

Exploring Male and Female Iranian EFL Learners' Attitude towards Native and Non-native Varieties of English

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Received: 2016.3.2

Revisions received: 2016.5.12

Accepted: 2016.7.23

Online Publication: 2016.10.16

Abstract

This study investigated whether Iranian EFL learners are aware of different varieties of English spoken throughout the world and whether they have tendency towards a particular variety of English. Likewise, it explored the attitudes of Iranian EFL learners towards the native and non-native varieties of English. Moreover, it made an attempt to investigate whether such attitudes are gender-oriented. To this end, 30 intermediate male and female Iranian EFL learners whose age ranged from 22 to 30 formed the sample population of this study. They responded to three questionnaires. Then, the collected data were subjected to a one-way repeated measure ANOVA, Fisher's LSD post hoc test, and independent-samples t-tests. The main conclusion of this study was that Iranian EFL learners do not believe in a single world English anymore; instead, they gradually believe in "world Englishes". They are indeed receding from that perfect English accent and are accepting other Englishes for their communication with people around the world. In addition, although the participants accepted non-native varieties, having tendency towards American and British accents reveals the fact that they have positive attitudes towards language learning.

Keywords: world englishes, standard English, English varieties, language learning attitude, Gender

Introduction

English as the language of international communication has for long been, and still is, spreading all over the world, and since any transmission of language brings about transformation (Widdowson, 2003), this spread has resulted in the existence of different varieties of English, each as a consequence of English contact with a certain language, culture and people. The interesting point is that the speakers of these new Englishes who use English to communicate with fellow non-native speakers far outnumber its native speakers (Widdowson, 2003).

The coinage and promotion of the term World Englishes is mainly associated with Kachru (1982). The underlying philosophy of Kachruvian approach argues for the “importance of inclusivity and pluricentricity in approaches to linguistics of new varieties of English” (Bolton, 2004, p. 367). In addition, in an attempt to empower new Englishes, this theory calls the labels native speaker and native and standard English into serious question and denies any special status for them.

Kachru (1985) proposed three-concentric circle model of World Englishes. The inner circle, such as the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, contains English as native language (ENL) speakers and has provided norms for non-native speakers of English. The outer circle, such as India, the Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, consists of English as second language (ESL) speakers and has developed institutionalized varieties of English. The expanding circle, such as Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, and Russia, contains English as foreign language (EFL) speakers and has relied on norms of the inner circle. This model has been criticized by the reason that “the center-periphery dichotomy” (Erling 2004: 224) reinforces superiority of native speakers from the inner circle and cannot explain increasing bilingual speakers who acquire both a native language and English simultaneously (e.g. Jenkins 2000; McKay 2002; McKenzie 2006). In spite of the criticism, the model is useful as a general taxonomy and will be applied in this study in relation to the perspective of English as EIL (English as an International Language).

According to Bhatt (2001), World Englishes paradigm discusses the global spread of English and the large number of functions it has taken on with increasing range and depth in diverse sociolinguistic settings around the world.

This paradigm particularly emphasizes on multilingualism, multicultural identities, multiple norms of use, and bilinguals' creativity.

Davis (2004), also, defined *World Englishes* as a term used to "legitimate the Englishes spoken in the British non-white colonies" and explained that the ideology behind it denies a special status for the native speakers of metropolitan English varieties and complains about these native speakers' discriminations against users of world Englishes (p. 442). World Englishes has its philosophical roots in the two dominant schools of thought of the present time, i.e., Postcolonialism and Postmodernism. English Language in Iran is often learned through imitating a particular variety of English and most of the times your proficiency in English is evaluated according to such imitation, i.e., the more you achieve a native-like accent, the more proficient you are considered to be.

Among different varieties of English just two are valued in Iran; in other words, it is generally believed that American and British Englishes are the best since they represent Standard English, the one spoken and understood most easily by its native speakers. Furthermore, it seems that having a native-like mastery of either of these two varieties has turned into a criterion for recruitment of English teachers. The startling fact here is that just a tiny percent of these learners will ever have a chance to communicate with native speakers (Kirkpatrick, 2007). The great majority of others need English either to communicate with fellow non-natives or to be able to read different books and journals in English. So the question which remains to be reflected on is what the use of such great emphasis on, and spending so much time and energy in acquiring these so-called standard varieties of English is. Not only does it demotivate those who fail to do so in the EFL context of Iran, but also it has exploitative effects on the learners who manage acquiring it after great effort. Recent research has shed light on some of such effects on the latter group.

