Faculty of Language and Communication

Language Attitudes toward Varieties of English Among University Students in China

Li Shengnan

Doctor of Philosophy
2023

Language Attitudes toward Varieties of English Among University Students in China

Li Shengnan

A thesis submitted

In fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

(Linguistics)

Faculty of Language and Communication
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
2023

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Except where due acknowledgements have been made, the work is that of the author alone. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

……

Signature 李胜男

Name: Li Shengnan

Matric No.: 20010075

Faculty of Language and Communication

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Date : Nov. 24th, 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have been helped by many people in the writing of this thesis. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all those who have guided and helped me directly or indirectly.

First of all, I would like to give my most sincere and deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Ting Su-hie. Her first-class guidance skills made me know exactly what to do and when to do it. She has been a constant source of encouragement, and she has always provided timely reviews and comments on my work. I am truly proud to have had such a supervisor.

I would like to give special thanks to Xu Yaqi, Wang Qiwei, Wang Yue and Ma Xiaoqiong. They personally recorded the speech samples needed in the study or collected them by using their interpersonal relationships.

I also would like to express my warm thanks to all the faculty of Faculty of Language and Communication and Business school in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak for their invaluable advice and coaching class.

Last but not least, a heart-felt thanks to my family, especially my husband and mother-in-law, your dedication to the family has enabled me to devote myself to writing my thesis.

Thank everyone who has been involved directly and indirectly in helping me to complete this thesis. Thank you all.

ABSTRACT

In an era where English serves as a lingua franca, it is essential to investigate the attitudes of Chinese English learners towards English varieties to shed light on whether non-native English varieties should be taught in educational institutions. This study investigates Chinese university students' implicit and explicit attitudes toward British RP-accented English (BRE), General American English (GAE), Hong Kong English (HKE), and China Mandarin-accent English (CME) from a sociolinguistic perspective using Verbal-guise technique (VGT) and questionnaires. The theoretical framework of this study is based on Ryan's (1973) model of implicit language attitudes which encompasses the dimensions of status and solidarity, Baker's (1992) categorization of explicit language attitudes, and Cargile et al.'s (1994) social process model of language attitudes. The objectives of this research were: 1) To investigate Chinese university students' implicit attitudes towards four varieties of English; 2) To examine Chinese university students' explicit attitudes towards English language and four varieties of English; 3) To compare their implicit and explicit attitudes to identify dimensions of language attitudes that differ in the participants' evaluative judgements; and 4) To analyse the influence of different demographic variables on their language attitudes. Five hundred university students from four universities in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Fuzhou, China listened to audio recordings of BRE, GAE, HKE and CME recorded by eight male and female speakers, scored them on a bipolar semantic scale. Then, they completed a questionnaire comprising 123 items that investigated evaluative reactions towards BRE, GAE, HKE and CME speakers, attitudes toward English attitudes, attitudes towards four English varieties, attitudes towards learning English, and attitudes towards the use of English. The results showed that for implicit attitudes, CME received the highest rating, followed by GAE, BRE, and HKE. For explicit attitudes, CME

received the highest rating, followed by BRE, GAE, and HKE. The instrumental value of English is valued, but BRE, GAE and HKE are not considered to have a high status. Participants were mildly eager to learn and use English, but not to learn CME. The status and solidarity dimensions in the VGT showed positive correlation, as did the questionnaire. The status dimension of the VGT and the questionnaire showed weak positive correlation, as did the solidarity dimension. Their implicit attitudes were affected by gender, age, grade, university, dialect area, and major. The explicit attitudes were influenced by gender, mother's education level, and self-perceived English proficiency. The participants have ambivalent explicit attitudes towards CME in that while they give explicit positive evaluations to CME, they refuse to learn it. Participants do not perceive Inner Circle English (BRE, GAE) as having a prominent status, which implies an awakening of Chinese university students' awareness of World Englishes or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).

