THE ALTERNATIVE –*OUR* VS. –*OR* IN THE OUTER VARIETIES OF ENGLISH WORLDWIDE

Marta Pacheco-Franco
Universidad de Málaga

Minor changes in the distribution of the orthographic variants *-our* and *-or* in British and in American English raise the question of competition between these two forms. There already exists a myriad of studies assessing this phenomenon for the varieties of the inner and of the expanding circle. Nevertheless, the orthography of the outer circle has been systematically ignored. This paper thus presents a corpus-driven analysis of the distribution of the pair in eight varieties of Asian English, all belonging to the outer circle. The aim is to assess whether the process of linguistic competition underway elsewhere is also ongoing in these varieties, and to enquire into the factors that enable it. The source material for the investigation has been drawn from the corpus of *Global Web English*, which houses data for India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Hong Kong. The study offers the overall quantitative distribution of the suffixes in the varieties in question, as well as the data by text type. These will be interpreted from the frameworks of Postcolonial Englishes put forward by Schneider (2007) and Kachru (2009), which will determine the significance of the competition, if applicable.

Keywords: orthography; Asian English; outer circle; competition.

1. Introduction

Linguistic competition is the phenomenon in which at least two synonymous forms contend for a specific distributional domain (Aronoff 2019, 42). In the history of the English language, countless patterns and structures have undergone competition, often resulting either in the specialisation of one variant or in its ultimate extinction. The Early Modern period saw the struggle between the derivational suffixes *-our* and *-or*, which eventually concluded with the re-arrangement of the morphological paradigm (Pacheco-Franco and Calle-Martín, forthcoming). In those words that still allow for spelling variation in Present-day English (*colour*, *labour*) the *-our* variants only survived in British English (henceforth BrE), whereas the *-or* forms were specialised on the grounds of diatopic variation, i.e. they became representative of the American standard (Fowler 1926, 428; Trudgill and Hannah 1994, 82-3; *OED* s.v. -our and -or, suffixes). However, grammarians have often found exceptions to such a rule. For example, Greenbaum and Whitcut argued that American English (henceforth AmE) favours the spelling *-our* in words like *glamour* and *honour* (1988, 499), and Gramley and Patzold added that the form *saviour* is also preferred in this variety (2004, 280). Nonetheless, data from contemporary American sources seem to disprove such a claim since these items occur more frequently spelled as *-or* than not (Pacheco-Franco and Calle-Martín 2020). On the one hand, the extension of the orthographical variant *-or* on to where it was rare answers to the claims of regularisation upon which the American spelling system was founded (Scragg 1975, 84). On the other hand, even the slightest change in a system so conventional as orthography is significant since it suggests that the system no longer remains fixed. Instead, the aforementioned historical competition might still be underway.

Studying linguistic competition in English nowadays compels the researcher to consider the varieties that exist outside of the United Kingdom and of the United States due to its status as a global language. Kachru's Concentric Circles Model provides an adequate starting point by categorizing English into three groups: the inner, the outer and the expanding circles (2009, 569). These labels refer to those places where English is spoken as a first, as a second and as a foreign language, respectively. There already exist studies on the spelling alternatives in the varieties of the inner and

expanding circle, including the variants *-our* and *-or*. In the first place, the Englishes of the first group tend to follow the British norm either by tradition or by the cultural links that still unite these countries. Indeed, the spelling systems of Australia, New Zealand and Ireland favour *-our* over *-or* (Gramley and Patzold 2004; Peters 2009; Fritz 2010; Korhonen 2015). In Canada, however, because of its closeness to the US, there is not an obvious trend towards any of these varieties. In 1993, Pratt stated that the choices between British and American orthographical renderings in Canadian speakers did not follow a clear-cut pattern (59), and a decade later Gramley and Patzold reached a similar conclusion (2004, 252). Secondly, in their study of English spelling variants worldwide, Gonçalves *et al*. concluded that the orthographical paradigm of the English language leans towards the American spelling on a global scale. This suggests that the dominance of one form over the other does not remain clear and that the varieties of the outer circle ought to be studied. Indeed, there are very few studies on the orthography of the outer circle, which means that a large part of the English-speaking population has been ignored.

In consequence, enquiring into some outer circle varieties becomes a compulsory exercise in order to assess whether there really is competition between the spelling forms *-our* and *-or*. Therefore, the present paper presents a corpus-based analysis of the orthographical variants *-our* and *-or* in the major Asian varieties of the outer circle, in order to assess whether there is linguistic competition between these two variants, and where the system seems to be going.