Why are some language learners more successful than others? To account for the differences in learning a language Dörnyei (2010) clings to individual differences. That is, the "dimensions of enduring personal characteristics that are assumed to apply to everybody and on which people differ by a degree (p. 41)". In some cases, learning second language is a relatively important educational task that students face during their academic formation, while for others it is a straight way to bilingualism. In both cases, researchers seem to

agree that “affective variables such as attitudes influence language learning” (Gardner et al. 2004).

Language learning has psychological and social aspects and attitude to second language learning affects the ability of the learners to master a language. In 1992, Baker focused on the importance of research about effect of attitude in language learning (Zainol Abidin, et al., 2012). In Parham's (2011) point of view, affective domain is important for its impact on learners' future learning behavior. He states that the reason such affective variables as students' attitudes, interests, and values are important to us is that those variables typically influence future behavior. The reason we want to promote positive attitudes towards learning is because students who have positive attitudes towards learning today will be inclined to pursue learning in the future. The affective status of students lets us see how students are predisposed to behave subsequently. Learners' attitudes, skills and strategies determine their underachievement or accomplishment (Nunan, 2000). Attitude to language learning is a hypothetical construct that cannot be observed directly and must be inferred from responses that reflect evaluations of the attitude object (Ajzen, 2005).

Karahan (2007) claims that "positive language attitudes let learner has positive orientation towards learning English" (p.84). As such, attitudes may play a very crucial role in language learning as they would appear to influence students' success or failure in their learning. It is also believed that positive attitude facilitates foreign language learning while negative attitude acts as a psychological barrier against it (Dörnyei , 1994; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002). Empirical evidence is available to support these postulations. Nikolov (2001), for instance, found that students' negative attitude to Russia or Russians was responsible for their failure to learn or retain the language. Also, Gardner and Lambert (1972) in their extensive studies give evidence that positive attitudes toward language enhance proficiency as well. Many researchers believe that attitudes have cognitive, affective and behavioral components (Wenden, 1991).

While the first set of attitudes is educational in nature, the second one is more social. SLA literature supports a relationship between attitudes towards language learning and achievement in the language (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) even more than that of other subjects of the curriculum (Jordan, 1941).

Attitudes towards language learning also seem connected to the context where learning takes place (Gagnon, 1974; Krashen, 1997). In learning a second language, it is important that students have high motivation and positive attitude towards the target language. This is because many linguists have proven that motivation and attitude are closely related in determining the success of second language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Higher levels of motivation and positive attitude will produce more successful language learners and vice versa. Brown (2007) states that positive attitudes towards the self, the native language and the target language group enhance second language proficiency. He further states that a language learner benefits from positive attitude and that negative attitude may lead to decrease in motivation, input and interaction; and consequently it leads to unsuccessful attainment of proficiency.

Attitudes towards second language learning have been researched for many years in the domain of applied linguistics, predominantly from the psychological perspective (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dornyei, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Furthermore, gender differences in attitudes towards second language learning have been repeatedly witnessed, positioning gender as an important issue of investigation and discussion in second language acquisition (Ellis, 1994; Clark & Trafford, 1995).

An overlooked trend in most questionnaire-based, quantitative research, which is still the dominant method in studying attitudes towards second language learning, is that such research ends with the identify. Action of gender differences, leaving the next question, what accounts for the differences, unexplored. For example, Powell and Batters (1985) conducted a survey with 459 boys and 494 girls from six mixed comprehensive schools in the UK, prompted by the decline in the popularity of foreign language learning, particularly among boys. The study found that female students had more positive perceptions of studying foreign languages. On the one hand, the researchers stated, 'that pattern [the predominance of female teachers in language departments] is part of wider social sex-stereotyping of roles which is bound to a child's view of the world'. On the other hand, this study, which is often cited as a classical study on gender differences in students' perceptions of foreign language learning, ended with the researchers' statement, 'We recognize the difficulty for researchers in gaining a clear picture of pupils'

perceptions of subjects taught in school, especially as regards sex differences'. There is also the case when the emergence of statistical differences between men and women in second language learning attitudes compelled researchers to provide an explanation for the result.