Keywords: Attitudes toward English varieties, implicit and explicit attitudes, Chinese university students, VGT, demographic factors

Sikap Bahasa terhadap Variasi Bahasa Inggeris dalam Kalangan Pelajar Universiti di China

ABSTRAK

Dalam era di mana bahasa Inggeris berfungsi sebagai lingua franca, adalah penting untuk mengkaji sikap pelajar China terhadap jenis bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini akan menjelaskan sama ada jenis bahasa Inggeris bukan asli harus diajar di institusi pendidikan. Kajian ini meneliti sikap bahasa pelajar universiti China yang tersirat dan tersurat terhadap RP-accented English (BRE), General American English (GAE), Hong Kong English (HKE), dan China Mandarin-accent English (CME), daripada perspektif sosiolinguistik dengan menggunakan teknik Verbal-guise (VGT) dan soal selidik. Kerangka teori kajian ini adalah berdasarkan model Ryan (1973) tentang sikap bahasa tersirat yang merangkumi dimensi status dan perpaduan, pengkategorian sikap bahasa eksplisit oleh Baker (1992), dan model proses sosial untuk sikap bahasa oleh Cargile et al. (1994). Objektif kajian ini adalah: 1) mengkaji sikap tersirat terhadap bahasa Inggeris dan empat jenis bahasa Inggeris di kalangan pelajar universiti China; 2) mengkaji sikap tersurat terhadap bahasa Inggeris dan empat jenis bahasa Inggeris di kalangan pelajar universiti China; 3) membandingkan sikap tersirat dan tersurat bagi mengenal pasti dimensi sikap bahasa yang berbeza dalam pertimbangan peserta; dan 4) menganalisis pengaruh pelbagai pemboleh ubah demografi terhadap sikap bahasa mereka. Sebanyak 500 orang pelajar universiti dari empat universiti di Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou dan Fuzhou di China mendengar rakaman audio yang dihasilkan oleh lapan orang penutur lelaki dan wanita, dan menggunakan skala bipolar semantik untuk memberi penilaian mereka. Selepas itu, mereka mengisi soal selidik yang merangkumi 123 item tentang reaksi penilaian terhadap penutur BRE, GAE, HKE dan CME, sikap terhadap Bahasa Inggeris, sikap terhadap empat jenis bahasa Inggeris, sikap terhadap

pembelajaran bahasa Inggeris, dan sikap terhadap penggunaan bahasa Inggeris. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa bagi sikap tersirat, CME mendapatkan penarafan yang tertinggi, diikuti GAE, BRE, dan HKE. Untuk sikap tersurat, CME mendapatkan penarafan tertinggi, diikuti BRE, GAE, dan HKE. Walaupun nilai instrumental bahasa Inggeris dihargai, BRE, GAE dan HKE tidak dianggap berstatus tinggi. Peserta kurang bersemangat untuk belajar dan menggunakan bahasa Inggeris dan tidak bersemangat untuk belajar CME. Dimensi status dan solidariti dalam VGT serta soal selidik menunjukkan korelasi positif. Dimensi status VGT dan soal selidik serta dimensi solidariti menunjukkan korelasi positif yang lemah. Sikap tersirat dipengaruhi oleh jantina, umur, gred, universiti, kawasan dialek dan major. Sikap tersurat dipengaruhi oleh jantina, tahap pendidikan ibu dan keyakinan diri dalam penguasaan bahasa Inggeris. Peserta mempunyai sikap tersurat yang ambivalen terhadap CME kerana mereka memberikan penilaian positif yang tersurat terhadap CME tetapi tidak ingin mempelajarinya. Peserta tidak menganggap Inner Circle English (BRE, GAE) sebagai sesuatu yang berstatus tinggi. Hal ini memberi implikasi bahawa pelajar universiti China sedar akan World Englishes atau English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).

Kata kunci: *Sifat terhadap jenis Inggeris, sikap implisit dan eksplisit, pelajar universiti Cina, VGT, faktor demografik*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
DECLARATION		**i**
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT		**ii**
ABSTRACT		**iii**
ABSTRAK		**v**
TABLE OF CONTENTS		**vii**
LIST OF TABLES		**xii**
LIST OF FIGURES		**xiv**
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS		**xv**
CHAPTER 1	**INTRODUCTION**	**1**
1.1	Chapter Overview	1
1.2	Background of the Study	1
1.3	Research Problem	4
1.4	Purpose of The Study	10
1.5	Operational Definition of Terms	12
1.5.1	Language Attitudes	12
1.5.2	Varieties of English	13
1.5.3	Chinese University Students	14

