

FOCUSING ON SOCIOLINGUISTIC ATTITUDES AND MEDIA LITERACY: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY ON PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract: *Information and communication technologies have developed rapidly; however, studies focusing on what is both pedagogical and digital are lacking. Although there are studies that focus on 21st-century digital literacies and sociolinguistic aspects individually, there are few studies that study digital literacies, such as media literacy, in relation to sociolinguistic attitudes. Accordingly, this paper examined the relationship between sociolinguistic attitudes and media literacy. The participants were 306 pre-service English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers. The data were collected via the Sociolinguistic Attitudes Test and Media Literacy Skills Scale, which were preceded by audio recordings taken from the British Library. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were undertaken to analyze the data. The analysis revealed that the participants had an undecided attitude towards the non-native variety of English (i.e., Pakistani English) in focus, yet they had a high level of media literacy. A lack of significant correlation between sociolinguistic attitudes and media literacy was also revealed. The findings demonstrated that digital literacies may not lend themselves to sociolinguistic phenomena directly. This implies that further research regarding potential variables, including moderating and mediating variables, may clarify the relationship between digital skills and sociolinguistic attitudes*

Keywords: *World Englishes, English language teaching, sociolinguistic attitudes, media literacy, Pakistani English*

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Introduction

Thanks to several factors such as the developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) and globalization, the status of English as a lingua franca has been established. Media and information literacy have become a significant skill and innovation for cultivating critical and informed citizens in the 21st century (Tatnall, 2003). The 21st-century skills, known as the 4Cs, consist of communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking, and digital skills are crucial in developing these 4Cs, which are related to foreign language education as well. However, previous studies tended to focus on technical issues only and ignore the social aspects. Tatnall (2003) underlined the fact that a sole focus on technology as the driver of change failed to unearth the complexities of the context under investigation. Accordingly, this study aimed to investigate what is both sociolinguistic (i.e., attitudes) and technological/digital (media literacy) based on pre-service English language teachers' literacy and attitudes.

Jenkins (2006) suggested that learners should possess a critical ability to assess the information in the media, mentioning new media literacies as a critical social skill. This situation, led by recent developments and conceptualizations in ICT, has naturally affected foreign language teaching and education practices. Heaton (2018) suggested that a correlation between media and language attitudes was hypothesized; however, this hypothesis was not tested. As shown by previous studies (e.g., Cheshmedzhieva-Stoycheva, 2020; Heaton, 2018), it was demonstrated that the media promote stereotyping. Hence, this can lead to negative sociolinguistic attitudes towards especially non-native varieties of English by representing them in a biased manner. In other words, the lack of media literacy skills may lead individuals to be affected by problems such as stereotyping, racism, and ethnocentrism, which can affect their sociolinguistic attitudes. On the other hand, considering the recent ELF-aware teacher training perspectives (e.g., Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015), pre-service teachers as future teachers need to internalize a more critical approach to issues such as lingering native speaker norms. Accordingly, it may be argued that there is a need for more studies investigating the relationship between digital literacies and language attitudes.

Until the 1960s, traditional methods such as the Grammar Translation Method tended to ignore interaction skills in English as a second/foreign language teaching (EFL). Attaining native-like pronunciation was the main goal of EFL; however, recently, there are debates about this assumption, and globalization and developments in ICT have shifted the goal of language teaching. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and sociolinguistic perspectives have emerged, and these perspectives underline the multiple functions and uses of languages, arguing for an acknowledgement of different layers of societies (e.g., Bayyurt, 2013; Karakas, 2019; Solmaz, 2021) and challenging what Bhatt (2002) called the Standard English ideology. Attaining an ELF perspective may also be a

crucial factor for ensuring critical pedagogy approaches such as democratic education. Therefore, starting with descriptive and correlational studies to understand the nature of these constructs is essential for finding ways to improve teaching practices in future studies. Şahin et al. (2013) suggested that democratic education would be nearly impossible if the teacher did not have a multicultural attitude since multicultural attitudes are the basis of democratic and multicultural practices. Accordingly, today an eclectic and post-modernist approach is acknowledged in the field, and different accents and varieties of English are seen as valid on their own right (Kachru, 2006). However, studies that merge pre-service teachers' digital skills (such as media and digital literacy) and social aspects of language learning are very rare (e.g., Şahin et al., 2013). What is more, these studies are undertaken in other teaching fields (e.g., social studies teachers in Şahin et al., 2013), yet, to my knowledge, they do not exist in the foreign language education context.

