

**Attitudes toward English as an international language: A comparative study of college teachers and students in Taiwan**

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**Abstract**

English has become an international language which people use to communicate with others to achieve a variety of purposes. Traditional English language teaching (ELT) pedagogy tends to promote native-like competence as the ultimate goal of English language learning. However, many scholars have criticized such a traditional teaching orientation and have proposed the concept of English as an international language (EIL) (McKay, 2003). In the framework of EIL, there is no one Standard English; rather, English learners should be aware of English varieties (e.g., American English, Singlish, Indian English, etc.) and be able to use appropriate English varieties in certain contexts. While the notion of EIL is accepted by many scholars, ELT professionals and English learners are usually unaware of EIL. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the attitudes of English teachers and students in Taiwan toward EIL. It discusses differences between teachers' and students' attitudes toward EIL through quantitatively analyzing the questionnaire of EIL attitudes completed by 300 students and 17 teachers in the English department of a university in Taiwan. The findings indicated that both students and teachers had positive attitudes towards the concept of EIL, but resisted using Taiwanese English. In addition, while most students felt inferior to native speakers, the teachers tended to encourage their students to put emphasis on linguistic correctness during communication. Pedagogical implications are also provided.

Keywords: English as an international language, Taiwan, teachers' and students' attitudes

**Introduction**

Nowadays English is an international language with which people communicate with others to achieve a variety of purposes such as social media, international business, cross cultural communication, and so on. Kachru (1992) distinguished English users into three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. The Inner Circle includes English speakers from countries where English is used as a first language such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The Outer Circle refers to countries such as India, the Philippines, and Singapore, where English is used as a second language. In the Expanding Circle, English is studied as a foreign language and is used for international communication. These three concentric

circles show that there are many people speaking English, even though they are not using English as their first language.

Although in today's world non-native English speakers outnumber native English speakers, in traditional English language teaching (ELT), people still think of the Inner Circle speakers as the owners of the English language, and tend to promote native-like competence as the final goal of English language learning. However, many scholars have criticized this traditional teaching orientation and have proposed the concept of English as an international language (EIL) (Matsuda, 2003; Jenkins, 2003; McKay, 2003).

That is, English does not belong to any particular country or people, and certain English varieties in the Inner circle (i.e., British English or American English) should not be the only standards for teaching or learning English. Other English varieties in the Outer or Expanding circles should be acknowledged and valued as well because English is a tool for communication in different regions and across cultural borders (Kachru, 1992; Jenkins, 2003; McKay, 2003; Widdowson, 1994). Although many scholars have promoted the new concept of English language, it is still difficult to implement such a new concept in the real world because some teachers and students have different attitudes towards the EIL conception (Masoumpanah & Zarei, 2014; Matsuda, 2003). Therefore, a deeper understanding of attitudes toward EIL, ownership of English, and English varieties is both urgent and necessary.

The related works on the EIL conception reported in the literature can be classified into three major categories: accent attitudes, English language attitudes, and EIL attitudes. Several studies have examined attitudes toward the accents of English varieties. McKenzie (2008) examined the social factors and non-native attitudes towards varieties of spoken English in Japan through a questionnaire of English learners in Japan. The results of the study demonstrated that the informants' ratings of speakers of varieties of English speech tended to be complex and were often contradictory. That is, while most informants were in favor of British and American English varieties, they demonstrated a greater solidarity with a heavily accented English spoken by a Japanese speaker. Sari and Yusuf (2009) investigated the role of non-native English speakers' attitudes towards English accents and their identity through interviewing English learners. The findings showed that the main problem of the determination to use their accented English to express their L1 identity in an International English Lingua Franca (ELF) community is the ability to understand other non-native speakers of English who speak with their own accents as local dialects which differ from those of other regions or from the grammar of "received English."

Other studies have examined attitudes towards the English language. For example, Ke (2009) investigated Taiwanese college students' conceptions of English and their views of the world. These findings further support the claim that students' attitudes toward, preferences for, or proficiency level in English do not seem to relate to their conceptions of English. The most significant in-

indicator causing a positive attitude toward English is participants' intercultural experiences.

Few studies have been undertaken to understand students' or English learners' attitudes toward the EIL conception (Matsuda, 2003; Saito, 2012; Stanojevic & Smojver, 2010). Most of these studies pointed out that most teachers and students still think it is important to teach or learn native-like English. Many students claim that they prefer native speakers of English as their English teachers because they think that native-speaking teachers are more helpful for them to learn English (Matsuda, 2003).

