



Students' Perception Toward American and British English in

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Abstract

This research aims to find out (1). Variety of English that the students use most in Cokroaminoto University of Palopo (2). The students' perceptions toward American and British English. It is a descriptive research. The population of this research is the seventh students of Cokroaminoto Palopo which consists of three parallel classes. The total population is 120 students. Cluster random sampling technique is used to determine the sample. This research took one class as sample. The result of this research shows the students use American English variety in vocabulary even though they think that they mix both varieties of English and they have ever exposed both of varieties, the students prefer American English in teaching learning process as they think that it easy to be pronounced and understood and it is frequently used by them. Other result shows that the students mostly notice the differences between American and British English on pronunciation. But minority of the students still think that British English is cool, more formal, general variety of English and they like it.

Keywords: American English and British English vocabulary, varieties of English, students' perceptions

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Introduction

Standard English means English that used widely in formal events. Those languages are not only used in the countries where the English native speakers live but also almost all over the world. Those varieties of English are used universally in education, mass media, politics, and trade and even entertainments. They spread all over the world from decades; time by time it seems that people from around the world are familiar with those varieties of English. Somehow, there is one of those varieties which can mostly be used by certain community as it is exposed more than the other varieties.

English has two standard varieties of language. They are American English and British English. The countries which use English as second language of course may use of these varieties or merely influenced by only one variety. Compared with the countries which use English as foreign language surely it is not very clear which varieties are used mostly. The dominant input of varieties of English may become the English variety mostly used in those countries. But it cannot be guaranteed as the input of varieties of English at school may be varied.

Based on Kachru's circle there are three layers of circle which show the speakers of English . First layer is inner circle that include countries which use English as first language such as USA, Australia, Ireland and some other countries. The second layer is outer circle which include countries that use English as second language. In this layer countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Philippine, and some countries are included. Thirdly, expanding circle includes countries which use English as foreign language such as China, Japan, Korea, and some other countries. Indeed, Indonesia is included in expanding circle as the status of English is foreign language in Indonesia

American English and British English are mostly used in the world. Therefore we need to know these two varieties of English. Unfortunately, many English speakers may only know one kind of English or cannot differentiate between British English or American English. People may only use only one kind of variety without knowing the variety of English itself. Beside that they may have different perception toward varieties of English. Most of them may prefer only one kind even though they actually use the other one. This research investigates the English variety used by the most students of English department in Cokroaminoto Palopo University. Knowing the students' variety of English that they use can help the lecturers to deliver subjects more comprehensive and decide to use certain utterances. Beside it may help the lecturers to promote another variety that the students do not use, while the students' perception may enhance better interaction between lecturers and students.

Standard English

There are some criteria for Standard Language; they are authority, language of famous writers, democracy, logic, and language of important people in community. English is a

language that used most widely in the world. No one seems to have spent anytime debating whether or not they should broadcast in English. There is a plenty of discussion about what kind of English should be used, of course; but the choice of English in the first place was simply not an issue (Crystal, 2004:84). Based on historical foundation, English had impacted the use of language in the world. It may be one reason why English became global language.

According to McArthur in Farrel and Martin (2009:2) Standard English is generally considered “the variety most widely accepted, understood, and perhaps valued within an English speaking country”. It is related to the correct usage of a language and acceptability in community. Furthermore McArthur in Farrel and Martin (2009:2) stated that Standard English has at least three identifying characteristic. The first, it is easiest to recognize in print because written conventions are similar worldwide. In this case most of books were published and accessed in English. Secondly, it is usually used by news presenter. Mass Medias of world news expose English to convey information. Of course it is one reason why English became standard language. Third, its usage relates to the speaker’s social class and education. There is a tendency that certain varieties of English are used in education. Beside that certain varieties of English are limited used in social class of English speakers. Even people can predict the social class of a community by their English used.

Fairclough in Hickey (5) added that Standard English was regarded as correct English, and other social dialect other social dialects were stigmatised not only in terms of correctness but also in terms which indirectly reflected on the lifestyles, morality and so forth of their speakers, the emergent working class of capitalised society: they were *vulgar, slovenly, low, barbarous*, and so forth. This case can judge that non-standard English use can reflect the social class of a community. Indeed, a language can show where the speaker’s class from.

