

Full Length Research Paper

Students' attitudes towards using different dialects of English by their instructors at Princess Alia University College

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Abstract

The study aimed at investigating the attitudes of English major students' at Princess Alia University College towards using different dialects of English by their instructors, and also to know the effect of GPA, and year of students on their attitudes. The sample of the study consisted of (83) students from first, second, third and fourth year English major students at Princess Alia University College. Means and standard deviations and T-test were used to analyze the results. Results showed that there were statistically significant differences in the attitudes of English major students at Princess Alia University College towards using different dialects of English by their instructors, it also showed that there are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.05$) in students' attitudes due to GPA variable, and also there were statistically significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.05$) in English major students' attitudes due to year variable.

Keywords: Dialects of English, English major students

INTRODUCTION

English is considered as a foreign language in Jordan. A student learns English from the first grade. But it is sad matter that after studying more than 12 years, a student cannot show his or her mastery to speak Standard English. It is true everyone has individual way to speak English. As a foreign language learner it is not possible to speak English with a proper sound. Hoque (2009) stated that one of the problems for a foreign language learner is that how to accurately utter the speech sound of a language. Main purpose of speaking a language is to communicate with others. If we cannot utter the proper sound of a language, the message will not be understood and communication may even break down. Such kind of situation is found in Jordan, as English is spoken with an accent which is related to the mother tongue.

Graddol (2007) mentioned that a more plausible reason for English to have become a world language is that it is used as lingua franca of the modern era, utilized for international relations, for the world media, international travel and tourism, science and technology and education.

Zaid (2008) gave another perspective to the notion of varieties in that sense that the traditional taxonomy of standard English varieties into British English (with particular reference to the South-Eastern English variety with its Received Pronunciation and the North American variety with its distinctive pronunciation) is now old fashioned and may not be appropriate for research or practice in pedagogical contexts.

Dialect means the way people use language. People use different patterns in their dialect. These patterns include pronunciation or accent, vocabulary and grammatical structures of the language. It also reflects the user's cultural and regional background. In 1985, Richards, Platt and Weber defined that "Dialect is a variety of a language, spoken in one part of country or people belonging to a particular social class, which is different in some words, grammar and/or pronunciation from other forms of the same language. A dialect is often associated with a particular accent. Sometimes a dialect gains status and becomes the standard variety of a country"

(p.80).Here, Richards, Platt and Weber pointed out the variety of speech along with regional and social dialects. They said that dialects have different style according to its word, grammar or accent. They also mentioned that sometimes dialect got the language status in a country. These all indicate that to some extent dialect could be getting an equal status of a standard language in a country. Haugen has pointed out that "language and dialect are ambiguous terms. Ordinary people use these terms quite freely in speech, for them a dialect is certainly no more than a local non prestigious a real language. He also pointed out that language is used to refer either to a single linguistic norm or to a group of related norms, and dialect is used to refer to one of the norms" (Wardhaugh, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Most students in Jordanian Universities feel an American English accent is the most important to both understand and speak with; yet in general perceive the need to understand speakers with other accents. However, Jordanian students did not generally express negative feelings towards understanding any accent.

This is quite revealing as students are expected to consider the concept of Standard English when judging accents, and thus feel less of a need to understand certain accents because speakers with such accents were perceived to use less standard grammar and vocabulary. In fact, students would wish to avoid exposure to those accents they considered nonstandard on the grounds that such exposure would negatively affect their own spoken accent or grammatical accuracy. The researcher in this study tried to investigate their attitudes towards using different dialects by their instructors.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate English major students' attitudes towards the using different dialects of English by their instructors at Princess Alia University College, and to know the effect of GPA, and year level of the student on students' attitudes.

Questions of the Study

- 1- What are the attitudes of English major students at Princess Alia University College towards using different dialects of English by their instructors?
- 2- Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of English major students at Princess Alia University College towards the using different dialects of English by their instructors due to their GPA (high, low)?
- 3- Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of English major students at Princess Alia University College towards the using different dialects of

English by their instructors due to the year (first year, second year or above)?