To date, however, research has tended to focus on students' rather than teachers' attitudes toward EIL. Moreover, few studies have investigated the attitudes of both English teachers and students toward EIL (He & Miller, 2011; Ranta, 2010), and none have been conducted in the context of Taiwan. In general, the difference between teachers' and students' attitudes toward EIL conceptions has been a neglected area.

The purpose of this study is to understand the attitudes of Taiwanese teachers and students toward EIL. More specifically, this study was undertaken in order to understand the difference between teachers' and students' attitudes toward EIL. In addition, through examining and analyzing teachers' and learners' attitudes toward the EIL conception, certain points can be helpful for language educators to design more effective EIL courses in the future.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are Taiwanese college students' and teachers' attitudes toward the concept of English as an international language (EIL)?
2. What are the differences between students' and teachers' attitudes toward the concept of EIL?

## Literature review

### *Conception of EIL: Ownership of English*

In traditional thinking, English may be considered as belonging to the native speakers of English (Norton, 1997; Widdowson, 1994). As Norton (1997) pointed out, native speakers of the language are generally considered as the real owners of English. Likewise, Widdowson (1994) noted that English originated in Britain, and both its morphology and history were created there. It could therefore legitimately be claimed that the British are the custodians of English, and English is their property.

However, the native speakers' ownership of English has been challenged as more and more people have begun to learn English as their second or as a foreign language. As Graddol (1999) estimated, in the next 50 years, second language (L2) users of English are expected to grow from 235 million to around 462 million, which would overtake the number of first language (L1) speakers. Furthermore, Jenkins (2003) stated that in today's world, due to English being an international language or a lingua franca, most communica-

tion in English might not involve English L1 speakers. Therefore, many EIL scholars have pointed out that English does not belong to any particular country or people. For example, Norton (1997) argued that English belongs to all English users, no matter whether they are native or non-native speakers because it has become an international language. Similarly, Graddol (1997) claimed that although native speakers might feel that they are the owners of English, it would be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who are likely to determine the world's future. Widdowson (1994) pointed out that more and more language researchers and educators are embracing the fact that English is spoken by more people as a non-native than as a native language. In other words, as English is no longer exclusively owned by the native-speaking communities, it should be shared by all members of the English-speaking communities, including non-native speakers.

To sum up, the number of people who use English as a second or foreign language is greater than that of those who use it as their mother tongue. Native speakers of English cannot be the only owners of English because English is no longer determined by birth or origin, but by those who use the language.

#### *Conception of EIL: Standard English*

To achieve native-like ability was usually the main goal in traditional English language teaching (ELT) pedagogy (McKay, 2003). Gardner (2001) noted that L2 achievement referred to developing near-native-like competence. However, the concept of EIL proposes that Standard English should not be the English used in the United Kingdom and the United States, but rather, should include different English varieties from the whole world.

Kachru's (1992) three concentric circles highlighted that many of the Outer Circle countries were colonies of the Inner Circle and had indigenized (or localized) varieties of English, such as in India, the Philippines and Singapore. According to Kachru (1992), the "nativization" process, which comprises local development of mixing phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic features, is the way to indigenize non-native varieties of English. Thus, these English varieties are used with distinct features by the regions or nations as their native or official language; Indian English could be considered as one convincing example. Likewise, when we look more closely at the European Union, we can know that in Europe, many countries have their own English which is integrated into their culture, life-styles, history, and so on (James, 2000). It is therefore important to raise people's general awareness of the global role of English, and L2 speakers need to be more tolerant of different kinds of English including non-native Englishes (Seidlhofer, 2004). In addition, to many L2 speakers, English communication ability is more important than achieving native-like competence (McKay, 2006). As a result, the main goal of learning English should focus on the competence of English communication.

English is a tool for communication in different regions and helps people cross cultural borders (Kachru, 1992; Jenkins, 2003; McKay, 2003; Widdowson, 1994). There should be no so-called Standard English, and British or American English should not overpower other English varieties. English should belong to those who use it, and can even represent one specific culture of a region.

