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## Attitudes of Korean EFL Learners Towards Varieties of English

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The present study attempts to explore the attitudes of Korean EFL learners towards two major varieties of English, American and British. The main purpose of the paper is to compare pre-university and university students as to their preference and familiarity with the two varieties. The study also aims at testing the possible relationship between language attitudes and culture attitudes. To this end, a large amount of data was collected from pre-university and university students using a modified version of the matched-guise technique and a questionnaire based on the discourse analytic approach. The results clearly showed the hegemony of American English in the Korean EFL classroom, indicating that both pre-university and university groups preferred American English predominantly over British English as their target language, and a similar trend was true in terms of familiarity. Learner preference and familiarity were shown to be correlated: Learners more strongly prefer a language variety that they are more familiar with. Language attitudes and culture attitudes were shown to be not always correlated. On the basis of the results, suggestions are made for teaching dialectal variations in the Korean EFL classroom.

### I. INTRODUCTION

In second language acquisition, learners are likely to be exposed to different varieties of English such as American, British, Canadian, and Australian varieties. They are exposed even to different regional dialects within a national level variety, for instance, southern, northern, or New York dialect, etc. within American English.

Since there are so many varieties of English within countries and across the world, different learners probably have different attitudes towards these varieties and make different choices concerning their target language (Goldstein, 1987). At times, learners are puzzled at which variety they should choose as their target language. Beebe (1985) suggested that second language acquisition must view non-native speakers not simply as passive recipients of comprehensible or incomprehensible input from native speakers but

as active participants in choosing the target language models they prefer. The former case, however, seems to be true for most Korean EFL learners in that they tend to simply receive input largely from their teachers rather than actively choose their own target language model.

This paper deals with learners' attitudes towards two major varieties, American and British English. This study was motivated by the fact that little attention has been directed to language attitudes in the Korean EFL context. The main purpose of the study is to investigate how pre-university and university students perceive the two English varieties and cultures, with particular attention to which variety they prefer as their target language. It further examines whether learner perceptions of language varieties are correlated with those of cultural varieties. This study limited its scope to American and British English mainly because they are the major varieties of English both in the Korean EFL context and across the world.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Language attitudinal studies are largely concerned with stereotyping of a particular variety of language. The assumption, either implicit or explicit, underlying such attitudinal studies is that a speech community has a preference for a particular variety over another. This implies in Korean EFL pedagogy that Korean students favor a particular variety of English over another as their target language.

Relatively many studies have documented attitudes towards English varieties across the world. Some major studies are listed in Table 1. The traditional view of the target language in second language acquisition was that standard English is the only target variety students should learn. This view was, however, challenged by many researchers. For instance, Goldstein (1987) demonstrated that black English served as a target for Hispanic boys acquiring English as a second language in New York City. It further showed that extensive peer contact with blacks was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the acquisition of features of black English. This study focused on black English as contrasted with standard American English.

Another attitudinal study on American English dialects was carried out by Alford and Strother (1990). Using a modification of the matched-guise technique, they compared the attitudes of L1 and L2 listeners toward specific regional dialects of American English. The results indicated that the judgments of L2 subjects differed from those of L1 subjects, revealing that the latter group accorded the southern male the highest overall rating, while the former accorded both the midwestern male and the southern male an equally high rating.

**TABLE 1**  
**Summary of Studies on Attitudes toward English Varieties**

Researcher	Varieties examined	Informants	Research tools
Goldstein (1987)	Standard vs. black English	Hispanic	identification measurement
Alford & Strother (1990)	Regional American dialects	Native/ nonnative	matched-guise & qualitative questionnaire
Flaitz (1993)	American vs. British English	French	matched-guise & qualitative questionnaire
Chiba et al. (1995)	American, British & International English	Japanese	matched-guise
Crismore et al. (1996)	American, British, Australian & Malaysian English	Malaysian	questionnaire
Ladegaard (1998)	British, American, Scottish & Australian English	Danish	verbal-guise & qualitative questionnaire
Friedrich (2000)	American vs. British English	Brazilian	questionnaire
Jarvella et al. (2001)	American, British, Scottish & Irish English	Danish	aesthetic judgments

Research on language attitudes has been also reported out of the U.S. context. Results were bidirectional. One direction was the preference for American English. Chiba, Matsuura, and Yamamoto (1995), using the matched-guise technique, examined the relationship between acceptance of varieties of English spoken by native and nonnative speakers and attitudes toward culture and English learning. It revealed that the level of subjects' respect for indigenous language affects their attitudes toward non-native English accents and that Japanese students resorted to American English when it comes to deciding the model for their English. The same trend was observed in Friedrich's study (2000), which investigated the attitudes of Brazilian EFL learners towards the target language. He found that American English was identified as the variety the learners were learning and considered as more prestigious than British English. These two studies, however, drew a somewhat different result concerning the effects of familiarity. The former showed that the students' familiarity with accents has a positive influence on their acceptance of varieties of English, but the opposite was true for the latter study in which respondents claimed that British English was easier to understand, though they were more familiar with American English than with British English.

