

The Ideology of American English as Standard English in Taiwan

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Abstract

English language teaching and learning in Taiwan usually refers to American English teaching and learning. Taiwan views American English as Standard English. This is a strictly perceptual and ideological issue, as attested in the language school promotional materials that comprise the research data. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed to analyze data drawn from language school promotional materials. The results indicate that American English as Standard English (AESE) ideology is prevalent in Taiwan. American English is viewed as correct, superior and the proper English language version for Taiwanese people to compete globally. As a result, Taiwanese English language learners regard native English speakers with an American accent as having the greatest prestige and as model teachers deserving emulation. This ideology has resulted in racial and linguistic inequalities in contemporary Taiwanese society. AESE gives Taiwanese learners a restricted knowledge of English and its underlying culture. It is apparent that many Taiwanese people need to re-examine their taken-for-granted beliefs about AESE.

Keywords: American English as Standard English (AESE), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), ideology, inequalities

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Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that English has become the global lingua franca. However, as far as English teaching and learning are concerned, there is a prevailing belief that the world should be learning not just any English variety but rather what is termed Standard English. Despite the fact that English is supposed to be learned for global communication, British English and American English have long been the two models underlying English instruction in most EFL countries (Trudgill&Hannah, 2002). The American English taught in Taiwan is regarded as ‘good’ English or Standard English (Chang, 2009; Tsou& Chen, 2014) because of the close historical and political relationship between the USA and Taiwan (Chang, 2004), as well as the superpower status of the US in military and economic aspects. English language teaching and learning in Taiwan is usually in reference to American English teaching and learning. AESE, which has been taken for granted as natural and a common sense choice in Taiwanese society, is an ideological perception. However, research into AESE ideology has received very little attention in Taiwan.

In examining AESE, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was employed to analyze data drawn from the promotional materials (school fliers, websites, television commercials and television English teaching programs) of English language schools and *buxiban* (cram schools) in 2014. English language schools refer to schools that offer general English courses for different groups (elementary, secondary and tertiary students, and adults) and whose purposes are not geared towards academic tests. *Buxiban* refers to language schools that offer supplementary English courses for test purposes, such as junior high and high school English, IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, and so on. ‘Cram school or language school’ is the generic term for both the ‘English language school’ and ‘*buxiban*’.

Attending cram schools is deemed a necessary part of life for many Taiwanese people; however, research on cram schools is scant in Taiwan (Liu, 2012). This research is significant because, to the best of my knowledge, no other published work has investigated AESE ideology in Taiwan through media discourses, and particularly through the promotional materials of cram schools. Research questions of this study include:

1. How is American English presented as the Standard English in advertisements by English language schools and *buxiban* in Taiwan?
2. How has AESE resulted in linguistic and racial inequalities in Taiwan?

Literature Review

Standard English is “the variety of English used by the formally-educated people who are socially, economically, and politically dominant in English speaking countries” (Farr, 1994, p. 4338). Kaplan (1999) argues that Standard English is “a sociolinguistic construct, reflecting both the reality that English is a pluricentric language, and the popular notion that one or another variety has greater social cachet” (p.5). There is a continuing debate over Standard English in the global context. Two key figures: Quirk (1985) and Kachru (1986), express contrary views on this issue. Quirk (1985) argues for the recognition of a single global standard for both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Kachru (1986), on the other

hand, argues for recognition of a multiplicity of standards both in native English speaking communities and those in non-native English speaking countries. Kachru(1986) views varieties of English in the world in general, and specifically in Asia, as consisting of three concentric circles: native speaking countries (the Inner Circle), second-language speaking countries (the Outer Circle) and foreign language speaking countries (the Expanding Circle). Both Quirk and Kachru agree that in regard to EFL countries in the Expanding Circle, some type of norm is needed (McKay, 2002). In EFL countries, English is learned as a foreign language for international communication, with the reliance being on English speaking country norms (Alm, 2003; Friedrich, 2002; Nino-Murcia, 2003; Petzold, 2002; Yano, 2009). Therefore, what Standard English is, and which model of English should be taught and learned, is the main concern in the EFL countries.

