

An Investigation to Influences of Chinese Postgraduate International Students' Language Learning Experiences on Their Preference and Perspectives on Different Englishes (Accents)

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ABSTRACT

The primary focus of the research was on undertaking an investigation on the influences of Chinese postgraduate international students' (Newcastle University) language learning experiences on their preference and perspectives on different Englishes in terms of accents. The research was guided by the following research questions, which included what Chinese postgraduate international students' preference on different English accents is at Newcastle University? Why? And how does their language learning experience influence their preference and perspectives on accents? The literature review found that there are diverse Englishes and students have specific attitudes towards them. Moreover, it has been established that English varieties have relative value. They have also led to the embracing of linguistic and cultural diversity. Most Chinese English learners have specific preferences and perspectives on certain Englishes for enhancing their postgraduate learning experiences. In terms of research methodology, the researcher adopted a qualitative research approach, which was guided by a semi-structured interview and thematic data analysis approach. The findings show that most Chinese students have positive attitudes and preferences towards American and British English as compared to the other types of Englishes. Using the themes of variety, experiences, preference, and perspectives of different Englishes, as well as literature review and theoretical background, it is concluded that there is a need for focusing on social, personal, and professional factors for influencing Chinese students' preference and perspectives on diverse Englishes.

Key words : English accents, English varieties, Linguistic diversity, Semi-structured interviews, Thematic analysis.

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the investigation of the influences of Chinese postgraduate international students' (Newcastle University) language learning experiences on their preference and perspectives on different Englishes in terms of accents. Globally, there are diverse Englishes, which have relative values attached to them (Kung & Wang, 2019). Notably, the study helps in demystifying what is considered to be standardised English for liberating English learners so that they can be free and successful in embracing linguistic and

cultural diversity, without any form of inferiority or superiority, which may be imposed on diverse Englishes (Weisi et al., 2019; Wang, 2015). The study is vital due to the increasing number of Chinese English learners in relation to postgraduate learning experiences. It will help reveal the preferences and perspectives of postgraduate students regarding different English varieties.

According to Edwards (2016) and Carrie (2017), English as a second language or foreign language has become a trending phenomenon among overseas students to the

native English-speaking nations for diverse purposes, especially in the postgraduate students' educational pursuits. Notably, English has been one of the widely spoken languages across the world and stands as an official language in different nations (Choomthong & Manowong, 2020; Tsang, 2019). The English language has been uniformed in different countries, but there are variations in spelling and accent, especially between American and British English. Kung & Wang (2019), Edwards (2016) and Jenkins et al. (2017) note British English is spoken and written in the United Kingdom, whereas American English is used in the United States and forms part of the Canadian English. There is also the Australian English that is used across Australia and is considered the national language, although English is not considered under the official status in the constitution (Jenkins et al., 2017).

The differences across the Englishes can affect Chinese postgraduate international students learning experiences due to their preferences and perspectives on the diverse English accents. An open-door report that was conducted by the Institute of International Education (2021), it was established that more than 64% of the international students in the United States came from Asia, with more than 42.9% coming from the Eastern parts of Asia, specifically China and Japan among other countries. China has been sending many postgraduate students to foreign nations, and most of these students enrol in schools for learning English, and the number is likely to increase. Moreover, China has become one of the leading sources of international students in the key global market share players, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, as well as Canada (Institute of International Education, 2021; Moxham-Hall & Sreenan, 2021; Kang, 2021). The finding is supported by a study carried out by Fischer (2014), which established that Chinese students have been accounting for around 60% of the foreign student growth in many American colleges, and it is common to find one Chinese student in every three

international students studying in the United States.

According to the Institute of International Education (2015), it is clear that Chinese international students in the United States have been increased by more than 11%, and China has strengthened its position as the largest source of international students in this country. The number is expected to continue increasing, but it is unclear how these students perceive different Englishes, and this research and knowledge gap will be addressed in the current study. The same is reflected in the United Kingdom. Notably, China has been the United Kingdom biggest single provider of overseas students, with a more than 35% of the number of non-European Union students in the nation (Moxham-Hall & Sreenan, 2021).

The surge in the number of Chinese students participating in the United States and the United Kingdom higher education shows it is important to focus on enhancing understanding of their experiences and attitudes towards the varieties in English prior to and after arriving in the United States. On the other hand, there are limited studies that examined the area of study, and the current study will be focused on closing the existing research gaps in the area of study. It will help show how Chinese postgraduate international students language learning experiences can be influenced in line with their preferences and perspectives on different Englishes. According to Tsang (2019), improving students' experiences will play a vital role in enhancing cultural sensitivity and academic performance for Chinese students in different parts of the world. In this case, the investigation is vital for understanding how language-learning experiences of postgraduate international students from China can be enhanced irrespective of the preferences and perspectives on different Englishes. The current study has been guided by the following Research Questions (RQs):

RQ1. What is Chinese postgraduate international students' preference for different English accents at Newcastle

University? Why?

RQ2. How does their language learning experience influence their preference and perspectives on accents?

This paper is divided into different sections, including literature review, methodology, research methods, findings, discussion, and conclusion. The aim is to ensure an in-depth investigation is carried out on the influence of Chinese postgraduate international students' language learning experiences on their preference and perspectives on different Englishes

2. Literature Review

The section focuses on enhancing understanding of the issue under investigation. Notably, the literature review examines the previously published works on how to influence Chinese postgraduate international students' language learning experiences on their preference and perspectives on different Englishes in terms of accents. The section focuses on the theoretical background, varieties of English, and English as a Foreign Language learners' attitudes toward varieties of English

2.1 English learning models

There are different theories that support the positive link between international students' language learning experiences and their preferences and perspectives on different Englishes. Chomsky Universal Grammar is a theoretical framework that argues that innate devices facilitate language acquisition due to universal elements that help in structuring language (Dabrowska, 2015). In second language learning, the theory provides students with the confidence they require in terms of grammar acquisition and reinforcement, as well as filling other particulars associated with the language. For instance, it enables students to focus on the areas that interest them during language learning. On the other hand, there is Schumann's Acculturation Model that focuses on the process involved when

immigrants are picking up a new language, leading to their complete immersion in the language (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 2014). It focuses on the social and psychological aspects that influence students' success in learning new languages, and this is vital for understanding Chinese students' perspectives and preference of different Englishes in postgraduate international students language learning and how their experiences are shaped. For instance, the theory shows that immigrants are likely to focus on a specific English accent if they see it as socially equal to their home country language. In this case, sociological factors play a vital role in connecting second language learning with an individual culture, thus influencing the learning process and experiences.

Additionally, there is the Krashen Monitor Model, which according to Lai & Wei (2019), has been one of the most cited theories in terms of second language acquisition. Patrick (2019) notes that the theory supports language acquisition through informal, natural, and formal communication, thus making it a subconscious process driven by error corrections. Further, Krashen Monitor Model argues grammatical structures are acquired through a predictable order and language is learned using comprehensible inputs (Lai & Wei, 2019). For example, learning by hearing and reading things that are considered to be slightly above our initial language level. A monitor acts as anything or anyone who focuses on correcting the learner language performance and other pressures associated with language learning and communication (Patrick, 2019). For instance, the language teacher can correct a student when they make grammar errors.

An analysis of these theories shows that they are supported by social constructivism theory that focuses on knowledge construction through interactions with others in social environments (Jung, 2019). The model is crucial in understanding how cultural perspectives affect language learning. Notably, the theory promotes collaborative meaning, teacher facilitation and monitoring students' progress and thinking, and social

interactions. The goal is to ensure the interests of all students are observed in the classroom, leading to the assimilation of new languages to the individual cultures. On the other hand, the social identity theory plays a vital role in showing how social behaviours and group memberships influence others in language learning (Carter et al., 2020). A study conducted by Norton & De Costa (2018) established that social identity theory ensures students understand the rules of English use and how these are socially and historically created for supporting the interest of the dominant groups in society. In this case, it can help in understanding why some students are focused on the use of specific Englishes as compared to others. A study carried out by Fang (2016) established the increasing changes in modern societies had made the world a small community, where people from different regions are interacting in diverse social and professional settings. In this case, the identified theoretical backgrounds clearly show that social changes and cultural backgrounds influence students' preferences and perspectives on different Englishes, which can affect Chinese postgraduate international students' language learning experiences.

2.2 Variety of English

A study conducted by Jenkins et al. (2017) has established that globalisation has been shrinking space, time, and borderlines, thus increasing diversity, as well as multiplicity across the world. In this case, the English language is increasingly becoming one of the most recognised languages in the Western and Lingua Franca world due to different reasons, including facilitating learning, holding international conferences, conducting multinational business trading, as well as enhancing operations in transnational organisations (Sung, 2016; Edwards, 2016; Choomthong & Manowong, 2020). It has also been helping in enhancing tourism activities and entertainment in different parts of the world. There are many native English speakers in the United Kingdom and the

United States and millions of speakers of English as a second language (Weisi et al., 2019). In this case, there are many people who have been enrolling in schools for learning American and British English because it has become a necessity for personal, professional, and national development, as well as economic advancement. It also helps people to be connected to the world for accessing information, power, and resources.