Previous research in the field

Sociolinguistics is a sub-branch of Applied Linguistics that studies the effects of social factors on the use and acquisition of languages. It is a post-modernist approach in that it focuses on the experiences of individuals rather than the methodologies of learning. Before the emergence of the ELF perspective, the traditional aim for language learners was to achieve native-like pronunciation, which was also apparent in the 1980s in the Communicative Approach. However, the goal of achieving native-like proficiency has transformed into being intelligible (Cook, 2009; Jenkins, 2000). Cook (2009) claimed that a native-like accent should not be the main target of pronunciation teaching, considering the ELF status of English. Today, the purposes of using English are much more diverse, and the needs of learners vary (Richards, 2017). Hence, EFL teachers need to be trained to teach regarding diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which will enable their learners to fully participate in intercultural exchanges (Gao & Wang, 2025). Indeed, most of the interaction in English takes place between non-native speakers. This new sociolinguistic realm called for a novel approach to avoid making English language teaching unrealistic and constraining (Alptekin, 2002). Hence, this perspective underlines the significance of understanding sociolinguistic aspects of foreign language teaching and learning. Also, today, the media are everywhere due to the prevalence of the internet, social media, and online platforms. Since people are exposed to these tools frequently, their attitudes may potentially be affected by the media. At this point, media literacy comes into play as a crucial factor in shaping their views of others (Erişti & Erdem, 2017). Hence, ensuring media literacy may be critical for avoiding sociolinguistic biases towards certain varieties of languages or groups of people.

Sociolinguistic approaches such as the ELF perspective imply that variation in languages is the norm. The notion of standard accents is, in this sense, artificial and relative (Esling, 1998). Yet, accents may indeed indicate where people have lived, what their occupation is, or what their education level is. Social Identity Theory also suggests that being a member of a group implies certain social characteristics for the members. This facilitates the formation of negative attitudes towards outsiders (Bresnahan et al., 2002). Hence, stereotypes based on local varieties are commonly observed across the globe (Ladegaard, 1998). This means that having stereotypes based on accents has a mostly social basis, and it reflects the organization and attitudes of a society (Esling, 1998; Trudgill, 2008). Moreover, as Trudgill (2008) mentioned, the standard English accent (i.e., received pronunciation) is usually the norm in the media although its use is very limited even in the native countries of English. Then, the media also contributes to the unrealistic sketch of the uses of English in real life, which is the ELF status.

Kachru (2006) mentioned the three concentric circles to explain the political and social dimensions of the varieties of Englishes. The first one is the inner circle comprising the native cultures of English (e.g., British, American, or Australian). The next one is the outer circles. This includes countries where English is used as a formal language due to historical relationships. For example, India and Pakistan did not have much in common with the British before the colonization of India. However, after the colonization, the English language started to have a significant place in that region. The final group is the expanding circle where there is almost no presence of the English or their language formally; however, English is spoken for several purposes, such as global trade, education, and catching up with technology and developments. These circles demonstrate the stratification of the English language as an international language.

The discussion in this sub-section indicated that the sociolinguistic approach has a variable understanding of language learning, and thus, it promotes the study of various factors to have a comprehensive understanding of the language learning process. In the literature, three variables were underlined: social status, social attractiveness, and linguistic features. Social status is concerned with prominence in society while social attractiveness refers to likability, which correlates with positive attitudes such as friendliness. Although non-standard and non-native accents tend to attract more negative sociolinguistic attitudes, the social attractiveness sub-factor was sometimes shown to be more positive for these varieties (Thomas, 2004). Finally, linguistic features denote the acceptability and formality of a language variety. Briefly, it may be argued that social status, social attractiveness, and linguistic features are the factors that affect an individual's attitudes towards different languages and accents.

The other main concept in this study is media literacy. The recent and rapid developments in ICTs have shaped people's lives in many respects. Computers

and the internet entered the lives of the masses only a few decades ago; however, they had immense effects. Education and language teaching were also affected by these changes indispensably. Initial studies on computer-assisted language learning have shaped the field and offered new opportunities. Moreover, the developments in the internet, media, and social platforms have quickly become a part of our lives today. These developments have provided various benefits (e.g., learning when, how, and how much learners prefer), yet they have also led to some problems (Erdem et al., 2023). To exemplify, the media and digital platforms can be used to deceive and manipulate the masses (Todorova, 2019). As mentioned by McDougall et al. (2019), information pollution is a significant problem. The role of teachers has also shifted from being a knowledge transmitter to becoming a facilitator and creator of learning environments thanks to ICTs (Amin, 2016). Therefore, previous research indicated that media literacy is a vital skill in the age of ICTs, and future teachers must possess it.

