

DETERMINING THE INFLUENCE OF ATTITUDE TOWARD TEACHER'S ACCENTS ON LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract: *The current study examined the influence of a teacher's accent on language learning. Students often make judgments about a teacher based on the teacher's accent. These judgments either motivate or demotivate a student from learning language. This study seeks to determine how attitudes held by students towards accents employed by teacher's influence language learning. To achieve this aim, the Matched-Guise methodology was used with a questionnaire. The following conclusions were drawn: (a) there is a relationship between accented speech and learners attitudes; (b) learners form a definite opinion about a teacher based on their accent; and (c) learners prefer to be taught by people who have certain accents based on their notion of a Standard English language accent. The spontaneous attitudes reflected by the participants do reveal that students generally hold some level of prejudice against speakers who have a strong accent in their speech.*

Key words: *language learning, aim, learner's attitudes, attributions*

1. INTRODUCTION

Quillian (2006) argued that previous research has shown that people generally form a positive or negative attitude towards speakers with different accents and that these attributions are dependent on a listener's attitude towards the speaker's region or country of origin, racial or ethnic group (as cited in Fishman & Gracia, 2010, p.9). Immediately one starts developing certain judgements about this person, based on what is seen and heard directly from them. In what ways people do this, and how much importance is attached to those opinions, is defined by both consciously and subconsciously held attitudes. The perception a person gets from someone, as described above, is not a passive process. Regardless of whether an

individual is aware of this process, everyone develops certain “implicit personality theories”, which allow a person to develop opinions about other people based on the information available about them. One of the first things that come into play, besides appearance, facial expression, and body language, is a person’s individual speech style (Giles & Powesland, 1975: 1). Accents also form an important cue when making judgements and evaluations of people. This provides the distinction between native and non-native accents. Accents, found in both native and foreign language speakers, elicit reactions in listeners that transfer over to judgements about the speakers’ personalities. Based on people’s accents, other people make judgements about their intelligence, personality and other traits (Hochel & Wilson, 2007, p.114). Many accounts of discriminations have been addressed by Matsuda (1991) and Triandis, Loh, and Levin (1966) .

Particularly interesting in the field of language teaching, students’ attitudes towards non-native English teachers are often influenced if the instructor has an accent in their speech. Research in this area has made investigations and discovered that students do have the ability to detect accents in the varieties of English language pronunciations and how this directly or indirectly influences their attitude towards learning from the teacher with a certain accent (Kelch & Santana-Williamson, 2002).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Previous studies that explore the attitude of students towards the accents of teachers of non-native English speakers in Asia were hard to find for a detailed review. The gap is in studies that explore influence of attitude towards teachers’ accents on language learning.

1.2 Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to determine how students view non-native English teachers with accents. This study examined how attitude towards a teacher’s accent can influence the student’s judgment about a teacher and influence the student’s motivation to be taught by that teacher.

The research also looked into what students considered to be the Standard English accent and the importance of accents on learning, according to the students.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the attitudes of students towards a non-native English teacher with a strong accent?

2. What is the effect of the accent of a teacher on student's motivation to learn English language?

3. What is the effect of the attitude towards a non-native English teacher with a strong accent on student learning?

4. What is Standard English accent according to the learners?

1.4 Hypotheses

- i) Students are likely to make judgments on the teacher's personalities based simply on their teachers' accents.
- ii) Based on the demographics of the high school students participating in this study, the attitude of the respondents towards the teacher can have a negative impact and demotivate them from learning English.
- iii) Attitudes of the students toward teacher's accent in general affect language learning.
- iv) Out of the English language varieties, American English, British English and Australian English are considered as standard forms of English language.

1.5 Importance of the Study

This study is important to the teachers to interpret how student's perception of accent could have an influence on their language learning. Teachers can also have a better understanding of why some students may resist learning English from teachers who are non-native English speakers. In addition, teachers may also incorporate varieties of accented listening material in lessons to expose the students to varieties of Standard English language to help students recognize different forms of accents in English. Finally, teachers can monitor student's reaction to varieties of accents in English language and limit the chosen materials to obtain a general accepted level of the students.

1.6 Definition of Terms

With the wide selection of English accents and its speakers, sometimes the difference between an American English accent and a British English accent can sometimes become confusing. In this study the American accent and British accent have been used while maintaining the view that both the American accent and British Accent are general accents that most people can identify with.

Abbreviations like NESTs for 'Native English Speaking Teachers' and NNESTs for 'Non-native English Speaking Teachers' have been used respectively while making the relevant references.

Native speaker: Someone who has spoken a particular language since they were a baby, rather than having learned it as a child or adult.

