Chinese Speakers' Language Attitudes Towards English Accents: Comparing Mainland and Hong Kong English Major Students' Accent Preferences in ELF Communication

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Abstract : Accent plays a crucial role in second language (L2) learners' performance in the schooling context in the era of globalization, where English is adopted as a lingua franca (ELF). Previous studies found that Chinese mainland students prefer American English accents, whereas the young generations in Hong Kong prefer British accents. However, these studies neglect the non-native accents of English and fail to elaborate much about why the L2 learners differ in accent preferences between the two regions. Therefore, this research aims to bridge the research gap by 1) including both native and non-native varieties of English accents: American accent, British accent, Chinese Mandarin English accent, and Hong Kong English accent; and 2) uncovering and comparing the deeper reasons for the similar or/and different accent preferences between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong speakers. This research designed a questionnaire including objective and subjective questions to investigate the students' accent inclinations and the attitudes and reasons behind their linguistic choices. The questionnaire was distributed to eight participants (4 Chinese mainland students and 4 Hong Kong students) who were postgraduate students at a Hong Kong university. Based on the data collection, this research finds out one similarity and two differences between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong students' attitudes. The theories of identity construction and standard language ideology are further applied to analyze the reasons behind the similarities and differences and to evaluate how language attitudes intertwine with their identity construction and language ideology.

Keywords : accent, language attitudes, identity construction, language ideology, ELF communication
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