

ENGLISH AS A EUROPEAN LINGUA FRANCA – CHANGING ATTITUDES IN AN INTER-CONNECTED WORLD

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RESEARCH FOCUS

- ELF and its European context
- guiding **research question**: How do European students perceive their use of English and English used by others particularly concerning their attitudes towards native speaker models?

GOAL OF THE RESEARCH

eliciting language attitudes on a broader level, including the topic areas:

1. Do students perceive themselves as users or learners of English?
2. Pronunciation
3. Grammar
4. Idiomatic language use

RESEARCH SET-UP AND INFORMATION

- informants: 250 European students
- methods: quantitative questionnaire survey, distributed online
- agreement indications on statements using 4-point-Likert scales
- participant profile:
 - 79% come from Austria
 - 78% female
 - 55% use English actively more than 4 times/week

EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

- theoretical framework based on various studies concerning attitudes towards ELF (e.g. Jenkins 2007, Adolphs 2005, Erling 2007)
- statistical analysis via SPSS
- interrelations are tested by chi-square analysis

FINDINGS

Self-perceptions as being users or learners of English

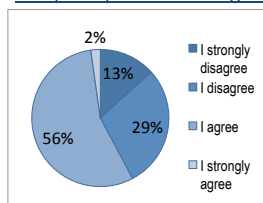


Figure 1: I consider myself mostly as a user of English.

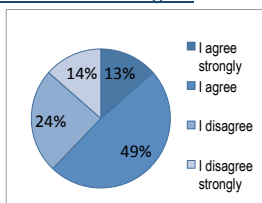


Figure 2: I consider myself mostly as a learner of English.

- participants **cannot be categorized** rigidly
- it is not legitimate to treat self-perceptions as users or learners as direct oppositions

Pronunciation

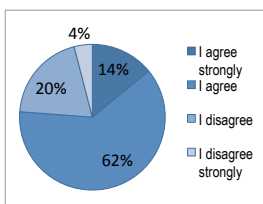


Figure 3: I don't need to sound like a native speaker to be taken seriously.

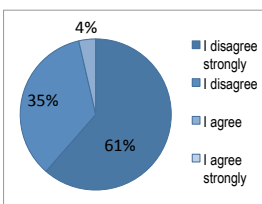


Figure 4: When somebody speaks English with me, I think it's important that they get their grammar right.

- generally **low support** for an adherence to native speaker norms
- differences between active and passive pronunciation imply linguistic insecurity

Grammar

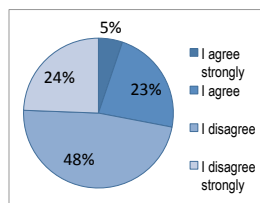


Figure 5: When I use English, I don't worry about grammar as long as other people understand what I mean.

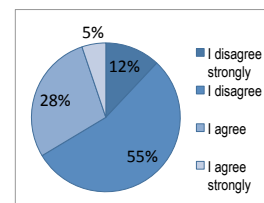


Figure 6: When somebody speaks English with me, I think it's important that they get their grammar right.

- directly **comparable** to attitudes concerning pronunciation
- possible explanation attempt for the differences between active and passive statements: „**Third-person effect hypothesis**“ (Davison 1983: 3) – participants might overestimate the possibility that their listeners will have problems to understand them

Idiomatic language use

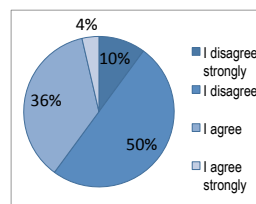


Figure 7: I don't think it's important to use native speaker idioms/sayings in a public debate.

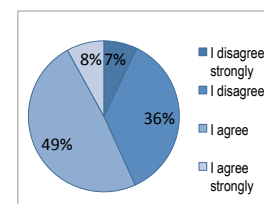


Figure 8: I don't think it's important to use native speaker idioms/sayings in private conversation.

- idioms are perceived to be **more important in public than in private domains** – supports relation between idiomatic language use and perceived language competence (cf. Adolphs 2005)

CONCLUSION – OUTLOOK

- diverse character of findings and further correlations suggest that attitudes are affected by a multitude of different factors, forming **multifaceted relationships**
- quantitative character and small scale of the research cannot explore interrelations in depth
- findings reveal **potentially rewarding areas** for further research using methodological triangulation
- attitudes concerning **active pronunciation and grammar statements** suggest that undefined notions of correct English and native speaker norms lead non-native speakers to experience linguistic insecurity
- generally **high tolerance** for their interlocutors' speech

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