There are two main standard varieties for the EFL countries: British and American English (Trudgill& Hannah, 2002). The choice of Standard English depends in part on each nation's history (Bhatia, 2009; Friedrich, 2002; Gill, 2009). For geographical, political and historical reasons, EFL countries in Europe tend to select British English as their Standard English because they see it as "prestigious", "proper" and "correct" (Modiano, 2001, p. 168). When a country chooses a pedagogical model, it reflects a valorization of the speakers of the model (Petzold, 2002). In other words, for Taiwanese learners of English who seek native-like competence, the goal often is to master American English. As a result, users of English regard an American native speaker as the model with the greatest prestige (Holliday, 2005; Jenkins, 2009; McKay, 2002). As Baker(2012) notes, for effective communication, users of English need to master more than the features of syntax, lexis and phonology of native speaker-like English that is the traditional focus in ELT: "In the diverse sociocultural settings of intercultural communication through English ...the skills of multilingual communicators are needed" (p.63). Furthermore, "the most powerful strategy in ELT seems to be to foster critical awareness with regard to English domination, construction of identities, and social, linguistic, racial, and ethnic inequality" (Kubota, 1998, p. 302).

Milroy and Milroy (1998) and Lippi-Green (1994) take a critical approach and view the concept of Standard English as an ideology, with "educated speakers as the sole possessors of the standard language"; "the form of English taught in school"; and signifying "all variants that are used by educated speakers". These are some definitions from three well-known dictionaries (*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* and *Chambers Dictionary*, as cited in Lippi-Green, 1997, pp. 54-55). Lippi-Green uses these definitions to demonstrate that Standard English is an ideological concept. She points out that these definitions create an educated and less-educated or uneducated dichotomy; it suggests that the educated group serves as the model for other groups in terms of both the languages' spoken and written forms. Standard language ideology has been defined as "a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed from above, and which takes as its model the written language. The most salient feature is the goal of suppression of variation of all

kinds” (Lippi-Green, 1994, p. 166). Moreover, Milroy and Milroy (1998) point out that standard language ideology has resulted in racial and linguistic discrimination.

Milroy and Milroy (1998) and Lippi-Green’s (1997) notion of a Standard English ideology is applied in this study to explore how American English is presented as the Standard English in language school advertisements and how AESE has caused social injustice. This study is essentially concerned with raising Taiwanese people’s awareness of AESE English ideology in the hope that they can escape the grip of this ideology in the context of globalization.

Methodology

Data Collection

In order to provide multiple sources of more accurate and convincing evidence than a single source of information, a corpus of texts advertised by language schools were collected in 2014 (Table 1).

Table 1. Background information of the data

English Language Schools	<i>Buxiban</i>	Total
41 fliers: LF1-LF41	31 fliers: BF1-BF31	72
35 websites: LW1-LW35	26 websites: BW1-BW26	61
14 TV commercials: TC1-TC14	N/A	14
N/A	1 teaching program: KK1	1

A total of 72 fliers were collected in four cities in Southern Taiwan by visiting these locations in July, August, September and October in 2014. A total of 61 websites were collected and material downloaded through www.yahoo.com and www.google.com in July and August in 2014. Nineteen commercials (1998 – 2014) were broadcast on leading television stations in Taiwan and were downloaded from language school websites in 2014. KK1 is a one-hour long American English pronunciation teaching program by *abuxiban* broadcast on a leading television station collected in August 2014.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Fairclough (1992) states that CDA not only describes discursive practices, but also demonstrates “how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief, neither of which is normally apparent to discourse participants” (p. 12). It can be argued that there is a close interrelationship between language schools and Taiwanese society as reflected in discourses practices. Analyses in the field of CDA often focus on media texts, such as advertising, newspaper reports, television, and so on. Kress (1993) claims: “The everyday, innocent and innocuous, the mundane text is as ideologically saturated as a text which wears its ideological constitution overtly” (p.174). In other words, all texts are ideological to

some extent. Goddard(1998) points out that not only written texts, but also images, do not appear in any advertisements by accident. Therefore, all texts play an integral part of the way the advertisements represent AESE.

To investigate how the ideology of AESE in English learning is manifested in language schools' promotional materials, and how this ideology has resulted in social inequality in Taiwan, Fairclough's(1992) conception of a "three-dimensional discourse" (p.73) model (Figure 1), the most well-known CDA theoretical framework, was employed in this study.

