



INDIAN STUDENTS' LANGUAGE ATTITUDE TOWARD "CHINA ENGLISH" UNDER ELF SETTINGS: A STUDY

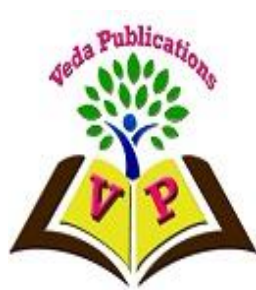
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doi.org/10.33329.joell.8.2.21.32

ABSTRACT



This paper reports on a survey of the language attitude of some Indian students studying and living in China toward "China English", which is a new English variant under ELF settings. The results indicate that while most of the Indian students recognize British English as Standard English, they also acknowledge the existence of different English variants including "China English", and they accept some typical China English expressions. The Indian students generally show an open and lenient attitude toward different English variants. This paper also provides some suggestions for improving the acceptability of "China English" and for its follow-up studies under ELF settings.

Keywords: *China English, language attitude, Indian students in China, ELF, World Englishes*



INTRODUCTION

With the development of globalization, there have emerged many English variants besides British English and American English, which are traditionally considered "Standard English". These English variants include Indian English, Singaporean English, Pakistani English, etc. Kachru (1992) described the distribution of World Englishes in three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle consists of countries where English is their primary language and is used in everyday life and government institutions, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Outer Circle includes former British and American colonial countries such as India, Singapore, and South Africa, where English is used as an institutionalized official language. The Expanding Circle covers China, Japan, Russia and other countries that consider English as a foreign language and mainly use it for international communication.

Jenkins (2009) estimated that about 350 million people worldwide used English as a Native Language (ENL), another 350 million used English as a Second Language (ESL), and about 1 billion used English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Thus, English communication occurs more often between non-native speakers than native speakers. This has led to the rise of ELF that Seidlhofer (2011) defined as any use of English among speakers of different first languages and linguacultural backgrounds, across all three Kachruvian circles.

Some English variants, especially those from the Outer Circle, such as Indian English and Singaporean English, have already become widely accepted. However, new English variants such as "China English" are still in question as to whether they are existent and acceptable. The acceptability of a new language variant depends largely on people's language attitude toward it, which Ofori & Albakry (2012) defined as "the positive, negative, or indifferent disposition a speaker has toward a particular language".

Currently, a large number of Indian students are studying and living in China under ELF settings.

They are speakers of Indian English and close contacts of "China English". Therefore, it is significant to study their language attitude toward this new English variant.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

We selected 74 Indian college students in Jiangsu Province, China. Before conducting the survey, we provided them with some basic knowledge about World Englishes and ELF. Then, we distributed questionnaires to them and conducted interviews when necessary.

The following questions were given in the questionnaire :

Q1. Which variety of English do you think is Standard English for you?

Q2. Which variety of English do you wish your speech sounds like?

Q3. Can English variants such as Indian English, Pakistani English, Philippine English and Singaporean English, etc. have equal status with English such as British English, American English, Canadian English, Australian English and New Zealand English?

Q4. Do you agree that there exists an English variant known as China English (a localized English variant spoken by the Chinese), just like other English variants such as Indian English, Pakistani English, Philippine English, and Singaporean English, etc.?

After the questions, we listed some typical China English words and phrases for the Indian students to decide whether they could accept them or not.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

For the first question (Which variety of English do you think is Standard English for you?), 71.6% of the students chose British English, 16.2% chose American English or Australian English, 9.5% chose Indian English, and 2 others thought there was no Standard English.

For the second question (Which variety of English do you wish your speech sounds like?), 78.4% chose British English, 14.9% chose Indian English, one chose Australian English, one American English, and



three others had no preference for any English accent.

As seen from the result of the two questions, most Indian students considered British English as Standard English. This may be attributed to India's colonial ties with Britain, its language and cultural traditions deeply rooted in India. Further, a large number of original English textbooks are being used in India, and British IELTS exam is a prerequisite for every Indian student planning to study abroad.