1.5.4 Explicit-implicit Attitudes 14

1.6 Significance of the Study 15

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW 18

2.1 Chapter Overview 18

2.2 Dual Nature of Attitude 18

2.3 Language Attitudes 20

2.3.1 Theory underlying Implicit Language Attitudes 20

2.3.2 Theory Underlying Explicit Language Attitudes 23

2.3.3 Theory underlying Sociodemographic Influences on Language Attitudes 29

2.4 Classification of English Varieties 31

2.5 Implicit Language Attitude towards English Varieties 35

2.5.1 Implicit Attitudes towards English Varieties Worldwide 36

2.5.2 Implicit Attitude of mainland Chinese towards English Varieties 48

2.6 Explicit Language Attitude towards English Varieties 57

2.6.1 Explicit Attitudes towards English Varieties Worldwide 57

2.6.2 Explicit Attitude of mainland Chinese towards English Varieties 65

2.7 Influence of Sociodemographic Factors on Language Attitudes 74

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY 86

3.1 Chapter Overview 86

3.2 Research Design 86

3.3 Participants 90

3.4 Instruments 95

3.4.1 VGT 95

3.4.2 Questionnaire 104

3.4.3 Sociodemographic Information 107

3.5 Data Collection Procedures 108

3.5.1 Pilot Study 108

3.5.2 The First Pilot Study 108

3.5.3 Modifications Based on Feedback of the First Pilot Study 109

3.5.4 The Second Pilot Study 110

3.5.5 The Actual Study 113

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures 114

3.7 Limitations of the Study 115

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION 117

4.1 Chapter Overview 117

4.2 Chinese University Students' Implicit Attitudes towards Varieties of English 117

4.3 Chinese University Students' Explicit Attitudes towards Varieties of English 123

4.3.1 Explicit Attitudes towards Speakers of BRE, GAE, HKE and CME 124

4.3.2 Principal Components Analysis (PCA) 129

4.3.3 Explicit Attitudes towards English Varieties 135

4.3.4 Explicit Attitudes towards Learning English/English Varieties 140

4.3.5 Explicit Attitudes towards Uses of English in China 145

4.3.6 Explicit Attitudes towards English Preference 148

4.4 Comparison of the VGT and Questionnaire Results 151

4.5 Influence of Different Demographic Variables on Language Attitudes 159

4.5.1 Influence of Gender on Participants' Language Attitudes 160

4.5.2 Influence of Age on Participants' Language Attitudes 162

4.5.3 Influence of Family Yearly Income on Participants' Language Attitudes 166

4.5.4 Influence of Parents' Educational Qualification on Participants' Language Attitudes 168

4.5.5 The Influence of Parents' Occupation on Participants' Language Attitudes 172

4.5.6 Influence of Self-perceived English Proficiency on Participants' Language Attitudes 176

4.5.7 Influence of Dialect Area on Participants' Language Attitudes 177

4.5.8 Influence of University on Participants' Language Attitudes 179

4.5.9 Influence of Major on Participants' Language Attitudes 181

4.5.10 Influence of Grade on Participants' Language Attitudes 183

4.6 Discussion 185

4.6.1 Implicit Attitudes of Chinese University Students towards Four English Varieties 186

4.6.2 Explicit Attitudes of Chinese University Students towards Four English Varieties 192

4.6.3 Comparison of Implicit and Explicit Attitudes of Chinese University Students towards Four English Varieties 197

4.6.4 Factors Influencing Attitudes towards Four English Varieties 199

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION 204

5.1 Chapter Overview 204

5.2 Summary 204

5.2.1 Chinese University Students' Implicit Attitudes towards Varieties of English 205

5.2.2 Chinese University Students' Explicit Attitudes towards English Language and Varieties of English 206

5.2.3 Comparison of Implicit and Explicit Attitudes towards English varieties 208

5.2.4 Influence of Demographic Variables on Chinese University Students' Language Attitudes 209

5.3 Implications of Findings 210

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research 213

REFERENCES 217

APPENDICES 241

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 3.1:	Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=500)	92
Table 3.2:	Personality Traits and their References in VGT of the Study	101
Table 4.1:	Implicit Evaluations of the Four English Varieties on Status and Solidarity (N=500)	119