According to Carrie (2017), English is being taught across the world, thus giving rise to the English varieties across divergent contexts apart from the traditional native English-speaking nations. These varieties have been created and promoted from the different adaptations, modifications, destabilisation, as well as transformation of the original monolithic English language (Sung, 2016; Tsang, 2019). Different regions have been speaking diverse Englishes, with the main branches of English remaining to be British English, American English, and Australian English. There is a rapid growth in other types of English, such as Canadian English, China English, Indian English, Singapore English, Malaysia English, Nigerian English, and Sri Lanka English, where Edwards (2016) argues the differentiating factor has been the accent because they are mainly founded on American, British, New Zealand, or Australian English. It is therefore clear that there is an increase in the emergent of the labelling of the local linguistic diversity in terms of the English language. Currently, the English language almost cuts across every nation, and it is no longer a sole possession of the native English-speaking nations (Wang, 2015; Choomthong & Manowong, 2020).

Additionally, the idea of World English has been emerging in different parts of the world due to the advent of diversity in the world of Englishes (Tsang, 2019). The current plural linguistic diversity in the world of English shows there are differences in relation to pronunciation, vocabularies, idioms, as well as other rhetorical styles, thus creating English into a plural form. Thus, it is

no longer a one nation possession (Sung, 2016; Carrie, 2017). Notably, English is a repertoire of diverse cultures across communities, and it has been expanding at a rapid rate, thus enhancing language acquisition and development (Kung & Wang, 2019). For example, China English has legitimate variations in relation to linguistic differences and cultural backgrounds, among other expressions, thus shaping preferences and perspectives on different Englishes in terms of international students' language learning experiences. Notably, varieties in English have been shaping meanings and expressions in communication, thus considering local cultures in the world of the English language (Wang, 2015). The same has been reflected in Malaysian and Korean English, leading to the development and institutionalisation of English in diverse ways and local functioning. According to Carrie (2017), English speakers from different nations and regions have been using a variety of accents as part of the systems of pronunciation, localised words, as well as other grammatical constructions. English dialects have been divided into broader and narrower levels in line with national, regional, and international regions (Edwards, 2016). Notably, this has led to the combination of differences in pronunciations and usage of local words as part of English dialects based on their language's exposure. It has also created differences in Standard English and how it is learned in different parts of the world.

In terms of English as a foreign language learning, most people have focused on British and American English because they act as the reference norms for spoken, written, and taught English across the world (Sung, 2016; Edwards, 2016). However, in Australia, Canada, Ireland, and New Zealand, English is considered a native language, which is taught as part of English language learning sources (Fang, 2016; Carrie, 2017; Jenkins et al., 2017). On the other hand, former British Empire countries use British English as well as American English (Weisi et al., 2019). The countries influenced by the

United States follow American English (Choomthong & Manowong, 2020). In this case, it is clear that many countries have been retaining strong connections with British and American English, in spite of their unique developed dialects. Canadian and Australian English have been ranking behind the American and British English. However, Canadian and Australian English has been accommodating diverse British English forms and American English vocabularies (Jenkins et al., 2017). It has led to the introduction of new dialects, which are being used in day-to-day conversations in different parts of the world, thus shaping grammar rules and guidelines due to the combination of Standard English, international English, and English as a Lingua Franca. The varieties of English have been shaping people attitudes and perspectives of Englishes, especially in terms of accent.

2.3 EFL Learners' Attitudes toward Varieties of English Previous Research

Across the world, there is an increase in recognition of plurality across English languages and diverse Englishes are widely accepted and used (Tsang, 2019). However, studies conducted by Weisi et al. (2019) and Carrie (2017) established not all English varieties are given equal values when compared to others in the world market. Many studies have shown the unequal distribution in terms of value in diverse Englishes have been playing a vital role in the determination of English learners' attitudes to the languages (Choomthong & Manowong, 2020; Wang, 2015; Sung, 2016). Issues of discrimination and marginalisation are closely related to the less popular varieties of Englishes (Kung & Wang, 2019; Tsang, 2019). There are many studies that have been focused on English as foreign language learners' attitudes on English varieties across contexts, such as European, Asian, and South American English as foreign language perspectives (Jenkins et al., 2017). The results of most studies show that there are some English varieties that are largely

welcome and admired by learners as compared to others (Sung, 2016).

A study conducted by Weisi et al. (2019) and Carrie (2017) established the standardised native varieties of English are more favourable and highly desirable as compared to the less standardised. For instance, most learners prefer to learn American and British English compared to the other English varieties. A study conducted by Wang (2015) and Weisi et al. (2019) established Chinese students have positive attitudes towards American, British, and Australian English and accurately identify with these varieties as compared to the other Englishes. Existing studies have shown a high level of familiarity and exposure to a specific variety of English via books, and mass media helps students to develop better perceptions towards diverse Englishes (Kung & Wang, 2019; Wang, 2015). In most cases, many students are exposed to American and British English via modern media sources, books, and online platforms, and this has been acting as the foundation of their preferences and positive attitudes towards these Englishes (Weisi et al., 2019).

Moreover, the findings are supported by studies conducted by Tsang (2019), and Carrie (2017), which established students have positive attitudes and a tendency towards English as a foreign language learning, especially in nations that favour native English compared to the non-native Englishes. In line with this finding, students are able to easily imitate the most popular varieties of English because they favour their attitudes. On the other hand, a comparison of native and non-native Englishes has shown that most students welcome native varieties of English, such as American, British, and Australian English, compared to China, India, and Korean English (Jenkins et al., 2017; Edwards, 2016). However, most studies are not clear on why most students prefer native Englishes. In addition, during learning, it is difficult to determine which variety of English should be used and seen as native because this is not clear in most studies. Many students from China have evaluated

English as a foreign language by focusing on American and British English compared to other varieties of English (Wang, 2015). However, the study does not clearly show why so many students have positive experiences with these varieties of English.

On the other hand, social status, attractiveness, as well as language quality play a vital role in the determination of learners' perceptions and attitudes towards English variety selection (Carrie, 2017; Choomthong & Manowong, 2020). In this case, it is clear that American and British English have been receiving higher rates in terms of preference and positive perceptions from English as foreign language learners from different parts of the world. Most argue British and American English is better for facilitating clearer, intelligent, pleasant, reliable, and sociable communications and interactions between native and non-native English speakers (Choomthong & Manowong, 2020; Tsang, 2019). In this case, the studies have clearly shown that most students are increasingly focused on American and British English compared to the other varieties of English.

3. Methodology

Research methodology focuses on the specific procedures and approaches that are used in the identification, selection, processing, and analysing of information and data on a given area of study (Devi, 2017). It is vital for enhancing the research validity and reliability. In the current context, the current research has been guided by an open and inductive research question. In this case, the qualitative methodological approach was adopted because it is the most appropriate method for supporting the utilisation of interview questions. Moreover, a semi-structured interview was used for collecting data and information for answering the research questions. On the other hand, data analysis has been conducted using the thematic data analysis approach.

In this study, thematic analysis was employed to systematically identify, analyse,

and report patterns (themes) within the data. This process involved several distinct steps, which ensured the rigor of the analysis. First, familiarisation with the data was achieved through repeated readings of the interview transcripts, allowing for immersion in the content. Then, initial codes were generated, whereby key features of the data were highlighted. This coding process was done manually to ensure that no relevant detail was overlooked, and it formed the basis for identifying recurring patterns across the dataset. Following this, related codes were grouped together to search for broader themes that represented the underlying meanings in the data. The themes were then reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and consistency, with some themes being split or combined as necessary. Next, the themes were defined and named to encapsulate the essence of the patterns identified. Finally, the thematic map was created, providing a visual representation of the relationships between the themes, which included Tone of English Language, Variety of English, Experiences with a Variety of English, Preference of Variety of English, and Perspectives on Different Englishes. This process ensured that the thematic analysis was conducted systematically, aligning with the research aims and questions.

3.1 Participants

The study involved five Chinese postgraduate students at Newcastle University, each with unique experiences in learning and interacting with different Englishes. These students provided a diverse range of perspectives on their accent preferences, shaped by their academic and cultural experiences. A summary of their backgrounds is as follows:

Chen: A postgraduate student majoring in Media and Public Relations. Chen initially learned British English in primary school but transitioned to American English in middle

school. Over time, Chen developed a preference for British English, particularly after moving to the UK, where local exposure and academic interaction influenced this shift. Age: mid-20s, Gender: Female (Chen).