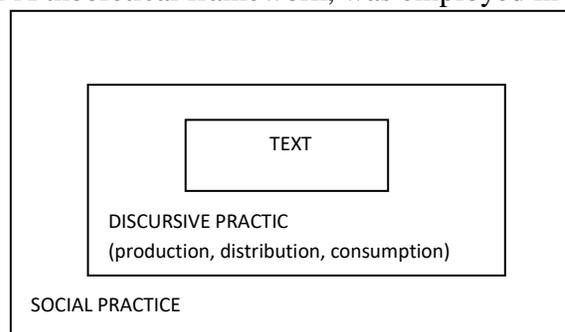


Figure 1. Three-dimensional conception of discourse (reproduced from Fairclough, 1992, p.73)

How this model can be employed in language school promotional materials will be demonstrated in the data analysis.

Data Analysis

First dimension: text analysis (description). The first dimension text analysis covers the description of the text (both written texts and multi-modal texts).

Any written words or images related to *USA*, *America* or *American* were analyzed. LF9 flier serves as an example of how written texts and images in the data were used to understand the use of the concept AESE. In this study, school address, school names, phone numbers, email addresses, and contact people are excluded and the symbol "XXX" is placed to protect their identities. Translation of Mandarin Chinese data into English is underlined.

In this study, 'still images' refers to photos and pictorials in school fliers and websites. As far as still images are concerned, three pictures in LF9 were found to contain the ideological concept of AESE. The top one on Side A shows two male Caucasians and four little Taiwanese pre-school children looking up and pointing to an oversized American flag. One of the Caucasians is wearing an American flag scarf. The bottom one on Side A shows a male Caucasian wearing an American flag scarf and a group of five pre-school children looking at something. The school logo on Side B depicts a lion wearing a hat with stars and stripes.

In terms of written texts, the slogans and lexical collocation of "America" or "American" are analyzed. The school slogan on Side A reads: 美語為您打通通往世界的鑰匙, For you, American English is the key to the world. There is another written text at the bottom of side

A: 天天外師上美語 Foreign teachers teach American English every day. Another slogan says: 美語就是競爭能力您具備了嗎? American English means competitiveness. Do you have it? In class information (both sides A and B), six lexical collocations of American were found. They are: 美語安親班 American English children-care class (2 tokens), 美語課輔班 Afterschool American English class (2 tokens) · 美語密集班 American English intensive class (1 token) and 兒童美語班 Children's American English class (1 token). Only four collocations were counted in this study: 2 tokens of American English children-care class and 2 tokens of afterschool American English class.

Second dimension: processing analysis (interpretation). The analysis of this dimension focuses on who are the producers of the text, how the text is interpreted and what are the producers' objectives. The producer of FL9 is an English language school. The photos of FL9 depict an oversized American flag, an American flag scarf, and the logo of a hat with stars and stripes, symbolizing AESE. The male Caucasians stand for clearly visible ideal native English speaking teachers, unlike Chinese Americans or black Americans. The Taiwanese English language learners are looking up to the idealized American English teachers.

In terms of written texts, this slogan: For you, American English is the key to the world. contains two ideological concepts: American English is THE preferred language over other variety of English. Moreover, English is marked as the only way to internationalization. Another slogan, Foreign teachers teach American English every day, also demonstrates two ideological concepts: foreign English teachers are better English teachers and AESE. Native English speaking teachers will help Taiwanese English learners to acquire American English. American English means competitiveness, do you have it? This slogan tells its viewers that American English is the language needed for global competitiveness. As far as lexical collocations are concerned, American English children-care class, afterschool American English class, American English intensive class and Children's American English class imply that an early start to learning English is imperative. In short, the slogans and lexical collocations indicate that only one variety of English, American English, is considered appropriate, correct and prestigious.

Third dimension: social analysis (explanation). The third dimension is concerned with connections between micro (language schools) and macro (Taiwanese society) relations. How the ideology of AESE in English language teaching and learning is manifested in language school promotional materials, and how this ideology has resulted in social inequality in Taiwan will be presented in the Discussion section.

Results

School Fliers and Websites

Slogans and excerpts

A total of 78 slogans and short excerpts alluding to the concept of AESE were found in the data. The slogans indicate that only one variety of English, American English was found. A salient finding is that 55 of these texts contain two or three ideological concepts (see Table 2).

Table 2. American English as Standard English and other ideological concepts of ELT

Descriptions	Total
Standard English	23
Standard-English & ideal English teaching method	21
Standard English & the-earlier-the-better	14
Standard English & American English as a key for global competitiveness	9
Standard English & the-earlier-the-better & American English as a key for global competitiveness	5
Standard English & ideal English teachers	4
Standard English & the-earlier-the-better & ideal English teaching method	2
Total Texts	78

The following is one of the texts with three ideological concepts.