Conversely, some research showed a preference for British English. Flaitz (1993), using the matched-guise technique and qualitative questionnaire, investigated French attitudes toward English varieties and found that the French regarded British English more favorably than American. The same result was true for Danish students in Ladegaard's

(1998) study. Ladegaard, who also used both quantitative and qualitative methods, revealed that RP (Standard British English) was the unsurpassed prestige variety in the Danish context; it was perceived not only as the most efficient, beautiful and correct accent of English, but also as a model for pronunciation. Unlike Flaitz's study, which focused only on American and British varieties, Ladegaard included additional varieties such as Scottish and Australian English, both of which in his study generally received the most positive ratings on solidarity-dimensions. His findings were corroborated by another Danish-based study. Jarvella, Bang, Jakobsen and Mees (2001), who reported on the evaluation by Danish students of English spoken by British, Scottish, Irish, and American men, showed that listeners rated speech produced by Englishmen as most attractive and the speech of Americans as least so. Rated attractiveness also varied with the speaker and the kind of utterance produced. However, this study has a critical limitation in that it focused solely on attractiveness at the expense of other traits widely used in the attitudinal studies. An examination of a single trait cannot provide a well-rounded picture of language attitudes. There is also the difficulty that attractiveness judgments are affected by how well the language is understood.

Though not tabulated in Table 1, language attitudinal research has gone beyond varieties of English. El-Dash and Busnardo (2001) investigated Brazilian attitudes toward English and Portuguese with special attention to dimensions of status and solidarity and showed that approximately half of the subjects evaluated English-speaking guises more favorably than those of native Portuguese in terms of status, which is typical of the adult population, who tend to feel the prestige of English as an international language, but half also valued this guise in terms of solidarity. On the other hand, Pennington and Yue (1994) and Flowerdew, Li and Miller (1998) addressed the attitudes towards English and Chinese in Hong Kong. The former focused on learner attitudes using a questionnaire, but the latter, lecturer attitudes using interviews. The results of both studies indicated the importance of English in Hong Kong, the former showing that students had a strong motivation to learn English and tolerate the use of English, and the latter showing that lecturers regarded English as the more important medium of instruction.

Previous research on language attitudes relied heavily on the matched-guise technique to collect data, under which "the same speaker speaks with different accents and subjects answer questions about status and personality for the two voices belong to the same speaker" (Starks & Paltridge, 1996, p. 218). Notwithstanding its long-lasting popularity, this research instrument has been criticized for its uncritical choice of speech samples and insensitive treatment of subjects (Hyrkstedt & Kalaja, 1998). These limitations have led to reconsideration of research methods for language attitudinal attitudes, suggesting the need for the use of multiple methods including questionnaires, interviews, a discourse-analytic approach, etc., as manifested in some of the aforementioned studies.

### III. METHODS

#### 1. Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions.

1. Which variety of English do pre-university and university groups prefer as their target language, American or British English?
2. Do the two groups differ in their familiarity with the two varieties?
3. Are learners' preferences among the varieties correlated with their familiarity with them?
4. Are learners' attitudes toward language varieties correlated with their attitudes toward cultural varieties?

At this point it is important to note that the pre-university group means those who had already graduated from high school but had not yet entered their program at university. Thus, this group is expected to help capture the currents of the high school classroom involving English varieties, uncovering which variety is prevalent and how much attention has been paid to teaching English varieties.

#### 2. Participants

Participants for this study totaled 211: 80 male; 131 female. They were divided into two groups: pre-university students (106) and university students (105). The pre-university group included graduates from 78 high schools across the country. On the other hand, the university group included sophomores (49), juniors (24) and seniors (32) enrolled at one university in Chungcheong province. They were English majors or minors or taking English classes as electives. The age of the pre-university group averaged 20, while the university group ranged in age from 20 to 27. Only five pre-university students had been to English speaking countries (2 to the USA; 2 to Canada; 1 to England), as had 28 university students (26 to Canada; 2 to the USA). A vast majority of these (94%) had stayed in English-speaking countries for less than one year. About half of the pre-university students (54) had had experience of speaking with native speakers during their high school days, and so had all the university students in or out of class. Since English is a required subject from middle school to high school, all of these participants had been exposed to a considerable amount of English instruction, particularly on grammar and reading. In addition, they had had opportunities, either directly or otherwise, to experience or learn about English-related culture. Unlike the pre-university students, the university students

had taken some courses (Introduction to English Linguistics; Understanding English Language and Culture) which helped them to capture the differences between British and American culture, not to mention the differences between British and American English varieties.

