

AN ANALYSIS OF STANDARD ENGLISH AND GENERAL AMERICAN VARIETIES IN TEACHING SPEAKING OF FKIP UIR-PEKANBARU

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email: Ahmad.Arimuliani@gmail.com Tahun 2015

Abstract

Standard English and General American are part of varieties of English that are used and learned in education world. Formerly only Standard English had been taught, but recently General American has been taught as well. Nowadays, both varieties of General American and Standard English are found in university of Indonesia. Based on this phenomena, the writers think, some problem may occur when deciding which variety to teach in the classroom. The purpose of this study is to find out the attitudes of eight EFL lecturers of English toward different varieties of English, namely Standard English and General American. Likewise, the researchers want to find out if these varieties are reflected in their classroom teaching as well as what their views are on student's use of the variety of English in question. The study was carried out in Islamic University of Riau Pekanbaru. The participants were interviewed by "alternative" and "open ended" questions. The results of this study showed that the Standard English variety was most frequently used among English lecturers at Islamic University of Riau when teaching speaking English than the General American variety. Furthermore, the lecturers' varieties illustrated that Standard English was considered as "formal", "educated", "polite", "better construction of sentence", etcetera. General American was described as being "friendly", "simple", "commonly used", "young approached" and so on.

Keywords: General American, Standard English, Language Variety, Teaching Speaking

Introduction

English has many differences in use, such as; dialects, varieties and accents by many people in the world especially in speaking. In teaching speaking, lecturers sometime use Standard English varieties and the others use General American. The two varieties, Standard English and General American are often used by lecturers in teaching materials. There is no "better" or "worse" for the varieties of both British and American because they have advantages depending on how and where the language used.

The ability to use English is necessary for studies; travel in other countries and for social and professional international contexts. As we know, the use of English nowadays has spread all over the world. People use English to interact with the others who come from different places and languages. Then, in academic atmosphere, English is widely used by scholars, not only in international classes, but also in national classes. The scholars are encouraged to have a good skill in English. In this case, English has essential roles in some context of situations.

Preisler (1999:262) states that teaching a foreign language begins with the choice of that particular regional and/or social variety of the language, which is to provide the learners' linguistic model. However, countless of people around the world speak English, and as a result of this many different dialects can be used as a model of pronunciation when teaching English. Rönnerdal and Johansson (2005:12) claim that such a model should be a dialect that is easy to understand and not restricted to a certain social or geographical area. That is, it should be a form of English encountered for example when travelling, and a form for which there is much teaching material available.

In English program of FKIP-UIR Pekanbaru, English is a core subject; General American and Standard English are used by the lecturers and students. The goal for teaching English to the students is to deepen students' understanding of English as spoken language in different parts of the world, and improve their ability to understand the contents of communicative English in varieties of media (Skolverket). In the previous, Standard English is the only variety taught in English program of FKIP-UIR Pekanbaru, but in the new Curriculum, it is clarified that Standard English or General American can be used when teaching English (Erickson, 2009). So, lecturers can choose between the two standard varieties Standard English or General American when teaching.

The purpose of this research is to determine the most frequently between General American and Standard English variety used by English lecturers when teaching Speaking at semester four of English program of FKIP-UIR Pekanbaru.

The instruments used in this research is interview; it is to find out what is the most frequently language varieties used by lecturers in teaching speaking and whether both General American and Standard English are reflected in the classroom. Do lecturers have opinions about Standard English and General American?

There are some questions as interview guideline asked to the lecturers, they are:

1. What English variety do you frequently speak? Why?
2. Which varieties do you prefer to speak, General American or Standard English? Why?
3. What variety is being taught in your speaking class?
4. Which variety – General American or Standard English – would you like your – students to speak? Why?
5. What do you think of General American and Standard English variety in speaking?

This interview expected to collect the information that related with the most frequently use of English variety by lecturers in teaching speaking, which variety – Standard English or General American variety used in teaching and learning process.

In short, it is necessary to conduct the research entitled "An Analysis of Standard English and General American Varieties in Teaching Speaking of English Program of FKIP-UIR Pekanbaru."

Review of Related Theories

Pyles and Algeo (1993: 212) state that "English is unmistakably one language, with two major national varieties: British and American". Thomas et al (2004:175) add that there are some varieties of Standard English globally. Nonetheless, there are two major standard varieties: Standard English and Standard American English, which both, in spite of sharing many similarities, also have their differences.

In addition, Thomas et al (2004: 174) explain that "part of the ideology of Standard English is that it is the 'correct' form of the language and that other varieties are 'incorrect'. Furthermore, they make clear that Standard English is the dialect of institutions such as government and the law; it is the dialect of literacy and education; it is the dialect taught as 'English' to foreign learners; and it is the dialect of the higher social classes"; thus adding that Standard English is the prestige form of English.

According to Svartvik and Leech, (2006:153), the most apparent differences between British English and General American can be detected in vocabulary as well as in pronunciation and spoken. So many words differ in British English and General American. For instance, in General American one uses the word *store*, whilst the British English equivalent is *shop*. In terms of the pronunciation of postvocalic /r/ - i.e. the /r/ sound after a vowel in words like *store*, *car* and *father* - there is an additional obvious difference between British English and General American. People who speak British English do *not* pronounce the /r/, while people speaking General American do (Modiano 1996:15).