Dai: Specialising in International Perspective: Education, Dai had exposure to both British and American English through films and television. However, Dai expressed a stronger preference for British English, particularly the London accent, which was seen as more formal and authoritative. Age: late-20s, Gender: Female.

Sun: A student in International Multimedia and Journalism, Sun initially preferred American English but shifted towards a preference for southern British English after moving to the UK. Sun noted that exposure to British culture and the need to adapt socially played a significant role in this transition. Age: mid-20s, Gender: Female.

Wang: Studying Global Human Resource Management, Wang grew up with significant exposure to American English through textbooks and media. Although now residing in the UK, Wang still prefers American English due to its perceived fluency and simplicity. Age: mid-20s, Gender: Female.

Yuan: A postgraduate student in International Media and Journalism, Yuan had early exposure to American English but developed a preference for the London accent after moving to the UK. Yuan highlighted the tonal qualities of the London accent and its perceived elegance, particularly in formal settings. Age: mid-20s, Gender: Female.

Each participant's unique learning experiences and cultural interactions with English, especially American and British varieties, have played a crucial role in shaping their preferences and perspectives. Their backgrounds are integral to the study's exploration of accent preference.

The primary interview questions that they were answering in line with this study are outlined in table 1 below:

No.	Interview Questions
1	What do you like about the English language? Why?
2	What variety of English do you like? Why?
3	Any experience that makes you like or dislike that variety of English? Why?

Table 1: Interview Questions

The five interview questions used in this study were carefully reviewed by an expert in the field to ensure their appropriateness and effectiveness in addressing the research aims. Although no pilot interviews were conducted, the questions underwent thorough evaluation by Dr. Sal Consoli, a researcher in language education and applied linguistics. Dr. Consoli is currently based at The Moray House School of Education at The University of Edinburgh and has received several national and international grants for his work in the psychology of language education, language teacher education, and ethics in applied linguistics. His expertise ensured that the questions were aligned with the objectives of investigating students' preferences and experiences with different Englishes, and that they would generate meaningful data relevant to the study's focus.

The convenience sampling method was adopted in the study because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a conveniently available pool of participants, following limited rules (Jager et al., 2017). The selected respondents were readily approachable, leading to the collection of desired data and information for answering the interview questions. The approach enabled the research to collect data quickly and economically. The sample was readily available.

3.2 Data Collection

Data collection accommodates the procedures followed in collecting accurate data, information, and insights in a research study, leading to the addressing of research questions and objectives (Devi, 2017). In the current context, data, and information on the issue of the influences of Chinese postgraduate international students'

(Newcastle University) language learning experiences on their preference and perspectives on different Englishes were collected using semi-structured interviews. The approach was adopted because semi-structured interviews can help the researcher in preparing questions beforehand for guiding the conversation (Magaldi & Berler, 2018). It was also selected because it allows the researcher to generate open-ended responses from the respondents. This is vital for collecting in-depth information for answering the research questions. It also encourages two-way communication in collecting data and provides for qualitative data to be compared (McGrath et al., 2019). Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to learn answers for the research questions from the participants and the reasoning behind their responses. For instance, it was easier to understand the participants' experiences, beliefs, and perceptions in relation to the aim of the research. Due to the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the public health measures enforced in the UK in 2021, the interviews were conducted via Google Zoom. This approach was chosen to comply with social distancing regulations and travel restrictions, ensuring the safety of both the researcher and participants. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent.

The researcher personally conducted and recorded the interviews, lasting approximately 45 minutes each. To ensure accuracy in capturing the participants' responses, the interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The transcripts were initially processed using Google Translate for rough translation from Chinese to English, after which the researcher meticulously revised the translations to

ensure linguistic accuracy. Finally, the transcripts underwent cross-checking by both native English and Chinese speakers to verify the fidelity of the translations and to resolve any inconsistencies. This thorough process ensured that the nuances in participants' responses were retained and accurately reflected in the final analysis. The interview guide is presented in appendix 1. It played a major role in supporting the interview process, leading to the collection of desired results for answering the research questions. The researcher allowed the interviewees to dominate the conversation for ensuring in-depth data was collected for addressing the aim of the study. The data was the basis of the transcripts of the interview that is presented in appendix 2.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data and information that was collected from the research participants were analysed using the thematic data analysis approach. The approach is part of the qualitative data analysis method that focuses on reading through data sets for the identification of patterns of meanings (Nowell et al., 2017). In the current context, data patterns were retrieved from the interview transcript. The collected data and information were coded manually, enabling the researcher to identify diverse themes, as presented in the thematic analysis map in Section 4.

3.4 Criteria for Judging this Study

The research approach that was implemented in the current study was the qualitative research method. The approach was implemented because it helps in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of non-numerical data (Aspers & Corte, 2019). It also makes it easier to understand individuals' perceptions and social reality meaning. According to Hammarberg et al. (2016), qualitative data can easily be collected using semi-structured interviews

and an interpretive and naturalistic approach. In the current context, it was easier to understand attitudes and generate the required content for addressing the research questions. The qualitative approach is economical and provides better insights on specific issues on the industry or study issue (Aspers & Corte, 2019). It also helped the researcher in remaining creative throughout the study process. The process was open-ended and flexible, leading to the collection of detail-oriented data. However, this approach did not represent statistical data and can lead to the loss of crucial information. To avoid such a situation, the researcher focused on recording the interview results. The aim was to enhance the study validity and reliability.

On the other hand, the semi-structured interview approach played a major role in generating the desired data and information for answering the research questions. The approach is crucial in enhancing communication between the interviewer and interviewee during the data collection process, thus answering the research aim (McGrath et al., 2019). As part of the studied judgment, the thematic data analysis method was adopted because it helps in the maintenance of data richness, thus addressing the research questions (Nowell et al., 2017). It is also a flexible way of evaluating qualitative data and allows for the generation of insights that are not anticipated by the researcher. However, it can be subjective because the researchers utilise their judgements in finding themes (Nowell et al., 2017). However, the issue was addressed in the current research by ensuring the selected themes were in line with the research aim and questions.

3.5 Research Ethics

Ethical considerations were upheld in the current research. The participants were not harmed in any manner during the data collection process (Burles & Bally, 2018). The respondents were respected and treated with dignity during the research process. Full

consent was obtained from the participants prior to the data collection process (Yip et al, 2016). The privacy of the participants was upheld in the research. An adequate level of anonymity and confidentiality was promoted. Honesty and transparency were maintained during communication, and misleading information was avoided.

4. Results

The findings of the data analysis show diverse data patterns, which can help in answering the research questions. The key themes identified in the collected data are a variety of English, experiences with a variety of English, preference of variety of English, perspectives on different Englishes, and tone of English language. The process of identifying thematic patterns from participants' responses was guided by a rigorous coding approach. Each interview transcript was meticulously reviewed to extract significant statements related to the key themes of the study. The identification of thematic patterns followed several distinct steps to ensure representativeness and consistency across participants.

For example, when asked about their preferences regarding the English language, some participants mentioned their affinity for certain English accents or tones. A key response that contributed to the theme "Tone of English Language" was, "...it might be the tone of English whilst speaking it." This statement, along with other similar responses, led to the development of the initial code "Perception of Tone: English Accent. " In

total, three of the five participants referenced tone or auditory qualities as an aspect they appreciated in English accents. This consistency across multiple interviews established the basis for considering "Tone of English Language" as a representative theme.

Similarly, responses such as Chen's description of the British accent as "gentler and with more rising and falling like a gentleman," and Yuan's statement about the London accent having an air of "looking down on others" were repeatedly mentioned and were grouped under the code "Tone: British Accent." This step-by-step approach allowed the emergence of broader patterns in the data.

To ensure that the thematic patterns were indeed representative, recurring responses across participants were tracked, and a consensus was established when at least three participants provided similar or related feedback. These recurring codes were then consolidated into larger thematic categories. For instance, in establishing the theme "Preferences of Variety of English," responses such as Yuan's preference for the London accent and Sun's shift from American to British English were grouped together to form a cohesive pattern.

By employing this coding approach (see Figure 1), each theme—such as "Tone of English Language," "Experiences with a Variety of English," and "Preferences of Variety of English"—was backed by multiple instances of participant responses. These patterns reflected shared experiences or perceptions, providing a solid foundation for considering them as dominant themes in the overall analysis.