Media literacy is defined in several ways, yet the definition provided by the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy may be seen as a precise and acceptable one in the field (Erdem et al., 2023). This definition describes media literacy as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in various forms (Aufderheide, 1993). It underlined four significant abilities needed for media literacy (Potter, 2010). The first media literacy skill is *access*, which involves obtaining relevant information and understanding its use efficiently. The next one is *analyze*. It is regarded as the main goal of media literacy (Aufderheide, 1993). It is concerned with individuals' ability to achieve critical autonomy in interaction with the media. The third one is *evaluate*. It includes coming to a conclusion concerning the value of the media content via some standards and principles. The final ability focuses on *creation* and *communication*. Hence, it focuses on the transformation of an individual from a media consumer to a media producer. Considering the point above, it is seen that media literacy is a complex concept, and it requires having several interrelated skills. Regarding the focus of the current study; however, the skill of analyze is directly related since it is regarded as the main goal of media literacy (Aufderheide, 1993). This skill is also concerned with individuals' ability to achieve critical autonomy in interaction with the media. Hence, it might be a predictor of more egalitarian sociolinguistic attitudes since having a critical understanding requires individuals to go beyond simply knowing and understanding. Accordingly, it is related to sociolinguistic attitudes.

To synthesize the introduction and justification of the study, today we live in a global world where the media are vast and affect all aspects of our lives. English has become a lingua franca, and it displays variation considering sociolinguistic factors. This global status and stratification have led to the emergence of different varieties of English called World Englishes (e.g., Pakistani English). Although these new varieties are acknowledged as distinct varieties of English

in academic circles, many negative attitudes and stereotyping persist due to factors such as social status, social attractiveness, and linguistic features. Hence, how different layers of society are represented in the media is of great significance in terms of sociolinguistic attitudes, and media literacy, especially the skill of analyze, might be a predictor of sociolinguistic attitudes. This is because having a critical understanding requires individuals to go beyond simply knowing and understanding. Rather, the individuals should be able to analyze different factors in a phenomenon. The literature review suggests that no previous study investigated the relationship between digital/ICT skills and sociolinguistic attitudes of pre-service EFL teachers towards different varieties of English. There are several studies regarding foreign language teachers' sociolinguistic attitudes towards World Englishes; however, they do not include technological literacies (e.g., Atar & Erdem, 2020; Coşkun, 2011; Karakas, 2019; Solmaz, 2021). Considering these justifications, the purpose of the study was identified accordingly below.

Research questions

The aim of the study was to investigate whether media literacy has a correlation with the participants' sociolinguistic attitudes. A potential correlation is hypothesized here since the media may promote stereotyping (Cheshmedzhieva-Stoycheva, 2020; Heaton, 2018), which leads to less favorable sociolinguistic attitudes toward, especially non-native World Englishes. In this sense, it is essential to understand the potential relationship between sociolinguistic attitudes and media literacy. Considering the sociolinguistic turn in the field (Firth & Wagner, 2007) and the ELF-aware teacher training perspectives (e.g., Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015), it is essential to ensure that pre-service teachers, as future teachers, internalize these perspectives. This is not only vital for ELF studies, but also social justice studies, as persistent stereotyping in this matter indicates lingering native speaker norms. Hence, studying potential factors such as media literacy which may interact with sociolinguistic attitudes can provide valuable insights considering the dominant role of the media in today's world. Accordingly, the research questions are:

1. What is the participants' level of sociolinguistic attitudes?
2. What is the participants' level of media literacy?
3. What is the relationship between the level of sociolinguistic attitudes and media literacy?
 - 3.1. Does it vary according to the social status sub-dimension?
 - 3.2. Does it vary according to the social attractiveness sub-dimension?
 - 3.3. Does it vary according to the linguistic features sub-dimension?

Methods

The study employs a quantitative research design via two surveys. In survey research designs, a survey is implemented to unearth the attitudes, opinions, or behaviors of a group of people (Creswell, 2012). Hence, this design is implemented since the purpose of the current study was to identify the correlation between the participants' attitudes and their relationship with media literacy. More specifically, firstly, the participants' sociolinguistic attitudes and levels of media literacy were identified. Then, the relationship between sociolinguistic attitudes and levels of media literacy was analyzed.