2. Methodology

The data for the present analysis comes from the corpus of *Global Web-based English* (or *GloWbE)*. It has been chosen in light of its quantitative and qualitative features. Indeed, the *GloWbE* is a 1.9 billion-word corpus compiled by Mark Davies at Brigham Young University (2013). The corpus provides a substantial input for the linguistic analysis of twenty varieties of English worldwide, including all of the inner and the major outer circle varieties. The texts in this corpus have been gathered from 1.8 million websites, including general websites, which amounts to around 70 percent of

the total word count, and personal blogs, which is the remaining 30 percent. The corpus facilitates the search of a specific item in each of the varieties contemplated in it, and also by text type, thus making it an ideal tool for the investigation of diatopic variation. Moreover, this version is POS-tagged, thereby allowing the exploration of items by lemma and by part-of-speech.

The present investigation has focused on the Asian varieties included in the *GloWbE* corpus, which are the Englishes of India (IndE), Sri Lanka (SLE), Pakistan (PkE), Bangladesh (BdE), Singapore (SgE), Malaysia (MalE), the Philippines (PhE), and Hong Kong (HKE). It has also been carried out in two distinct phases. First, the complete list of occurrences was retrieved for both suffixes, *-our* and *-or*. Then, the fifteen topmost frequent bases in these varieties that still allow for spelling variation in PDE were selected as the focus of the study. These items were *armour*, *behaviour*, *colour*, *endeavour*, *favour*, *flavour*, *harbour*, *honour*, *humour*, *labour*, *neighbour*, *rumour*, *saviour*, *tumour* and *vapour*. In total, 285,702 instances of *-our* and *-or* were analysed, including those items that function both as nouns and as verbs, and also deverbal adjectives.[1] Once the raw frequencies were determined, the text types were also enquired into in order to provide the investigation with further data.

3. Analysis

Figure 1 illustrates the normalised frequencies of the spelling variants *-our* and *-or* in eight varieties of Asian English. In strictly quantitative terms, the data seem to indicate that most of the varieties in question are undergoing linguistic competition. Calculating the percentage difference that exists between the two forms in each of the varieties is an effective way of looking into the process. For example, Singapore, Pakistan and India present a

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[1] No other verbal nor adjectival forms were included since, as Greenbaum and Whitcut claim, some derivational process may favour the occurrence of one form over another. Indeed, in BrE the *-our* form is preferred, except with the suffixes *-ate* or *-ation*, among others: see *coloration* versus *colourful* (1988, 499). Because suffixal derivation may alter the results, and because the line had to be drawn at some point, prefixal derivatives have not been considered either.

percentage difference of 4-5%, which means that competition is at its peak and, therefore, remains unresolved. In turn, the higher the difference, the more unlikely it is that competition is unfolding at the moment. In the case of the Philippines, there is a percentage difference of 146% between the uses of *-our* and *-or*, thus suggesting that one of the following events has occurred: either (1) competition has never taken place within this variety, (2) it has taken place and it has been resolved already, or (3) it is but an incipient development. In between IndE and PhE lie the varieties of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Hong Kong. The first continues to be clearly differentiated from the rest as it presents a difference of 51%, thus leaning towards one of the scenarios discussed for the Philippines. The remaining three, however, do not present a difference higher than 30%, which indicates that competition is near the aforementioned peak.
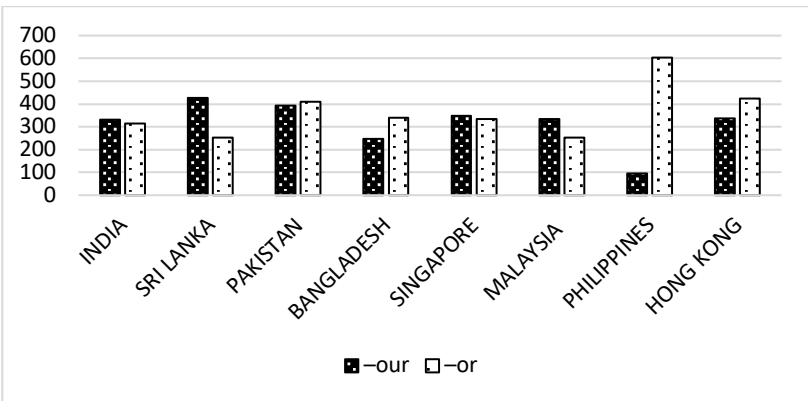