Non-native speaker: Someone who has learned a particular language as a child or adult rather than as a baby.

Accent: The way in which people in a particular area, country, or social group pronounce words.

Linguistics: The scientific study of the structure and development of language in general or of particular languages.

Pronunciation: The way in which a word is pronounced, in a very distinct and noticeable manner.

Attitude: A feeling or opinion about something or someone, or a way of behaving that is caused by this.

Perception: A belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem to be.

Judgment: The ability to form valuable opinions and make good decisions.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This research focused on the attitude towards accented speech and its influence on language learning for students. There are several collateral variables that must be analyzed before investigating the significance of attitude towards accented speech on second language speakers of English language. The first of these variables is the definition of the term 'accent.' The second variable explores whether learners have any kind of reaction or attitude towards accented speech. The third variable is the relationship between the attitude and motivation in second language learning. The final variable is the nature of English as a global language.

Accent

The Oxford dictionary (2016) defines accent as a distinctive way of pronouncing a language, especially one associated with a particular country, area, or social class. The answer to the critical question as to what is an accent has shown some significant difference in the opinion of what constitutes a specific accent. Sociobiological scholars including Thomas Scovel (as cited in Brown, 2007) were of the opinion that an accent is

something that is developed at puberty age and that enables humans to bond socially in order to form an identity as one assumes various roles in life. Scovel further stated that human accents help to attract people of one's own kind as people strive to maintain their own community.

Deviating from the sociobiological view, Bauer, Holmes and Warren (2006) defined the understanding of accent as just the way one enunciates or utters words. According to their research, it is simply the manner in which English speakers pronounce vowel sounds. They do support Scovel's theory that if a student is not drilled in certain vowel sound distinction during teenage years, the chances are he or she may not be certain about how to pronounce certain words. Therefore, people may have different accents depending on different vowel pronunciation in their local community. Their definition seems to focus mainly on a regional background, based solely on one's individual pronunciation.

Further, there are scholars who see accent in the context of the language it is used in. Green (1997) understands accent as an ambiguous term used in relation to a language. Such scholars are of the view that one of the potential problems that may arise due to a difference in accent is a rather negative social evaluation, coming from the majority accent group. This is often manifested when minority accents are held to be signs of crudeness and lack of refinement. Research also holds the media outlets as being responsible for promoting such stereotypes of 'perfect English' of the educated and regional working class accents.

Attitude towards accented speech

Stereotypes or prejudice on the part of the listener may lead to perceiving an individual negatively solely based on their speech. Such a negative attitude with a foreign accent may be perceived negatively because of the attitude it can evoke in a listener. Such negative viewpoint can have a detrimental influence on how speakers are evaluated in the community (Matsuda 1991; Lippi-Green 1997).

Sometimes a local accent becomes just one of the excuses like skin color, mannerisms, and social status to discriminate against people, due to prejudice, which is when a person will pre-judge another, based on their appearance, which relates to the stereotypes that are held by the given community involved.

An individual may react negatively to an accent for a number of reasons. The number one reason could be the prejudice one holds against a certain group of people which may be triggered when one hears speech patterns affiliated with that group as noted by Brennan & Brennan (as cited

in Munro, Derwing and Sato, 2006). Such kind of behaviour leads to stereotyping – a phenomenon, which this researcher will refer to as *accent stereotyping* – and this may also lead to discriminatory behavior towards particular groups or towards foreigners in general. Stereotyping on the basis of language occurs in a wide variety of contexts, ranging from individual classrooms to educational proposals that underline the curriculum for an entire country. In the case of the latter, the concern is often with issues of international communication. It is legitimate to be concerned about the mutual intelligibility of English speakers around the world; in fact, many writers have commented on the complex issues related to this problem (Kachru 1976; Nelson 1982; Kachru 1982; Crystal 1997; Jenkins 2000). Nevertheless, it is important to research the question of intelligibility in a systematic way, rather than to resort to stereotyping or to make unwarranted assumptions.

Van der Walt (as cited in Munro et al., 2006) recounts that many scholars have argued that British English should be the Standard English in the South African educational system because they are of the opinion that other South African English variations could be incomprehensible to an international listener. Van der Walt's explanation is very true for people who rely on stereotypes and can result in adverse consequences.

Role of attitude and motivation in second language learning

Attitude and motivation play a significant role in second language learning. Brown (2007) assessed studies conducted by Gardner and Lambert who examined the effect that attitude has toward language learning. The scholars concluded that motivation constitutes many certain types of attitude. The most important is the kind of attitude the learners have towards the community whose language they are learning. In this light, when one examines the case of second language learners holding stereotypical negative attitudes toward speakers with accents, it is clearly evident that negative attitude may lead to a definite decrease in motivation.