Definition of Terms

Dialect

A variety of a language that is distinguished from other varieties of the same language by features of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary, and by its use by a group of speakers who are set off from others geographically or socially.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to English major students at princess Alia University College who were involved in the college at second semester in the academic year 2014/2015

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sonia, S. (2013) conducted a study entitled "Learners & Attitudes toward Regional Dialects and Destination Preferences in Study Abroad" This study explored the impact of short-term study abroad on the language attitudes of college-level learners of Arabic in the United States. It investigated students & destination preferences in various Arabic-speaking countries, their attitudes toward learning Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and regional dialects, and the factors that they perceived as influencing their attitudes. Survey responses from 371 participants indicated that learning Arabic in the Arab world favorably impacted students & attitudes toward dialect learning and sociolinguistic awareness. Students in this sample rejected learning MSA exclusively, believed that learning any dialect was important, and they became open to learning multiple dialects, including those that are less commonly taught. Respondents attributed this attitude shift to the change in their learning context, i.e., learning Arabic in an Arab country.

Cheongmin and Stephanie (2013), conducted a study entitled "The Role of Speaker Identification in Korean University Students & Attitudes towards Five Varieties of English" This study investigates how the attitudes of 60 Korean university students towards five varieties of English are affected by the identification of the speaker & nationality and ethnicity. The study employed both a verbal guise technique and questions eliciting overt beliefs and preferences related to learning English. While the majority of the students stated that American English was the variety that should be taught and learned in Korea, this preference did not necessarily extend to ratings of an American speaker unless they were informed of her nationality. Listeners who were informed about the nationality/ethnicity of the speakers tended to rate European-American and Korean English speakers higher and British and African-American Vernacular English (AAVE)

speakers lower than did listeners who were not informed. Listeners who were asked to guess speakers' ethnicities often identified the AAVE speaker as being from a non-Inner Circle country, suggesting that stigmatized native accents are not very salient to this group; Australian English was also not salient. The finding that speaker identification plays a role in the evaluation of a variety has implications for the interpretation of verbal guise studies and suggests the need for more research into how listeners evaluate speakers in everyday situations when they typically know more about the speaker.

Nikole (2012) conducted a study entitled "An Assessment of Language Attitudes towards African American Vernacular English" in this study he claimed that speakers of stigmatized varieties are often judged as less educated and less competent than speakers of prestigious varieties. This can have profound effects on speakers' academic achievement and language assessment in schools. Linguists' efforts to destigmatize AAVE have included providing commentary in media outlets, publishing scholarly works, and developing reference materials about AAVE. On a localized level, a dialect awareness course may be suitable in addressing the misrepresentation of AAVE by demonstrating that nonstandard varieties are not ungrammatical or merely slang. However, there is lack of research regarding the effectiveness of such techniques. It remains unclear whether dialect awareness courses are effective in changing attitudes towards a nonstandard variety. The current study is set up to determine attitudes of students towards AAVE by investigating the effect of a dialect awareness course on language attitudes of undergraduate students attending a large Midwestern university. During the 15-week course, the 120 students enrolled learned about the background and structure of AAVE. Topics included discussing what AAVE is, social and ideological factors affecting its representation in the media and within the African American community, distinguishing AAVE from slang, grammatical features and possible origins of AAVE, and educational approaches to teaching children whose home speech is AAVE. In the 2009-10 academic years, a questionnaire was administered to students enrolled in the dialect awareness course, and to students in a general linguistics course and a biology course. The results show that the dialect awareness course is most effective at changing student attitudes towards AAVE as a linguistic variety. Upon completion of the dialect awareness course, students perceive AAVE as a distinct dialect of English rather than as slang or incorrect English. However, the dialect awareness course had minimal effect on students' perceptions of AAVE-speakers and acceptability of AAVE use.

Robert (2008) conducted a study entitled "Social factors and non-native attitudes towards varieties of spoken English: a Japanese case study", This paper, through the employment of a verbal-guise study and

techniques incorporated from perceptual dialectology, investigated the attitudes of 558 Japanese university students towards six varieties of English speech. Although the results suggest a particularly favorable attitude towards standard and non-standard varieties of UK and US English in terms of 'status', informants expressed greater 'solidarity' with a Japanese speaker of heavily-accented English. Differences in the students' gender, self-perceived proficiency in English, and exposure to English and evaluations of varieties of Japanese all had significant effects on the informants' attitudes. The findings are discussed in relation to the pedagogical and language planning implications in English language teaching inside and outside Japan