Figure 1. Frequencies of *–our* and *–or* in eight Asian varieties of the GloWbE

Other than determining whether competition is an ongoing process in the varieties under study, Figure 1 also provides insight into which forms are more frequently used within them. In this respect, there does not seem to be a recognisable pattern in the distribution of the two variants. However, it becomes obvious that two distinct groups arise, which will be termed as 'conservative' and as 'regularising'. The conservative group includes the varieties of India, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Malaysia, which present a widespread use of *-our*. The label 'conservative' answers to historical and etymological reasons, seeing that the terms in

question entered the English language through French, that is spelled as *-our* (*OED* s.v. -our, suffix). The regularising group displays Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Hong Kong, where the simplified –or rather regularised– spelling *-or* is favoured (Scragg 1975; Gramley and Patzold 2004).

The revision of these quantitative data is evidently crucial for the present discussion. Nevertheless, it does not allow for interpretation yet as the initial and end points of the linguistic competition are not considered in the Figure. Instead, Figure 1 poses a myriad of questions that can only be answered by means of a qualitative analysis. Indeed, enquiring into the nature of the linguistic competition for each of the variants and examining whether the information presented so far is part of a larger picture ought to be but the next steps in this analysis. In order to answer these questions, the following sub-sections will be looking at the different models of use that these varieties have traditionally followed, and at the developmental process that Schneider described in his Dynamic Cycle (2007).

3.1. The Models of English

Kachru argues that the question of "[w]ho determines the models and standards for varieties of world Englishes" is a "social and attitudinal [one]" (2009, 572). In this way, the scholar is not only answering how the different models that exist today come to being, but also why other varieties adhere to them in particular. Nonetheless, history also plays a determining role both in the creation and in the assignment of models, at least regarding the varieties of the inner and outer circles. Indeed, the two major models of English available today are, as suggested above, the British and the American. These have become, over time, sufficiently differentiated on the levels of phonology, the lexicon, orthography and even syntax as to be considered two different varieties. Other varieties of English have undergone a similar process of differentiation, and yet, because they did not count with a particular set of historical, political and cultural circumstances, they did not

become models as such (Pennycook 2010).[2] In turn, the features of all other varieties of PDE are contrasted with these two, and expected to follow any one of them (cf. Trudgill and Hannah, 1994; Gramley and Patzold 2004; Momma and Matto, 2009; Kirkpatrick 2010). Colonial expansion did, for the most part, dictate the norms for each of the countries at hand.

The United Kingdom headed the colonial expansion that led to the spread of English in the world. The phrase "the sun never sets on the British Empire" exemplifies the scope of their imperialist endeavours, which were the beginnings of the Englishes of the inner and outer circles (Kachru 1985, 12-3). The Asian varieties under study in the present paper originated from such a diasporic exercise. The colonisation of these areas often implied that the Empire instilled a number of language policies "to control the manner in which English was learned and used", thereby suggesting that the British model was imposed, initially at least (Momma and Matto 2009, 402). Recent literature on the topic continues to support such a claim. For example, IndE has been described as an 'exonormatively set' variety, where the British norm is allegedly followed or, at the very least, held as the target (Mukherjee 2010, 169, 173). The cultural ties and the common historical past that exists between Pakistan and Bangladesh and India indicate that the first two conform to similar norms (Kachru 1994). Mendis and Rambukwella analyse SLE in the same terms, arguing that there exists a mismatch between the speakers' actual competence and the British standard that they regard as their own (2010, 191). As for the colonial links that also exist between Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong, and the United Kingdom, these are indicative as well of the adopted model of use (Ling 2010, 229-30; Setter *et al*. 2010, 4-11; Tan 2011, 16). The Philippines, nonetheless, presents an entirely different picture. More than three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule in the South Asian archipelago came to an abrupt end by the turn of the twentieth century, as the United States took control

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[2] Among the circumstances leading to the rise of AmE as a global variety are the independence of the United States from the British, the search for independence also in the linguistic, and the emergence of their economic and cultural dominance in the twentieth century (Pennycook 2010; Pacheco-Franco and Calle-Martín 2020).

of the territory. This means that the complex linguistic landscape of the Philippines –in which indigenous languages struggled to coexist with Spanish– saw the rise of English as the language of the state. Gonzalez reads this phenomenon as the "transplantation of American English in Philippine soil", thereby arguing that whatever variety was to emerge from this event would be a derivative of AmE (2009, 213-5).