LF35: 培養孩子與世界接軌的美語競爭力

LF35: To cultivate children's American English means giving them a competitive edge when entering the world.

LF35 promotes American English as the global language, implying that children need to acquire this particular form of the English language to ensure global competitiveness. LF35 illustrates three ideological concepts: American English as a key for global competitiveness, AESE and the-younger-the-better. These 55 texts indicate that ELT ideologies in Taiwan, such as American English is a key for global competitiveness, American English teachers as the ideal English teachers, American English only as the ideal English teaching context, the-younger-the-better regarding American English acquisition and AESE ideology are closely inter-linked.

Body texts

A total of 370 terms encompass the concept of AESE (Table 3). The lexical collocations of Table 3 also reveal a one English notion: American English, since no other varieties of Englishes were found.

Table 3. Lexical collocations of USA, America or American

Descriptions	Total
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The Ideology of American English as Standard English in Taiwan	Chang
USA degree	122
American English class	120
American English teaching method	39
American/Canadian teachers	37
American curriculum & teaching materials	36
American English learning environment	10
KK pronunciation class	6
Total	370

Seven categories of lexical collocations of *USA*, *America* or *American* were found. They are *USA degree* (122 tokens), *American English class* (120 tokens), *American English teaching method* (39 tokens), *American and/or Canadian teachers* (37 tokens), *American curriculum & teaching materials* (36 tokens), *American English learning environment* (10 tokens) and *Kenyon and Knott (KK) pronunciation class* (6 tokens).

Since a North American accent is regarded as the standard, Canadian English teachers are included in *American and/or Canadian teachers*. *American English teaching* means either an English-immersion method or communicative language teaching. The *KK pronunciation class* also presupposes General American pronunciation. The lexical collocations of *USA*, *America* or *American*, such as: *USA degree*, *American English class*, *American English teaching method*, *American and Canadian English teachers*, and *American English learning environment* reinforce the notion that only one English: American English, is viewed as the standard, appropriate, correct and prestigious version.

Still images

A total of 55 still images containing AESE were found.

Table 4. Symbolic objects of Americans or American features

Descriptions	Total
American Flags	29
Places and Landmarks	11
Studying in the USA	11
Eagle	2
Americans	1
Sesame Street Characters	1
Total	55

The American flag (29 tokens) plays an important role in conveying AESE both in commercials and still images. Famous American places or landmarks (11 tokens), such as the

Statue of Liberty, Golden Gate Bridge and the White House, were found. Only one photo presented other English cultures (Buckingham Palace, Sydney Opera House, Cities in Canada) in this study. A total of 11 photos show an American education exhibition or a farewell party for a group of Taiwanese students who are about to leave to study in the USA. These pictures provide further evidence that an American degree is preferred. One photo in LF15 in the corpus depicts American or Canadian individuals who are well-known public figures. The photo of prominent Americans includes Father Jerry Martinson an American Jesuit missionary and English educator, the founder of XXX Language School, and one of the most recognizable public figures in Taiwan. The main reason for the low frequency of Americans is that foreign teachers' nationalities cannot be identified in still images. In short, these still images explicitly illustrate that Taiwan is strongly influenced by the USA and cannot dissociate itself from American English norms.

School names

Every school name contains two parts, for example, 長頸鹿美語. 長頸鹿 means "Giraffe" and the second part, 美語, means "American English". The English name for 長頸鹿美語 is Giraffe Language School. The name demonstrates that the second part of the school name, especially in Mandarin Chinese, plays an important role in conveying the concept of AESE. Therefore, the second parts of language school names are analyzed separately in Mandarin and English (Table 5).

Table 5. Types of language schools

In Mandarin Chinese	Total	In English	Total
American English School	50	Language/English School	67
English School	27	American/English School	7
Educational Organization	15	Educational Organization	3
Foreign Language School	9	Foreign Language School	1
Total	91	Total	78

A total of 91 language school names in Mandarin and 78 names in English were found (Table 5). The analysis demonstrates that school names in Mandarin (50 tokens) play a more important role in spreading the notion of AESE than those in English (7 tokens).

TV Commercials

American representations

The TV commercials (TC) explicitly or implicitly promote AESE via American representations, such as American flags, an eagle, Mount Rushmore, Statue of Liberty and the White House (cf. still images analysis). Moreover, the American anthem has also been used in the TC1 commercial. The commercial shows a group of Taiwanese English language learners (from pre-school to adults); the pre-school children are talking in English and standing in front of a huge animation of the Statute of Liberty.