R.C. Gardner and his associates carried out many Attitude and Motivation Battery tests (as cited in Masgoret and Gardner, 2002). They came up with the concept of integrative motivation. According to Masgoret and Gardner a student with integrative motivation is the one who is motivated to learn the second language, has openness identification with other language communities, and has favorable attitude towards the entire language learning situation.

Brown (2000) is of the view that in second language learning, negative attitude often leads to a decrease in motivation. Reddington (n.d.), based on the findings of language attitude research, affirms that there is very

much a negative attitude toward non native speakers of English. Giles and Billings (as cited in Reddington, n.d.) are of the opinion that speakers of so-called non-Standard English are disregarded.

Native English Speaking Teachers (NESTs) and Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNESTs)

In addition to the critique on the judgment made by learners on the accent of the teacher, another debate arises as to who makes a better teacher of English language: the NESTs or NNESTs?

Christen (as cited in Llurda, 2006,) defined a native speaker as a user of English language who has learned English since childhood as his or her first language. That means “it is impossible for non-native speakers to ever become a native speaker without going back to their childhood; nothing learned in later life could qualify you as a native speaker” (as cited in Llurda, 2006, p. 49)

On the other hand, Christen defined a non-native speaker as is a person who has learned the language as a second or a third language and has his or her own separate native language.

Peter Medgyes (2001) is of the opinion that native speakers have “acquired English in comparison with non-native speakers who are still acquiring” (p.12).

Studies conducted at some American universities have shown that teachers with foreign accents are perceived by parents and students to be less intelligent compared with teachers without hints of, or strong foreign accents (Nelson, 1991; Solomon, 1991).

Most importantly, native and non-native teachers’ accents seem to have a strong influence on the students. Han (2008) discussed a study conducted by Amin (1997) which indicated that students considered the white-skinned speakers of English from countries like Britain, the United States, and Canada as having superior status than speakers of countries like India, Singapore, and Kenya who have different accents.

However, the analysis of a more recent research undertaken by Mahboob in 2003 (as cited by Llurda, 2006) showed that both NESTs and NNESTs received positive and negative feedback from students. The NESTs received negative comments on areas such as grammar, their ability to answer questions and the methodology used. Nonetheless, NNESTs received negative comments with regard to their oral skills and their culture.

Relationship between teacher's accented speech and motivation to learn the language.

Over the years, many studies have shown the importance of motivation in language learning. Lenon (as cited by Graham, 1997) reinforces the relationship between attitude and motivation as “the most important single factor influencing continuing development in oral proficiency” (p. 96).

Further, Moussu's Study (2006) confirmed that there is a difference of perception between native and non-native speakers based on their accents. The results of the survey of 1,040 students showed that students generally preferred NESTs (Native English Speaking Teachers) to NNESTs (Non-Native English Speaking Teachers). However, positive attitude towards NNESTs developed with time and extended exposure.

According to Tang (2012), students often have misconceptions about NNES teachers based on their judgments of the teacher's accents. Some common misconception given by Tang based on the research survey which included 100 participants per region in Hong Kong, mainland China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, were that students believed that there is a good and an accurate accent. There was also the misconception that a teacher's accent affects student's learning. Students also believed that listening to a NEST improves one's listening, whereas listening to a NNEST does not. Someone with an accent cannot help students improve their pronunciation. Misconceptions such as having an accent are the same as having bad or unclear pronunciation was also prevalent among students. Some students believed that being exposed to a non-native accent may cause irreversible damage to the learner's accent. Finally, there was also a misconception that a teacher's accent is an indication of his/her proficiency in English and their quality level of teaching (Tang, 2012).

Nature of English as a global language

After discussing the impact of native English and non-native English speaking teachers, the issue of what the Standard English language level that the students should be taught arises. In Foley's (2007) view the global English is often associated with Standard British and American English language, under the supposition that these are both truly native English language.

The idea can be paralleled to Phillipson's discussion on the “native speaker's fallacy” (p.1) that the ‘perfect teacher’ will always be a native speaker.

This is obviously a form of discrimination between native English language teachers and non-native English language teachers. This discrimination is seen as a controversy by Medgyes (2001) where using the term native English language teachers and non-native English language teachers is politically incorrect. One possible explanation for such discrimination may be perhaps due to the ignorance of the learners about the vast varieties of the English language. As noted by Schneider (as cited by Palusci, 2010): “If language is similar to growing a plant, English is a plant that is constantly re-locating and re-rooting in a new territory” (p. 8).