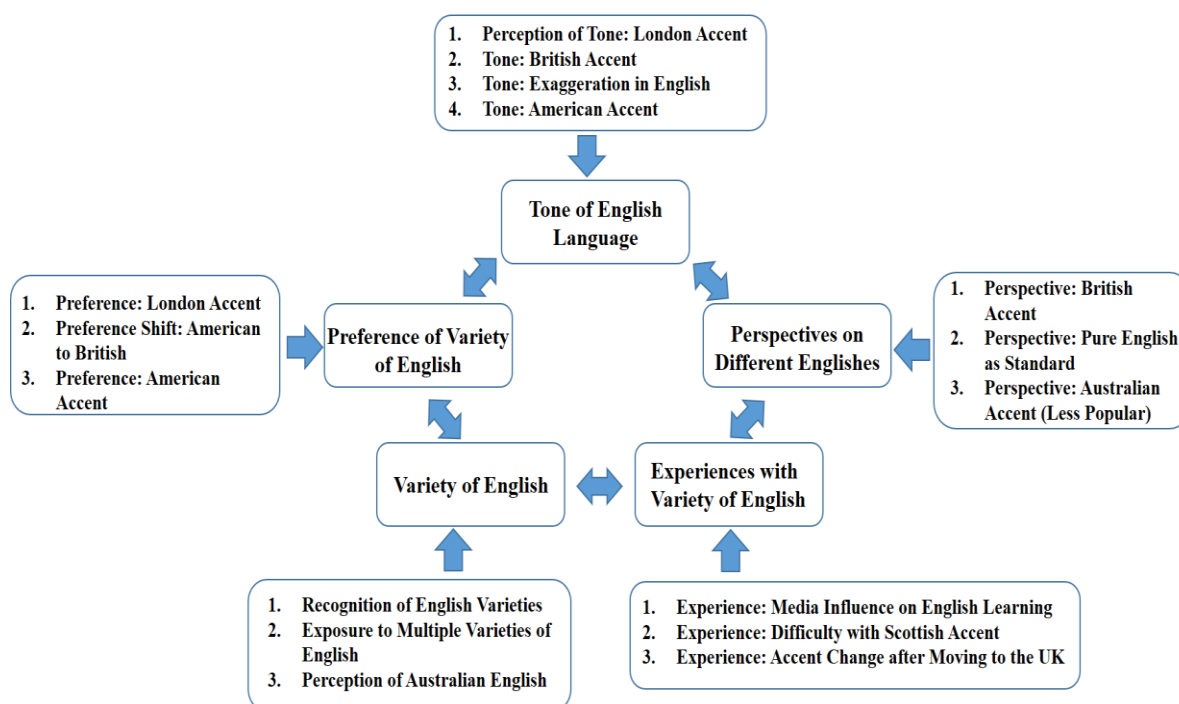


Figure 1: Thematic Map

In this study, the participants had Chinese citizenship, which played a vital role in ensuring diverse perspectives were generated for conducting an investigation on the influence of the Chinese postgraduate international students' (Newcastle University) language learning experiences on their preference and perspectives on different Englishes. The respondents argued that they like the tone of the English language when asked what they liked about the English language. The response is presented below:

"...it might be the tone of English whilst speaking it."

Moreover, the respondents argued that they prefer American and British accents because of their tone and other benefits. However, the respondents were divided in their Englishes attitudes and preference. For example, the interview conducted by the researcher on Chen established that British English is better than American English in terms of accent.

"...American accent is faster like a machine gun, and British accent sounds gentler and with more rising and falling like a gentleman."

It was clear that most Chinese students have interacted with British and American English through entertainment platforms, such as television shows, movies, and series. The analysis reveals that the majority of participants demonstrated a clear preference for either British or American English accents, with British English, particularly the London accent, being viewed more favourably by most. Several factors influence these preferences. For instance, Yuan expressed a strong liking for the London accent, describing it as carrying an air of sophistication and even "arrogance." This sentiment was echoed by Chen, who highlighted the tonal qualities of British English, noting its "gentle, rising and falling" nature, which contrasts with the more direct American accent. Participants consistently associated British accents with social status and elegance, which may explain their preference in more formal contexts.

On the other hand, American English was appreciated for its fluency and straightforwardness. Wang and Sun both remarked on the speed and clarity of American English, with Wang describing it as

"fast and cool." This preference for American English was rooted in familiarity, as most participants had been exposed to American media and educational resources during their early years of language learning. Thus, the preference for different accents appears to be shaped by both the perceived social implications of the accents and the participants' prior exposure to them through media and formal education. The participants argued that the British and American accents have balanced ups and downs. The respondents have also argued that they have interacted with people communicating in British and American English in different social settings, and this influenced their preferences and perspectives in relation to Englishes accents. The students prefer the British and American English accents because it uses a different tone from the very flat tone used in China. Notably, most participants like American and British English because of the tone.

"...when I am speaking English, my tone is flat and lack of emotion."

The interview established tones differ from one person to another due to environmental influences, thus affecting students' preferences and perspectives in terms of a variety of Englishes. Participants' language learning experiences played a pivotal role in shaping their accent preferences. For many, early exposure to American English through textbooks, films, and television shows created a strong foundation for their accent preferences. Wang, for instance, noted that his preference for American English was largely due to the extensive use of American-accented materials in her schooling. However, after moving to the UK, several participants, such as Sun and Chen, experienced a shift in preference towards British English. This shift was attributed to the immersive experience of living in the UK, where they were surrounded by British speakers and were encouraged to adapt to local speech patterns.

Moreover, the influence of teachers in shaping accent preferences was particularly evident. Dai recalled how one of her teachers

in the UK corrected her American-style pronunciation, which led to a gradual preference for British English. This demonstrates that the educational environment, particularly the feedback from teachers, can have a significant impact on how students perceive and adopt different English accents. Additionally, participants like Yuan and Chen noted that the elegance and authority associated with British accents influenced their shift in preference, especially in formal academic and professional settings. Most students prefer British and American English because it is easier to learn and speak fluently as compared to other Englishes. In this case, natives and non-native English speakers can easily understand each other. The respondents argued that the Englishes are easier to use in communication. In addition, it was established that English is an international language. Some argued they prefer American English.

"I used to prefer American English because it is fast and cool. They just burst words out."

Furthermore, the participants argued the American English sounds very fluent. Interactions with a variety of Englishes influences how students speak. For example, Chinese students in the United Kingdom change their speaking tones after interacting with British English. However, the participants had varying arguments on why they like American or British accents. It is clear when Chinese students move to the United States, they automatically like the American accent and the same is reflected when they move to the United Kingdom. These accents are preferred because of their slow and gentle pronunciation. The participants argued there are many varieties of English, such as Spanish English, Russian English, British English, and American English. However, it has been difficult for them to focus on Standard English, and that is why they are focused on learning British and American English for enhancing their English capabilities, skills, and knowledge. The goal is to acquire the accent of the people

who have grown in the United Kingdom for reaching the level of Standard English. However, some students fail to understand Standard English, and this influence their perspectives and preferences of English accents. In addition, pronunciations may affect how people selected their preferred Englishes. However, the participants raised concerns that some English teachers were not using Standard English in English as a foreign language teaching. Good and bad experiences in learning have been shaping Chinese students' attitudes towards a variety of Englishes.

In summary, students' preferences for English accents are not static but evolve in response to their language learning experiences. Early exposure to American English fosters a strong initial preference, while immersion in British culture and the influence of teachers often shift preferences towards British accents, particularly in academic and formal contexts. This highlights the dynamic nature of accent preference and the critical role of both media and educational settings in shaping these preferences.

5. Discussion

Based on the theoretical background, literature review, and the collected data, it is clear that plurality in English has been gaining popularity across the world, and there are many Englishes that have been introduced. These have been influencing English accents and people attitudes and preferences in their learning and usage. The research has shown English varieties are not given equal values, and most Chinese students prefer to use American and British English in learning English because it has better market value locally, regionally, and internationally. The finding is supported by a study conducted by Wang (2015) and Sung (2016), where it was established that learners' attitudes have been positive towards British and American languages, and this has been leading to the discrimination and marginalisation of the other varieties of Englishes. The popularity

of American and British English has been making most students from China select it for their English as a foreign language learning as compared to other English varieties. Weisi et al. (2019) and Kung & Wang (2019) notes the standardised native varieties of English are more popular, desirable, and favourable among students who identify with these varieties.

Most Chinese students have positive attitudes and a tendency towards American and British English when learning English as a foreign language because, as established by Tsang (2019), they prefer native English compared to the other varieties of English, which they perceive to be non-native. The finding is supported by the collected data, which established that most Chinese students have been interacting with American and British English via television shows, movies, and series, as well as other social settings. The finding is supported by the Krashen Monitor Model, which argues that formal, informal, and natural communications and interactions can influence language acquisition (Lai & Wei, 2019). The students then imitate the tone and pronunciation of words based on these accents, and this forms the basis for their preference and perspectives towards varieties in English. The finding is supported by Jenkins et al. (2017) and Edwards (2016), where it was established that native English varieties are preferred by most English as a foreign language learning students compared to the non-native Englishes. For example, instead of focusing on Spanish English, Australian, or Indian English, most Chinese students are focused on American and British Englishes because they are considered to be part of International English, which can be used in diverse social and professional settings. In this case, it is expected that most students from China will continue appraising English as a foreign language from American and British English perspectives.