### 3. Instrumentation

This study employed a modified version of the matched-guise technique and a questionnaire based on the discourse-analytic approach. The whole questionnaire was comprised of two major parts, along with demographic questions. The demographic questions involved the background of informants to uncover gender, school grade, the name of the high school they had graduated from, experience in English speaking countries, and other related information.

Part A of the questionnaire was concerned with a modified version of the matched-guise technique with a semantic differential scale, similar to that used by Alford and Strother (1990), to determine language attitudes. The modified version has methodological advances over the original version. First, unlike the original version, which had a bilingual person read a passage in the different accents under investigation, the modified version used natural rather than “counterfeit” accents: Four different native speakers, two each speaking American English and British English, read a passage in their normal indigenous accents. This also prevents speakers from varying their voice quality and style in an attempt to distinguish among the various accents (Alford & Strother, 1990). Second, the modified version employed a minimal number of personality traits (*intelligent* and *educated*) which are used for evaluating speakers, but instead included semantic traits for measuring language varieties (*easy*, *effective*, etc.).

Demographic data for the four native speakers, whose speech was taped are presented in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**  
**Demographic Information about the Speakers**

Speakers	Name	Nationality	Sex	Age	Hometown	Education	Occupation
Speaker A	Jonathan	British	M	30	Hereford	BA	Instructor
Speaker B	Claire	British	F	28	Manchester	MA	Instructor
Speaker C	Christine	American	F	28	New York	MA	Instructor
Speaker D	Tim	American	M	31	Oregon	MA	Instructor

The speakers included two males and two females, with two Americans and two British of each gender. Other variables were controlled as tightly as possible: Their ages were similar,

ranging from 28 to 31; all of them were highly educated and were in a teaching position; their voice quality and speaking speed (36-37 seconds) were very similar. Their pronunciation was evaluated to be close to standard British and American English, respectively, without marked regional accents. This was confirmed by two other native American English speakers, who agreed, after listening to the tape, that the four native speakers showed clear enough differences to distinguish British and American varieties.

In order to control the content, the four speakers read the same passage. However, they were asked to rewrite the passage and make changes in such a way as to sound natural to them. Their rewriting showed lexical variations, depending on American and British speakers, as shown in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Reading Passage**

Tom is living in a terrible apartment/flat. It often runs out of hot water. The elevator/lift is very slow, and the walls are very dirty. His mailbox/postbox was broken into. He asked for repairs, but they didn't do it. The worst thing is that his golf-club which was placed beside his baggage/luggage was stolen a few months ago. After this, he decided to move into a better apartment/flat in the fall/autumn, if possible, not too far away from his office and close to a bus stop.

The voice-recording manifested not only lexical differences but also pronunciation variations between the two English varieties. While it is well beyond the scope of the present study to analyze the differences between British and American English, lexical differences were shown in most of the underlined parts above, the first word in each pair being American English and the second British.<sup>1</sup> One of the most salient differences in pronunciation was the [r] sound, the American speakers pronouncing [r] and the British speakers not pronouncing it, especially when it occurred at the end of a word (*water, far, etc.*).

As mentioned earlier, the four speakers read the same passage with their respective accents in random order. Responses were elicited via a series of bi-polar semantic differential scales for nine pairs of adjectives: *stigmatized vs. prestigious*; *unintelligent vs. intelligent*; *ill-educated vs. well-educated*; *nonstandardized vs. standardized*; *ineffective vs. effective*; *difficult vs. easy*; *bad vs. good (for modeling)*; *disadvantageous vs. advantageous (for job-seeking)*; *unfamiliar vs. familiar* (Appendix).

Part B of the questionnaire, which consisted of 15 items, was an attempt to evaluate learner attitudes towards American and British culture. While the term 'culture' is

<sup>1</sup> The distinction between British and American English is not always clear-cut. For instance, the two American speakers used *baggage* and *luggage* interchangeably. For a full investigation of the differences between American and British English, see Uhn-Kyung Choi (1996).

multifarious and impossible to define in a precise and unambiguous way (Ladegaard, 1998), its scope was limited in this study to customs, social systems, ways of thinking, and ways of life that characterize a group of people (Brown, 2000). The survey questions were based on the discourse-analytic approach (Hyrkstedt & Kalaja, 1998) in which another group of 34 university students were asked to feel free to write their opinions, either positive or negative, about American and British culture. Their descriptive opinions were reorganized and itemized for the questionnaire. In this sense, the items about culture in the questionnaire emerged naturally from students rather than being determined beforehand.

#### 4. Procedure

The survey for the university group was administered during the Spring 2005 semester, while the survey for the pre-university group, during the freshmen orientation period right before they entered the university program the same year. The survey was conducted anonymously so that the participants could respond honestly. A Korean version of the questionnaire was employed to avoid possible confusion and misunderstanding.