Clearly, there has not been enough evidence to show learners the diversity of English language today. Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008), for example, argue that, “Not for the first time in its history there is an excitement about the diversity of English, the vast number of territories into which it is spreading, and the prospects of a global means of communication” (p.222). Furthermore, they claim that there are many kinds of “New Englishes” and “World Englishes” (p. 3) to show that English today is no longer confined to one domain but has become an immensely diverse language.

It becomes vitally important to investigate the attitude of the second language learner towards the nature of English language speaking. Kachru (1992) is of the opinion that English in modern times is acquiring various national identities and acquiring multiple ownerships.

3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research project involved both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analyses. The study can be defined as having been quasi-experimental, since the subjects were selected on the basis of the independent variable groups which included two levels, native and non-native speakers of English language.

3.1 Study Design

The primary objective of this research project was to how students view non-native English teachers with accents. It also aimed to determine whether students were motivated to learn English with teachers with non-native accents. In addition, the research also probed into what students considered to be Standard English.

3.2 Target Population

The target population for this research had to be high school students between the age group of 14 to 17 years old. The target population was controlled to strictly be students who were enrolled in the English Language

Development classes so that they could listen to the recordings and answer the questionnaire independently.

3.3 Research Sample

The sample used consisted of 61 high school students from KPIS Keerapat International School, Bangkok, Thailand. The participants were aged between 14 to 17 years old. There were 28 male and 33 female students involved. The ethnic compositions of the participants were of the following nationalities and cultural backgrounds:

- Thai
- Dutch/Thai
- Chinese
- British/Thai
- Korean
- Filipino
- Burmese

The participants were both native and non-native English speakers.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The samples were chosen using the purposeful sampling method to have equal representation of age group that had been targeted in the study. The chosen sample would have been appropriate for the study.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

The main instruments used in the data collection were as follows:

i) Matched-Guise Method of Audio Recordings

Data in this study was collected using the matched-guise method. One of the main advantages of using this technique is that it is an indirect method to get an evaluation of people's attitude and impression formation about language variations (Garrett, 2010). The students' attitude towards various accents were elicited through audio recordings which reflected the speech of five English speakers (two male and three female) of the five accents of interest, i.e. North American, Australian, Indian, South American, and South African. Two speakers were from the native English speaking countries and regions of North America and Australia. The other three speakers were from non-native English speaking countries and regions of India, South America, and South Africa. The two native English speakers (one male and one female) were deliberately chosen as a deliberate distracter stimuli in order to keep the participants blind to the real interest of the study.

All the speakers were recorded separately and were instructed to read a short passage about “samtam,” a popular form of Thai salad. The speakers were given time to read the short text to ensure a relaxed, clear, and uninterrupted delivery of the reading. The speakers were not told that the recording would assess their accent, which was done in order to make sure the speakers sounded completely natural in the recordings, and so they would approach the reading as being almost something relaxing and *en passant*. When recording the voices, some important variables were controlled in view of the validity of the instrument, including the speaker’s level of proficiency, their nationality and their level of education.

ii) Survey Questionnaire

The data for the research was collected through a survey which included three sections. Section one aimed to elicit general biographical information about the participants, including their gender, age, and nationality.

Section two aimed to elicit participants’ general opinion on the English language. The participants were given six language options to choose for every question (Refer to Appendix 2). Example 1 illustrates the format of the question in section two.

Example 1: 1. What do you consider to be the Standard English Accent?

- a. American English accent.
- b. Australian English accent.
- c. Indian English accent.
- d. Thai English accent.
- e. South American English accent.
- f. South African English accent

Section three aimed to elicit the participants’ attitude towards the speakers they heard on five different recordings. The participants had to form impressions about the voice by indicating their response by answering questions about the speaker they heard in each recording. A four point rating scale was used following the Likert scale (0 = not at all, up to 4 = very) for measuring attitudes where the participants indicated the level of agreement given by the researcher regarding the attitude, opinion, and discriminations they hold (Thomas, 2009). The scale ranged from 0-4. The higher the number, the more positive the attitude and the lower the number, the less positive the attitude.

Example 2 illustrates the format of the question in section three.

Table 1: Determining attitudes towards accents

In your opinion to what extent is this person:

	Not at all	Not very	Average	Rather	Very
Intelligent	0	1	2	3	4
Educated	0	1	2	3	4
Responsible	0	1	2	3	4
Trustworthy	0	1	2	3	4
Is this person's pronunciation clear?	0	1	2	3	4
Is their English understandable?	0	1	2	3	4

There were two other questions followed by the questions as shown in example 2. One of the questions was an open ended question. It elicited the participant's perceptions on who they would prefer to learn English with and why. The last question was asked to elicit the participant's opinion on the nationality of the speaker. The nationality option for this question followed the same as example 1.