Farrel and Martin (2009:3) clarified that If Standard English is supposed to be an example of only one norm of the English language then the term *World Englishes* would be the norm that includes all varieties of the language. It is obvious that Standard English can be only one norm that should be included in all varieties of English. Commonly there are sharply differences of American English and British English, such as spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation that can be clearly identified. Those differences appeared based on the historical background. World Englishes mostly use American dialect and had exercised greater influence on English in the world Crystal in Safaa (2015:10). The variety of American English mostly used on media and information sources all over the world. Even movie and film recently exposed American culture and of course American English variety. Jankonwaki in Safaa (2015:11) added that American English will be the language spoken in the US with its geographically, politically and economically conditioned characteristics. It ensure that American English will be the world language even though American English was considered less educated, less cultured, less beautiful in British English Totti in Safaa (2015:11). It is caused by American English accents were changed and influenced by the immigrations of the British and Germanic in the North America.

Many American English spellings follow Noah Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English Language* of 1828 which was a strong proponent of spelling reform for reasons both philological and nationalistic. Many spelling changes proposed in the US by Webster himself, and in the early 20th century by the Simplified Spelling Board, never caught on, while current

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British English spellings follow, for the most part, those of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755). As result spelling adjustments in the UK had little effect on present-day US spelling, and vice versa.

British English has some differences from American English such as different spelling on the same words. British English is the form of English used in the United Kingdom. It includes all English dialects used within the United Kingdom. History explained that English language started by the arrival of three Germanic tribes that invaded Britain during 5 century. The native inhabitants spoke in Celtic which give us present day Wales, Irish, Gaelic and in (Brittany) Breton (Hogg, 200:1) in the 17th century Britain had great colonization that was followed by trade and by establishment of settler. At that time America did not speak English. As British came there, English then was used for administration, commerce, and education and also mother tongue. The great communities of British in America then used English not only at home but also in all aspects such as work, government and law (Lingyu Qiu in Safaa, 2015:10). Based on the historical background English was spoken by Britain and increasingly spoken in America. That's why there are some differences between both varieties as American English might be changed by the influenced of different speakers.

Furthermore Trudgill and Hanna in Alftberg (2009:4) stated that British English is the standard accent known as RP, normally the variety taught to pupils who are studying English. British English should be one of the priorities taught in schools as British English is the most prestigious variant of English. Tottie in Alftberg (2009:4) added that the text-books are used in schools in many countries in many countries today are still mostly British English-oriented. British English has original and unique accent that is considered as prestigious. The changes of accents, dialects, vocabularies may be caused by the simplified of function in its use in other countries.

Generally there are some differences between American English and British. Those differences can be identified such as spelling, grammar, vocabularies, and pronunciation. Thus the speakers of English may prefer one variety on their communication based on their exposure of English. If someone used to expose American English he/she may speak in American English and vice versa. It is not a problem for native speakers or second language speakers but of course it will be a problem for English foreign learners. They may have different case in using both of varieties.

Stelerova (2014:12) stated that if learners study British and American differences, they might simultaneously broaden their social and cultural experience regarding life and institutions of English-Speaking countries. Students of English foreign learners should understand that varieties of English do exist and they need to expose them. The basic component should be taught is vocabularies as it may cause misunderstanding. Sartvik and Leech in Stelerova (2014:13) added that there are about 4000 different words in American English and British English which some of them known in both countries, but many words are not. This fact is surprising. We consider that English may only have varieties on accent or pronunciation but merely different vocabulary may cause frustrating for the learners on how to use them appropriately that suitable with context. Briefly, the students do need to expose them to

understand the appropriate usage in different varieties of language. That's why English Foreign learners need to understand the vocabularies differences between American English and British English. The same words may have different concept. Here are the common differences between American English and British English.

Perceptions

Preference means a greater liking for one alternative over another or the other (Concise Oxford English Dictionary). It seems that we rather use or chose one than another, while perceptions is a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something. Hurtig (2006:24) found that the teachers in Swedish considered British English as more formal, intelligent, strict and correct than American English. They regards that the features of British English as preferable for educational purposes. A studies of attitude related to English variety seems put British English as the most formal of language. Indeed teachers prefer to use British English in teaching.

Edward in Hurtig (2006:8) investigated teachers' attitude toward Standard English and Hawaiian English speakers. The result showed that the standard variety was consistently favored by the teachers. It shows that Standard English should be taught to the students and they should be able to use one variety. For English Foreign learners, knowing the differences may be helpful to understand the whole context of communication as the differences are significant. Furthermore, Alferg (2009:2) the pupils tend to use American English more than British English, in both vocabulary and pronunciation, and all the pupils mixed American and British English. A majority of the pupils had a higher preference for American English, particularly the boys, who also seemed to be aware of the differences between British and American English. Regardless the most Standard English, it seems that preferences influence the use of variety of English. There may be reasons why the speakers tend to use only one variety. Preference reflects desire or intention to use only one of two choices. English is foreign language in Indonesia. Investigating the students' preference will contribute to English teaching.