Another study on foreign language motivation in the USA (Sung & Padilla, 1998) revealed that female students were more motivated to study Asian languages than male students. The researchers acknowledged that they did not know whether the gender difference could be attributed to a type of socialization or the fact that all of the teachers in the various FL [foreign language] programs included in the study were female. They concluded that they were inclined to believe that the advantage of female students in motivation to learn a new language has more to do with gender role modeling than with any female predisposition to learning languages.

Fakeye (2010) investigated the effect of attitude and gender on achievement in English and the findings revealed that attitude was not gender-related; thus, there was not a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of male and female students. However, Zainol Abidin et al. (2012) showed that there were gender differences between male and female students' attitudes towards English and perception of second and foreign language learning. In other words, female students had more positive attitudes towards English and second/foreign language learning.

Considering the perspectives about World Englishes and attitudes towards different varieties of English, the following research hypotheses are formulated in the current study:

1) Iranian EFL learners are not aware of different varieties of English, 2) Iranian EFL learners do not prefer certain varieties of English, 3) Iranian EFL learners do not accept non-native varieties of English, and 4) There is not a gendered orientation towards awareness of different varieties as well as preference and acceptance of certain varieties of English.

Method

Participants

The population of this study consisted of 30 intermediate male and female Iranian EFL learners whose age ranged from 22 to 30. All participants lived in Isfahan and their mother tongue was Persian. They studied English at Pazhouhesh Language Institute and their fields of study were Basic Sciences and Social Sciences. They needed to be at intermediate or higher levels, since it is believed that at such levels they have already established a sense of what different varieties of English are, formed attitudes toward these varieties and have probably selected one as their own model. The classes were already classified to beginners, intermediate, and advanced by the institute itself after the students had taken Oxford Quick Placement Test. This test was developed in collaboration with the University of Cambridge ESOL Examination (UCLES, 2001). The institute had placed the students in terms of their scores on this test. According to Peny (2005), those students scoring over 80% correct might be considered high ability (advanced), those between 50% and 80% average ability (intermediate), and those below 50% below average (beginner). Hence, to select the intermediate EFL learners, those scoring between 50% and 80% in the placement test administered by the institute were chosen.

Instrumentation

A modification of the matched guise technique—developed at McGill University by Lambert, Hodgeson, Gardner, and Fillenbaum (1960)—was used in the present study. In this modification, speakers with different accents speak with their own normal accents and, thus, there is no need to change their voice quality or style in an attempt to distinguish among the various accents. That is why this technique enjoys natural, rather than counterfeit accents with the aim of representing actual stereotypes of the speakers. For the purpose of the present study, there were 8 male and female speakers from America, Britain, India, and Iran. America and Britain belong to the Inner Circle, India belongs to the Outer Circle, and Iran belongs to the Expanding Circle. There was a short letter which was read by the eight speakers and it was recorded while they were reading it. American and British speakers' accents were used from a website¹;

¹ <http://www.otago.ac.nz/anthropology/Linguistic/Results/Results.html>

while the Indian and Iranian English accents were the ones recorded by the researchers while they were reading the letter.

Three Likert scale questionnaires were used to show the participants' reaction to the characteristics of each speaker which best represents their opinion and their reaction to the native and non/native varieties of English. The first questionnaire was composed of a series of adjectives which were drawn upon to help the participants indicate their impression of individual speakers. It included eight sections each of which associated with one speaker. At the end of each section, there was a question which asked the participants to recognize the nationality of the respective speaker. The second questionnaire included statements about the importance of English in school life, getting a job, and communication with both native and non-native speakers. The third questionnaire consisted of questions which sought the participants' preference of the different English accents, travelling to English speaking countries, and speaking with foreigners.

Procedure

Having asked the supervisor of Pazhouhesh English Institute about the intermediate classes, the researchers selected two classes randomly and the students of such classes were briefed on the experiment. All three questionnaires were distributed among the participants simultaneously. For the first questionnaire which included the modified matched guise technique, the participants were given instructions on how to complete the evaluation sheet and finally they listened to the short letter read through varieties of English. Each recorded variety was played and the participants were asked to respond to the questions. In case the participants needed to listen to a speaker twice, the researchers would play that variety for the second time. After the matched guise test, participants were provided with instructions on how to complete the second and third questionnaires. Participants were permitted to ask questions if they did not understand the instructions about the questionnaires.