The participants were told the purpose of the survey and given instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. After listening to each speaker on tape, they were asked to evaluate each speaker's speech on the bi-polar semantic scales, with 1 corresponding to negative characteristics and 5 to their opposites. Each sample was played at intervals so that the participants could have enough time to perform their task for each speaker.

For part B of the questionnaire, the participants were not given an opportunity to listen to the tape, but simply asked to assess American and British culture by choosing one position on a five-point Likert scale. It took 20 minutes or so to complete the whole questionnaire.

## IV. RESULTS

In determining learner preference among the four native varieties of English, the following eight items were considered together: *prestige*, *intelligence*, *education*, *standardization*, *effectiveness*, *easiness*, *modeling*, and *advantage for job-seeking*. The last item, *familiar*, in the semantic differential technique was excluded for measuring learner preference but considered as an independent variable, familiarity.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to test whether there was any difference between the pre-university and the university groups in their preferences among the four native speakers of English. The results are presented in Table 3. The table indicates that there were no significant differences for two effects - Group and Speaker

( $p > .05$ ;  $F = 1.322$ ). In other words, differences were not found between pre-university and university groups in the preference for American or British English speaker variety. Nor was it evident that voice qualities of “maleness” or “femaleness” (Alford & Strother, 1990) influenced learner perceptions of preference for the varieties. This fails to lend support to Alford and Strother’s postulation that sex and accent-based stereotypes interact in determining what perceptions people have of accented language.

**TABLE 3**  
**One-way ANOVA for Preference by Group and Speaker**

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	p
Group	3.734	1	3.734	7.249	.004
Speaker	127.127	3	42.376	82.275	.000
Group*Speaker	2.043	3	0.681	1.322	.266 n.s.

$p > .05$

It is worthwhile to take a closer look at the perceptions of the pre-university group and those of the university group, respectively. Table 4 tabulates a descriptive presentation of the pre-university group’s ratings of characteristics of the four English varieties.

**TABLE 4**  
**Pre-university Students’ Mean Ratings of English Varieties**

Characteristics	Speakers			
	British male	British female	American male	American female
prestigious	3.26	3.05	3.74	2.89
intelligent	3.35	3.20	3.70	3.10
well-educated	3.22	3.04	3.62	3.03
standardized	2.90	3.03	3.87	3.74
easy	2.63	2.81	3.88	3.65
effective for learning	2.53	2.92	3.91	3.74
good for modeling	2.55	2.76	3.61	3.50
advantageous for job-seeking	2.68	2.96	3.66	3.56
mean score	2.88	2.96	3.74	3.39

A look at the overall mean scores at the bottom of the table indicates that the American male speaker was rated highest ( $M = 3.74$ ) followed by the American female ( $M = 3.39$ ), the British male speaker lowest ( $M = 2.88$ ), and the British female speaker ( $M = 2.96$ ) being rated between the American female and the British male speakers. Interestingly, the two American varieties were rated higher than the two British varieties, which suggests that the American variety is preferred over the British at the high school level. The favorable

evaluation of American English is also confirmed at the individual item level, which revealed that the American male speaker was rated consistently more favorably on all dimensions: Not only was he evaluated most favorably in terms of prestige, intelligence, education, standardization, and easiness, but his speech was viewed to be most effective for learning, most advantageous for job-seeking, and the most appropriate model for learning.

These ratings can be compared with the university group's ratings, as reported in Table 5. The pattern observed in the pre-university group's ratings is repeated at the university level: The American male speaker was accorded the highest overall rating ( $M=3.97$ ), followed by the American female speaker ( $M=3.61$ ).

**TABLE 5**  
**University Students' Mean Ratings of English Varieties**

Characteristics	Speakers			
	British male	British female	American male	American female
prestigious	3.35	3.15	3.92	3.21
intelligent	3.35	3.17	3.84	3.34
well-educated	3.34	3.04	3.80	3.22
standardized	2.90	2.89	<b>4.03</b>	3.82
easy	2.80	3.09	<b>4.17</b>	3.94
effective for learning	2.71	2.87	<b>4.03</b>	3.93
good for modeling	2.68	2.76	3.99	3.78
advantageous for job-seeking	2.70	2.75	<b>4.03</b>	3.73
mean score	2.97	2.95	3.97	3.61

A similar trend was also found at the individual item level in that the American male speaker received the highest ratings on all eight characteristics, with unusually high mean figures, four of them marking a mean of more than 4.0: *standardized* (4.03), *easy* (4.17), *effective for learning* (4.03), *advantageous for job-seeking* (4.03). The American male speaker was perceived a little more positively by the university group than by the pre-university group.

The results taken together showed that both pre-university and university groups gave more positive ratings for American English than for British English on all dimensions: Korean EFL learners, whether high school or university students, rated American English as more prestigious, intelligent, standardized, effective, advantageous, easier, better educated, and better for modeling than British English. This is in line with Chiba et al.'s (1995) study which showed that Japanese students resorted to American English.