American flags play an important role in conveying the concept of AESE (see also the still image analysis). The TC7 commercial shows a Taiwanese mother riding a bicycle with her son sitting on the rear bicycle rack heading towards a big oversized American flag. The slogan of TC7 commercial says XXX Language School fulfills your dream of studying abroad. Although the slogan does not specifically indicate which country is the destination for Taiwanese learners, the oversized American flag indicates that studying abroad means studying in the US.

Slogans or short excerpts

A total of 19 slogans or excerpts containing the concept of AESE were found in TV commercials. They can be divided into five categories: American style teaching method is fun, easy and interactive (7 commercials); American English is the key to the world or is equated with global competitiveness (5 commercials); American English makes English language learners' dreams come true, or means future success (4 commercials); Speaking English fluently as if you were in the US (2 commercials); and Standard American English pronunciation is the key to possessing good English listening comprehension ability (1 commercial). The slogans or short excerpts analysis also indicates that AESE is closely linked with other ideologies (see Table 2) such as native speakers of English as ideal English teachers, the English-only method as a superior English teaching method, the-earlier-the-better in English instruction, and American English as the key to globalization.

The above analysis demonstrates that the commercials promote only American English. The dominance of American English representation, without any other English varieties and cultures in the commercials, shows that Taiwanese people perceive AESE.

KK American Pronunciation Teaching Programs

KK1isa KK American pronunciation teaching program. The KK system of General American pronunciation was adopted in public schools in Taiwan in 1969, and has been used universally since then. There is only one figure, a male Chinese English teacher in the program. The teacher uses a teacher-centered method to teach how to pronounce KK phonemics to help Taiwanese learners acquire American English pronunciation. This reinforces the notion that an American accent is the standard and students are required to acquire it.

Discussion

Based on the research questions proposed in the Introduction, American English pronunciation, North American accent, USA degree and American English learning environment will be discussed in the following. These concepts are inextricably linked to the ideological concept of AESE which has resulted in racial and linguistic discrimination in contemporary Taiwanese society.

American English Pronunciation (KK System)

Crystal (1995, as cited in Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert & Leap, 2000) argues that “Standard English is not a matter of pronunciation, rather of grammar, vocabulary and orthography” (p.21). The data results show that American English is currently the dominant variety, and Taiwanese students are strongly encouraged to acquire American English pronunciation. In order to master American English pronunciation, the KK system of General American (GA) pronunciation was adopted as the official English pronunciation in Taiwan in 1969.

The KK system is a “phonemic” transcription of General American English, i.e. it provides a symbol for each distinctive consonant and vowel of General American English. The KK system and American English have been codified and used in dictionaries, local English newspapers and educational materials that have been recognized in English test systems. Now all Taiwanese students learn English in their schools using the KK phonetic system. With the government and language schools working together to promote KK as the standard, the concept instilled in the minds of students is that other varieties are of less value. Every Taiwanese English teacher has learned the KK system and, not surprisingly, they teach American pronunciation. When an English teacher presents only American pronunciation without providing students with equivalents from other varieties, the implication is that American English is the accepted standard. Therefore, Taiwanese or foreign English teachers who do not possess American English pronunciation are not regarded as properly equipped to teach pronunciation.

While Taiwanese people regard the KK system as Standard English pronunciation, in reality there are numerous varieties of KK which differ from Kenyon and Knott’s original model, due to the misinterpretation of some original KK symbols (Vijūnas, 2014). These misinterpreted American English phonetic symbols have become the norms and continue to be used in EFL teaching materials in ELT in Taiwan (Vijūnas, 2014). Ironically, Taiwanese people have been working hard on acquiring misinterpreted American English pronunciation or so called Standard American English pronunciation which has continued to be perceived as correct English for a long time. The ideological concept of American English pronunciation, which is deeply rooted in the minds of the people of Taiwan, is part of a greater power construct.

North American Accent

The term “accent” is used as “a loosely defined reference to sets of distinctive differences over geographic or social space, most usually phonological and intonation features”, or more generally as – “how the other people speak” (Lippi-Green, 1994, p.165). The term, 北美音 North American Accent, originally meant how native speakers from the USA speak English. Now it means how native speakers of English in the USA and Canada speak English, because “the sociolinguistic situation in the USA and Canada, as far as pronunciation is concerned, is rather different from that of the rest of English speaking countries” (Trudgill & Hannah, 2002, p. 35).