Furthermore, Trudgill and Hannah (1994:54) state that there are also words that differ in terms of stress. For instance, in words like *address*, *magazine* and *cigarette*, people who speak British English stress the last syllable, while people speak General American stress the first.

Moreover, Trudgill and Hannah also put forward that there are differences between British English and General American in terms of spelling. For example, in General American one spells *color* without the /u/, while in British English the same word is spell as *colour*. What is more, the word *centre/center* is spelled *centre* in British English and *center* in General American. There are also differences in the final sound in words like *analyse* (General American), and *analyze* (British English) (Trudgill & Hannah 1994:84).

Based on the theories above, the researchers concluded that there are some aspects can be analyzed in Standard English and General American varieties, but the researchers just analyzed three aspects; vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The researchers used interview to find out what eight lecturers' thoughts about the most frequently varieties use between General American or Standard English in teaching speaking and whether these English varieties are reflected when they are teaching in the classroom. Do lecturers have preconceived opinions about Standard English and General American? Furthermore, the researchers analyze the results of interview as follow:

1. What English variety Standar English or General American do you frequently speak? Why?

Based on the result of interview, the researcher found that 50 percent (4org) of lecturers used Standard English, 37.5 percent (3org) used General American, and 12.5 (1org) used Standard English and General American. (S1) and (S4) state that they spoke Standard English in teaching speaking because they were from

Australian University. So, they spoke Standard English in every situation. Another lecturer (S2) used General American in teaching speaking. He said that he uses more General American in teaching speaking because he has some native speakers of American. So he liked General American to speak in all of situation. In addition, (S6) used Standard English in teaching because she taught English Course students that used Standard English. (S3) explained that she used both varieties – Standard English and General American – when speaking. She pointed out that the reason for speaking Standard English and General American because she was very much influenced by her lecturers.

Moreover, (S5) spoke Standard English because she graduated from one of Malay University that commonly uses Standard English. (S7) and (S8) informed that they spoke General American caused by influencing of the movie, TV and they also state that General American were friendly and much easier.

Based on the statements above, the researcher concludes that there are several different reasons for speaking a certain variety of English, and the environment has a significant role in this situation. In addition, the variety that is used by the lecturers whether it is Standard English or General American is very much connected to their emotional liking as well as experience. However, it can be seen that the majority of the lecturers answer that the use of particular variety of English because they were influenced by their environment, lecturer and previous education.

2 Which variety do you prefer to speak, General American or Standard English? Why?

Lecturer as (S1) said that she preferred Standard English because she assumed that Standard English was "polite", "formal" and "educated" than General American. Another lecturer (S4) states that she prefers Standard English because she used to this variety in communication with other. Two male lecturers (S7) and (S8) stated that they preferred General American because it is easy to use and easy to be understood in daily conversation. Then, one female lecturer (S3) who spoke mix of Standard English and General American pointing out that this was very much depends on the environment atmosphere "I think that the language is influenced by the environment atmosphere". (S5) declared that she spoke Standard English since this variety sounds "formal" and "educated".

In addition, one lecturer (S6) informed that she liked Standard English because "Received Pronunciation" she thought that it is the importance to use proper and correct English. One lecturer (S2) preferred General American because he thinks it is commonly used in conversation. He also said that speaking in General American variety more "neutral" and easier regarding pronunciation and vocabulary, which are some of the many reasons for speaking General American. "I think that it is common and many people prefer this variety to speak".

Based on explanation above, it is clear that all of the lecturers as participant in this research have their own reasons in using a certain variety of English in teaching speaking. Furthermore, the researchers think that there is no problem what variety is used by lecturer when teaching and communicating.

3. What variety is being taught in your classroom? Why?

Lecturer (S3) spoke Standard English and General American at the time when teaching and communicating, she thinks that it is important to present the relationship between General American and Standard English to the students, since they (General American and Standard English) influence each other. He continues by clarifying: "There are some differences between these varieties but such as its pronunciation. So, I think that it is OK to mix them as well as my students understand". The researchers certainly agree for the reason that it may be difficult to teach and learn how to distinguish pronunciation of a foreign language like English where pronunciation differs with the various dialects. Still, the researchers believe that the lecturer must be aware of the differences and be able to explain them if necessary. If a learner of English does not distinguish the differences – in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar – between General American and Standard English, it can make he/she confuse to use the variety in speaking.

Lecturer (S1) thought that using Standard English when teaching speaking can increase the students knowledge in using English variety she added her statement; "Standard English is more educated than General American, so as a teacher candidate my students should comprehend Standard English for their speaking variety". It is the reason why she chose Standard English variety in teaching speaking. One of male lecturer (S7) said that he taught General American because it is more interested for the students because it is commonly used in social interaction.