#### *Students' attitudes toward EIL*

A number of studies have pointed out that students have a negative attitude toward EIL. For instance, Saito (2012) examined the native speaker orientation among middle school EFL students in Japan. Data were elicited from 338 students in a public middle school through a questionnaire. The findings suggested that the students had more positive attitudes toward native than non-native varieties of English. That is, many English teachers and students still support native English (i.e., British or American English) as the Standard English. Likewise, Matsuda (2003) explored the ownership of English in Japanese secondary schools through a questionnaire and interviews. The study was conducted at a private senior high school (10th-12th grades) in Tokyo, and one 12th-grade class was selected which consisted of 34 students. The findings showed that the students viewed the speakers of the Inner Circle as the owners of the language. They believed that although English is used all over the world, it does not belong to the world. The Japanese variety of English was perceived as either Japanese or incorrect English that deviated from the "real" English of native English speakers. Similarly, Moore and Bounchan (2010) studied the views of college lecturers and their students in relation to the status of English in Cambodia through a questionnaire. The findings showed that most of the students thought it was important for people in Cambodia to learn English, and the standard must be the native English which is taught by native speakers of English. Finally, Stanojevic and Smojver (2011) examined the attitudes of Croatian university students toward the possible emergence of Euro English and their foreign accent. The study found that the students seemed to be unwilling to accept English varieties. As a result, most of the findings indicate that, in general, students have negative attitudes toward the conception of EIL.

Among the studies on students' attitudes toward EIL, fortunately, there are a few students who have positive attitudes. Jin (2005) explored Chinese undergraduates' attitudes towards China English and the preferences of local or native English-speaking teachers through a pre-questionnaire before an EIL course and a post-questionnaire after the course, group discussion, and interviews. The findings showed that the participants were more positive about EIL after the course. The students became more comfortable using English with a Chinese accent, and felt that native-speaker norms are no longer so important. They thought that China English should one day be accepted as a standard va-

riety of English. Xu and Poel (2011) examined the relation between English as a lingua franca (ELF, a similar concept to that of EIL) as a theoretical construct and as a reality of life for Flemish language students. A total of 69 second-year university students completed questionnaires about the ELF conception. The results indicated that the students had embraced the idea of ELF but retained a strong belief in the native standard norm. In short, although most of the studies found that students cannot accept the concept of EIL, a small amount of research has indicated students' positive attitudes toward EIL.

#### *Teachers' attitudes toward EIL*

Whereas many English students' attitudes have been explored, there are few studies focusing on teachers' attitudes toward EIL. Among the few that have examined teachers' attitudes, Lai (2008) explored what university English teachers think about the role of EIL today in Taiwan through qualitative interviews with five college English teachers in Taiwan. The findings revealed that these teachers were struggling about whether they should follow a native speakers' model or an English variety when teaching English. Although most of them agreed with the notion of EIL, it was very difficult for them to put it into their own teaching practices because most of their students wanted to achieve native-like competence as their final goal, and in Taiwan native-like English is more acceptable than English varieties. Therefore, even though the teachers themselves had positive attitudes toward EIL, it was still very hard for them to teach the EIL conception in class.

#### *Both students' and teachers' attitudes toward EIL*

While most of the studies have focused on either students' or teachers' attitudes, only a little research has examined both students' and teachers' attitudes toward EIL. Among these few studies, Pishghadam and Saboori (2011) analyzed teachers' and learners' attitudes toward English language learning and teaching in the language institutes in Iran, with respect to the theory of world Englishes through interviews and observation. The findings indicated that in Iran, both teachers and students still believed in a world English rather than world Englishes. However, there is another study which showed that students and teachers both had positive attitudes toward EIL. Ranta (2010) investigated Finnish English teachers' and students' views of English in the real world and English at school. Questionnaires were filled out by 108 students and 34 non-native teachers of English in a Finnish upper secondary school. The results suggested that although native-like proficiency is the standard when they teach or learn in school, students and teachers in Finland still had a good awareness of the concept of EIL in reality, and accepted English varieties. According to the findings of these two studies, there are many contradictions in both students' and teachers' attitudes toward EIL. Therefore, although much work has

been done to date, more studies need to be conducted to ascertain the difference between students' and teachers' attitudes towards the conception of EIL.

### *Summary*

Previous studies have shown that native speakers of English cannot be the only owners of English based on the EIL conception. There should not be a single standard for judging English production. English should refer to English varieties in local contexts, rather than the Inner circle British or American English. Previous studies on attitudes towards EIL have highlighted that most teachers and students still think it is important to teach or learn native-like English. Many students claim that they prefer native English-speaking teachers because they think that they are more helpful for learning English than non-native English-speaking teachers.