In a study conducted by Jennifer Jenkins (2005), eight non-native teachers of English were questioned in interviews as to their thoughts and attitudes regarding non-native and native accents of English. When asked if they liked their own accent, three of the participants responded positively to the question, saying that they were happy with it. Four of the remaining participants said that they were not pleased with their accents and that they needed to improve themselves in some areas. The last participant said that she had never thought about it and could therefore not give an answer to the question. However, later in the interview, when asked how they would feel if their accent was mistaken for that of a native speaker of English, contradictions emerged. The majority of the participants said that they would feel flattered and happy since most of them considered a native accent the same thing as being proficient in English. One of the participants, who came from Poland, said that she would feel very pleased if she were mistaken for a native speaker. However, a little later she contradicted herself by saying "I feel Polish... I don't want to sound like an English person, obviously not" (Jenkins, 2005: 538). Another participant, from Italy, gave a similar answer: "I am comfortable about it. I'm proud of it... I don't want to be what I am not. I am Italian, I have my own culture, my roots are Italian" (Jenkins, 2005: 538). These answers tell us that there is ambiguity when it comes to attitudes towards native and non-native accents. To some extent, the participants want to sound like native speakers of English since a native-like accent is considered, by the participants, to be more "correct", "proficient", "competent", "fluent" and "real" than a non-native accent. On the other hand, it seems that their attachment to their mother tongue reflects the crucial role it plays in their identity (Jenkins, 2005).

Kahtani, A. (1995) conducted a study entitled "Dialectal Ethnographic 'Cleansing': ESL students' attitudes towards three varieties of English" in this study he examined the attitudes of 14 Saudi Arabian college students at Michigan State University toward Standard American English (SAE), Black English (BE), and Indian English (IE). Results found that the students favored SAE over BE and IE, and considered IE to be both a poor

Table 1: students' attitudes towards using different dialects of English by their instructors

No	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1	4.14	.840
Q2	4.17	.853
Q3	3.19	1.054
Q4	3.22	.981
Q5	4.14	.896
Q6	3.15	1.189
Q7	3.27	1.202
Q8	4.20	.998
Q9	3.21	1.316
Q10	4.05	.974
Q11	4.53	.768
Q12	2.90	1.199
Q13	3.64	1.317
Q14	2.92	.937
Q15	4.02	1.076
Q16	4.38	.864
Q17	3.45	1.214
Q18	3.03	1.029
Q19	4.18	.869
Q20	4.36	.810
attitudes	3.71	.186
Valid N (listwise)		

variety of English and inappropriate as a medium of instruction.

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all students at Princess Alia University College/Al Balqa Applied University who form about 2800 students.

Sample of the Study

The sample of the study consisted of 83 students from English major studying at Princess Alia University College during the academic year 2014/2015; a questionnaire was distributed among them.

Instrument of the Study

A questionnaire was distributed among the students at Princess Alia University College and this questionnaire was designed by the researcher himself, it consisted of 25 items. Many variables were included such as the major, year, and GPA of the student.

3.4 Reliability of the instrument

To ensure the questionnaire reliability, the researcher applied it to a pilot sample of (30) students excluded of the study sample with a two-week period between the first and second time it was distributed. The researcher found that the reliability of the questionnaire was suitable after she calculated it using correlation coefficient.

Procedures of the Study

A questionnaire about English language students' attitudes towards using different dialects of English by their instructors was given to 83 students. After that the researcher collected the questionnaires and collected data, and then this data was analyzed statistically.

Statistical Analysis

The results were analyzed for each question using suitable statistical methods such as mean and standard deviation. The researcher also used figures to clarify the results more.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate English major students' attitudes towards using different dialects of English by their instructors at Princess Alia University College, and to know the effect of GPA and year of the students on their attitudes. A questionnaire was distributed among 83 English major students at Princess Alia University College/Al Balqa Applied University. Means and standard deviations and T-test were used to analyze the results.

To answer the first question about English major students' attitudes towards using different dialects of English by their instructors: What are the attitudes of English major students at Princess Alia University College towards using different dialects of English by their instructors? A questionnaire was distributed among them and means and standard deviation were calculated. Results were shown in [Table 1](#)

[Table 1](#) shows there are statistically significant differences in students' attitudes towards using different dialects of English by their instructors at Princess Alia University College. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (83) students about their attitudes towards using different dialects of English by their instructors. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that question 11 got the highest mean which was (4.53); question 16 comes next with a mean of (4.38).