Table 4.2:	ANOVA Results of the Implicit Evaluation on Status and Solidarity of the Four Varieties (N=500)	123
Table 4.3:	Explicit Evaluations of the Four English Varieties on Status and Solidarity (N=500)	124
Table 4.4:	ANOVA Results of the Explicit Evaluation on Status and Solidarity of the Four Varieties (N=500)	129
Table 4.5:	KMO and Bartlett's Test	130
Table 4.6:	Factor Loadings on Six Principal Components after Varimax Rotation	130
Table 4.7:	Explicit Attitudes towards IC and OC English Varieties (N=500)	136
Table 4.8:	Explicit Attitudes towards Local English Variety in China (N=500)	139
Table 4.9:	Explicit Attitudes towards Learning English (N=500)	141
Table 4.10:	Explicit Attitudes towards Learning English Varieties (N=500)	144
Table 4.11:	Explicit Attitudes towards Uses of English in China (N=500)	146
Table 4.12:	Explicit Attitudes towards English Preference (N=500)	150
Table 4.13:	Independent Sample T-test Results of Overall Explicit and Implicit Attitudes (N=500)	151
Table 4.14:	Independent Sample T-test Results of Explicit and Implicit Attitudes on Status and Solidarity Dimensions (N=500)	152
Table 4.15:	The Correlation between Status and Solidarity Measures in VGT and Questionnaire (N=500)	154
Table 4.16:	T-test Results on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes by Gender (N=500)	161

Table 4.17: ANOVA Results on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes by Age (N=500) 164

Table 4.18: ANOVA Results on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes by Family Yearly Income (N=500) 167

Table 4.19: ANOVA Results on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes by Fathers' Educational Qualification (N=500) 169

Table 4.20: ANOVA Results on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes by Mothers' Educational Qualification (N=500) 171

Table 4.21: ANOVA Results on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes by Parents' Occupation (N=500) 174

Table 4.22: ANOVA Results on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes by Self-perceived English Proficiency (N=500) 176

Table 4.23: ANOVA Results on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes by Dialect Area (N=500) 178

Table 4.24: ANOVA Results on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes by University (N=500) 180

Table 4.25: ANOVA Results on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes by Major (N=500) 182

Table 4.26: ANOVA Results on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes by Grade (N=500) 184

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 2.1:	Kachru's (1985) Concentric Circles Model	33
Figure 2.2:	Kachru's (1992) Concentric Circles Model	33
Figure 3.1:	Conceptual Framework of Study	89
Figure 3.2:	A Plan of the Museum's Underground Facilities for Speakers to Describe	99
Figure 4.1:	Comparison of Status and Solidarity Dimensions of Language Attitudes Measured using VGT and Questionnaire (N=500)	153
Figure 4.2:	Line Graph of Implicit Attitudes towards English Varieties Among Participants of Different Ages (N=500)	165
Figure 4.3:	The Effect of Mother's Education Qualification on Children's Explicit Attitudes Toward English Varieties	172
Figure 4.4:	Implicit attitudes of different major participants towards English varieties (N=500)	183
Figure 4.5:	Implicit Attitudes toward English Varieties among Students of Different Grades (N=500)	185
Figure 4.6:	Factors Influencing Explicit and Implicit Attitudes of Chinese University Students (N=500)	186

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of variance
BRE	British RP-accented English
BUU	Beijing Union University
CME	China Mandarin-accent English
EC	Expanding circle
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ESL	English as a second language
GAE	General American English
GHC	Guangzhou Huashang College
HK	Hong Kong
HKE	Hong Kong English
IC	Inner circle
MJU	Minjiang University
OC	Outer circle
PCA	Principal Components Analysis
Post-hoc LSD	Post-hoc least significant difference
SMU	Shanghai Maritime University
VGT	Verbal-guise technique

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 describes the background of the study (Section 1.2), the research problem (Section 1.3), purpose of the study (Section 1.4), operational definition of terms (Section 1.5), and significance of the study (Section 1.6).