According to these studies of attitudes toward EIL, there are still a few students and teachers who are aware of EIL in the real world and who welcome diversity. Although all of these studies have aimed to understand students' or teachers' attitudes toward EIL, none of them have investigated or compared the attitudes of both English teachers and students toward EIL in Taiwan. In other words, the difference between teachers' and students' attitudes toward EIL conceptions is a neglected area, and is thus the focus of the present study in the context of Taiwan.

## **Methodology**

This aim of this study was to investigate Taiwanese college students' and teachers' attitudes toward the concept of English as an international language (EIL). It further examined the differences between students' and teachers' attitudes toward the concept of EIL. The following sections describe the research design, research participants, instruments, and data analysis, respectively.

### *Research design*

In this study, we applied a quantitative research design to the investigation. The questionnaire design was used to address the research questions of the study. A questionnaire was administered to identify the attitudes of Taiwanese students and teachers toward EIL in a university in Taiwan.

### *Research participants*

The present study was conducted at a university located in a suburban area of northern Taiwan. The participants were 300 students and 17 teachers in the English department. As faculty members, we are familiar with the university context, making it possible to develop a better understanding of the results.

All the students and teachers in the English department were invited to participate in the research. Of the 428 students and 21 teachers, 300 students and 17 teachers agreed to take part in the study. According to Table 1, the student participants were 92 males and 208 females majoring in the English department, consisting of 68 freshmen, 52 sophomores, 91 juniors, 80 seniors, and 8 above senior level (other). Table 2 indicates that the teacher participants were 3 males and 14 females teaching in the department.

Table 1  
*Background information of the students*

Gender		Grade				
Male	Female	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	other
92	208	68	52	91	80	8

Table 2  
*Background information of the teachers*

Gender		Years of teaching English(year)			
Male	Female	0-4	5-9	10-14	15↑
3	14	1	6	6	4

### *Instruments*

The questionnaire was adapted from Matsuda (2003), Xu and Poel (2011) and Stanojevic and Smojver (2011), and was translated into Chinese. The central issues structuring the questionnaire statements are based on the key concepts of the theory of “English as an international language” as reviewed earlier (McKay, 2003; Widdowson, 1994). The questionnaire for students was composed of 49 statements to which the respondents indicated their degree of agreement, with the choices of “*strongly agree*”, “*agree*”, “*no comment*”, “*disagree*”, and “*strongly disagree*.” The questionnaire for the students was structured into seven areas: (1) goal/focus of learning English; (2) motivation for learning English; (3) opinions about ownership of English and varieties of English; (4) opinions about Standard English; (5) feelings about interaction with native/non-native interlocutors; (6) focus of learning and views of EIL communication; and (7) opinions about ideal English teachers (NS/NNS). The questionnaire for teachers included the same items, but an additional area about teacher beliefs regarding teaching English was added (59 items).

### *Data analysis*

The quantitative data were coded and analyzed by descriptive statistics, *t* test through SPSS version 22. Descriptive statistics were performed to explore the Taiwanese students’ and teachers’ attitudes toward the EIL conception. Specifically, the mean scores and standard deviation of the survey were calculated to understand the participants’ views of the notion of EIL. *T* tests were conducted



to compare Taiwanese students' and teachers' attitudes toward the EIL conception.

## Results

This section reports the analysis of the data collected from the surveys of the students' and teachers' attitudes toward English as an International Language (EIL). It reports five themes concerning the participants' attitudes toward the EIL conception: (a) goal and motivation of learning English, (b) ownership of English and English varieties, (c) opinions about Standard English, (d) interaction with native/non-native speakers, and (e) views on EIL communication. After presenting their attitudes according to each theme, the differences between the teachers' and students' attitudes toward the concept of EIL are discussed.

### Goal and motivation of learning English

Regarding the goal of learning English, both students and teachers perceived speaking English fluently as more important than correct English pronunciation and grammar. According to Table 3, most students and teachers (strongly) agreed that speaking fluently is important when they speak English (item A1) (mean=4.41 vs. 4.39). The findings also revealed that most of the participants learned English in order to communicate with others. As Table 3 shows, most of the students and teachers (strongly) agreed that English is a tool for communication with people from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds (item B3) (mean= 4.41 vs. 4.53). Therefore, for most students and teachers, fluently communicating with others is their main goal and motivation for learning English.

