phonological sequences of the target language and its use in society, as well as to be aware of the diversity and linguistic variation existing in it, and will allow to reduce the abyss that separates the unrealistic linguistic goal of the classroom, the minority and the vernacular of the real world, the majority.

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How to quote this article

HERNÁNDEZ-CAMPOY, Juan Manuel; CUTILLAS-ESPINOSA, Juan Antonio; BRITAIN, David. Variação e competência sociolinguísticas no ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira. **Rev. EntreLínguas**, Araraquara, v. 6, n. 1, p. 183-201, jan./jun., 2020. e-ISSN: 2447-3529. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29051/el.v6i1.13379>

Submitted: 30/07/2019

Required revisions: 30/08/2019

Approved: 30/11/2019

Published: 06/01/2020