The interview findings are supported by the studies that were conducted by Carrie (2017) and Choomthong & Manowong (2020) because they established that attractiveness

and language quality play a significant role in the determination of the learner perspectives and preferences of the English accent to use in learning and communication. For instance, it is clear that most Chinese students prefer American and British English based on the interview results, which shown it has a high rate in terms of preference and positive perceptions as compared to other Englishes. The arguments are supported by Choomthong & Manowing (2020), who established that British and American English have better tones that facilitate clear, reliable, pleasant, and sociable communication and learning in the context of English as a foreign language learning. It has been helping students in engaging with each other through a collaborative manner as proposed under the social constructivism theory, which focuses on knowledge construction through interactions with others in the learning environment (Jung, 2019). In this case, most Chinese postgraduate students prefer American and British English in their learning process, and this is shaped by the benefits associated with the Englishes.

6. Conclusion

In summary, the research paper has focused on an investigation of the influences of Chinese postgraduate international students' language learning experiences on their preference and perspectives on different Englishes in terms of accents. The study was steered by two research questions, including what is Chinese postgraduate international students' preference on different English accents at Newcastle University? Why? And how does their language learning experience influence their preference and perspectives on accents? It has been established that there are diverse theoretical models that influence language acquisition, which has shown that social interactions and personal thinking patterns shape students' preferences and perspectives on varieties of English. Moreover, it is clear that most students undertaking English as a foreign language learning have a specific preference for certain

Englishes. In the current context, most Chinese postgraduate international students at Newcastle University prefer American and British English as compared to other varieties of English. It is attributed to many factors, such as thoughts, social interactions, engagements with the language, tone, the value placed on the type of English, among other reasons. However, the diversity of English varieties is becoming more recognised globally.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Interview Guide Questions

What do you like about English language? Why?
What variety of English do you like? Why?
Any experience that makes you like or dislike that variety of English? Why?

Appendix 2: Interview Transcript

Participant 1 (Chen)

Interviewer: Alright, the following interview is going to be focusing on your perspective on English as a language and English accents. During the interview if you do not understand any terms, please ask just me, and all your personal information will not be put on my work.

Chen: Uhm, okay!

Interviewer: Okay, so what is your major?

Chen: Media and public relation.

Interviewer: Just to ensure, do you have Chinese citizenship now?

Chen: Yes.

Interviewer: Good let's get started!

Chen: Right.

Interviewer: What do you like about English language? For example, some people like its pronunciation, tone, culture or grammar, anything you can think of.

Chen: May I say I do not like it?

Interviewer: I did not compare English to other things, just itself.

Chen: In that case, it might be the tone of English whilst speaking it.

Interviewer: tone?

Chen: So, aren't there like British and American accents? Like American accent is faster like a machine gun, and British accent sounds gentler and with more rising and falling like a gentleman.

Interviewer: How do you describe the 'tone'?

Chen: tone.... Like, for example, the way people speak in American and British series.

Interviewer: the way?

Chen: Feels like the way British people speak has more ups and downs.

Interviewer: Any examples?

Chen: Like one time, I heard the cashier in the supermarket in Newcastle said, 'Do you need a bag?'

Interviewer: I see.

Chen: And for instance, in China, we do not focus on English speaking, so most of us speak in a very flat tone.

Interviewer: So why 'tone' is the factor that makes you like about English?

Chen: Because when I am speaking English, my tone is flat and lack of emotion.

Interviewer: Could you please describe more about 'lack of emotion'?

Chen: Soulless, like you are not into it, or you are just reading something out.

Interviewer: So, in terms of the tone, do you mean tones for everyone in general? Or just those people who are fluent in English?

Chen: No, the tones are different from person to person due to the environment they are living in.

Interviewer: Any other things that make you feel English is actually not bad? As a language or as a way of communicating with others.

Chen: Yes, like even if you don't speak in fluent English, people can still understand.

Interviewer: What reasons do you think that cause this phenomenon?

Chen: Because English is an international language, isn't it? So, people from other countries can at least understand it a bit, I

think. Easier to communicate. Feels like at least I know English.

Interviewer: You said that English is an international language, didn't you? And you said that there are many English accents. Basically, there are huge varieties of English. Which English do you prefer?

Chen: I used to prefer American English because it is fast and cool! They just burst words out.

Interviewer: What kind of cool?

Chen: like very fluent because it is very fast. So jealous.

Interviewer: yeah, I can feel it.

Chen: However, when I came to the UK, some people said that the way I speak now has more ups and downs, I have probably been affected. One time, my friends and I were on a taxi, and we were talking about which accents they like. I said I used to like American accent, but they said they prefer British one. Then I said, I guess I don't have a very thick accent. But they told me that the way you speak has many ups and downs as well.

Interviewer: So, you became preferring British accent after you came to the UK?

Chen: yeah, the time when we were taking classes here, I realised the accent of my teachers were actually not bad! And they spoke relatively slowly and gently.

Interviewer: Any other pronunciation features from your teachers that you like?

Chen: Just slow and gentle.

Interviewer: Okay, and you have mentioned that there are many varieties of English. So, what kinds of varieties of English do you think there are?

Chen: like many accents. For example, the Spanish teacher that taught humanities, she has got a very thick foreign accent. Therefore, in terms of the variety, I think everyone has his own way of speaking English, like sometimes you can understand what they say, but you can distinguish that they are not speaking in 'pure' English. Also, I have a Russian professor and I could still distinguish that she is not a native speaker even though she speaks fluent English.

Interviewer: You mentioned 'pure English'

could you talk about it more? Like standard or?

Chen: Uhm, like not proper standard.

Interviewer: So, what kind of English to you is pure English? What's your thought about 'pure'?

Chen: Like the original group of people in the country. Accent is highly related to the environment that people have been living in, so if you have been living in the UK since you were a kid, the people you came across would be mostly British people or migrants have been living there. Their accents have been formed by those factors which make their English standard.

Interviewer: So, do you think that people who grow up in the UK speak standard English?

Chen: In my mind, yes.

Interviewer: So, do you think people who grow up in the US speak standard English?

Chen: Depends on where they live. They might have British parents. But to be honestly they all sound standard to me. Unmm, I would say people who speak English as a first language speak standard English.

Interviewer: So, they all speak standard English?

Chen: oh wait! India! People there speak English as an official language as well, but with a thick accent.

Interviewer: Do you think they speak standard English?

Chen: I don't know how to define standard now (sigh).

Interviewer: What accents in the UK have you heard of?

Chen: I don't remember, aren't they all speak just English? Apart from those who have special accents. Like those I can tell they didn't grow up in here. I remember the accent of a shop owner; I could barely understand him, but I knew he spoke in English.

Interviewer: could you tell me about that? How did you know it was English even though you didn't understand?

Chen: Might be from some words as well as his gestures, I guess. I remember he asked me something about 'do you one bag or two bags', and he used his hands to present it which helped to understand what he said. I

can roughly guess what he wanted to express merely by some words, even though those words were pronounced differently, at least different to what I have learnt.

Interviewer: So, you guessed the meaning from the unfamiliar or vague pronunciation?

Chen: yeah, I could still find some clues from the pronunciation. Just like people pronounce words differently and with accents, but you can still feel and understand it. I cannot guarantee the meaning, but I can roughly guess.

Interviewer: Okay, and what variety of English you have been learning?

Chen: I used to learn British English in elementary school but change to American English when I was at junior high and high school. But honestly, my teachers had their own accents which were not standard.

Interviewer: like local accent?

Chen exactly.

Interviewer: Did they follow the textbooks and pronounce the vocabulary correctly?

Chen: No, they had got used to it. Most of teachers there don't speak standard English, they all had their special accents. However, I remember there was a Singaporean teacher in my elementary school, he spoke relatively standard English.

Interviewer: So basically, your English teacher were local teachers before you came to the UK?

Chen: Yes. And I just remember that one of my English teachers at the university spoke quite standard English as well since he used to study in the US.

Interviewer: Any experience that makes you like or dislike that variety of English throughout your life?

Chen: I didn't like English when I was a kid, and actually I don't like English that much now.

Interviewer: you have said that you used to think American English was fast and cool, what experience made you think of that?

Chen: When I was studying at junior high school, there was a Korean idol team which had a member who grew up in the US. I remember he spoke fast and perfect English on a show that made me feel that he is so cool,

and further led to the fact that I thought American English was preferable. Additionally, other team members spoke Korean accented English, so I was amazed by that person who spoke in fluent American English. I was so jealous at that time, and of course I am still jealous people who can speak fluent English now as well. But not Indian accented English haha.

Interviewer: you said that you prefer British English after coming to the UK, what experience made you change in that way?

Chen: apart from teachers, the environment affected me a lot too. People around me all speak in British English, which made you use to it and further like it. Now I prefer British accent over American accent. Furthermore, my accent has been affected by British accent as well.