Stelzerova (2014:54) in *Teaching Differences between British and American English in Lower-Secondary EFL Classes* found that it was necessary to find how differences between British and American English in EFL textbooks. The differences between British and American English should be taught on a regular basic without affecting the lesson plan and might be an enriching animation of the lesson for both teachers and students.

In other research Safaa (2015:23) investigated British vs American English for University Students Teaching Purposes: The Case of Third-Year EFL Students at Tlemcen University, this research explained that British and American English have variants of English as a whole: the differences do not only affect the pronunciation but also other levels like grammar, writing, semantics and lexics. The students' varieties of English were influenced by the variety that they exposed. Furthermore, Biswanger (2008: 43-44) concluded that varieties of English are still not adequately represented in current ELT. Varieties of English might be not taught explicitly. The curricula, material, and teacher training program have concerned certain details. Indeed to increase the students' communication skills in the maximum situation as much as possible the students need to encounter varieties of English

Related to the issue this research explores which variety of American English and British English do the students of Cokroaminoto University of Palopo use most and what is the

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students' preference toward British American English and British English in Cokroaminoto University of Palopo.. The main objectives are to find which variety of American English and British English that the students use most which can be information to enrich the theory of English varieties related to sociolinguistic study. In this case, this research only focuses on the use of vocabulary for students' English variety. Beside that it aims to find the students' preference toward American English and British Cokroaminoto University of Palopo.

Method

This research was descriptive which took place in Cokroaminoto Palopo University. The population of this research was the seventh semester students in academic year 2018/2019. The total number of the population is 120 students. The seventh semester consists of three classes. The sample was taken by using cluster random sampling technique. One class was chosen as sample which consists of 40 students.

Vocabulary test was used to obtain the data. The test consisted of choices of American and British words. The answers of the students were analyzed which variety that they use mostly. To find out the students' perceptions toward American and British English, questionnaires were distributed which consisted of 8 questions in categories of preference and the difference of English varieties.

Results

This research figures out some finding related to the students' English variety, and the students' perceptions toward American and British English. The results of the research are shown as follows:

a. Student's English variety

Table 1: The variety of English Used by the students

No	Variety of English	Percentage
1	American English	58.8
2	British English	41

The table above shows that the percentage of American English used by the students is 58.8 % which is higher than the use of British English which is 41%. It is clear that the English variety of the students is American English.

b. Students' Perceptions

There are eight questions related to the students' perceptions. The data is displayed based on the question categories that are detailed as follows:

1. Questionnaire 1

Table 2 : have you exposed American English and British English?

No	answer	frequency	percentage
1	yes	23	76.7
2	never	3	10
3	unclear	4	13
	total	30	100

The table above shows that 76.7 % students have exposed American and British English and only 10% students never expose American and British English.

- Questionnaire 2: Which English variety of English do you prefer, British or American English? Why?

Table 3

No	Variety of English	students' answer	Percentage	Reasons
1	American English	18	60	easy in pronunciation and vocabulary, it is habit
2	British English	3	10	It is habit and cool
3	Mix	1	3	
4	no answer	8	27	
	Total	30	100	

The table above shows that 60% of the students prefer American English for it is their habit and it is easier than British English while only 10 % of the students prefer British English. It is surprising that 27% of the students have no preferences in using variety of English thus they do not mix the variety as well. Indeed most of the students use American English.

- Questionnaire 3: How can you differentiate between American and British English?

Based on the data the students can differentiate American English and British English from the pronunciation, in this case it is related to r and t differences between American and British English pronunciation. Beside that the students can also differentiate between American English and British English by the spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and intonation.

- Questionnaire 4: Which variety do you use? American English/ British English/ mix both of varieties

Table 3

No	varieties of English	students' answer	percentage
1	American English	9	30
2	British English	4	13.3
3	mix both varieties	12	40
4	unclear	5	16.7

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The table above shows that 40 % of the students tend to mix the variety of English and 30 % use American English while 16.7% do not give clear answer and 13.3% use British English. it is clear that the students tend to mix the variety of English

5. Questionnaire 5: Do you prefer to be taught in British English or American English? Why?

Table 4

No	variety	Students' answers	percentage
1	American English	10	33.3
2	British English	7	23.3
3	no answer	13	43.3

Comparing between American and British English, most of the students (33.3%) prefer to be taught in American English for it is their habit, it is easy in pronunciation, it is commonly use and the queer reason is that they like it. While 23.3% students prefer to be taught in British English for it is more formal, it is general variety of English, and they like it. Students consider that British English is cool variety of English.