1.2 Background of the Study

Nowadays, English is used to communicate with people from different language backgrounds all over the world. For centuries, with the discovery of the new world and the global spread of colonialism, English speakers and English learners have increased all over the world. It is estimated that there are about 450 million native English speakers, while the number of non-native English speakers is almost three times that of native English speakers, reaching 1.7 billion (Candel-Mora, 2015). With the spread of English all over the world, local forms of English often appear in communities using English, which can be identified and defined through its unique grammatical features, vocabulary, pronunciation and style (Kachru, 1992). These local forms of English which have developed into local nativized varieties are often called varieties of English or English varieties (e.g., Bolton & Lim, 2000; Eshghinejad, 2016; Poon, 2006). English varieties around the world can be categorized into Inner Circle English (IC), Outer Circle English (OC), and Expanding Circle English (EC) (Kachru, 1992). Native varieties like British English and American English belong to the IC,

while English varieties used as a second language in countries or regions with colonial history, such as Malaysia, the Philippines, and Hong Kong, fall into the OC. English varieties used as a foreign language in countries or regions like China, South Korea, and Japan belong to the EC.

As an EC country, China has a large English learning group in the world, which has approximately 400 million English learners and users (Wei & Su, 2012). Considering that the number of native speakers of English in the world is about 450 million which is based on data from United Nations statistics (Candel-Mora, 2015), this figure is quite substantial. English is a compulsory course in People's Republic of China, and has been listed as the main course at various educational levels, along with Chinese and mathematics which have been made compulsory since 2001 (Pan, 2015, p. 2). According to the current policy of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, students generally begin studying English in the third grade of elementary school. English is studied throughout middle school and high school. For the first two years after entering university, undergraduate students are generally required to continue taking college English courses. Therefore, a person generally needs to go through 12-14 years of English Education. If according to the normal teaching plan, each student must go through more than 2,000 hours of English education when they graduate from university. On the other hand, this is related to the instrumental value of English in China. Wang et al. (2017) affirmed the great economic returns of having good proficiency in English in China. Chinese learners have been investing a lot of time, money

and efforts to improve their English level (Qian, 2010). This makes China the largest English learning market in the world (Li et al., 2021).

Among English learners in China, university students constitute a significant group. University students are an important community in learning and using English in China. English is a compulsory course for Chinese university students, who study English for two to four semesters. Most students take College English Test which has become one of the prerequisites for employment when recruiting college graduates (Yan & Huizhong, 2006). English is also a compulsory subject in the postgraduate entrance examination in China.

The success of learners' language acquisition is influenced by their language attitudes (Gardner, 1985). Language attitudes have been described as the perception and value judgments that people ascribe to language varieties (Hidalgo 1986). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) claimed that attitude represents one of the most important sets of variables for predicting learner efficiency and achievement. Language attitude is also an important indicator for revealing language vitality and understanding the current community thoughts, beliefs and preferences (Baker, 1992). In addition, language attitude is considered to affect speakers' language behavior, the national decision-making to implement, maintain and promote particular language policies (Errihani, 2008; Gabsi, 2022).

Thus far, there is limited research on the evaluation response of Chinese students towards English varieties. Researchers found that participants rated native accents, especially British Received Pronunciation-accented English (BRE) and General American

English (GAE), more positively than non-native accents (e.g. Fang, 2016; Xu et al., 2010; Xu & Gao, 2014; Yang & Liu, 2016). These findings are consistent with the mainstream research results in other contexts (e.g. Ahn, 2017; Dalton-Puffer et al., 1997). Participants' self-reports indicate positive attitudes toward English as a language (Liu & Zhao, 2011) and a strong bias toward China Mandarin-accent English (CME) and other non-native English accents (Huang & Hashim, 2020), but this does not affect their Chinese identity (Fang et al., 2017). These studies on attitudes towards China Mandarin-accented English employed questionnaires which are subject to social desirability bias.