Interviewer: Any experience that made you dislike a certain English?

Chen: No, I don't have that experience. Bad experience just made me dislike English in general not to a certain accent.

Interviewer: Okay that's the end of the interview, thank you.

Participant 2 (Dai)

Interviewer: The following in interview is going to be focusing on your perspective on English as a language and English accents. During the interview if you do not understand any terms, please ask just me, and all your personal information will not be put on my work.

Dai: okay.

Interviewer: just to be sure, what major are you studying at the university?

Dai: International perspective: Education.

Interviewer: do you currently have Chinese citizenship?

Dai: yeah.

Interviewer: What do you like about English language? It can be some pronunciation, tone, rhythm, culture background or any aspects.

Dai: I think being able to speak fluent English is very impressive, and honestly, I personally remain neutral to the language itself. However, because I sometimes watch

American and British shows and films which include both American and British English, I was exposed to and spending time listening to them. Among them, I prefer British accent.
Interviewer: Could you please talk more about the feeling of 'impressive' to fluent English speakers?

Dai: For example, in class, some students who are more confident and proficient in English or have nicer accents have discussion with the teacher make me feel impressive.

Interviewer: So, you have mentioned the term 'fluent' English, what does it mean to you?

Dai: Like they can speak as naturally as native English speakers, and don't have many pauses whilst talking.

Interviewer: How do they speak can make you feel they are native speakers, and what does the term 'native speaker' mean to you?

Dai: For example, people from middle East sound less alike native English speakers, and people from countries in Europe sound closer to native speakers such Germany and Italy. I think it is more nationality based.

Interviewer: other than feeling impressive, you said that you like British accent because you watch English films and shows. So, could you tell me why do you like about those English films and shows?

Dai: Firstly, I think it is cool that they speak in fluent English. Secondly, when I was watching those films, I gradually formed the 'sense of language' and made me memorise some pronunciation.

Interviewer: the reason why you think it is cool is because they are fluent in a language, or it is because it is English?

Dai: I think it because of being fluent in a language, plus English is now an international language. Therefore, when you travel to countries that English is not the main language such Korea and Japan, you don't have to speak the local language to communicate, I mean at least you can try to communicate in English. I remember once I travelled to Japan, and I felt they were not bad at English, they just had accents which might be influenced by their native tongue.

Interviewer: do you think that is a kind of ability?

Dai: yeah, because you can let people from different countries understand you by speaking in English.

Interviewer: Okay, and you mentioned they people have accents because they speak different mother tongue, so what if a person who speak fluent English but still has an accent? What would you think about that?

Dai: I remember when I was taking after school classes for IELTS test, there was a teacher who used to study in Canada, and I found her has a little bit of American accent, but honestly, I cannot really distinguish different accents very well. That teacher commented an interpreter in a video that the interpreter's accent is a neutral accent which means it does not lean to American or British accent. That's because that interpreter needed to be neutral in formal situation. And I think it is okay for people who don't have the authentic accents such as American or British accents. People speak differently so it is fine.

Interviewer: How do you think about neutral accent?

Dai: I think it depends on how people think about it. Some people prefer certain accent, and some people don't. Moreover, I think in this globalised world open-minded people shouldn't mind people's accent or cultural background, regardless the accent is good or bad.

Interviewer: Right, so what variety of English do you like?

Dai: I prefer British accent a bit since I have already come to the UK for studying. I think it is mostly because its culture and history. For example, like the US used to be colonised by the UK's, didn't it? I think I was sort of affected by that.

Interviewer: so other than that, what else reason do you think that make you prefer British accent?

Dai: I think it is just because it sounds nice. It feels more formal and official to me. Also, the term 'English' is supposed to be more related to the UK based on its literal meaning. Moreover, the stress of British accent is more obvious and sounds more powerful to me. For example, the pronunciation of 'water'.

Additionally, throughout my English learning experience, British and American English are always mixed and taught at the same time, and I personally cannot tell the difference that much even though I have tried to speak in the British way. I remember once my teacher from England corrected my pronunciation when I pronounced it in American way, I started to realise it ever since then.

Interviewer: Oh so, you have been trying to learn British accent?

Dai: yeah, because I think it is more official, and it sounds like an accent for authorities. Nothing special, I guess.

Interviewer: Compared to other ones?

Dai: yes, it seems to be more representational. But even though I said 'British accents', in fact people from different regions of the UK have different accents such as people in London, Cambridge or Oxford, they all speak differently. Like you might not know before then, but some influencers on TikTok mimic accents from different areas, which let me realise that they are diverse.

Interviewer: In that case, what kind of British accent do you like the most?

Dai: Probably London one? For example, people from Liverpool just sound more 'rural' to me, it can be seen in Chinese language as well. Like you can tell where the people from by their accents, either big cities or rural areas.

Interviewer: So, you don't like accents that are not spoken in urban areas?

Dai: I mean I still like them since they are native speakers and they speak fluent English, but just not as much as the big city ones. I just prefer more 'modern' accent.

Interviewer: Any specific accent you want to learn?

Dai: London one I think, it sounds more powerful and certain to me. I like Emma Watson's accent the most, I think she speaks standard English.

Interviewer: How do you feel about her accent then?

Dai: You can clearly understand what she exactly wants to express, clear and certain, and her tone can also deliver her confidence. I remember I have seen a video her having a speech about feminism, she really sounded

powerful and representational.

Interviewer: Let's bring the topic back to the sense of 'rural', the reason why you like London accent in particular is because it is an urban accent?

Dai: yeah, like you can tell from how many words in English that describe the sense of 'city', such as urban, metropolitan etc., which reflect the difference between people live in cities and country sides. However, the term 'rural' for describing someone's accent can be a positive word because it is difficult for non-native English to sound rural. It is kind of a compliment to praise your English proficiency.

Interviewer: So, what the causal relation about that? Because you would sound urban?

Dai: yeah, because London is one of the most modern cities in the world, you would sound more intellectual and powerful if you spoke in that accent. It can somehow mean that you used to have more educational resources. Additionally, if it is intelligible is also a factor, which is the reason why I didn't choose to study in Scotland. It is too different to the English I used to learn.

Interviewer: Any experience that makes you like or dislike that variety of English?

Dai: I don't dislike any accents. The experience that made me like British accent was the Emma Watson's video I watched for practising my English. After watching that, I soon realised that she was the actress in Harry Potter, and she spoke beautiful English accent even when she was young. I was just amazed by her accent and further looked up to who she was and her background. It all started from her.

Interviewer: What about your English classes back then?

Dai: I used to learn both British and American English, they were basically mixed in class, and I think it was mainly because the textbooks I used and the teachers. One of the teachers was speaking in American accent, but the textbooks at my elementary school were written in British English. Interestingly, we were taught that with the same meaning the longer vocabulary is British one, and the shorter one is American. But to be honest, I

didn't really mind using both words because I just chose the easier one to write in exams.

Interviewer: Right! That's the end of the interview, thank you!

Participant 3 (Sun)

Interviewer: Interviewer: Alright, the following interview is going to be focusing on your perspective on English as a language and English accents. During the interview if you do not understand any terms, please ask just me, and all your personal information will not be put on my work.

Sun: Okay.

Interviewer: What is your major at the university?

Sun: International Multi-media and Journalism.

Interviewer: Just to make sure, do you have Chinese citizenship?

Sun: Yes.

Interviewer: What do you like about English language? Any features of it, can be its convenience, tone, or culture etc.

Sun: Mostly its culture, because it is currently an international language, and there are many countries that use English as their first language. If you want to travel to western countries such as the US, speaking English would be a better option because it is convenient. Even most films and shows are in English as well, which made me like English more, and it would be more direct to understand the authors' thought if you can read or understand the English texts directly so that you would not be affected by the translation.

Interviewer: Seems you are more into its convenience?

Sun: Yes.

Interviewer: What about the cultural wise you have mentioned?

Sun: In terms of culture, I am very interested in European history, so if I want to access those documents, it is better to directly read the original English one to prevent the intervention of the translator's subjective thoughts.

Interviewer: Any specific culture that makes you like about English?

Sun: I think it is the modern history of the UK, since it was where the modern history started. For example, some famous literatures and thoughts. Basically, more about the literature wise. Moreover, I firstly knew about them by using my native language, and once I got more interested in them and had better English proficiency, I started to access the original pieces. But I am still not good enough to understand them all though, but I think I can understand them better when my English ability gets better.

Interviewer: Is it because English that makes you like about the culture and history?

Sun: No, I am just curious about how those English-speaking countries became so powerful and modern, so honestly, I just like about the history.

Interviewer: English is more like a tool for you.

Sun: Exactly.

Interviewer: So, what do you like about it as a tool? OR any other features?