For the general public in Taiwan, no distinction is made between American English and Canadian English in referring to North American English. Cartridge (2005), as a very experienced native English-speaking teacher from Australia, points out, Taiwanese English language learners may at times be learning a very heavily American-accented English from the “deep South” of the USA, which “is difficult for other English speaking people in the world to understand” (p.8). However, any American accent is considered the most important aspect of speaking proficiency, so students in Taiwan are strongly encouraged to acquire a North American accent. Only the North American accent is seen as prestigious; it has established an unequal social relationship among native English speaking teachers in Taiwan. In 2003, employment agencies planned to recruit some teachers from the Philippines and India to teach in kindergartens and language schools in Taiwan “because these teachers will teach for about half the salary of their western counterparts” (Chang, 2003, p.3). However, the Ministry of Education (MOE) objected to recruiting English teachers from India and the Philippines because in these countries “English is not the native language and residents have non-native accents” (Chang, 2003, p.3). The MOE clearly indicated that its plan to import foreign English teachers targeted the US, Canada, the UK and Australia/New Zealand. This implied that the MOE only considers English teachers from the Inner Circle, especially the USA and Canada, and is reluctant to hire English teachers from the Outer Circle because of their accents.

Now “All native English-Speaking accents welcome” is one of the English teaching job requirements advertised on the Teaching English and Living in Taiwan (Tealit) Website (<http://www.tealit.com>), the most popular English teaching job website in Taiwan. However, in reality, many language schools still prefer Caucasian English teachers with a North American accent (Cartridge, 2005; diGenova, 2011).

A qualitative research conducted by Chen and Cheng (2012) focused on three South African English teachers’ challenges in Taiwanese elementary schools. One of the major findings is that the American accent is viewed as the Standard English in Taiwan, so not only their students but also their colleagues expressed doubts regarding their South African accents. As a result, the teachers are required to modify their South African accent, which is regarded as a type of ethnic discrimination or even racism by South African English teachers.

The MOE hiring policy, the website post and the result of Chen and Cheng’s study demonstrate that “accent becomes both manner and means for exclusion” (Lippi-Green, 1994, p.165). In fact, racial discrimination and accent are closely linked. “When people reject an accent, they also reject the identity of the person speaking: his or her race, ethnic heritage, national origin, regional affiliation, or economic class” (Lippi-Green, 1994, p. 165). Lippi-Green (1997) points out that, despite the myth of non-accent, “every native speaker of US English has an L1 accent” (p.43), and it is impossible to substitute one phonology (accent) for another consistently and permanently. “L2 learners are nowadays the only English speakers who are still encouraged to approximate an RP or General American (GA) accent as closely as possible” (Jenkins, 2002, p. 85). Having a North American accent as the standard implies that the goal of English learning is to achieve a native-like accent. Taiwanese English learners wish to acquire a native-like North American accent. In reality, most Taiwanese English users will never attain a

native-like North American accent (Yang, 2012). English used in Taiwan every day is called “臺灣英語”: Taiwanese English, because a Taiwanese variety of English is already emerging (Chung, 2012; Yang, 2012). Taiwanese English has been used in English classrooms at all levels (Chung, 2006). Chung (2006) identifies and describes the features of the sounds and allophones of Taiwanese English and shows how they differ from a North American accent. Taiwanese English is one of the countless varieties of World Englishes (Chung, 2012; Yang, 2012). Clearly, acquiring a North American accent is an ideological imperative. Another concept associated with AESE is the US degree.

USA Degree

According to the statistics from the Institute of International Education, Taiwan was the single largest source country of international students on American campuses during the 1970s and 1980s (Teng, 2002). The USA is still the most popular destination among Taiwanese for studying abroad; it is strongly encouraged and supported by distinguished Taiwanese scholars (Teng, 2002; Wu, 2014).

Since the early 1990s, there has been a moderate but steady decline in the number of Taiwanese students going to America. According to a recent report by Taiwan's MOE (Wu & Hsu, 2014), the number of Taiwanese students studying in the US has decreased nearly 22% over a decade, from 28,017 in the 2002-2003 school year to 21,867 in the 2012-2013 school year. The former president of Taiwan (2008-2016), Mr. Ma, and the former minister of Education of Taiwan (1999-2000), Mr. Yang, who studied in the USA were worried about the decline in the number of Taiwanese students going to the US, fearing that Taiwan will lose its global competitiveness (Lin, 2013; Yang, 2011). The above arguments insist that if Taiwan wants to maintain competitive in the world, people need to study in the USA.