1.3 Research Problem

In the context of globalization, Chinese people should not only communicate with the native English speakers but also with non-native English speakers. When two individuals do not share a common language, they often choose to use English. In the teaching of English, it is not only necessary for learners to understand English spoken by native speakers, but also the English spoken by non-native speakers. However, China's traditionally and strongly held attachments to standards and correctness (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002) has led to the pragmatic adoption of the native speaker norm (He & Zhang, 2010; Tévar, 2020). As Shan and Li (2020) stated, English has been taught as a foreign language in the classroom of China for a long time. It stipulates that the usage and pronunciation of each word should conform to the standards, but which English variety should form the standard is a question that is not yet answered. Every learner is proud to use and speak fluent English as native speakers. The pursuit of native speaker standards may lead to difficulties

for Chinese learners learning English as a foreign language to understand other English varieties. As Asian countries have close trading ties with China, people from China may need to communicate with people from other Asian countries like Malaysia and India and they do not speak native speaker varieties of English. Therefore, it appears necessary to incorporate non-native varieties into English language instruction in China to increase Chinese learners' exposure to EC and OC English varieties, enhance their comprehension of these non-native varieties, and improve their communication skills with non-native variety speakers. However, since Chinese English learners are stakeholders, the decision to include non-native varieties in English instruction should take into full consideration the attitudes of the parties involved.

In investigating the attitudes of Chinese learners towards non-native varieties, it is crucial to include native varieties as reference points for comparison. Native varieties are the primary varieties Chinese learners encounter in the classroom, primarily British English and American English (Liu et al., 2023). Therefore, studies on attitudes of Chinese university students towards English varieties should include both British English and American English. It is also important to examine the attitudes of Chinese learners towards China Mandarin-accent English (CME). CME can be viewed as an English variety that has adapted to the local context in China. It has developed through the simultaneous use of the native language and its integration with Chinese social and cultural influences. When Chinese individuals communicate in English with each other, they naturally incorporate both intentional and unintentional elements of CME's distinct characteristics (Liu et al., 2023). This prevalent

and purposeful adoption of CE brings up questions about how and when CE should be incorporated into education.

Chinese attitudes toward English varieties learnt as second language have received less attention. Research in China has shown that Indian English variety is rated lower than native varieties and the local Chinese variety (e.g., Gao & Lin, 2010; Huang & Hashim, 2020; Shi, 2013; Xu & Gao, 2014). Similarly, Singapore English accent is not considered as good as CME accent by Chinese learners (Fang & Yuan, 2011). However, little is known about how other varieties of English are rated by Chinese learners. In a global world, there is increasingly more contact among people from different countries, and this makes it pertinent to investigate attitudes towards varieties of English that they come into contact with.

People in China come into close contact with Hong Kong English (HKE). It is relevant to investigate the attitudes of mainland Chinese learners towards HKE as an OC variety of English. Following the political transition in 1997, communication between Hong Kong and mainland China has been on the rise. Especially after the Hong Kong government introduced the Individual Visit Scheme in 2003, allowing residents from approved cities to visit Hong Kong as independent travelers, the number of tourists from mainland China increased at an average annual growth rate of 33.6%, rising from 1.9 million in 1994 to 45.8 million in 2015 (Tse & Qiu, 2016). Increased exchanges can expose mainland Chinese individuals to HKE, potentially leading to shifts in their attitudes towards the variety. Additionally, considering that the political relationship between China and Hong Kong are

in a flux caused by the proposed extradition bill in 2019 (Cheng et al., 2022), there may be changes in mainland Chinese people's attitudes towards HKE. However, the study of attitudes towards HKE has been largely overlooked by scholars from mainland China. Given the deep interconnection between language and culture, understanding the perspectives of mainland students on HKE can provide insights into the perceptions held by mainland individuals regarding HK (Li et al., 2022). This is particularly relevant due to the diverse cultural and social contexts of HK residents.

To fully understand language attitudes and to advance the field of sociolinguistics, it is important to study both implicit and explicit attitudes. Differences exist between implicit and explicit attitudes (McKenzie, 2015). There are indications of differences in findings of scholars who compared implicit and explicit attitudes of English learners toward English varieties (e.g., McKenzie, 2013, 2015). McKenzie (2013) found that Japanese university students implicitly evaluated the UK and US varieties of English more positively compared to other Asian forms of English while they explicitly expressed a preference for accents that aligned with their own. McKenzie (2015) reported that UK-born students exhibited a clear implicit preference for native varieties of English, although when directly asked, these students tended to have a positive attitude towards language diversity in English. However, such studies that compare implicit and explicit language attitudes are severely limited. Furthermore, the findings need verification in other contexts to understand how they might differ. The dual attitude model posits that attitudes can be divided into implicit attitudes and explicit attitudes (Wilson et al., 2000). Based on a comprehensive search of the literature, it