Sun: I have never thought about that before, probably the fact that English itself can make speakers more exaggerated due to its stress and tone. Take Chinese as an example, it still sounds flat compared to English even though it has got four tones. The advantage for Asian people to learn English is that you can enhance your confidence by that, since Asian people seem to be shy and calmer.

Interviewer: Do you feel yourself more confident after learning English?

Sun: Yeah, kind of. I became more competent to speak in public ever since I started learning English. I was very shy at first. Interestingly, my teacher taught me that you must be exaggerated when you practise speaking English. I felt it was a bit stupid to do that, but gradually I became more confident after doing it repeatedly. Moreover, when I came back from the US, my personality became brighter because I had to force myself to speak in that exaggerated way.

Interviewer: Like being forced to do so?

Sun: It was mostly due to its culture there, and most people in the US would encourage you to speak rather than judging you, which is different from the situation in China.

People tend to judge you and further make you unwilling to speak. I changed quite a lot during the month studying in the US.

Interviewer: Okay, so what variety of English do you like? Or prefer?

Sun: I used to like American English, but I became to prefer British English ever since I came here, but only the accents in southern England. I remember the time I visited Scotland, I literally could not understand people there at all, and so as the Welsh accent, I even thought it is a different language.

Interviewer: So, you now like southern British accent more now?

Sun: Yeah, I am now living here after all, kind of use to it. However, I did not like British accent at the very beginning because I thought it sounds 'fake', like not sincere enough.

Interviewer: Your thought changed quite a lot, didn't it?

Sun: It is not entirely being changed, just because you would not like to speak in American accent in the UK, and also some British people think that the rising tone in the end of Australian accent does not sound intellectual. So, I tried to adapt my way to speak English, and now I am used to it. I don't want to be strange in others mind.

Interviewer: What other features do you think that make you like British accent?

Sun: Probably because people generally think that British accent sounds elegant. For instance, Thomas Hiddleston's accent has been commented as very elegant, and he usually do many audio recordings such as stories or podcasts.

Interviewer: Why do you think it sounds elegant then?

Sun: My English teacher told me that in terms of British accent, the part of mouth that uses for pronouncing sound is more backward, and American accent is more forward which leads to the deeper voice for the British accented speakers. Furthermore, the way of pronouncing 'o' in British accent sounds good, just like a person who does broadcasting. However, like I said, I didn't like British accent at first, because it sounds fake to me, and I guess the reason could be

the fact that I was exposed American accent more, such as songs and films. And British people seem to be indirect and not very sincere compared to American people.

Interviewer: So, would you feel that way when you hear someone speaks in British accent?

Sun: Somehow, like when I chatted with British people, I felt quite comfortable because they kept saying 'interesting' or 'that's good', which they probably did not think so. They usually say, 'talk to you later', but actually they will never talk to you anymore. Moreover, they often stand people up, and I have experienced that quiet a few times when I was trying to do interviews. So yeah, I would probably think of these stereotypes if I came across people who have this accent even though I don't know where they are from.

Interviewer: Would you think of that when you heard people speak in American accent?

Sun: No, I would assume those people are more direct and strait to the point.

Interviewer: What do you think of the variety of English? What concept is it for you?

Sun: I think it is like people speak differently between regions, but they are still speaking English, but I am not sure about the reason that resulting it.

Interviewer: How do you distinguish whether it is a dialect or not?

Sun: I think people nowadays recognise British and American English as standard Englishes, so others might be dialects. And I believe Australian is not too different to the two standard ones, so it could be classified as standard English.

Interviewer: Any experience that makes you like or dislike that variety of English?

Sun: In order to know more about the UK, I used to watch quite many British series and films, and most the actors speak in London accent, which led to my gradual acceptance of that accent. However, before I came to the UK, I liked American accent because it is easy to pronounce based on my language experiences. Moreover, American spelling is shorter and easier which is good for me answer exam questions. One other reason

would be I was exposed to American English more when I was learning English at school. In terms of experience that made me dislike an accent, probably just the accent I don't understand in general, because I sometimes feel annoyed and tired when listening people saying something I don't understand for too long.

Interviewer: So, were all your textbooks written in American English?

Sun: Actually, they were mixed, I learnt British English for the first few years, and learnt American English after that. Teacher normally just taught different spellings and pronunciation but didn't distinguish what kind of English the words belong to.

Interviewer: What kind of English do you use now based on your learning experience?

Sun: Now I think I use more of British English, because the spelling is longer and more complex which makes me easier to switch between different Englishes (American and British English).

Interviewer: Okay that's the end of the interview, thank you.

Participant 4 (Wang)

Interviewer: The following interview is going to be focusing on your perspective on English as a language and English accents. During the interview if you do not understand any terms, please ask just me, and all your personal information will not be put on my work.

Wang: Uhm, okay.

Interviewer: Firstly, what major are you doing?

Wang: Global Human Resource Management.

Interviewer: Okay, and do you have Chinese citizenship now?

Wang: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: So, what do you like about English language? It can be any aspects, what do you like about it?

Wang: Uhm, I don't know if I can say I like English as a language, since I don't have any preference in terms of languages. But I would say English has its advantage which is its convenience. It can be used to communicate with other people around world, and once you understand its spelling and pronunciation

patterns, it would be easy to spell and read some new words, even though you might not know the meaning.

Interviewer: Okay, and you just mentioned that it has the advantage of convenience. What is your understanding about it?

Wang: It is easy to communicate with people from different countries, and there would not be many problems when you live in other countries if you learnt it. Unless the local culture of the country is relatively fixed or unitary, you would not face too many difficulties in most cases.

Interviewer: Based on that regard, what the role of English to you?

Wang: In terms of studying, English is more like a language that I have been learning it passively since teachers use English to teach most of the time. In terms of working, it is widely used as a tool to communicate. Therefore, it really depends on the situation and context.

Interviewer: Can its convenience be the reason for you to like this language?

Wang: Undoubtedly, English is very convenient among languages, and it is beneficial to many aspects of my life.

Interviewer: Right, and what do you know about the variety of English?

Wang: I think there might be many dialects of English, like in English speaking countries, the way people use vocabulary, phrases etc. is probably different to each other. For example, there are Canadian accent, Australian accent, and many other accents, right?

Interviewer: Okay, so you mentioned some different dialects or accents, so what do you think a dialect is to you?

Wang: Because dialects are based on English, they are largely similar to each other, which is not a problem to me to understand or communicate with people who speak those dialects. Compared to other languages, the dialects of English are less complex to me. Take Chinese as an example, you might fail to understand people from the village next to yours even though you all speak 'Chinese'. I think English dialects share many similarities, which makes them less complicated to me.

Interviewer: Could you tell me more about how it is less complex even though it is being widely used? What is your thought about that?

Wang: Ummm, like comparing British and American English for instance, I think we have learnt both over our language learning experience. Although, we may not be taught how to distinguish which is British or American, we can understand of systems. In my opinion, I believe English words are all in the dictionary, but they are just being used or pronounced in different ways, they are maybe just distinctive between countries. It not a problem for non-native English speakers. For example, 'holiday' and 'vacation', we all know their meaning, but they are just used in different countries. As well as the pronunciation, such British accent, American accent, Australian accent, and Singaporean accent, they would not affect the input of the meanings because they all based on a certain frame. Therefore, although English is varied but they variations are still similar to each other.

Interviewer: Among all those variations, what variety of English do you prefer? Like relatively.

Wang: Ummm, based on the accent I have some practical reasons, I might prefer American English a bit more.

Interviewer: Could you tell me the reason why? You don't have to be academic, just relax.

Wang: Okay. In terms of my personal experience, firstly, when I started learning English, I was mostly exposed to American English, including audio recording for textbooks, films and even teachers' accent. Thus, it influenced me a lot, which gradually formed my accent. Even though I am now studying in the UK, I don't intentionally change or try to change my accent, I just stick to the American way. Oppositely, I was rarely exposed to British films or series, so personally I think American English affects me more. In addition, I would feel myself a bit 'fake' if I tried to speak or adopt British accent. I don't think I need to change the way I speak based on the places I go or study in.

Interviewer: you said that you are mainly

influenced by teachers, films, and language learning resources. Were your teachers American? Or they just spoke America English?

Wang: majority of my teachers were Chinese, and of course there were few American teachers in some summer camps. I think American English is prevalent in China as well as among teachers, so their accents tend to be more American. For the films, there were many American films and series being imported to China when I was a child, and there were some good pieces such as 'Friends'. I was more focusing on American pieces at that time, which affected me a lot. Another reason would be, British series or film tend to be more classical or old, and the use of vocabulary is relatively outdated, so that it was difficult for me to understand. Unlike American English which is more direct and simpler.

Interviewer: could you develop a bit more on why American English is simpler and British English is indirect and hard?

Wang: It is just my personal experience, I think British culture is just like Chinese culture which has been developed for hundreds or thousands of years, some there are some old expressions are kept until now.

Interviewer: So, I guess you prefer the one that is easier to understand?