The collected data were analyzed and the descriptive statistics were conducted in terms of frequencies in order to calculate mean ratings, standard deviations, percentages, etc. A one-way repeated-measures ANOVA was run to compare several means such as participants' overall evaluations of different varieties of English. Fisher's LSD post hoc test was carried out to spot the

location of differences. Indeed, the one-way repeated measures ANOVA was run to verify the first, second, and third hypotheses. Furthermore, independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare two means such as male and female participants' evaluations of native and nonnative varieties of English in terms of gender.

Results

To verify the research hypotheses, one-way repeated measures ANOVA and t-tests were run on the data collected. Furthermore, to locate the probable differences among the eight speakers, the Fisher's LSD post-hoc test was used. The following tables indicate the results of such analyses, respectively.

Table 1 shows the overall evaluation of Iranian male and female participants' attitudes towards all speakers who belonged to the Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle.

Table 1

One-way repeated measures ANOVA to compare the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards all speakers

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intercept	373512.600	1	373512.600	4820.628	0.000
Error	2169.500	28	77.482		

As indicated in Table 1, there was a significant difference (F value (28) = 4820; P value=0.000) between all participants' attitudes towards all eight speakers' accents. To locate where the differences occurred, the LSD post-hoc test (Fisher's least significant difference test) was drawn up.

Table 2 locates specifically the differences among the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the all speakers who belonged to the Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle.

Table 2

Fisher's LSD post-hoc test to locate the differences among the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards all eight speakers

Speaker i	Speaker j	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
American man	American woman	-18.23	3.13	*0.000
	British man	-12.47	2.90	*0.000
	British woman	-10.33	1.71	*0.000
	Indian man	-7.43	1.96	*0.001
	Indian woman	-11.67	2.16	*0.000
	Iranian man	-11.23	1.41	*0.000
American woman	Iranian woman	-10.63	2.23	*0.000
	British man	5.77	3.33	0.094
	British woman	7.90	3.38	*0.027
	Indian man	10.80	3.38	*0.003
	Indian woman	6.57	2.71	*0.022
	Iranian man	7.00	2.98	*0.026
British man	Iranian woman	7.60	3.68	*0.048
	British woman	2.13	2.91	0.470
	Indian man	5.03	1.93	*0.014
	Indian woman	0.80	2.22	0.721
	Iranian man	1.23	2.32	0.599
	Iranian woman	1.83	2.39	0.449
British woman	Indian man	2.90	1.70	0.099
	Indian woman	-1.33	2.41	0.585
	Iranian man	-0.90	1.56	0.567
India man	Iranian woman	-0.30	1.50	0.843
	Indian woman	-4.23	2.24	0.069
	Iranian man	-3.80	1.57	*0.022
India woman	Iranian woman	-3.20	1.50	*0.041
	Iranian man	0.43	1.76	0.807
	Iranian woman	1.03	2.49	0.681
Iran man	Iranian woman	0.60	1.63	0.716

* shows the significant differences.

The results of the post-hoc test show that there are significant differences between the mean score of the American man and the rest of the speakers. Likewise, there are significant differences between the mean score of the

American woman and the rest of the speakers except the British male speaker. Also, there is a significant difference between the mean score of the British male and Indian male speakers, and also significant differences exist between Indian male speaker and Iranian male and female speakers.

Table 3 compares the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the American male speaker.

Table 3

T-test to compare the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the American male speaker

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig.
Men	15	29.93	9.32	0.426	28	0.674
Women	15	28.47	9.56			
Total	30	29.20	9.30			

It is indicated in Table 3 that there was not a significant difference (t value (28)=0.426; P value=0.647) between male participants' (M=29.93; SD=9.32) and female participants' (M=28.47; SD=9.56) attitudes towards the American male speaker.

Table 4 compares the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the American female speaker.

Table 4

T-test to compare the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the American female speaker

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig.
Men	15	54.80	18.43	2.735	28	0.011
Women	15	40.07	9.79			
Total	30	47.43	16.32			

As shown in Table 4, a significant difference was observed (t value (28)=2.735; P value=0.011) between male participants' (M=54.80; SD=18.43) and female participants' (M=40.07; SD=9.79) attitudes towards the American female speaker.

Table 5 compares the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the British male speaker.

Table 5

T-test to compare the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the British male speaker

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.
Men	15	45.40	11.29	1.980	28	0.058
Women	15	37.93	9.26			
Total	30	41.67	10.84			

The results in Table 5 showed that there was not a significant difference (t value (28)=1.980; P value=0.058) between male participants' (M=45.40; SD=11.29) and female participants' (M=37.93; SD=9.26) attitudes towards the British male speaker.

