

English Varieties and Arab Learners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries: Attitude and Perception

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the attitudes of post-secondary Arab learners towards native and non-native varieties of English. A stimulus tap was incorporated within semi-structured interviews where respondents listened to 6 speakers (an Indian, Arab, Thai, British, American, and Canadian) and then answered 5-Point Likert scale questions. The findings revealed that the interviewees encountered difficulties identifying the speakers' first languages. Whilst the British and Canadian speakers were perceived more positively than the other speech samples and were easier to understand than the Thai speaker, they were less understandable to the interviewees than the Arab and Indian speakers. The American speaker was perceived less positively than the other speech samples and was also the least understandable. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings and specific recommendations that could facilitate improving Arab learners' tolerance of their own (as well as other non-native) varieties of English. The data in this paper forms part of a broader study investigating the attitude of Arab learners towards the shifting ownership of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).

Keywords: Arab learners; English as a lingua franca (ELF); native speaker (NS) / non-native speakers (NNS) of English; accent; attitude.