Wang: yes, I think so.

Interviewers: Okay, what about the language learning resources? Were they written in American English and fitted with teacher's accent? Or actually they were mixed?

Wang: I have never learnt phonetic symbols systematically, so I just pronounce the way what teachers taught me. Therefore, pronounced some word in American way and some in British way, but I didn't realise that. However, in terms of audio recordings, they were mostly American accented. I don't specifically learn British English unless I am learning IELTS test.

Interviewer: Did you teach you about the difference between British and American English?

Wang: No, not explicitly. They normally just pronounced they way they thought is right.,

so they sometimes just taught both. My teachers only adopted their standards.

Interviewer: Any features that make you like American English?

Wang: Like some paronomasia features I think but cannot think of any example right now. Some elements in American English are humorous. There are always double meanings within a sentence, and the meanings are different depend on the context.

Interviewer: Is that English makes you like American films and series or it is another way around?

Wang: No, I would not say I like English, I just treat it as a tool to communicate. Also, I don't think English is cool or exceptionally beautiful, or it can make me feel different by learning it. It is more passive to me when it comes to learning it.

Interviewer: Right, do you have any experience that makes you like or dislike that variety of English?

Wang: I think I don't that kind of moment which make me feel some variety of English is good, I only feel like it is convenient in some situations. My attitude toward English is neutral.

Interviewer: what about just relatively prefer any of them?

Wang: I only have experiences about being amazed by British accents in terms of the way it sounds, and also how the language use can distinguish people from different class. For instance, the use of words 'loo' and 'toilet' are spoken by different groups of people. Furthermore, some royal family members were judged because they used some words which don't fit with their class.

Interviewer: How did you discover that difference? From films?

Wang: They were largely from talk shows or stand-up comedies, and once I realised it, I found that it happens in many situations, such as news regarding royal family or articles.

Interviewer: Did you realise that through formal education.

Wang: No, I did not. Mostly from shows and series.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. I think that is

it!

Participant 5 (Yuan)

Interviewer: The following in interview is going to be focusing on your perspective on English as a language and English accents. During the interview if you do not understand any terms, please ask just me, and all your personal information will not be put on my work.

Yuan: Got it!

Interviewer: Let's get started then. What is your major?

Yuan: International media Journalism.

Interviewer: This project is focusing on Chinese international students. Do you have Chinese citizenship now?

Yuan: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: Okay. First question, what do you like about English language? Or what feature do you like? It could be its tone, grammar, or culture.

Yuan: I have talked about that with my friends before. For tones, I think we all like London accents, especially the feelings of being pretentious when people speak in that accent. For example, 'yeah' (rising the tone).

Interviewer: Can you describe it more specifically?

Yuan: I particularly like the tone part of London accent, like it has got a feeling of 'looking down others'. Just like how the characters speak in a series called 'Downtown Abbey', and since they are typical British noble, you can feel a bit of arrogance within their conversation. Like I would not tell you that I am looking down on you even though I did think so. My favourite part of that series is when they are arguing implicitly with others.

Interviewer: Okay, so could you describe a bit more about what kind of tone has this feature?

Yuan: Uhm, like their tones take 'turns', and usually go deep. Seems like London accent has this feature, or probably British English in general. London accent just sounds very pretentious to me.

Interviewer: Take turns? How do you connect this feature to the sense of being 'pretentious'?

Yuan: I am not saying that those people are

actually pretentious, just the tone has that sort of feeling to me.

Interviewer: Could you tell me more about it?

Yuan: For instance, when they say 'yes', the tone would go down first and then turn up, which is different to the way we normally say that word. Like the tone turns up in the end of the sound. I don't really know how to mimic it, but many of friends have been affected by the accent, so we often make fun of each other of feeling like pretentious to others when we speak in English. Moreover, it always happens when we talk to British people, we all sound pretentious with noticing it, just like Londoners.

Interviewer: Like your accent has been influenced by them?

Yuan: Yeah. When I just arrived here in the UK, I lived with British flatmates. I was shocked when I firstly heard they say 'yes', because I didn't know that is how they speak. I felt the same when I watched 'Harry Potter', I was surprised by the way how those characters speak, very dramatic. So that experience made me realise that they actually speak in that accent, not just in the film.

Interviewer: Why do you like about that feature?

Yuan: Because they sound like people from upper class, and sound arrogant naturally which is very different to American accent that I am familiar with. I used to learn American English over my language learning experience.

Interviewer: Since English I now widely used, so there are different variety of English in different places. What variety of English do you like the most? Including every aspect.

Yuan: I think both British and American English sound quite good, but Australian English sound a bit 'rural' to me. Not just me, all my friends do think so. I remember when we were chatting, we all agreed that Australian accent sound 'rural', or just sounds very 'dialect-like'.

Interviewer: Do you mean it sounds different to the one you are familiar with?

Yuan: No, like it feels more 'bendy' in terms of tone, which is kind of similar to some Chinese dialects. You can feel the sense of

'rural' form them as well. Additionally, people who speak that use their nose to vibrate a lot, which also sounds rural to me.

Interviewer: Apart from Australian accent, what other accents do you think have this feature?

Yuan: I think people who are from countries that don't use English as their first language have accents when speaking in English, which is normal. Also, when I heard Scottish accent, I found it sounds a bit rural to me, or sounds like they are not from big cities.

Interviewer: You said you like British accent and American accent. Which of them do you prefer then?

Yuan: Ummm, I think they both are good, but London accent is favourable in China. Because most people in China learn American English, so if a person speaks in London accent in public would be impressive. However, if that person speaks in Australian accent, people might find it a bit strange.

Interviewer: So, it is not because it sounds different?

Yuan: Yes, I guess people in China just love London accent in general.

Interviewer: Why London accent specifically?

Yuan: I am not very sure the reason why, people just like it. But it seems like people outside of China usually make fun of that accent, especially the missing letter 'T'. I think the main sources for people to access British English are films and some influencers in China. I didn't know anything about London accent when I was a kid, but it just sounded good from the very first.

Interviewer: What is the 'influencer' part you just mentioned?

Yuan: They were those people who praised foreign stuff years ago, and they said London accent sounds beautiful, and in some videos that have people speak in London accent, there are always many compliments about the accent in the comment section, which gradually changed people's thought. Even people who don't really know about English also have good impression about London accents. I remember there was a show that had students speak on the stage, and one of them spoke in Australian accent and another

student spoke in British accents, and in the comment section, many people commented the accent such as, 'British accent sounds so elegant' or 'British sounds beautiful', etc.

Interviewer: Can those people identify London accent?

Yuan: No, they just think accents which don't sound rural are all London accents, and they sort of equate London accent to standard accent.

Interviewer: What do you think about the variety of English? What that concept is to you?

Yuan: I don't quite understand, I think people just speak differently. Actually, I have never thought about that before.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have any experience that makes you like or dislike that variety of English? Including your language learning experience and daily life experience.

Yuan: I think my experience would not affect my impression on how the accent sounds like, both American accent and British accent sound beautiful to me. I would not like or dislike a certain English due to my experience. However, I just don't like to use and learn English since I don't like to memorise things, so my English wasn't good when I was a child.

Interviewer: What about films or series?

Yuan: Probably not. I think I was affected mostly by the discourse such as comments or opinions of influencers. I might think Australian accent sounds good if all those comments were compliments and everyone was saying good things about it. Therefore, I think it basically due to the public discourse, not the films and series.

Interviewer: Right, thank you. That's the end of the interview.

中文母語碩士國際學生語言學習經歷對其應對不同英語（口音） 偏好與觀點的影響之研究

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摘要

這項研究的主要重點是對中文母語碩士班留學生（新堡大學）的語言學習經驗使他們面臨不同英語(英語口音)時的偏好及看法的影響進行調查。研究問題包含新堡大學的中文母語留學生對於不同英語口音的偏好是什麼？為什麼？以及他們的語言學習經驗如何影響他們對口音的偏好和看法？閱覽文獻時發現世界上有各種不同的英語(英語口音)，且學生對於這些不同的英語持有特定的態度。此外，英語口音是具有其相對的價值，其促進了語言和文化多樣性的相互接受。大多數中文母語英語學習者對於某些英語(英語口音)有特定的偏好和看法，以提升他們的碩士班學習體驗。在研究方法方面，研究採用了質化研究方法，採半結構式訪談和主題數據分析方法進行。研究結果顯示，與其他類型的英語口音相比，大多數中文母語學生對美國英語和英國英語持積極態度與偏好。通過使用英語種類、經驗、偏好和對不同英語口音的看法的主題，以及文獻綜述和相關理論，得出之結論為需要著重於社會、個人和職業因素，方以影響中文母語學生對不同英語口音的偏好和看法。

關鍵詞：英語口音, 英語多樣性, 語言多樣性, 半結構式訪談, 主題分析。