

Language attitudes research: Affordances of Acceptability Judgement Task

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Research on language attitudes has been undertaken mainly in disciplines such as social psychology, sociolinguistics and recently world Englishes. What appears consistent in these divergent disciplinary standpoints is that findings from language attitudes studies have increased awareness of the relationship between language users' attitudes and different aspects of their identities. What appears unsettled, however, is *how* to approach different aspects of language attitudes research. While a great deal of the research in social psychology appears to adopt indirect approaches such as Matched Guise Technique (MGT) or its variant known as Verbal Guise Technique (VGT) (McKenzie, 2010), approaches in sociolinguistics tend to be either direct or indirect, with a few studies adopting a mixed-methods approach (Kitazawa, 2013). One of the most contentious debates in this area of language research is whether the methodological approach should be direct or indirect. These two dominant approaches are informed by the *behaviourist* and *mentalist* theoretical underpinnings. In response to an emerging convergence of opinions to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to the study of language attitudes owing to its complex nature, this study intends to show what affordances Acceptability Judgement Task (AJT) holds. First, the study takes a critique of the major approaches within the discipline. Second, it argues that the language contact situation in world Englishes contexts further complicates language attitudes studies, and should therefore be approached differently. In other words, while the main approaches in language attitudes research might suffice to study attitudes in non-contact situations, it might not be so in world Englishes contexts. While conducting a larger study of attitudes pertaining to English language ownership among speakers of Nigerian English, this lacuna was identified. In this paper, I present the methodological choice I made: incorporating Acceptability Judgement Task to fill the identified lacuna. Data will be drawn from that study to support the argument put forward here. The overarching aim of this study is to show how neither of the main approaches in language attitudes research can (singly) sufficiently account for the attitudes phenomena, and to propose an 'integrated approach', which involves the employment of Acceptability Judgement Task (AJT).

Keywords: language attitudes, acceptability judgement task, world Englishes, Nigerian English, methods in language attitudes research

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