Table 6 compares the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the British female speaker.

Table 6

T-test to compare the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the British female speaker

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.
Men	15	37.40	5.17	-1.781	28	0.086
Women	15	41.67	7.71			
Total	30	39.53	6.80			

Table 6 demonstrated that there was not a significant difference (t value (28)= -1.781; P value=0.086) between male participants' (M=37.40; SD=5.17) and female participants' (M=41.67; SD=7.71) attitudes towards the British female speaker.

Table 7 compares the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the Indian male speaker.

Table 7

T-test to compare the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the Indian male speaker

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig.
Men	15	36.07	6.88	-0.521	28	0.607
Women	15	37.20	4.87			
Total	30	36.63	5.89			

Table 7 showed that there was not a significant difference (t value (28)= -0.521; P value=0.607) between male participants' (M=36.07; SD=6.88) and female participants' (M=37.20; SD=4.87) attitudes towards the Indian male speaker. It is shown that the level of significance was higher than 0.05 and thus the null hypothesis was confirmed, claiming that no significant difference was observed between male and female participants' attitudes.

Table 8 compares the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the Indian female speaker.

Table 8

T-test to compare the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the Indian female speaker

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.
Men	15	44.87	9.49	2.509	28	0.018
Women	15	36.87	7.91			
Total	30	40.87	9.50			

As indicated in Table 8, there was not a significant difference (t value (28)=2.509; P value=0.018) between male participants' (M=44.87; SD=9.49) and female participants' (M=36.87; SD=7.91) attitudes towards the Indian female speaker.

Table 9 compares the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the Iranian male speaker.

Table 9

T-test to compare the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the Iranian male speaker

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig.
Men	15	41.73	3.84	1.427	28	0.166
Women	15	39.13	5.91			
Total	30	40.43	5.08			

As can be seen in Table 9, there was not a significant difference (t value (24)= 1.427; P value=0.166) between male participants' (M=41.73; SD=3.84) and female participants' (M=39.13; SD=5.91) attitudes towards the Iranian male speaker.

Table 10 compares the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the Iranian female speaker.

Table 10

T-test to compare the attitudes of the Iranian male and female participants towards the Iranian female speaker

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.
Men	15	37.60	5.80	-2.028	28	0.052
Women	15	42.07	6.25			
Total	30	39.83	6.35			

The results indicated that there was not a significant difference (t value (28) = -2.028; P value=0.052) between male participants' (M=37.60; SD=5.80) and female participants' (M=42.07; SD=6.25) attitudes towards the Iranian female speaker.

Discussion

As the results indicated, the participants could guess where the 8 speakers—four males and four females from (USA, UK, Iran, and India) were from in the verbal guise test. Moreover, it was indicated that Iranian EFL

learners did not have difficulty in distinguishing varieties of English. The Fisher's LSD post-hoc test which followed the one-way repeated-measures ANOVA demonstrated how each speaker was distinguished by the participants. The first and most noticeable accent was the American male speaker; he was distinguished from the rest seven speakers. Then, three prominent accents were the American female speaker, the Indian male speaker, and the British male speaker. It is noticed that the participants showed more sensitivity to male speakers rather than female ones.

In a similar study carried out by Kim (2007), it was found out that Korean students had difficulty in identifying varieties of English and therefore could not discriminate the native from non-native varieties of English. This result implies that English language teaching (ELT) in Korea should emphasize awareness of varieties of English, as many academics (e.g. Gibb 1999; Han 2005; Kang 2004; Kim 2003; Shim 2002) insist. This awareness can lead to the development of learners' communicative competence, in particular "sociolinguistic competence" (Bachman 1990: 94), that is sensitive to different varieties of English and "contexts in which they will use English" (Berns 2006: 726).

In addition, the results indicated that Iranian EFL learners in this study could discriminate native and non-native varieties/models of English and they did not prefer only the Standard English accents as the best and only accepted accents. It follows that in addition to the Standard English accents which are usually preferred and accepted by ESL and EFL learners, these participants rated Indian and Iranian accents as significant ones.