With respect to the second research question, a statistical analysis was also processed to explore whether there are any differences between the pre-university and university groups

in their familiarity with American and British varieties. In this case, gender was not considered, and thus the subjects' responses to the two speakers of each English variety were averaged to give a single rating for that variety. Table 6 presents mean ratings of familiarity with the two English varieties, and Table 7 summarizes the results of one-way ANOVA tests for familiarity by group and speaker.

**TABLE 6**  
**Mean Ratings of Familiarity with English Varieties**

Groups	Speakers	Mean	SD
Pre-university	British	2.50	1.22
	American	3.99	1.12
University	British	2.59	1.12
	American	4.20	0.81

**TABLE 7**  
**One-way ANOVA for Familiarity by Group and Speaker**

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	p
Group	4.743	1	4.743	4.084	.044
Speaker	510.050	1	510.050	439.188	.000
Group*Speaker	.747	1	.747	.643	.423 n.s.

*p* > .05

One-way ANOVA tests reveal that statistical differences were not found between the pre-university and university groups in their familiarity with the American and the British varieties. Both groups were much better-acquainted with American variety than with British variety. This confirms the earlier point that students showed a strong orientation toward American English with little exposure to British English both in high school and at the university. This tendency is more evident for high schools, given the fact that the pre-university data were collected from students who graduated from 78 high schools from all over the country.

The results of learner preference and those of learner familiarity taken together lead us to assume that these two variables are related in one way or another. In order to test this possibility, Pearson Correlation Coefficients were computed between learner preference and familiarity, as presented in Table 8. In order to answer the third research question, we have to look particularly at the bold figures in the table. The bold figures indicate that there is a strong correlation between familiarity with American English and preference for it ( $r=.682$ ) on the one hand and between familiarity with British English and preference for it ( $r=.651$ ) on the other. In other words, familiarity has a strong impact on preference, indicating that the more familiar with an English variety learners are, the more strongly

they prefer it. This in turn implies that lack of familiarity led to generally unfavorable stereotypes in relation to British English.

**TABLE 8**  
**Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Familiarity and Preference**

	F/A	F/B	P/B	P/A
F/A	1			
F/B	-.182**	1		
P/B	-.131	.651**	1	
P/A	.682**	-.137*	-.191**	1

\* $p < .05$     \*\* $p < .01$

F/A = Familiarity with American English

F/B = Familiarity with British English

P/B = Preference for British English

P/A = Preference for American English

On the other hand, in order to capture learner attitudes toward American and British culture, mean scores for each item were calculated, as in Table 9.

**TABLE 9**  
**Mean Scores for American and British Culture**

Items on Culture	Mean	SD
<b>Positive Attitudes toward American Culture</b>	<b>3.46</b>	<b>.56</b>
11. America is a country where freedom is respected.	3.97	.84
2. Americans are kind.	3.00	.74
8. Americans are rational and have a positive way of thinking.	3.42	.85
<b>Negative Attitudes toward American Culture</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>.54</b>
14. Americans have a sense of superiority.	4.24	.85
5. Americans are ego-centric and selfish.	3.74	.95
7. Americans are too open to sexual relationships.	4.02	.85
9. Americans lack politeness.	3.00	.88
13. Since Americans are allowed to carry weapons, there are a lot of crimes, which makes America look dangerous.	4.02	.94
10. There is serious racial discrimination in America.	3.90	.83
<b>Positive Attitudes toward British Culture</b>	<b>3.66</b>	<b>.69</b>
12. The British look gentle and noble.	3.56	.94
1. The British have good manners and etiquette.	3.63	.78
4. British people's tea time shows their peaceful life.	3.81	.91
<b>Negative Attitudes toward British Culture</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>.59</b>
6. The British look depressed, because of the bad weather.	2.72	1.00
15. The British have too much pride.	3.30	.93
3. I don't know much about British culture because of lack of opportunities to know it.	3.67	.97

As noted earlier, the categorization of these items was based on the data from the

discourse-analytic approach rather than being predetermined. The individual items were subsumed under four overall categories: positive attitudes toward American culture ( $M=3.46$ ); negative attitudes toward American culture ( $M=3.82$ ); positive attitudes toward British culture ( $M=3.66$ ); negative attitudes toward British culture ( $M=3.22$ ). Concerning the negative attitudes toward British culture, one may raise a question as to whether item 3 'I don't know much about British culture' can be categorized as a negative attitude. The main reason for considering this item as negative was that learners' failure to know much about British culture is indicative of their indifference to it. In order to answer the last research question as to whether there is any relationship between these four categories of culture and the English language attitude variables from Part A of the questionnaire, Pearson Correlation Coefficients were calculated. The results are reported in Table 10.