There are 170 tokens of Chinese English teachers who have US degrees (Table 5), with 47 tokens of degrees of other English speaking countries. Generally speaking, *Buxiban* hire Chinese teachers who have USA degrees to teach TOEFL, GRE and GMAT to help more Taiwanese students to study in the US. Since a large number of people are studying in the US, they are acquiring American English. American English will probably continue to be privileged both in theory and in practice in Taiwan in public and private schools. A USA degree also implies that American English signifies competitiveness.

Kachru (1988, as cited in Brown, 1993) argues that “students from EFL countries will return home to promote the teaching of English after studying in English speaking countries” (p.61). Many former Taiwanese students who studied in the US became outstanding scholars and teachers in Taiwan, and reached the pinnacles of business, the professions, public service and government (Babb, 2002). As a result, a defense of other varieties of English is lacking since the majority of Taiwanese English language scholars, educators or politicians have a US degree; few have a degree from other English speaking countries. Strict adherence to

American English by the government does not provide students with an opportunity to learn other varieties of English.

American English Learning Environment

“Any teaching curriculum is designed to answer three interrelated questions: What is to be learned? How is the learning to be undertaken? To what extent is the former appropriate and the latter effective?” (Breen & Candlin, 2001, p. 9). The result indicates, as far as ELT in Taiwan’s English language schools is concerned, that anything associated with the terms *USA*, *America* or *American* is viewed as signifying the best. An *American curriculum* in English language schools means North American English needs to be learned, with the teaching process to be undertaken by Caucasian native speaking English teachers with a North American accent and using an English-only or interactive method and American teaching materials. These components consist of a so-called *American English learning environment*, which is considered appropriate and effective for Taiwanese learners to acquire English language mastery. Such a learning environment gives Taiwanese students the fullest possible introduction to the American speech community and reinforces the concept of AESE. As a result, an American curriculum, American teaching methodology, American English teachers, American teaching materials and other ELT activities used are considerably influenced by the US and promoted by English language schools. Since American English is perceived to be the appropriate and correct variety to learn, Taiwan relies on American norms.

The English language schools’ exclusive promotion of American English shows that there is an acceptance of the language-related beliefs and behaviors of the native speakers of American English. As a result, American English is considered the educational standard, and superior to other English varieties. The choices of which English should be taught, how English should be learned, who is going to teach it and who will train the teachers in the school system is not made locally or individually, but by the government. The result is that the diffusion of American English has become an issue of political power in English teaching and learning.

Since Taiwan shares many values with the US and has maintained a long, strong friendship and close contacts, for these reasons alone, AESE is synonymous with knowledge and privilege. American English is regarded as prestigious, appropriate and correct English. The majority of Taiwanese people agree with one single English language; since generally speaking, only American English is taught; thus, Taiwanese English language learners’ awareness and understanding of the world may be limited as well.

Conclusion and Implications

The results indicate that there is an AESE ideology: American English is viewed as correct, superior and proper and is the preferred language version for Taiwanese people to compete globally. AESE in Taiwan is a socially constructed myth. This ideology has resulted in racial and linguistic discrimination in contemporary Taiwanese society.

There are some implications generated by this study. First, Taiwan is an EFL country and English is being learned for international communication. Even though there is a growing

demand for, and recognition of, the importance of English for cross-cultural and international communication, English should not be limited to certain varieties of English.

Second, the analysis and results have demonstrated how American English norms are promoted while other varieties of English are characterized by an almost complete absence in the corpus. Taiwan will continue to look to the US variety of English as a model for correctness because of its close relationships in the political, cultural, economic and educational spheres. The ideology of AESE means that Taiwan needs to maintain a dependency relationship with English speaking countries, mainly the US, for pedagogical advice.

Third, the Taiwanese government needs to shift the focus away from only American norms, and develop appreciation of other varieties of English, since the government will pay the most crucial role in avoiding the AESE ideology.

Finally, it is hoped that many Taiwanese people will reexamine their beliefs about AESE, which they have taken for granted for so long. They need to adopt a more thoughtful, sensitive and critical attitude toward differences in the English language and teaching English as a whole. They need to examine and re-evaluate their love affair with American English.

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