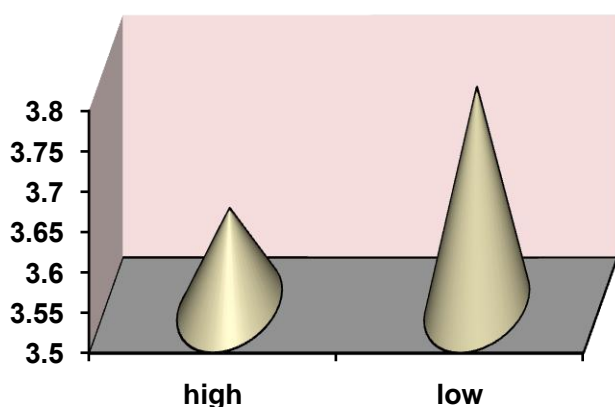
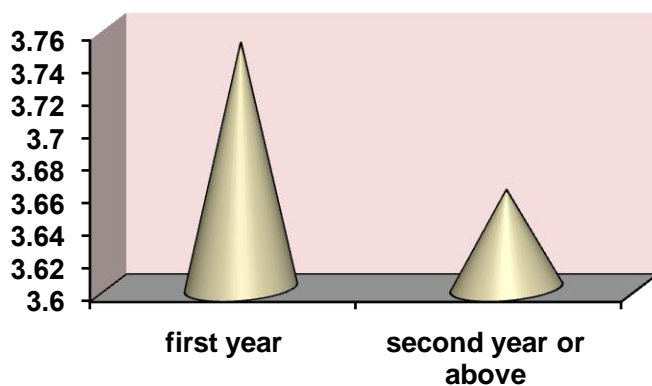
Standard deviation for question 11 was (0.768) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for question 16 was nearly

Table 2: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to GPA variable

	GPA	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
attitudes	high	34	3.62	.149	-5.373	164	.000
	low	49	3.77	.186			

Table 3: Means, standard deviations and t-test according to year variable

	Year	N	Mean	Std Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Attitudes	First year	45	3.75	.195	3.294	164	.001
	Second year or above	38	3.66	.162			

**Diagram 1:** Means, standard deviations and t-test according to GPA variable**Diagram 2:** Means, standard deviations and t-test according to year variable

the same; it was (0.864) which is also statistically significant.

To answer the second question about students' attitudes and their GPA : Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of English major students at Princess Alia University College towards using different dialects of English by their instructors due to their GPA (high, low)? Means and standard deviations were computed and [Table 2](#) shows the results.

[Table 2](#) shows there are statistically significant differences due to GPA variable. It shows the results of the questionnaire which was distributed among (83) students about their attitudes towards using different dialects of English by their instructors. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that students whose GPA is high got a lower mean than students whose GPA is low, it was (3.62, and 3.77) respectively; this indicates that GPA variable has an effect on students' attitudes.

Standard deviation for students whose GPA is high was (0.149) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for students with low GPA was higher; it was (0.186) which is also statistically significant. So, [Table 2](#) shows there are statistically significant differences due to GPA variable in favor of those with low GPA.

[Diagram 1](#) shows that students whose GPA is high got lower negative attitudes towards using different dialects of English by their instructors than students whose GPA is low.

To answer the third question about students' attitudes and year: Are there any statistically significant differences in the attitudes of English major students at Princess Alia University College towards using different dialects of English by their instructors due to the year (first year, second year or above)? Means and standard deviations were computed and [Table 3](#) shows the results.

[Table 3](#) shows there are statistically significant differences due to year variable. It shows the results of the questionnaires which were distributed among (83) students about their attitudes towards using different dialects of English by their instructors. Means and standard deviations were calculated and results show that students of the first year got a higher mean than students of the second year or above which was (3.75,

and 3.66) respectively; this indicates that year variable has an effect on students' attitudes.

Standard deviation for students of the first year was (0.195) which is higher than ($\alpha \leq 0, 05$) so it means that it is statistically significant. Standard deviation for students of the second year or above was lower; it was (0.162) which is also statistically significant. So, **Table 3** shows there are statistically significant differences due to year variable in favor of first year students.

Diagram 2 shows that students of the first year got more negative attitudes towards using different dialects of English by their instructors than the students of second year or above.

CONCLUSION

Students of English in Jordanian universities need and would benefit from a broader ability to understand accented English. The implications of this are that instructors must find ways to overcome their students' general reluctance towards accented English in order to develop this broader ability. With this new understanding of students attitudes towards using different dialects by their instructors, it's time to overcome this challenge either by help students to be familiar with different dialects through listening to different dialects for longer time, or ask instructors to unify their dialect since most of

them are non- native speakers of English. They can use standard English.

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