Then, one lecturer (S2) stated that he used General American when teaching because his students have a more positive respond towards this variety, General American than Standard English because the students used to hear General American in their daily life start from movie and other entertainments. Another lecturer (S6) thinks that Standard English appears more "polite and", "better construction in sentence than General American. So, she used Standard English variety when teaching especially when teaching speaking. Another lecturer (S5) says that Standard English is important to be learnt because it is necessary to continue her study

to abroad. Furthermore, a female lecturer (S4) uses Standard English because she finds it "great" and "correct". One lecturer (S8) thinks that General American variety "make students comfort" because it is "easy to be understood".

The statements above indicated that four (50%) female lecturers used Standard English in teaching speaking because the students need to learn some varieties of language such as Standard English and General American, it is to add their skill in using language in speaking when they teach latter. Furthermore, three (37.5%) male lecturers used General American variety in teaching. they thought General American that it was easier to understand by students. Meanwhile, one (12.5%) lecturer mix both Standard English and General American in teaching speaking, the lecturer used both Standard English and General American in teaching speaking because it is necessary to know other variety in speaking not only one variety.

4 Which variety - General American or Standard English – would you like your students to speak? Why?

The teacher (S1) liked her students to speak Standard English because she thought that this variety is more "polite", "smart" and "formal". Another lecturer (S4) said that Standard English is more accepted to speak in different varieties of English lately; she wants her students to be familiar with several varieties and not only one. In addition, a female lecturer (S6) also stated that she like her students use Standard English frequently; it is to make her students familiar in using this variety. Furthermore, one female lecturer (S5) made clear that she preferred her students to use Standard English because this variety was formal one, it needed by students to know to get the job because Standard English used in many office and formal place.

In addition, another lecturer (S7) liked his students used both Standard English and General American but she prefers his students use General American to speak in communication. He added his statement that the students have benefit if they learn different varieties and not learn one variety only.

Furthermore, one lecturer (S2) informed: "American English is commonly use". He says that this variety has a "younger approach" which is another reason why students should use this variety. Moreover, one lecturer (S8) pointed out that he prefers his students to speak General American because it is "friendly" and "simple one".

The last lecturers (S3) explained that she supported her students to mix those Standard English or General American. She hoped his students can use both Standard English and General American because both Standard English and General American were useful for the students to know and mastery.

Points out of statements above are three lecturers support their students to use American English in speaking and communication, but four lecturers prefer their students use Standard English. Another lecturer chooses mix both of them to use by her students. She thinks it is better for the students to know both Standard English and General American.

What do you think of General American and Standard English?

All of lecturers have the same opinion about General American and Standard English. They stated that Standard English is the form of English used in the United Kingdom and General American is form of English used in United States. The two varieties of English most widely found in speaking and taught around the world are British and American.

Four of Lecturers said that Standard English used in formal situation but General American in informal situation. Another opinion of three lecturers was Standard English was more polite than General American. One of these comments was: "General American is informal in use meanwhile Standard English used in formal situation". Furthermore, another lecturer states that this variety – General American is "simple" and "commonly used".

Three lecturers claim that General American is easier to understand than Standard English. One of these lecturers highlights: "General American is easier to comprehend than Standard English". A male lecturer thought that General American was "friendly" and "easier to pronounce". In addition, one lecturer said that General American used as "International language". Furthermore, one male lecturer found that General American was "cooler" than Standard English. Another lecturer found out that the intonation of General American is "nicer". Additionally, two lecturers used the word "nice" when expressing something that they like. One comment was: "Standard English showed when lecturer speaks in teaching speaking particularly in pronunciation of word 'sure'. Two lecturers claim that Standard English is more "educated" and has "better construction in sentence" when comparison to General American. Moreover, one lecturer argues that Standard English sounds "better" and "smart". The most common comments, four of eight lecturers concern Standard English because it has to do with the formality of this variety. One of these comments is: "British English is more formal than American English".

The opinion above illustrates that there are many opinion of the lecturers have towards the two English varieties – Standard English and General American – among the eight lecturers participating in this

study. Furthermore, depending on what liking the lecturers have they often use different words when explaining the varieties. Words like "educated", "better construction of sentence", "original" and "correct" are frequently used when describing Standard English, while General American is perceived as being "cool", "younger approach", "commonly used" and "simple", etcetera.

Conclusion

Different English dialect often expresses some varieties in speaking. In addition, there are some differences – in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar in using Standard English and General American varieties. Between these varieties in interaction difficulties may easily occur. That is way, the researchers conduct this research to find out of the most frequently use Standard English and General American variety among English lecturers of Islamic University of Riau when teaching speaking.

Based on the result of interview the English varieties – Standard English and General American used by lecturers reflected when teaching speaking in the classroom and preconceived opinions about Standard English and General American, the researchers concluded that the Standard English variety is more frequently used among eight lecturers, than the General American variety. The results show that the majority of the lecturers (50 per cent) use Standard English when teaching. Furthermore, the lecturers' English varieties Standard English and General American illustrate that Standard English is considered as "formal", "educated", "polite", "better construction of sentence", etcetera. General American was described as being "friendly", "simple", "commonly used", "young approached" and so on. We conclude that the characteristics of Standard English can be seen as more preferred for educational purposes, than those of General American.

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