Section three was divided into five different parts, each labeled as: 1) person one; 2) person two; 3) person three; 4) person four; and 5) person five. Each recording included all the questions given in examples 1 and example 2 followed by the two additional questions.

The fourth section of the survey aimed to elicit the opinion of the participant on which of the five speakers from the recordings would make the best English language teacher in their personal perspective.

3.6 Process of Data Collection

The speech samples were recorded on different occasions, then organized in a random order and copied onto an audio CD. The text was about "somtam", a common Thai salad which every participant could relate to. The text was chosen to avoid any culturally sensitive or controversial topics that could affect the respondents. (Refer to Appendix 1 for the instrument)

The survey was administered in a school classroom. Overall, it took about 25 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The survey was conducted with four different grades at four separate classes. Prior to conducting the survey, the participants were informed that they were a part of a graduate research study. They were also briefly instructed on how the recordings would be played and how they were to answer the questionnaire.

The participants first completed the biographical information in section one followed by answering general questions on their impressions on the English language in section two. In section three, the participants listened to five different recordings and expressed their opinion in the attitudinal survey questions in section three. The participants expressed their opinion through using the Likert scale ranging from 0-4. The higher the number, the more positive the attitude and the lower the number, the less positive the attitude. The scales measured, for each participant, his or her estimation of the speaker's intelligence, education, responsibility, trustworthiness, pronunciation, and also the preference of studying English with the speaker. In the same section, participants indicated their best guess on the nationality of the speaker in the recording and also expressed their opinion on why they would or would not study English with the particular speaker played on the recording.

Finally, in section four, the participants indicated their opinion of which of the five speakers played in the recordings would make a better English teacher. Each class followed the same procedure and completed the survey during class time.

3.7 Ethical Concerns

Considering the fact that this study made reference to nationalities of the speakers rather than language typology, it was considered important to include the nationalities of the speakers for the participants to guess. A distracter nationality of "Thai" was used since the study mainly involved Thai students and it was conducted in Thailand.

Although participants were not given extensive insights into the nature of the research, one of the high school classes had been studying about stereotyping based on speech in one of their psychology lessons.

4 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS AND RESULTS

This section presents the results of the data analysis based on the research question in section 2 of the survey questionnaire.

Research question one was formulated as: "Can the accent of a teacher influence the student's judgment about a teacher's personality?" The overall attitudinal score was derived from six items, each measured on a scale of 0-4. The higher the number, the more positive the attitude towards the accented speech. There were five individualized accents involved in the study. The attitudes towards accent speech of the five individuals have been summarized in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. The speakers on the tapes belonged to the respective nationalities and they spoke with their natural accents:

Speaker on tape 1 – Australian

Speaker on tape 2 – North American
 Speaker on tape 3 – South American
 Speaker on tape 4 – Indian
 Speaker on tape 5 – South African

The overall judgments of the teachers' personality based on the speakers on the five tapes have been summarized in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Table 2: Comparison of participants' perception of accent and imputed intelligence of the speaker

	Accent	Not at all Intelligent	Not very Intelligent	Average Intelligence or Above	Total
Speaker on Tape 1	Australian	0	1	59	60
Speaker on Tape 2	North American	0	2	59	61
Speaker on Tape 3	South American (female)	0	1	58	59
Speaker on Tape 4	Indian	0	2	56	58
Speaker on Tape 5	South African (male)	0	4	55	59

It is apparent from the results in Table 2 that the speakers on tape 1 and tape 2 were considered more intelligent than the three other speakers. The participants were oblivious to the fact that the speakers in tape 1 and tape 2 were native speakers of English language from Australia and North America. It can be argued that their perception was based solely on listening to the accent which seems to prove that listeners do unconsciously make judgments on the intelligence of a person. This can be compared to "unconscious association" (p.318) defined by Frumkin (2007) where listeners unconsciously hold a prejudice against accented speech to non-accented speech.

	Accent	Not at all Educated	Not very Educated	Average Educated	Rather Educated	Total
Speaker on Tape 1	Australian		1	16	45	62

Speaker on Tape 2	North American		2	25	33	60
Speaker on Tape 3	South American		3	24	33	60
Speaker on Tape 4	Indian	1	2	39	18	60
Speaker on Tape 5	South African		5	30	24	59

Table 3: Comparison of participants' perception of accent and imputed education of the speaker

Table 3 shows the comparison of the participants towards accented speech and imputed education of the speaker. Once again, the speaker on tape 1, who is an Australian, has been considered to be the most educated compared to the other speakers. The participants have once again done instant social analysis by judging the way the speakers have spoken on tape. This confirms to the understanding that people often make judgements even before completely interpreting the meaning of what is spoken (Roeper, as cited in Diaz-Campos, 2011). However, an unexpected result was the fact that the North American speaker on tape 2 was not considered to be very educated when compared to the Australian counterpart. From the results of this data analysis, it seems quite apparent that the participants assumed that since the speaker on tape 1 was intelligent, he would be more educated than the other speakers.