6. Do your lecturers use American or British English?

Table 5

No	Variety of English	Answer	Percentage
1	American English	11	36.7
2	British English	4	13.3
3	Mix	12	40
4	no answer	3	10

The table above shows that 40% of the students state that their lectures use both of American and British English, 36.7 % of the students' state that their lecturers use American English and 13.3% of the students state that their lecturers use British English. Somehow 10% of the students do not give clear answer thus comparing the data of the variety of English between American English, British English and Mix both varieties it seems that the lecturers tend to mix both of varieties of English.

7. What the differences between American English and British English do you notice most?

Table 6

No	Differences	Answer	percentage
1	Pronunciation consonant t, r, accent	19	63.3
2	Grammar	3	10
3	spelling	3	10
4	Vocabulary	5	16.7

The table above shows that the difference of the American and British English that the students notice most is pronunciation including consonant t and r and accent. It is 63.3 % and it is following by vocabulary which 16.7% then grammar and spelling which have the same percentage 10%. Somehow the range of pronunciation and vocabulary percentage is quite far that is 46.6%.

8. Do you think that American and British English can be useful to you to learn English Language?

Table 7

No	answer	frequency	percentage
1	Yes	24	80
2	No	1	3.3
3	unclear	5	16.7
	Total	30	100

The table above shows that 80% of the students consider that learning both varieties of English can be useful for them in communicating in English even though only 3.3 of the students consider that it is not useful to learn both varieties of English.

This research aims to find out the variety of English that the mostly used by the students and the students' perceptions toward American and British English. Most of the students have ever exposed the differences between American and English vocabulary as the lectures mostly mix both varieties in teaching English. In fact the data shows that the students prefer to be taught in American English. The main reason is that they think American English is easy in pronunciation and it is commonly used. Indeed the students' mostly use American English. Compared with Alferg (2009:2) the pupils tend to use American English more than British English, in both vocabulary and pronunciation, and all the pupils mixed American and British English. We can find that the students in Cokroaminoto Palopo University used American English in vocabulary. Unfortunately, this research does not investigate about the students' pronunciation. But it is enough to see the great influence of American English. Based on the data 58.8 % of the students used American English based on the test and (41%) students used British English. They also state that American English become their habit. It may be such as entertainment programs and even in teaching learning process.

Totti in Safaa (2015:11) stated that It ensure that American English will be the world language even though American English was considered less educated, less cultured, less beautiful in British English. Based on the data the students consider that American English is easier than British English. But some students think that British English is more formal, cool, general variety of English and they like it. The students can differentiate American and British English by pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. Based on the data the students mostly notice on pronunciation difference particularly "r" and "t".

Somehow the students could expose American English more than British as by comparing British and American English; their lecturers mostly used American English even though 40% students stated that their teachers mix their English varieties. As addition 33.3%

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students preferred to be taught in American English than British English (23.3%).

Discussing about the students' preferences most of the students prefer American English which contributed 60% for it is easier in pronunciation and vocabulary and they were used to expose it. Relating to the habit the students stated that their lecturers use more American English than British English. But it is interesting that the students consider that British English is cool language despite of it is more difficult than American English. As Hurtig (2006:24) found that the teachers in Swedish considered British English as more formal, intelligent, strict and correct than American English. Somehow, only (10%) of the students prefer British English.

Above all the students need to expose both varieties of English. The most important is that the students should be able to identify the differences between both varieties. In this case the students can differentiate by the pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. It seems that the students (63.3%) mostly notice the difference in pronunciation particularly "r" and "r". Indeed Safaa (2015:23) explained that British and American English have variants of English as a whole: the differences do not only affect the pronunciation but also other levels like grammar, writing, semantics and lexis. It means that the students need to expose both of the varieties as 80% students stated that it is useful to learn the differences of American and British English. Somehow Biswanger (2008: 43-44) concluded that varieties of English are still not adequately represented in current ELT which can be one consideration for the EFL teachers in teaching English.

It seems that the students need more exposure of the differences between American and British English. Beside that the students' English variety is American English even though the students consider that they have completely mixed both varieties in communicating in English. Somehow the students prefer American English for it is easier in pronunciation and vocabulary. For maximum communication the students should learn the differences between American and British English

Conclusion

As conclusions the students use American English variety in vocabulary even though they think that they mix both varieties of English and they have ever exposed both of varieties, the students prefer American English in teaching learning process as they think that it easy in pronunciation and vocabulary and it is frequently used by them. Other result shows that the students mostly notice the differences between American and British English on pronunciation. But minority of the students still think that British English is cool, more formal, general variety of English and they like it.

This research may still have limited data for some sample could not give any answer in certain cases. So it is consideration for the next research to take the samples which are really competent in English. Besides that, this research only focuses on vocabulary level and excludes the students' pronunciation, so it can be consideration to research about pronunciations. The students should expose both varieties in teaching learning process for maximum communication.

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