Table 3

*Results of the descriptive data and t test on students' and teachers' attitudes towards the goals and motivation of learning English*

Items	Student M(SD)	Teacher M(SD)	<i>t</i>	P- value
<b>Goal/focus of learning English</b>				
(A1) When I speak English, I believe that being fluent is important.	4.39 (0.711)	4.41 (0.507)	- 0.143	0.161
(A2) When I speak English, I believe that correct pronunciation is important	4.13 (0.710)	3.88 (0.600)	1.429	0.35
(A3) When I speak English, I believe that correct grammar is important	3.45 (0.900)	3.35 (0.702)	0.452	0.166
<b>Motivation for learning English</b>				
(B1) I like learning English because it al-	3.91	4.12	-	0.068

lows me to interact with native English speakers and understand their cultures.	(0.788)	(1.054)	1.020	
(B2) I like learning English because I love the beauty of the English language.	3.72 (0.786)	3.59 (1.004)	0.645	0.064
(B3) I like learning English because it is a useful tool for communication with people from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds.	4.41 (0.629)	4.53 (0.800)	- 0.770	0.562
(B4) We learn English to communicate with people from a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including both native and non-native speakers of English.	4.29 (0.659)	4.59 (0.507)	- 1.829	0.512
(B5) Learning English for undergraduate students is important for their academic studies.	4.16 (0.755)	4.41 (0.795)	- 1.334	0.801

Note: \* $p < .05$  , \*\* $p < .01$  , \*\*\* $p < .001$

### Ownership of English and English varieties

The results indicate that while most of the participants had an open-minded attitude toward the concept of English as an international language (EIL), regarding ownership of English and English varieties, the students and teachers had varied attitudes. As Table 4 shows, the students were more open-minded than the teachers regarding the concept of ownership of English (Items C1& C5). Specifically, more students than teachers seemed to agree that English does not belong to any particular countries or people (Item C1, mean= 3.81 vs. 3.35). The results of the *t* test also reveal that there is a significant difference between the students' and teachers' perspectives on item C1 ( $t=1.749$ ;  $p=.038$ ). While many students agreed that English belongs to those who can speak English fluently, teachers tended to disagree with the statement (Item C5, mean = 3.40 vs. 2.88).

Moreover, the findings reveal that more teachers than students tended to embrace different varieties of English (Table 4, items C2, C3, & C4). To illustrate, the teachers were more aware of other varieties of English in addition to British or American English than the students (Item C2, mean= 4.44 vs. 4.00). Also, more teachers than students were interested in knowing about other English varieties (Item C3, mean = 3.81 vs. 3.53). Finally, more teachers than students agreed that it is useful to know the different accents and ways of speaking English (Item C4, Mean=4.18 vs. 3.75).

Therefore, as Table 4 shows, the students were more positive about the ownership of English than the teachers; the teachers were more open-minded than the students when it comes to the concept of English varieties. The teachers and students had significantly different opinions on the aspects of owner-

ship of English and the concept of English varieties; this is probably due to their different identities and linguistic contact. That is, teachers tend to have stricter standards in terms of language accuracy; thus, it is less likely for them to claim ownership of English. When it comes to the concept of English varieties, though, the teachers were more tolerant and open-minded. This might be because most teacher participants had experience of studying or travelling abroad, which resulted in an increase in language contact with people from all over the world.

Table 4

*Results of the descriptive data and t test on students' and teachers' attitudes regarding ownership of English, and English varieties*

Items	Student M(SD)	Teacher M(SD)	<i>t</i>	P- value
<b>Ownership of English and English varieties</b>				
(C1) English does not belong to any particular countries or people.	3.81 (0.838)	3.35 (1.057)	1.749*	0.038
(C2) Besides British or American English, there are other varieties of English in the world, e.g. Singapore English	4.00 (0.734)	4.44 (0.496)	-2.444	0.788
(C3) I am interested in knowing about other varieties of English	3.53 (0.782)	3.81 (0.808)	-1.464	0.397
(C4) It is useful to get to know the different accents and ways of speaking English in the world	3.75 (0.773)	4.18 (0.636)	-2.248	0.098
(C5) English belongs to those who can speak English fluently	3.40 (1.015)	2.88 (1.219)	2.023	0.123

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

### Opinions about Standard English

Although most of the participants were aware of English varieties, some students and teachers still perceived American or British English as the standard when they learned English. Interestingly, as Table 5 indicates, the teachers were more likely to embrace English varieties, while the students tended to hold a monolithic view of English and see British or American English as Standard English (Items D1, D2, & D3). For example, more students than teachers would like to pronounce English as American and British people do (Item D1, Mean=3.81 vs. 3.35). It is shown that more students than teachers felt inferior to native speakers concerning English language use (Item D2, Mean=4.06 vs. 3.24). There are more students than teachers who thought that people should learn to speak English as closely to a British or American accent as possible (item D3) (mean= 3.38 vs. 3.12). The results of the *t* test also re-

veal that there are significant differences between students' and teachers' perspectives on items D1 ( $t=1.075$ ,  $p=.025$ ) and D2 ( $t=2.795$ ,  $p=.011$ ).