Table 4: Comparison of participants' perception of accent and imputed responsibility of the speaker

	Accent	Not at all responsible	Not very responsible	Average responsible	Rather responsible	Total
Speaker on Tape 1	Australian	0	1	28	31	60
Speaker on Tape 2	North American		1	29	31	61
Speaker on Tape 3	South American	2	1	24	35	62
Speaker on Tape 4	Indian		2	33	26	61

Speaker on Tape 5	South African		6	30	23	59
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Interestingly enough, a significant difference was found in the perception of the participants towards the accent and imputed responsibility of the speaker on tape 1 and tape 2 who had scored the highest in both the areas of intelligence and education. The rest of the speakers scored lower than the speaker on tape 3. It seems possible that participants tried to assume that the speaker on tape 4 and tape 5 seemed less responsible regardless of what country he or she came from. However, on the contrary, the speaker on tape 3 was a native speaker of English from South Africa. Therefore, the speaker's accent had no significant effect on the participant's perception on imputed responsibility of the speaker.

Table 5: Comparison of participants' perception of accent and imputed trustworthiness of the speaker

	Accent	Not at all trustworthy	Not very trustworthy	Average trustworthy	Rather trustworthy	Total
Speaker on Tape 1	Australian		5	31	26	62
Speaker on Tape 2	North American		5	27	29	61
Speaker on Tape 3	South American		3	26	31	60
Speaker on Tape 4	Indian	1	3	38	18	60
Speaker on Tape 5	South African		7	30	22	59

The result on participants' perception of accent and imputed trustworthiness of the speaker as revealed in Table 5 shows that speaker on tape 1 has been favored as being more trustworthy than other speakers. Speaker on tape 3, who was rated the highest in terms of responsibility, has been rated as being trustworthy compared to other speakers. However, speaker on tape 1, who was considered intelligent and educated, was rated lower than speaker on tape 2.

Research question two aimed at finding out if negative attitude towards an accent would demotivate students from learning English with the teacher who had a distinctively accented speech. Table 6 shows the results of the comparison of participants' desire to learn English language from the speaker of different accents.

Table 6: Comparison of participants' desire to learn English from the speaker

	Accent	Would not learn English from Speaker	Would learn English from Speaker	Total
Speaker on Tape 1	Australian	19	36	55
Speaker on Tape 2	North American	16	33	49
Speaker on Tape 3	South American	18	32	50
Speaker on Tape 4	Indian	39	8	47
Speaker on Tape 5	South Africa	40	10	50

Table 6 once again shows the bias towards the speaker on tape 1. The speaker on tape 1 seems to be most favorable accent and voice type because the participants have already rated the voice as being the highest in tables 3 and 5. The accent of the speaker on tape 1 seems to have influenced the student's judgment about the speaker's personality.

Research question three aimed at finding out what effect the judgment of students and their motivation have on language learning. The overall attitudinal results from Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8 are more homogenous, giving preference to speakers who were of American and Australian origin. Based on the judgments made by the participants in Table 7, it is revealed that the participants' estimation as to the characteristics that go towards making a good teacher of English language influence their decisions.

Table 7: Participants' estimate as to which speaker would make the best teacher and the reason why they make that estimation

		Why would this person make the better Teacher?					
		Accent must be understandable	Accent must be clear and slow	Accent must sound friendly, kind, gentle	Notes age, helpfulness and thinks they speak well	Preference: Native Speaker; Australian	Total
Taped Person would make a	Person: Tape 1	7	4	4	1	4	20
	Person: Tape 2	10	3	1	0	1	15

better Teacher	Person: Tape 3	4	4	0	0	2	10
	Person: Tape 4	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Person: Tape 5	0	1	0	0	0	1
							47

This table indicates that the speakers on tapes 1 and tape 2 were the preferred teachers of English language and the predominant reason was that the accent was clear and delivered at a slow pace. The least positively rated person were the speakers on tape 4 and tape 5 who happened to be of South African and Indian origin. Overall, the native speakers of English, which were the speakers in tapes 1 and 2, were preferred as teachers of English language predominantly for their accents which were identified as being clearer and slower than the rest of the speakers.