Being aware of the models of use for each of the varieties under analysis enables the interpretation of Figure 1. On the one hand, the data displayed for the Philippines points to a fixedness in the orthographical system of this variety. The fact that PhE draws from the American norm as a model accounts for the high percentage difference that existed between the use of *-our* and *-or*. In turn, the scenario suggested above where linguistic competition was resolved in favour of the *-or* variants may now be dismissed. This means that two alternatives remain. Figure 2 below presents the percentage values for the distribution of the suffixes *-our* and *-or* in PhE and in AmE in order to ascertain whether the occurrences of the conservative form are characteristic of an incipient change or whether they are simply due to chance. Considering that the status of AmE as a model prevents it from opening to change (orthographical or otherwise), and bearing in mind the equivalence in the distribution of the spelling variants in both of the varieties, it becomes clear that the occurrences of *-our* are not indicative of a change. Quite the opposite situation is at play: the orthographic system in the Philippines remains fixed.
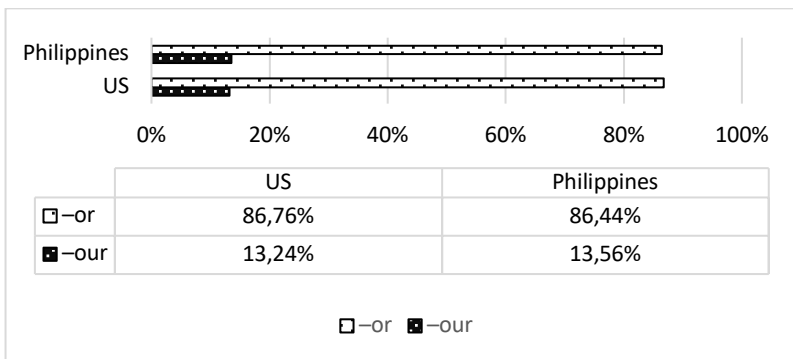

	US	Philippines
□ –or	86,76%	86,44%
■ –our	13,24%	13,56%

□ –or   ■ –our

Figure 2. Percentage values of the distribution of *–our* and *–or* in PhE and AmE

On the other hand, the previous data indicate that competition is moving towards the regularisation of orthography, instead of approaching the conservative form. Indeed, all of the varieties which showed evidence of linguistic competition have had a historical connection with the British Empire and, therefore, with the British norm. The strong emergence of the *-or* spelling suggests that the orthographic systems of these Postcolonial Englishes are stepping away from convention, even if at different paces. Competition, as was argued above, is not unfolding in a simultaneous manner everywhere. For those classified into the regularising group, the process is in a more advanced stage: namely, for PkE, BdE and HKE. Among them, BdE presents the greatest percentage difference between the two forms (that is, 30 percent), which points to competition being most developed in this variety. Next is HKE with a 23 percent difference, and third would be PkE, with only 5 percent. Regarding the conservative group, SgE, IndE and MalE follow these varieties, with SLE lagging behind in the process.

The differences that exist between these seven varieties in the process of linguistic competition may answer to the disparity regarding their developmental stages. Sub-section 3.2. will provide a more in-depth analysis on this topic, from the perspective of Schneider's Dynamic Model (Schneider 2007).

3.2. The Dynamic Model

The Dynamic Model is a framework that enables the study and the categorisation into five developmental stages of the different varieties of Postcolonial English. The five phases included in the proposal are (1) foundation, (2) exonormative stabilization, (3) nativisation, (4) endonormative stabilization and (5) differentiation. Along this continuum are found all of the varieties of English from the inner and the outer circle. The varieties of the inner circle have for the most part reached the very last stages, as in the cases of Australian or New Zealand English (2007, 125, 132). The varieties of the outer circle remain, for the moment, somewhere between exonormative and endonormative stabilization.[3] The first of these

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[3] According to Schneider, Hong Kong would have reached Phase 3, while still presenting features of phase 2; Philippines would remain in Phase 2, although

phases has already been commented upon in retracing the development of the varieties across history. Indeed, by exonormative stabilization Schneider refers to the use of English as per "external norm, usually written and spoken English as used by educated speakers" (2007, 38). This phase precedes nativisation, which includes those innovations that arise due to contact with indigenous languages, and which is followed by endonormative stabilisation, that is the phase in which "a community is entitled to decide language matters as affairs of its own" (48). Determining in which of these phases the linguistic competition between -*our* and -*or* is illustrative is a crucial, and yet problematic exercise.