Contrary to the participants of this study and concerning people's attitudes towards the Standard English, Flaitz (1988) investigated French attitudes toward Anglo-American ideology, culture, people and language. The elaborate research showed that British English received more favorable attitudes than did American English; moreover, there was little or no relationship between motivation to study English and attitude toward the language.

The first preference of the participants of the study was the American female speaker. In line with this issue, Matsuura et al. (1994) investigated Japanese college students' attitudes toward six Asian accents of English as well as toward an American accent. They found that the participants viewed American English more positively than they viewed the other varieties.

Furthermore, the participants' reactions to the spoken accents did not correlate with their overall English proficiency at significant level.

Matsuura et al. (1994) also indicated that the participants who thought that in any country the native language should be most respected tended to accept the non-native accents as well as the native accent. This acceptance can strengthen the idea put forward by Kachru (1982) about world Englishes, which makes an attempt to empower the new Englishes. They further added that familiarity with accents play an important role in acceptance of different varieties of English. To be more precise, they will value an accent more positively when they can identify what nationality a speaker of that particular accent has. In addition, Timmis (2007) argued that the variety of a target language a learner acquires and prefers to speak in is influenced by his or her attitude towards that variety. In other words, the more positive your attitude is toward a certain variety, the more motivated you get in conforming to it. It follows that when a learner considers a certain variety to be the best or standard one and thus emphasizes on sounding like its native speaker, his or her cultural identity gets at stake. The participants of the study did not recognize the American and British accents as the only accepted accents since they probably did not intend to jeopardize their cultural identity and tended not to be identified with the people of those cultures.

Concerning a gendered orientation towards different varieties of English, the results indicated that there was not a gendered orientation towards awareness of difference varieties as well as preference and acceptance of certain varieties of English. Likewise, Fakeye (2010) investigated the effect of attitude and gender on achievement in English and the findings revealed that attitude was not gender-related; thus, there was not a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of male and female students. However, Sung and Padilla (1998) and Zainol Abidin et al. (2012) showed that there were gender differences between male and female students' attitudes towards English and perception of second and foreign language learning. In other words, female students had more positive attitudes towards English and second/foreign language learning.

As the main conclusion of this study, Iranian English users' belief in American and British Englishes as well as Indian and Iranian ones has an

outstanding macro-level ramification. This ramification claim that Iran's educational system does not live in the modernist era anymore due to different reasons. It unfortunately seems that their claim is completely true about Iran's ELT, as far as this study is concerned, considering the fact that most of our learners do not still believe in a single world English anymore; instead, they gradually believe in "world Englishes" and that the ideas of "the best" and "the perfect" and the importance of unification such as teaching the same books all over the country and the existence of General Exam, to name a few, is losing their followers among them. Fortunately, Iranian EFL learners are indeed receding from that perfect English accent and accepting other Englishes for their communication with people around the world.

However, the detailed descriptive results of the questionnaires clearly illustrated that people with the American accent were considered to be superior to others from different perspectives including psychological, sociological, etc. corresponding to the bipolar adjectives presented in the questionnaires. The possible reasons for such a view among Iranian English learners are worthy of attention. The most important reason might be the unique status of the US in the world today, that is, its being a superpower and dominating the international business and markets, science, information technology, etc. A second possible reason can be the English learners' lack of knowledge about the present situation of English around the world, i.e. its stratification and realization in different varieties through indigenization and the fact that, today, the nonnative speakers of English far outnumber its native speakers. In this respect, Jenkins (1998) argues for raising awareness of "the difference between a model and a norm" in the English as an International Language (EIL) context. The third possible reason can involve the aesthetic aspect, namely, they have a positive view towards it simply because it sounds more beautiful and pleasing to them. The final reason might be that most of our learners are perfectionists, so they consider one of the varieties to be the perfect one and do their best to acquire it as Kachru (1992: 67) also claims that "acceptance of a model depends on its users". Whatever the reason, the obvious point is that such a way of looking up to a certain variety and longing for being labeled as its native speaker can lead to a faint local identity with a great potential and willingness for adopting its culture.

Although the participants accepted non-native varieties, having tendency towards American and British accents reveals the fact that they have positive attitudes towards language learning. Karahan (2007) claims that "positive language attitudes let learner has positive orientation towards learning English" (p.84). As such, attitudes may play a very crucial role in language learning as they would appear to influence students' success or failure in their learning. It is also believed that positive attitude facilitates foreign language learning while negative attitude acts as a psychological barrier against it (Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002).

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