Participants and data collection

The participants were 306 pre-service English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers from Türkiye, which is an expanding circle country. The participants came from all parts of Türkiye via convenience and snowball sampling, which are non-probabilistic sampling methods. A probabilistic sampling would have provided a better representation of the population; however, since this study was not supported by funding, it was impossible to collect data from all the universities in Türkiye systematically. Hence, using convenience sampling and snowball sampling, the researcher tried to recruit as many participants as possible from different universities across the country. In Türkiye, to be an English language teacher, a student needs to have a bachelor's degree in a four-year program in ELT, English Language and Literature, English Linguistics, or relevant fields. 47 (15.4%) of the participants were 1st graders, 100 (32.7%) were 2nd graders, 82 (26.7%) were 3rd graders, and 77 (25.2%) were 4th graders. 213 participants (69.6%) were males, while 93 (30.4%) were females. Regarding ethics, the participants were informed about the goal of the study, their rights, and were ensured anonymity in the study.

The first data collection tool, Media Literacy Skills Scale (MLSS), was developed by Erişti and Erdem (2017) to measure pre-service teachers' media literacy levels. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 45 items in the factors of 'access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate'. The scale was demonstrated to be valid and reliable in its development study. It had a Cronbach's alpha value of .823 for the *analyze* factor consisting of 15 items. The sociolinguistic attitudes data were collected by the Sociolinguistic Attitudes Test (Atar & Erdem, 2020). This test consists of 10 items and 3 sub-dimensions: social status, social attractiveness, and linguistic features. It is a 5-point Likert-type survey, 1 denoting the lowest point while 5 the highest. The Cronbach alpha coefficient result of the test was .845. The reliability level for social status sub-dimension was .674, .812 for social attractiveness, and .819 for linguistic features. These indicated good reliability (Field, 2009).

The data were collected online in the 2021-2022 academic year in the post-pandemic era via a Google Docs link. The test was preceded by two audio recordings taken from the British Library with permission. To design a more reliable and valid study, the recordings were chosen from the ones including contexts regarding daily issues of Pakistani speakers (a non-native accent), because, as Labov (1966) suggested, people tend to speak more naturally while speaking about daily issues. This also ensured the potential effects of discourse domains (Young, 2008). To balance gender, one of the speakers in the recording was male, and the other was female. The recordings were presented before the survey items so that the participants listened to them first. After listening to the audio recordings, the participants filled in the Sociolinguistic Attitudes Test and the MLSS on a Google Docs document.

Data analysis

The data were first checked for skewness and kurtosis values. For the Sociolinguistic Attitudes test, the values were .286 and -.270, and for the MLSS, the values were -0.80 and 1.193, respectively. As these values were between +1.5 and -1.5, both datasets were normally distributed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The data were analyzed descriptively via SPSS to answer the first and second research questions. Then, Pearson correlation analyses were performed to answer the third research question. Also, further analysis was undertaken to check the potential effect of the sub-dimensions of The Sociolinguistic Attitudes Test, which are social status, social attractiveness, and linguistic features. This analysis answers the sub-questions of the third research question.

Results

The first analysis focused on the participants’ level of sociolinguistic attitudes and its three sub-dimensions.

Table 1. *Level of Sociolinguistic Attitudes*

Sub-dimensions	Mean	Sd
Social Status	2.31	0.93
Social Attractiveness	2.91	1.11
Linguistic Features	2.36	1.05
Overall	2.54	1.11

The analysis showed that the overall average for sociolinguistic attitudes was 2.54. It was 2.31 for social status, 2.91 for social attractiveness, and 2.36 for the linguistic features sub-dimensions. The overall average suggested that the

participants had a neutral attitude towards Pakistani English, which is mentioned as “undecided” in the test (Atar & Erdem, 2020). However, some variations were observed in the sub-dimensions. While there was a neutral attitude regarding social attractiveness, the participants had a relatively more negative attitude in terms of social status and linguistic features, which was closer to what was worded as “disagree” in the test (Atar & Erdem, 2020).

The second analysis was undertaken to detect the participants’ media literacy levels in the *analyze* factor.

Table 2. *Level of Media Literacy*

	Mean	Sd	Median
Media Literacy	4.13	.39	4.13

The results showed that the mean was 4.15 while the standard deviation was 0.39. According to the scale, the participants had a high level of media literacy (Erişti & Erdem, 2017). There does not seem to be a significant variation in the scores according to the standard deviation.

The next analysis focused on the main objective of this study: identifying whether there is a correlation between media literacy and sociolinguistic attitudes.