The fourth question investigated by this research project related to the participants' perception of the Standard English accent. The results reported in Table 8 shows the preferred English accents of the participants. The table also shows the accents easily understood by the participants and the accents that the participants had previously been exposed to during their education. These three factors seem to have a direct impact on what the participants considered to be the Standard English accent.

Table 8: Preferred accent in relation to Education

	Considered Standard English Accent	Accent Easily Understood	Preferred English Accent	Accent Exposed to during Education
American English	56	40	47	57
Australian English	2	0	5	13
Indian English	0	0	0	33
Thai English	3	11	1	40
South American English	0	0	0	1

South African English	0	0	0	8
Total	61	51	53	152

The results reveal that since most of the students were exposed to the American accent, an overwhelming majority favored the North American accent. When one compares the results from Table 8 to the attitudinal survey questions in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4, it does reveal that even though the participants favored the Australian speaker on tape 1 without knowing his nationality, they still chose American English accent as being what they understand to be the Standard English accent. These differences of responses will be further elaborated in the discussion section.

4.1 Discussion

This section presents a discussion on the results of this investigative study and identifies important factors regarding the accents of the teachers, which may have implications to future English language learning. The discussion of the results follows the order of the research questions. The conclusion is drawn out by being based on the overall results of the study. Some pedagogical implications are made based on the conclusion. The limitations of the study are outlined along with recommendations for further research that could be undertaken, in order to extend the theme of this research project.

The first research question asked whether the accent of a teacher influences the student's judgment about the teacher's personality. The results showed that the participants did make judgments about the speakers from listening to them speak on the tapes, without even knowing the speaker personally, but made decisions based only on their accents they heard. The students rated positively all the speakers who were native speakers of English (like speakers on tape 1 and 2 who were Australian and North American). This preference finds validity with the results of the English accents of the participants. This could be the result of both a conscious and unconscious attitude held by individuals towards speakers of different accents, which has been mentioned by Quillian (2006) in the literature review. Since this study involved participants who were non-native speakers of English language, it was expected that they would be more favorable towards the speakers who sounded native-like.

Therefore, this result certainly does confirm the perspective that some students do judge their teachers based on their accents. The findings from the study also proves that specific attributes of personalities, including intelligence, trustworthiness, level of education, and responsibility of a teacher are mainly being judged based on the accent of the teacher.

The second research question probed into whether negative attitude towards an accent demotivated students from learning English language with the teacher who had a notably accented speech. Here a link can be made to what Lambert and Gardner revealed in their study (Brown 2007) that holding stereotypical negative attitude towards speakers with accents may lead to a decrease in a student's motivation. The preference of the participants was far more favorable towards the native speakers on tapes 1 and 2. This result certainly supports the view of the participants on the judgment of the personalities of the speakers.

The third research question asked whether the judgment made by the students and their motivation had any effect on their actual language learning. It has been discussed in the literature review that attitude and motivation play a significant role in language learning. The results revealed that the participants eagerly wanted to learn English language with the native speaking teachers on tapes 1 and 2. Their preference was justified by the fact that these speakers seem to speak more clearly and their English pronunciation was more easily understandable than that of the other speakers. There was no contradiction in their choice of preferring teachers who were native speakers, because the participants were entirely favorable towards them, rating them higher in personality preference and showing motivation to learn with native speakers of English language.

The fourth question inquired as to what was considered the Standard English accent by the participants. More specifically, the question was stated as: "What do you consider to be the Standard English accent?" The results showed that the participants seemed to consider the North American accent as being the Standard English accent that was acceptable to them. The reason for the preference seemed to arise from the fact that the majority of the participants had mainly been exposed to the North American accent in their previous education experience. To make the preference valid, they seemed to rate the North American accent as being the most easily understood. However, the participants did not choose the Australian accent, which was the accent they had rated as being the highest in all the survey questions. This contradiction brought an insight into the seemingly spontaneous and logical attitude towards accepting or rejecting an accented speech.

4.2 Conclusion

In compiling the results of this study, three conclusions can be drawn.

First, there is a relationship between an accented speech and the English language learner's attitude. These factors may also affect the motivation for a person to learn English. Factors like familiarity with the language can also influence an individual's judgment on teachers who speak with an accented speech. That is, accents that are linguistically familiar are more positively perceived than accents that may be regionally unfamiliar. In the case of this, the majority of the students were unfamiliar with accents other than native accents coming from North America and Australia. Therefore, it can be speculated that factors of social unfamiliarity may lead to negative evaluation by the student of their teacher, or how one person views another from a different country.