**TABLE 10**  
**Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Language and Culture**

	British English		American English	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Positive to British culture	.081	.245		
Negative to British culture	-.165*	.017		
Positive to American culture			.213**	.002
Negative to American culture			.019	.781

\* $p < .05$     \*\* $p < .01$

There is a partial correlation between language attitudes and cultural attitudes, in that only two correlations were found, one at the 0.05 level of significance and the other at the 0.01 level of significance. The first correlation,  $-.165$  at the 0.05 significance level, indicates that negative attitudes toward British culture were inversely correlated with the preference for British English. The second correlation,  $.213$  at the 0.01 significance level is indicative of an association between positive attitudes toward American culture and American English. In other words, the correlation analysis appears to suggest that English language attitudes and cultural attitudes are not always related, revealing a partial relationship on the two dimensions. Thus, it was not evident that positive attitudes toward a culture variety lead to positive attitudes toward a variety of English or the other way around.

## V. DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide important implications. First of all, Korean students in high school and at the university showed a tendency to rate American English more

favorably than British English on many dimensions. The single predominant pattern of American English affirms that American English has been the *de facto* target model for learning English in the Korean EFL setting. Learner orientation toward the American English variety resulted in little attention to other major varieties of English, say, British English. Learner familiarity with a particular variety had a favorable effect on their preference for it. Specifically, learners preferred a language variety that they were familiar with.

Learner perceptions of American English as the preferential target language variety and as the more familiar variety can be attributed to many possible factors. Above all, it coincides with sociopolitical influence from the United States. From the historical point of view, Korea has been influenced by the United States, particularly since the Korean War when American English was an important medium for communication between Koreans and Americans. Many American camps still stationed across Korea are influencing learners' modeling of the target language in one way or another. Second, movies, music, soap operas, and the media that Korean students have access to are in overwhelming favor of American English. Third, in the classroom setting teachers are largely oriented toward American English, and the same is true for teaching materials including textbooks and listening comprehension tapes. Given the fact that listening tapes are an important resource for enriching pronunciation skills, they have influenced learner choice of the target language variety. On the other hand, less favorable evaluation of British English may be the result of a lack of exposure to it in terms of individual contacts, the media, and textbooks, etc.

Heavy reliance on American English may pose some problems in theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, it is not in accordance with the notion of communicative competence. According to Bachman (1990), communicative competence consists of four major components, one of which is sociolinguistic competence, which involves sensitivity to dialect or variety, and sensitivity to register, among others. This suggests that exposure to different dialects is important for enhancing sociolinguistic competence, which is in turn important for developing communicative competence. Practically, it may trigger communication breakdown, especially when learners oriented toward the American English variety encounter another variety which they are not familiar with, say, British English. Monodialectal learners are susceptible to listening incomprehensibility stemming from dialectal differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, etc., as is the case with monodialectal mainstream teachers discussed by McGroarty (1996).

In order to reduce the heavy reliance on American English, it might be a first step to make the objectives of English education more explicit in the National Curriculum. The objectives should include understanding of English varieties for international communication, so that the learner can communicate not only with American native speakers but also with

speakers of other English varieties.

Such objectives should then be reflected in the development of curricula. Literature presented in the textbook should involve not only American varieties, but also British or other varieties, and so should written dialogues. It may also be of help to present a section of English varieties after the presentation of the main text in each unit in which some major items already introduced are contrastively analyzed in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, etc. At the lower level, the contrastive analysis needs to focus on differences in pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary, but at the higher level, it should go beyond them to differences in discourse pragmatics and rhetorical conventions.

Given the finding that American English was rated as more prestigious and more standardized than the British English variety, learners seem to have a misconception that British English is secondary and peripheral to American English, which is obviously not true. Teachers should change this misconception, explaining that there are many different varieties of English, each having its own features and that no variety is superior to another. Learners need to be guided to recognize that the target language is not homogeneous. There is no denying that the choice of which variety should be the target language is largely contingent upon learner needs, learning goals, or social needs. Nonetheless, the results of the present study indicate more need for emphasizing the British English variety in the Korean EFL classroom. Emphasis on the neglected variety will lead to judicious exposure to different varieties of English so that learners can adequately cope with communication problems resulting from unexpected varieties.

A subsequent question which springs to mind involves the optimal period for overt teaching of dialects or varieties, more specifically, British English. Among the variables that can influence the role of dialects in English teaching are age, proficiency, skill, and need, which are akin to Celce-Murcia's (1991) approach to teaching grammar.