Table 3. *The correlation between Media Literacy and Sociolinguistic Attitudes*

		Media Liter- acy	Socioling. Attitudes (Total)	Social Status	Social Attractive- ness	Ling. Features
Media	Pearson Cor.	1	-.007	-.020	.015	-.022
Literacy	Sig. (2-tailed)		.911	.743	.805	.716

The results demonstrated that there was no notable correlation between media literacy and sociolinguistic attitudes. This suggested that a statistically significant linear relationship between media literacy levels and dimensions of sociolinguistic attitudes was not detected in the dataset. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the two tools was $r = -0.007$, indicating a very weak negative correlation. This meant that the correlation had negligible practical significance (Cohen, 1988). This suggested that there was almost no linear relationship between the two sets of scores. The p-value of .911 indicated that the correlation was not statistically significant. Hence, the observed relationship could be due to random chance. These observations were similar regarding the three sub-dimensions (social status, social attractiveness, and linguistic features) of sociolinguistic attitudes as well. Therefore, the results demonstrated that media literacy and sociolinguistic attitudes did not have a significant linear correlation.

Discussion of findings

The first research question aimed to identify the participants' sociolinguistic attitudes. The results suggested that they had an "undecided" attitude according to the total score from the test. The result, however, suggested that it was closer to a slight dislike in two of the sub-dimensions. This slight negative attitude was more obvious in social status and linguistic features. Hence, it may be suggested that the participant prospective English as a language teachers had a slightly negative attitude towards the accent of an expanding circle country (i.e., Pakistani English). The literature demonstrated that World Englishes and even native non-standard English accents attract less positive sociolinguistic attitudes (e.g., Atar & Erdem, 2020; Bresnahan et al., 2002; Hiraga, 2005; Karakas, 2019; Snell, 2013; Trudgill, 2008). Hence, this finding may be an indication of the fact that the participants did not have equal sociolinguistic attitudes towards standard and non-native varieties of English. Also, in line with Trudgill's (2009) argument, the popularity of standard accents in the media may be the reason for the dislike towards the non-standard and non-native varieties. The findings, then, revealed that the stereotypes and prejudices about certain groups (i.e., Pakistani English speakers) might have been reflected upon their speakers since the accents of individuals are usually seen as the markers of membership to certain social groups (Atar & Erdem, 2020).

The analysis regarding the second research question revealed that the participants had a high level of media literacy. This finding is striking in that the participants had a high media literacy level, yet this still did not prevent them from having a slightly negative attitude towards the accent of an expanding circle country. Hence, it may be suggested here that individuals' media literacy may not necessarily have a correlation with their sociolinguistic attitudes towards non-native varieties of English. Together with the finding regarding sociolinguistic attitudes, it may be suggested that there can be various other variables ranging from social and psychological ones to technical skills (e.g., Yazıcı et al., 2009). However, one point to remember is that increasing pre-service teachers' knowledge about multicultural issues may not mean that it will have a direct effect on their attitude scores. Hence, unearthing the potential factors and variables is essential. The finding that there was not a significant correlation between sociolinguistic attitudes and media literacy is in line with the few studies in the literature (e.g., Şahin et al., 2013, which was undertaken in a non-English language teaching context, though). Considering this result and the literature, it may be suggested that there is no strong correlation between sociolinguistic attitudes and media literacy. Observing that there was no correlation between sociolinguistic attitudes and media literacy, future studies may check whether some variables might be having an effect. To clarify, there should be further investigations into the kind of other variables, especially non-language factors as Rubin (1992) puts it, that may influence the equation between sociolinguistic attitudes and media literacy.

Having positive attitudes towards non-standard and non-native varieties is significant for achieving democratic and multicultural pedagogies (Şahin et al., 2013). In line with the rise of technology in recent decades, it may be suggested that the field of English language teaching should go beyond internal factors and focus on external factors such as technological and digital skills as well. Therefore, it is essential to understand the relationships between social and non-social variables and train pre/in-service teachers according to the contexts in which they will teach as future professionals (Güngör, 2017).

Conclusions

Although technology and digital skills have become a part of our lives swiftly, few studies in the literature have investigated the complex relationships between digital and social aspects, especially in the educational context. Hence, the current study aimed to find out the pre-service teachers' level of sociolinguistic attitudes towards a non-native variety of English and their media literacy skills to account for what is technical and social at the same time, in line with the digital age we live in.

