

An Investigation on the Perceptions and Attitudes of Taiwanese University Students on the Varieties of English

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Abstract

As part of the expanding circle, English is learned as a foreign language in Taiwan. Since language attitudes play an important role in the learning of English, how Taiwanese university students perceive different varieties of English is essential in the teaching and learning of English. Therefore, this study aims to investigate Taiwanese university students' perceptions and attitudes toward varieties of English. A total of 268 university students participated in this study. A questionnaire on the perceptions and attitudes on the varieties of English was administered to all 268 participants and a follow up interview was given to ten volunteers. The results revealed preferences for English varieties of the Inner Circle, especially American English and British English, which could be attributed to the over-dominance of English related resources in these varieties of English and their perception that a native-like pronunciation is attainable with enough practice. The participants also considered English to be a second language or a lingua franca more than its official status as a foreign language based on their lengthy years of learning English. However, English is not used commonly outside of the classroom. Psychological factors, such as lack of confidence and fear of losing face, and linguistic factors like vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar contribute to the inhibition of Taiwanese university students in using English. Findings provide implications that English learning materials encompassing different varieties of English should be used and the concept of English as a communication tool should be introduced in order to provide a more comprehensive usage of English as a global language to university students in Taiwan.

Keywords

English varieties, perceptions, attitudes