The competition under analysis in the present paper is indicative of a development of phase four: endonormative stabilization. Indeed, the growth in the use of the spelling variant -*or* answers to two linguistic processes: regularisation and phonological approximation. The first of them has been introduced beforehand as the process followed in AmE. Indeed, PDE presents a set of words that are systematically spelled as -*or*, such as *emperor* or *doctor*. These items are generally regarded as agentive nouns, and their distinct and univocal orthographical realisation resulted from the competition that is still at play (Quirk *et al.* 1985, 1550; *OED* s.v. -or, suffix; Pacheco-Franco and Calle-Martín 2020). Webster, in view of the spelling of this set of items, brought forward the proposal to change the orthographic realisations of the words that allowed for variation "by the principle of uniformity and by etymology" (Wells 1973, 62). In turn, the regularisation of the spelling alternative -*our* and -*or* in the Asian varieties of English might have resulted from a similar endeavour. This notion gains strength if the phonological factor is taken into consideration. Li explains that English is an inconsistent semiotic system, especially at the level of orthography, as there is great disparity between what is written and what is pronounced (2010, 618). The lack of user-friendliness in such a widely spread language suggests that change will eventually take hold of orthography. The identical phonological realisations of -*our* and -*or* (that is, /-əʳ/ or /-ər/, depending on

moving to the next one; Malaysia proves to be in Phase 3, and Singapore in Phase 4; and, lastly, India –along with Pakistan and Bangladesh– would be found in Phase 3, with early symptoms of Phase 4 (2007, 133-170).

rhoticity) suggest that the simplification of spelling would not affect pronunciation and would, indeed, be more illustrative of what is ultimately uttered, that is one vocalic representation for one vocalic sound. There are, nonetheless, arguments claiming that the emergence of *-or* derives from the sociolinguistic process of Americanisation.

Americanisation, which refers to the phenomenon promoting the spread of American cultural and ideological values across the world, has been attested for some varieties of the inner and expanding circles in the study conducted by Gonçalves *et al*. (2018). In their study on the competition between British and American lexical and orthographical variants, the authors concluded that the process of Americanisation is behind the dominance of the latter forms, including *-or*. Such a development suggests that there has been a change in the model of use: in moving away from BrE, most of the varieties analysed here are (in the process of) adhering to AmE. A shift like this seems to be characteristic of exonormativity. Such a theory, however, does not correspond to Schneider's conclusions about the Dynamic Cycle. Indeed, he argues that PhE is the only Asian variety to remain in Phase 2, whereas all others – namely, HKE, MalE, SgE and IndE– have advanced onto Phases 3 and 4 (Schneider 2007, 133-70). In light of this situation, it is my contention that the Americanisation of the spelling system does not account as a developmental example of phase two. Indeed, because orthography does not allow for drastic innovations (otherwise language would become unintelligible), any change, however minimal, resonates within the Dynamic Cycle. In the case at hand, one can only shift from one norm to another, which also indicates a level of autonomy typical of later phases in the cycle. In Winford's own words, "[r]esolution of the problem of the orthography will go a long way toward establishing autonomy" (2009, 420). This means that if the emergence of *-or*, whether it be due to Americanisation or not, is characteristic of endonormative stabilisation.

The argument of Americanisation is supported by further analysis. The following section will thus present the distribution of the suffixes *-our* and *-or* by text types: namely, by general website and by personal blogs. In this sub-section the issues pertaining to English online will be discussed.