The results of the study contribute to the existing literature in several ways. First, while previous research has generally examined sociolinguistic attitudes toward World Englishes and digital literacies such as media literacy individually, this study has investigated the relationship between these two domains. By examining pre-service EFL teachers' sociolinguistic attitudes toward a non-native variety of English together with their media literacy skills, the study offers new insights into whether digital competencies are associated with more inclusive socio-linguistic perspectives. The analysis has also revealed that the participants had an "undecided" attitude towards Pakistani English, yet the details of the analysis regarding the sub-dimensions of the questionnaire indicated a stance closer to a slight dislike. Regarding media literacy levels, the participants were competent. In addition to unearthing these levels, the study also checked whether there was a relationship between sociolinguistic attitudes and media literacy levels. The results demonstrated that there is no significant correlation between the two. Additionally, the study has highlighted the potential limits of digital literacies in influencing sociolinguistic awareness, suggesting that technological competence alone may not foster more positive attitudes toward socio-linguistic variation.

Media literacy skills include gaining critical autonomy in an individual's relationship with media (Aufderheide, 1993). The *analyze* and *evaluate* dimensions are specifically related to this critical stance (Potter, 2010). Therefore, an individual who has media literacy skills is expected to engage with ICTs more critically. Considering there was no correlation between media literacy and sociolinguistic attitudes, moderator variables that can change or

intensify this relationship need to be studied. Erdem et al. (2023) suggested that media literacy can equip individuals with critical autonomy in their engagement with media and help them participate in social life; however, a single factor/variable (i.e., media literacy) cannot explain a phenomenon alone due to potential rival causes (Richards, 2017). Giacosa (2021) also suggested that interactional skills should be studied more in digital environments, and the study went on to argue for the concept of digital interactional competence. Accordingly, studying further factors and mediating or moderating variables is essential for understanding the effect of digital skills on social attitudes. Some relevant variables, such as holding a graduate degree and experience of living abroad, may change this relationship.

The current study has some limitations to be considered while interpreting the results. Firstly, the data were collected via online tools, and the participants were recruited via convenience and snowball sampling methods. Since digital skills such as media literacy and digital citizenship are critical skills in the current era and teachers are expected to teach accordingly, pre-service teachers were chosen as the target. In future studies, participants with different backgrounds and characteristics may be included to increase data diversity. On the other hand, the contexts and participants of this study are limited to a single country. These issues indicate that the study group may not be a representative of the population. Hence, studies undertaken in different contexts with more participants would enable researchers to understand the phenomena better. Moreover, the study focused on a single variety of English only (Pakistani English) while analyzing the correlation. Future studies focusing on different varieties and investigating causation would be a significant contribution to the field.

The data of this study were collected between 2021 and 2022. Due to the swift developments in technological and online platforms, novel studies need to be undertaken to track these changes at short intervals. Also, this study is a significant study in analyzing the relationship between digital competencies and sociolinguistic attitudes. The results indicated a lack of correlation, suggesting that there are other potential variables affecting sociolinguistic attitudes. Hence, replication studies in different contexts may be undertaken to see whether the findings in this study are generalizable. Finally, as social attitudes consist of different layers (e.g., affective and conative), qualitative studies could enrich and clarify this issue and provide further insights. The detailed understanding qualitative research can offer has the potential to unearth variables in a bottom-up fashion and open the way for further interpretations.

Implications

The previous studies suggested that research in the field of English language teaching often focused on technical aspects and ignored the social ones. Tatnall

(2003) argued that the sole focus on technology as the driver of change cannot achieve unearthing the complexities of this phenomenon. An essentialist perspective cannot explain all the aspects of a phenomenon. As Cargile et al. (1994) indicated, several independent variables can come into play in sociolinguistic attitude studies. This seems to be in line with the findings of the current study since the findings revealed that forming a one-to-one link was not possible.

Considering the participants' negative or undecided attitudes towards non-standard and non-native varieties of English, as Bayyurt & Sifakis (2015) suggested, EFL teachers need to be trained more in line with the ELF perspective. Indeed, Coşkun (2010) stated that there were some improvements regarding the ELF perspective in Türkiye. The Turkish Higher Supreme Council of Education (YÖK) suggested incorporating different varieties of English into the pronunciation courses at universities. Still, as seen from the results of the current study and some other recent studies (e.g., Atar & Erdem, 2020; Karakas, 2019), this does not seem to be sufficient for dealing with prejudice based on local varieties. Consequently, considering the fact that the participants had a relatively neutral attitude (2.54 out of 5) towards a non-native variety of English, it is essential that pre-service teacher programs include more courses such as Sociolinguistics and World Englishes to increase their awareness of World Englishes.

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