**TABLE 11**  
**Variables that Determine the Importance of Dialect Teaching**

	Less Important	⇐ Focus on Dialects ⇒	More Important
<i>Age</i>	children		Adults
<i>Proficiency</i>	beginning		Advanced
<i>Skill</i>	writing, reading		listening, speaking
<i>Need</i>	local		Global

Too much dialectal instruction should not be forced on children or beginning level learners. When different English varieties are taught to learners at the early stages of language acquisition, it tends to interfere with their learning of English. Moreover, it can give them a heavy learning load in class work, which will eventually impede the language

acquisition process. In terms of language skills, dialectal variations are more important to listening and speaking than to reading and writing mainly because “pronunciation is one of the most obvious differences separating regional dialects” (Alford & Strother, 1990, p. 480). The degree of emphasis on language varieties may also vary, depending on learner needs. If learners are headed toward global goals, they may need to pay more attention to an array of English varieties used across the world than learners with goals at the local level. For instance, one who does business with England may need to have access to British English as well as American. These proposals, however, should by no means be looked on as absolute principles, but simply general guidelines for figuring out the relative emphasis to be placed on dialectal variations in the process of English learning. These variables need to be tested with further research.

Another issue that should be considered is the type of instructional program relevant for teaching English varieties. In order to adequately tackle this issue, it may be worthwhile to look at Siegel’s (1999) three types of instructional programs for the acquisition of the standard by working with a stigmatized variety: *instrumental*, *accommodation*, and *awareness*. According to Siegel, in *instrumental* programs, the stigmatized variety is used as a medium of instruction to teach initial literacy and content subjects. In *accommodation* programs, the variety is not a medium of instruction or subject of study, but it is accepted in the classroom; students are allowed and even encouraged to use their home varieties in speaking and sometimes writing. In *awareness* programs, on the other hand, the stigmatized variety is an object of study in the context of discussions of language diversity. While these programs are not exactly applicable to the present study, the awareness program is most highly recommended for dialect teaching in the Korean EFL setting. The instrumental programs seem inapplicable, since the use of the British variety as a medium of instruction to teach content subjects does not conform to Korean specific contexts where an even more familiar variety, American English, has not successfully been used as a medium of instruction. Moreover, the added load of using another variety as in instrumental and accommodation programs may be too much to bear on the part of both teachers and learners. The awareness program, on the other hand, poses no such limitations. Indeed, this type of program has been occasionally utilized in the Korean university setting for teaching English major students dialectal differences between American and British English. It enables teachers to take effective control of instructions on American and British varieties, explicitly teaching dialectal differences between the two.

Siegel (1999) noted that the awareness program used a contrastive approach between standard and stigmatized varieties. The contrastive approach is also useful for teaching American and British English varieties to Korean students, as it helps them clearly to notice differences between the two varieties. In the present study American English variety was viewed by learners as the mainstream variety. Hence, in the development of a model

for teaching dialects, it would seem reasonable to place the American variety in the core position, and British as added to this core, focusing on dialectal differences derived from the contrastive analysis. The knowledge of those aspects of British English which are distinct from the American variety should be used as a bridge to learning a single target language, filling the gap between various aspects of the varieties. This integration seems to be tenable because the two varieties are not mutually exclusive, but rather are interrelated with each other and because, as Sato (1989) pointed out, the phonological, lexical, and morphosyntactic differences between varieties of English are not as massive as those that obtain between typologically distinct languages, nor do they occur in every instance of communication. Thus, an effective approach is that wherever dialectal differences occur in the context of teaching, teachers need to give students guidelines based on a contrastive analysis so as to sensitize them to differences not only in phonological, lexical, and morphosyntactic features but also in culture.

Another way of increasing awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity is to show students films involving the British variety wherever necessary. Indeed, the use of films has been an important way of teaching culture in the classroom. Well-selected films, particularly British films, are expected to provide students with opportunities to capture how British English and culture differ from American, while promoting a high level of interest. To English major students who need to know more about dialectal differences than non-English majors, it may be a good idea to utilize the “matched-guise” technique for a classroom activity. In this activity, the teacher asks learners to listen to taped speech samples of American and British English varieties and determine how they are different. The teacher’s major task in this activity is to carefully observe learner attitudes or reactions toward the varieties of English. If they have negative attitudes toward the British variety, as shown in this study, teachers should guide them to recognize that British English is not at all inferior to American English and that both varieties are worth learning for international communication. Teachers also need to arrange for discussions about how the varieties heard on the tape differ from the variety learners are accustomed to, focusing on the factors interfering with the communication process or general learning process. Such an approach will help to integrate the “stigmatized differences” into the target language model.

The finding that attitudes toward language varieties were not necessarily correlated with attitudes toward cultural varieties indicates that these two do not always go hand in hand. This does not seem to be in line with the relativists’ view that language, thought, and culture are strongly interrelated with each other (Brown, 2000). It appears that the anti-Americanism which has been inherent in Korea does not always influence learners’ choice of the target language. The inverse relationship between negative attitudes toward British culture and the preference for British English suggests that learners’ deficiency in knowledge of British culture had a negative impact on their preference for British English

in one way or another. This indicates a need for more emphasis on British culture in the classroom. Given the fact that learners benefit from positive attitudes toward culture and that negative attitudes may lead to unsatisfactory levels of proficiency (Brown, 2000), teachers need to aid in dispelling unnecessary biases against and false stereotyping of culture. Better understanding of culture will help learners make an effective choice of their target language model, let alone enrich their background knowledge.