For the third question (Can English variants such as Indian English, Pakistani English, Philippine English and Singaporean English, etc. have equal status with English such as British English, American English, Canadian English, Australian English and New Zealand English?), 85.1% gave a no answer. Their reasons were that English is their second language and is influenced by their mother tongue, so Indian English is not as perfect as Standard English in terms of grammar, phonetics, and vocabulary; they are also

less skilled in using English than native speakers. 12.2% gave a yes answer. Their reasons were that English as a communication tool does not have a higher or lower status between variants as long as people can use it to achieve effective communication; Indian English also has a large number of speakers. There were 2 students not sure about this.

For the last question (Do you agree that there exists an English variant known as China English, just like other English variants such as Indian English, Pakistani English, Philippine English, and Singaporean English, etc.?), 78.4% gave a yes answer. 16.2% gave a no answer. The reasons for the latter were that English is not China's official language and very few Chinese people speak English on a daily basis. 4 students were not sure about this. It is clear that most of the Indian students recognized the existence of "China English" as a new variant.

The following table shows the Indian students' acceptability of some typical China English words and phrases. (Y- I accept this expression. N- I do not accept this expression.)

Words or Phrases	Y	N
1. Confucius	74/100%	0/0%
2. Fengshui	53/71.6%	21/28.4%
3. Yin-Yang	61/82.4%	13/17.6%
4. mantou (steamed buns)	50/67.6%	24/32.4%
5. jiaozi	59/79.7%	15/20.3%
6. Peking roast duck	68/91.9%	6/8.1%
7. chi-pao (cheongsam)	26/35.1%	48/64.9%
8. Chinese jubilation knot	39/52.7%	35/47.3%
9. Chinese silk	61/82.4%	13/17.6%
10. the Mid-Autumn Festival	65/87.8%	9/12.2%
11. Double Seventh Festival	15/20.3%	59/79.7%
12. Crosstalk	41/55.4%	33/44.6%



The twelve China English words and phrases can be divided into four groups. 1. Chinese culture: Confucius, fengshui, Yin-Yang and crosstalk. 2. Chinese food: mantou (steamed buns), jiaozi and Peking roast duck. 3. Chinese dress culture: chi-pao (cheongsam), Chinese jubilation knot and Chinese silk. 4. Chinese traditional festivals: the Mid-Autumn Festival and Double Seventh Festival.

As the table shows, all of the Indian students accepted the word "Confucius". As a great thinker in ancient China, Confucius is known all over the world. The trend of learning Chinese language has made Confucius even more popular. With the spread of Chinese culture, "fengshui" and "Yin-Yang" are becoming increasingly familiar to foreign people. However, perhaps the word "crosstalk" is a bit ambiguous, so fewer students in our study accepted it.

As for Chinese food, the students' acceptability of it is appreciable. Chinese food has long enjoyed a high reputation abroad. Moreover, the Indian students often eat Chinese food in China. For example, one Indian student almost eats mantou in school's cafeteria every morning, and so he is already quite familiar with the word.

The words and phrases of Chinese dress were moderately acceptable to the students. However, they did not know much about chi-pao, and some Indian students did not know what chi-pao and Chinese jubilation knot referred to.

Chinese traditional festivals have long been of interest to the world. Many of these Indian students had already spent Mid-Autumn Festival once or twice in China. But the Double Seventh Festival might be relatively unfamiliar to the students. Many foreign people, especially those new to China, are unaware that China has its own Valentine's Day.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

From our study, while most of the Indian students consider British English as Standard English, they also recognize the existence of different English variants including "China English" and have a high level of acceptability of China English words and phrases. Although they do not consider English variants such as Indian English to have the same status as so-called

Standard English, they generally show an open and lenient attitude toward them under ELF settings.

The Indian students in our study are living and studying in China. Their frequent exposure to Chinese culture has also increased their acceptability of "China English". Therefore, so as to promote the acceptability of "China English", China needs to continue enhancing its spread of Chinese culture at home and abroad.

There are two limitations of this study. First, the Indian students' English and Chinese language proficiency and the time they had spent in China might have affected their judgment. Second, the variety of China English words and phrases listed in the study is relatively small.

In terms of the study of "China English" under ELF settings, subsequent studies should be carried out from multiple perspectives, such as its phonological features and different translation methods of Chinese culture-loaded words. Meanwhile, the acceptability of different audience groups needs to be surveyed and studied.

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