On the other hand, the results also indicate that many of the participants paid attention to fluency in communication rather than native-like competence, and that native norms are no longer the standard when learning English (Items D4, D5, & D6). According to Table 5, both teachers and students agreed that speaking fluently is more important than sounding native-like (Item D4, mean= 4.06 vs.3.80) and that it is not necessary to speak like British or Americans (Item D5, mean= 3.59 vs.3.38). Most of the participants did not mind people speaking English with an accent as long as it did not hinder the communication (Item D6, mean= 4.59 vs. 4.07). It is important to note that more teachers than students agreed with items D4, D5, and D6.

Table 5

*Results of the descriptive data and t test on students' and teachers' attitudes regarding Standard English*

Items	Student M(SD)	Teacher M(SD)	<i>t</i>	P- value
<b>Opinions about Standard English</b>				
(D1) I want to pronounce English as British or American people do	3.77 (0.848)	3.47 (1.125)	1.075*	0.025
(D2) With respect to my English language use, I see myself as inferior to native speakers	4.06 (0.840)	3.24 (1.200)	2.795*	0.011
(D3) People should learn to speak English as closely to a British or American accent as possible	3.38 (0.874)	3.12 (0.781)	1.201	0.378
(D4) It is more important to be able to speak fluently than to sound native-like	3.80 (0.849)	4.06 (0.827)	-1.212	0.389
(D5) It is not necessary to speak like British or Americans	3.38 (0.862)	3.59 (1.004)	-0.958	0.308
(D6) I don't mind people speaking English with an accent as long as it does not hinder the communication	4.07 (1.796)	4.59 (0.507)	-1.191	0.928

Note: \* $p<.05$  , \*\* $p<.01$  , \*\*\* $p<.001$

In sum, more students than teachers felt inferior to native speakers regarding their English language use. Although many of the participants thought that it is not necessary to sound like native speakers, they still wanted to pronounce English as British or American people do, especially the students in this study. Because of the differences in English proficiency, the teachers were more confident and comfortable when conversing with native speakers of English. The students who felt inferior to native speakers might want to boost

their confidence and English proficiency by learning to sound like native speakers of English.

### Interaction with native/non-native speakers

The findings from this study seem to indicate that the teachers and students had different attitudes toward native and non-native English speakers and the use of Taiwanese English. As Table 6 shows, more teachers than students felt comfortable speaking English with native speakers (Item E1, mean=3.94 vs. 3.20) as well as enjoyed speaking English with non-native speakers of English in multilingual environments (Item E3, mean=4.00 vs 3.64). More teachers than students thought that there is no difference speaking English with either native or non-native speakers (Item E4, mean=3.71 vs 3.50) and that native and non-native English speakers are equal when using English for international communication (Item E5, mean=4.35 vs. 3.93). There were more students than teachers who felt less comfortable speaking English with non-native speakers (Item E2, mean=3.06 vs. 2.59). The results of the *t* test also suggested that there are significant differences between the teachers' and students' attitudes toward items E2 ( $t=1.789$ ,  $p=.014$ ) and E4 ( $t=-.715$ ,  $p=.026$ ).

Table 6

*Results of the descriptive data and t test on students' and teachers' attitudes regarding interaction with native/non-native speakers and views on EIL communication*

Items	Student M(SD)	Teacher M(SD)	<i>t</i>	P- value
<b>Interaction with native/non-native speakers</b>				
(E1) I feel comfortable speaking English with native speakers	3.20 (0.837)	3.94 (0.827)	-3.568	0.115
(E2) I feel less comfortable speaking English with non-native speakers	3.06 (0.772)	2.59 (1.064)	1.789*	0.014
(E3) I enjoy speaking English with non-native speakers of English in multilingual environments	3.64 (0.690)	4.00 (0.707)	-2.066	0.135
(E4) There is no difference to me speaking English with either native or non-native speakers	3.50 (0.844)	3.71 (1.160)	-0.715*	0.026
(E5) Native and non-native English speakers are equal when using English for international communication	3.93 (0.800)	4.35 (0.7020)	-2.135	0.779
(E6) It is ok to use Taiwanese English when speaking or writing English	2.58 (0.945)	2.18 (1.185)	-0.490	0.139
(E7) Taiwanese English can express	2.74	2.29	2.016	0.552