3.3. Text Types in the Internet as a Medium

The emergence of the internet entailed the birth of a new medium, one which was a combination of written and spoken speech, for it presented features characteristic of both (Crystal 2011, 16). Indeed, Crystal argues that the adherence to the written or to the spoken depends on the output, and describes that these may be found in a continuum where "[the web is] at one extreme, which in many of its functions (such as reference publishing and advertising) is no different from traditional situations that use writing (…). In contrast, email, chat, instant messaging, and texting, though expressed through the medium of writing, display several of the core properties of speech" (2011, 19-20). This suggests that there exist in the internet several text types, each of which displaying a different set of particularities. Among them, the *GloWbE* corpus includes general websites, which are what Crystal defines as "the web", and personal blogs, which are somewhere in-between regarding the classification above (Warschauer 2010, 496). Differences in the characteristics of these text types are fundamental in studying linguistic change, as their situation within the continuum will determine their proneness to innovation. In turn, personal blogs differ from general websites in that a lower register is employed –due to the topics typically included in these texts– and in that there exist increased chances of interaction. This translates, according to Hardy and Friginal, in a greater inclination towards deviating from the norm (2012, 157). Under these circumstances, analysing the occurrence of the spelling variants being considered by text type became a crucial task.

Figures 3 and 4 below present the distribution into general websites and into personal blogs of the suffixes *-our* and *-or*, respectively. The first of these evinces that the form *-our* occurs more frequently in general websites in IndE, SLE, PkE and BdE, whereas it is slightly more common in personal blogs for SgE, MalE and HKE. However, this spelling being the standard in all of the varieties in question, Figure 3 does not provide much relevant information for the present analysis. Indeed, the data exhibited here seems to be more representative of the distribution of the items under study than of the spelling variants per se. Figure 3 does, nevertheless, outline a distributional pattern that might be regarded as close to the standard, and which will be useful for the analysis and interpretation of Figure 4. In turn, Figure 4 shows that the

spelling variant *-or* occurs more frequently in personal blogs than in general websites. For some of the varieties the difference in distribution is insignificant. For example, both orthographical forms are more commonly used in personal blogs in SgE, and the difference is nearly identical in both cases. In the cases of IndE, PkE and BdE, the dominance of *-or* in personal blogs seems to be indicative of an actual trend.
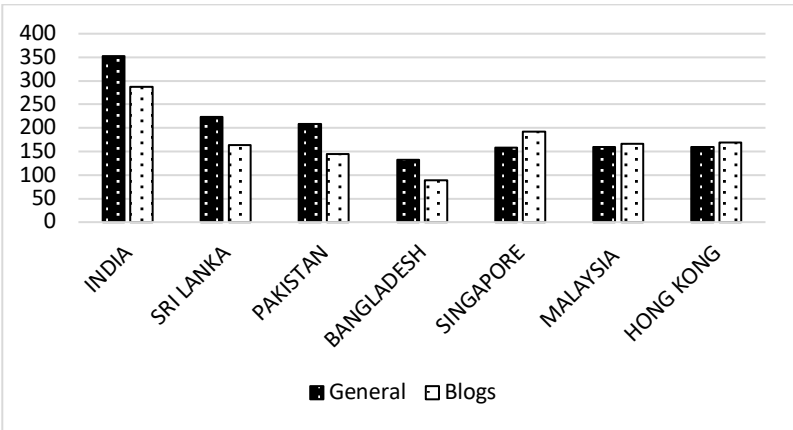

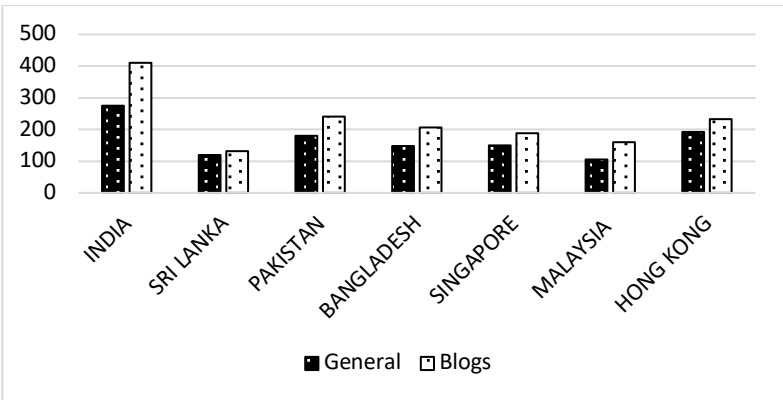**Figure 3.** Distribution of the suffix *–our* by text type

Figure 4. Distribution of the suffix *–or* by text type

The data from the *GloWbE* corpus thus show that there exists a higher incidence of *-or* forms in personal blogs, thereby pointing to these text types as being more inclined to innovation than others. Nonetheless, there are other factors at play which enable

Americanisation: namely, the overall dominance of AmE forms online, the role of English in most varieties of the outer circle – including the Asian ones. In the first place, Crystal argues that the American orthographic forms are more frequently found online than their British counterparts, and that speakers tend to choose "what they see used around them" more often than "[being] conditioned by their educational background (2011, 65). The prevalence of the -*or* variant in the case of Online English is not entirely surprising since the United States is, by a long way, the country with the most internet hosts in the world ("The World Factbook" 2012). This does not necessarily mean that the websites included in a specific host adhere to a specific orthographical rule. Nevertheless, this fact is representative of the United States' dominance in the web, thereby suggesting that Americanisation should occur.