When it comes to language testing or assessment concerning English varieties, it is important to develop a standardized testing instrument to measure learners' ability to recognize different English varieties and/or learners' receptive and productive competence concerning English varieties. In order to do this, testing specialists need to conduct an array of experiments to investigate the difference in scores on tests based on the two varieties of English (American and British). Until a standardized assessment instrument is developed, caution should be used in interpreting the results drawn from exams, since they can vary, depending upon which variety is used. In this regard, there should be an explicit indication of the variety of English, American or British, used in the exams, so that a judicious and unbiased interpretation can be drawn.

## **V. SUMMARY AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES**

It has been shown that both pre-university and university groups strongly preferred American English over British English and a similar trend was true in terms of familiarity. Moreover, learner preference had a positive relation with familiarity, indicating that what learners were exposed to corresponds to what they preferred as their target language. These results taken together suggest that the American English deeply rooted in the Korean EFL classroom has served as a target language, either in high school or at the university. It was also shown that language preference was not necessarily correlated with culture preference.

On the basis of these results, suggestions were made about the teaching of English varieties. While the choice of English variety as the target language model depends largely on learner needs, it is important that teachers give well-rounded instructions on a wide array of dialectal variations, particularly, language varieties other than the American English most students are well acquainted with, because nonnative speakers' exposure to single source of input may exacerbate the process of communication, leading to inadequacies in coping with possible problems triggered by dialectal variations new to learners.

This study has an important limitation in data sampling. Unlike the pre-university data drawn from 78 high schools, the university data were collected from only one university. Thus, whether the data are representative of the whole population of university students

should be confirmed by further studies using data from more universities. Empirical evidence is also required for some intuitive proposals made in the previous section, concerning how reliance on a single variety, say, American English, influences the whole process of target language acquisition, and concerning when the optimal period should be for integrating dialectal variations into the general teaching model. It may also be of interest to analyze Korean EFL textbooks and listening tapes to investigate how they reflect dialectal differences among a wide array of English varieties.

As already noted, sociolinguistic competence, in Bachman's framework of language competence, is comprised of sensitivity to dialect or variety, and sensitivity to register, among others. In this sense, this study will shed light on the aspect of sociolinguistic competence, raising the awareness of dialect or variety, which will ultimately enhance communicative competence.

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unintelligent	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	intelligent
ill-educated	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	well-educated
nonstandardized	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	standardized
difficult	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	easy
bad for modeling	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	good for modeling
ineffective for learning	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	effective for learning
disadvantageous (for job-seeking)	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	advantageous (for job-seeking)

**Second Speaker:**

stigmatized	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	prestigious
unintelligent	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	intelligent
ill-educated	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	well-educated
nonstandardized	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	standardized
difficult	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	easy
bad for modeling	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	good for modeling
ineffective for learning	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	effective for learning
disadvantageous (for job-seeking)	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	advantageous (for job-seeking)

**Third Speaker:**

stigmatized	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	prestigious
unintelligent	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	intelligent
ill-educated	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	well-educated
nonstandardized	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	standardized
difficult	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	easy
bad for modeling	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	good for modeling
ineffective for learning	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	effective for learning
disadvantageous (for job-seeking)	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	advantageous (for job-seeking)

**Fourth Speaker:**

stigmatized	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	prestigious
unintelligent	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	intelligent
ill-educated	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	well-educated
nonstandardized	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	standardized
difficult	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	easy
bad for modeling	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	good for modeling
ineffective for learning	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	effective for learning
disadvantageous (for job-seeking)	____, ____ , ____ , ____ , ____	advantageous (for job-seeking)

**Part B:** The following statements are concerned with American and British culture. Decide how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

- 1 *strongly disagree*    2 *disagree*    3 *neither disagree nor agree*  
 4 *agree*                    5 *strongly agree*

1. The British have good manners and etiquette.
2. Americans are kind.
3. I don't know much about British culture because of lack of opportunities to know it.
4. British people's tea time shows their peaceful life.
5. Americans are ego-centric and selfish.
6. The British look depressed, because of the bad weather.
7. Americans are too open to sexual relationships.
8. Americans are rational and have a positive way of thinking.
9. Americans lack politeness.
10. There is serious racial discrimination in America.
11. America is a country where freedom is respected.
12. The British look gentle and noble.
13. Since Americans are allowed to carry weapons, there are a lot of crimes, which makes America look dangerous.
14. Americans have a sense of superiority.
15. The British have too much pride.

Applicable levels: secondary, university

Key words: attitudes, varieties of English, dialect teaching, culture

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