Taiwanese things better than words from American English do	(0.872)	(1.047)		
(E8) Foreigners would not understand us if we talk to them in Taiwanese English	2.95 (0.924)	3.06 (1.088)	-0.454	0.203

Note: \* $p < .05$  , \*\* $p < .01$  , \*\*\* $p < .001$

### Views on EIL communication

The results showed that most of the participants considered communication skills as more important than linguistic correctness. As Table 7 indicates, the majority of the teachers and students believed that effective communication depends more on communication skills than on correct language use (Item F4, Mean=4.24 vs. 4.00) and that the focus of the teaching of English should be on developing communicative effectiveness across international contexts (Item F5, Mean=4.29 vs. 4.02). Most of the teachers and students agreed that they want to know more about the skills for intercultural communication (Item F6, Mean=4.35 vs.4.06).

While the majority of the participants thought intercultural communication skills are important, the study also illustrates that some of them still pay much attention to linguistic correctness. According to Table 7, many teachers and students tended to pay a lot of attention to linguistic correctness and precision in using English for spoken communication (Item F1, mean=3.88 vs.3.60) and felt very strongly about what constitutes “correct” English in spoken communication (Item F2, mean=3.24 vs. 3.36). When speaking with fellow non-native speakers, some teachers and students felt bothered by their linguistic errors and their varying levels of proficiency (Item F3, mean=2.82 vs. 3.07). What is interesting in this data is that the results of the  $t$  test reveal that there is significant difference between the students’ and teachers’ perspectives on item F1 ( $t=-1.831$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). That is, more teachers than students focus on linguistic correctness in EIL communication.

The study also indicates that the participants agreed that one’s first language could be used as a resource in learning English. As Table 8 shows, many teachers and students agreed that their first language could help them learn English more easily (Item F8, mean=4.18 vs. 3.34); some of them disagreed with the statement that they should not use their first language during English class (Item F7, mean=2.53 vs. 3.43).

To sum up, while most participants agreed that fluency is more important than accuracy in EIL communication, the teachers tended to pay more attention to linguistic correctness in English spoken communication.

Table 7

*Results of the descriptive data and t test on students’ and teachers’ attitudes regarding EIL communication*

Items	Student M(SD)	Teacher M(SD)	<i>t</i>	P- value
<b>Views on EIL communication</b>				
(F1) I tend to pay a lot of attention to linguistic correctness and precision in using English for spoken communication	3.60 (0.757)	3.88 (0.600)	- 1.831**	0.001
(F2) I feel very strongly about what is “correct” English in spoken communication	3.36 (0.831)	3.24 (0.752)	0.594	0.492
(F3) When speaking with fellow non-native speakers, I feel bothered by their linguistic errors and their varying levels of proficiency	3.07 (0.772)	2.82 (0.883)	1.291	0.664
(F4) Effective communication depends more on communication skills than on correct language use	4.00 (0.657)	4.24 (0.664)	-1.456	0.310
(F5) The focus of the teaching of English should be on developing communicative effectiveness across international contexts	4.02 (0.659)	4.29 (0.772)	-1.652	0.212
(F6) I want to know more about the skills for intercultural communication	4.06 (0.689)	4.35 (0.606)	-1.733	0.651
(F7) I think we should not use our first language during the English class	3.43 (0.906)	2.53 (1.125)	3.954	0.212
(F8) My first language can help me learn English more easily	3.34 (0.843)	4.18 (0.809)	-4.009	0.387

Note: \* $p < .05$  , \*\* $p < .01$  , \*\*\* $p < .001$

### Summary

The results of the present study suggest that, broadly speaking, both students and teachers had positive attitudes toward EIL. Most of the participants learned English in order to communicate with others so they thought that fluency is more important than accuracy. They preferred to focus on communication skills rather than native-like competence. In addition, the participants had ambivalent feelings about some of the EIL concepts. Many of them accepted English varieties but considered using Taiwanese English as undesirable.

Comparing the difference between students' and teachers' attitudes toward the concept of EIL, it could be concluded that teachers were more likely to embrace a range of English varieties and see one's first language as a resource in learning English, but they tended to pay more attention to linguistic correctness in spoken communication; unlike the teachers, many students still

wanted to pronounce English like British or American people do, and they saw themselves as inferior to native speakers of English regarding language use.