Secondly, the function of the English language in most outer circle varieties enables the process of Americanisation, including the varieties under study in the present paper. Indeed, English has often been regarded in Asia as opening a door to the rest of the world, in terms of communication and of job prospects (Sridhar 2009; Ling 2010; Mukherjee 2010). Provided that most opportunities of both of these typologies originate in the United States nowadays, the adoption of a spelling that is distinctly American might be perceived as the speakers' desire to blend with their peers and to belong (Crystal 2011, 62). At any rate, and referring back to Warschauer *et al*., "technologies […] do not, for the most part, bring about changes in language forms, but rather amplify trends already underway" (2010: p. 494). The authors thus suggest that the findings of this paper are not only applicable to Online English. Instead, any other corpus would present the very same results, although it is likely that the process of linguistic competition would be further behind than at present. Nonetheless, Americanisation would still be an eye-catching phenomenon.

4. Conclusions

The present paper has studied the orthographic variant -*our* and -*or* in eight outer circle varieties of Asian English. The study is based on the fifteen most frequent words with these suffixes in the

GloWbE corpus, which has provided sufficient data for the analysis of this phenomenon. The conclusions are the following.

The data for the distribution of *-our* and *-or* in the *GloWbE* corpus seemed to suggest that linguistic competition was an ongoing phenomenon in seven out of the eight varieties under analysis, thus leaving the Philippines behind. The remaining countries showed varying degrees of competition, as determined by the percentage difference between one form and the other. For example, SLE was described as lagging behind in the process, whereas BdE turned out to be further advanced. These data did, nonetheless, raise the question of where competition was going, i.e. whether striving for the conservative *-our* was the innovation or whether it was the regularising *-or*. After enquiring into the different models followed in these varieties of English, it was concluded that competition between the spelling variants *-our* and *-or* today is leaning towards the latter form. Indeed, the seven countries presenting competition had been colonised by the British Empire, which functioned as an exonormative force in the language. This means that, even slight trends towards the use of a typically American spelling form, are indicative of linguistic change. Such a change was argued to be an instance of endonormative stabilization as per Schneider's theses. It was claimed that the preference for *-or* could be due to issues of a linguistic and of a sociolinguistic nature, such as the simplification of the system and phonological approximation, which would ultimately be influenced by a process of Americanisation.

The distribution of the two spelling variants was also analysed from the perspective of the internet as a medium for language and of its text types. In combining the features of the written and the spoken mediums, the internet proved to be a petri dish for linguistic change. This is especially true of personal blogs, where innovation is most likely to take place. Analysing the competition between *-our* and *-or* proved this to be true, as the latter form was more frequently employed in this particular text type. Other than the very nature of the personal blog as a text, where interpersonal exchanges are far more frequent than in personal websites, and where authors may use a style of their own, the preference for this variant answers to the sociolinguistic as well. The dominance of the United States over the internet inevitably results in the Americanisation of Online English, a process that definitely

affects orthography. Moreover, the English language in the countries of the outer (and also of the expanding) circle functions as a tool for social mobility and for outward communication. Provided that most opportunities for both these endeavours come from the US, it does not seem surprising that the language should shift towards the American.

John Adams already claimed in the last decades of the eighteenth century that English would become the next global language and that American English would be the model of general use. It seems today that the second president of the United States was not wrong: not only has English become a lingua franca worldwide, but his variety of English –which was only being born during his time– is expanding throughout the world. The present study has evidenced that there exists Americanisation, however (under)developed, for the spelling variants *-our* and *-or* in the Asian varieties of the outer circle. Nevertheless, this is only part of a larger issue, as there exist in English a number of pairs which are minimally differentiated in their orthographic realisations and which are representative of one variety or another, such as *-ise/-ize* or *-re/-er*. Nonetheless, future research on the topic must, and will, take a wider scope in order to arrive at a more satisfying conclusion.

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