## **Discussion**

### **General attitudes toward the EIL conception**

Concerning the notions of EIL, the results of this study showed that most participants held positive attitudes toward English varieties, Standard English, and the ownership of English. They could embrace English varieties and consider that there is not only one standard when people learn English. Moreover, English belongs to the world because it is a tool for communication. A partial explanation for this may lie in the fact that people can get more information than before, which means there were more opportunities for them to be aware of different cultures and English varieties.

Up to this point, these results are consistent with Ranta (2010), whose study found that although native-like proficiency was the standard when the participants taught or learned in school, many Finnish students and teachers still had good awareness of the concept of EIL, and accepted different English varieties. The results of the current study are also in agreement with those of Jin (2005) who pointed out that after giving more information about the concept of EIL, the participants would have more positive attitudes. The findings of this study are not compatible with previous studies which suggested that both teachers and students still believed in a world English rather than world Englishes (Moore & Bounchan, 2010; Pishghadam & Saboori, 2011; Saito, 2012).

### **Ambivalence**

Although the participants in this study were open-minded about the concept of EIL, they had ambivalent feelings about having a native-like accent and the use of Taiwanese English. The results indicated that although the participants could accept English varieties and would like to know different kinds of English, they still considered that it is not advisable to use Taiwanese English. In addition, they thought that it is not necessary for people to sound native-like, but if they can they would like to pronounce English like American or British people do. The more likely explanation rests in the nature of participants' attitudes which depend on the educational goals and particular social environment of each country (Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011). This result is congruent with previous studies which found that although students had embraced the idea of EIL, they still retained a strong belief in linguistic accuracy according to native English norms, aspired to sound native-like, and believed that American English is the best variety to teach and learn (Pishghadam & Saboori, 2011; Saito, 2012; Xu & Poel, 2011).



Most of the students would feel inferior to native speakers when they speak English. We interpret this to mean that students were afraid that native speakers might judge them according to their English proficiency and make fun of the mistakes they make. This is in complete agreement with previous studies (Ke, 2009; Xu & Poel, 2011). Previous research also pointed out that students have inferior feelings using English to communicate with native speakers, and this unequal linguistic power relationship does not help them develop a cosmopolitan worldview or view of an equal world.

Finally, most of the teachers tended to focus on linguistic correctness while speaking English. This result may be explained by considering that most of them have high expectations of themselves. They cannot accept themselves making mistakes in English because they are professionals. Besides, if they cannot speak English correctly, the society will doubt their capability as English teachers, which will influence their English teaching career. This finding is not surprising, as it confirmed what previous researchers have discovered about teachers having a strong sense of commanding the correct use of English rather than locally accented English or English varieties (Gun, 2009; Lai, 2008; Liou, 2010; Pishghadam & Saboori, 2011; Ranta, 2010).

In conclusion, the findings of this research show that most of the participants are willing to accept the EIL conception. However, they are still struggling with the use of Taiwanese English and a native-like accent. Furthermore, the students' attitudes toward the EIL conception are differentiated from the teachers'. While most of the students would feel inferior to native speakers when they speak English, most teachers believed that native and non-native English users are in an equal position, but they tended to place much more emphasis on linguistic correctness.

### **Implications of the study**

Several pedagogical implications can be drawn from this study. First of all, the results indicated that most of the students would feel inferior to native speakers, and most of the teachers tended to focus on linguistic correctness while they speak English. Therefore, raising both students' and teachers' awareness of the EIL conception regarding these two aspects is one of the ways to change the status quo. Teachers' awareness raising is particularly crucial because they play important roles in English language education (Lai, 2009). Jenkins (2006) also argued that one of the reasons why the EIL conception has not influenced language teaching in practice is because teacher training programmers place less emphasis on it. Hence, in teacher education, the educators should be raising awareness of the concept of EIL by designing some EIL courses to raise both teachers' and students' awareness.

In addition, the findings showed that although the participants were open-minded about EIL, they still had ambivalent feelings about the native-like accent and the use of Taiwanese English. It is suggested that English educators and teachers can try to integrate the EIL concept into their teaching. They can

familiarize their students with different English accents and varieties during class. For example, Jin (2005) designed a course that integrated the concept of World Englishes which includes arguments regarding the ownership of English and Standard English. The result of the study suggested that after taking the course, Chinese students felt comfortable about using Chinglish, and they thought Chinglish should be accepted as a standard one day.

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