Secondly, irrespective of the credentials and personality traits of the teachers, students do want to be taught by people speaking certain accents. The spontaneous attitudes reflected by the participants do reveal that students generally hold some level of prejudice against speakers who have a strong accent in their speech. Maybe if the participants were given the opportunity to think and reflect, they would be more tolerant and acceptance English language being taught by fluent but non-native English language teachers.

Thirdly, the notion of a Standard English accent held by the students can also influence their overall attitude. From this study, it became apparent that most of the student participants considered the North American English accent as the benchmark for the 'normal' English accent. The reason for their choice was related to the fact that the majority of the students had been exposed to the North American accent during their previous education experience. Their notion of varieties of English language pronunciation was limited to, quite literally, just what they had been previously exposed to. They seemed to be oblivious of the diversity of English as a language. Therefore, it can be speculated that through a more mature and open-minded attitude and exposure to different accents in education, such negative attitudes can gradually be changed.

4.3 Pedagogical Implications

Based on the conclusions that have been drawn from this research project, one main recommendation would be very useful and beneficial for a pedagogical purpose within second language teaching.

It is recommended that students should be educated on the diversity of English as an international language. This would help the students have an open-minded attitude concerning the varieties of English that is used as a global language. The psychological barrier built by prejudice and negative

attitudes toward a non-native accent should not hinder the students from learning from a non-native teacher who holds a definite accent in their speech. As mentioned by Hiep (2001), English professors and teachers must make sure that English becomes a truly international language which can be used by people universally around the globe and within many different cultures and local traditions. For English to acquire and establish such a status, then any prejudice towards accented speech should not be encouraged and, therefore, learning with any accented, but fluent, English speaking teacher should not be discouraged.

4.4 Recommendation for future research

This study was conducted with a rather small sample target of students from KPIS International School, Bangkok, Thailand. During the process of the data analysis, some observations were clearly made that could inform further researchers about areas that need further investigation. They are outlined as listed below:

a. The stimulus providers in this study were two native speakers of English. The sequence in which the recordings were placed also seems to have affected the response of some, if not all, of the participants. It is recommended that in further research a larger sample of non-native English speakers should be included. There should also be more distracters used in order to obtain a more generalized opinion and avoid any bias.

b. The demographic variables were not analyzed during the final result analysis. Such analysis would certainly yield more insight to the study. Further to this, two groups of sample students were employed in this specific research study. This could be another interesting area of study for future researchers, if they expand the age groups of the target sample of the English language students they focus on. For example, adult learners who take language evening classes after work, may well be found to have far more motivation to learn English language from any accented teacher, when compared to the approach of teenage school children.

c. The design of this study involved both qualitative and quantitative methodologies of data collection. However, in order to obtain a more profound result, the data could be subjected to more statistical analysis.

4.5 Limitations of the Study

This research project only focused on examining the attitude of the participants towards various accented speech based on a questionnaire. The ranges of choice of answers were therefore strictly limited. If the participants would have had their choice of writing their own answers to certain choices given, the results would have been rather different. For example, in section

two in the questions 1, 2, 3, and 4, the choices of languages provided were fixed to what the research designer had laid out due to given limits.

For example, the options of the accents that were on offer were limited to only six: a) American English accent; b) Australian English accent; c) Indian English accent; d) Thai English accent; e) South American English accent; f) South African English accent. Those listed included almost every country or location in the world that uses English language, but did not include England, or Great Britain. As the English language originates there and has travelled to other locations around the world through British colonization and other factors, hence developing local accents, then other research projects could also include the UK or British accent to meet the criteria for a student's understanding of the acceptable "Standard English Accent."

Some of the students in the KPIS International School target group were listed as being British/Thai and Dutch/Thai, so they would not have chosen American or Australian accents or any other country or region in the list, as being their understanding of "Standard English Accent." Their previous education and home environment would mainly have been the British English accent. Also, as the Burmese students are also listed, and as Burma or Myanmar was colonized by the British for almost one hundred years, one could argue that their own legacy would be a British English accent rather than American, or even Australian, let alone Thai-English. However, future research project could also aim to include within the generic term 'British English' the local accents of Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish accents when speaking English language, as they are each distinctly strong accents in themselves.

The sequence in which the recordings were played could also have been organized in such a way as to distract the listener, rather than have them almost instantly figure out the native from the non-native speaker.

4.6 Contributions of the Study

This study was the first of its kind to be conducted in both a multi-cultural and multi-lingual setting like that of KPIS International School, Bangkok, Thailand. It has provided new insights into interpreting attitudes towards accented speech of English language teachers and speakers in general. Positively, this study has helped the area of linguistics understand why students generally hold the attitudes they do towards teachers of different accents and what relationship these attitudes and motivations have in second language learning.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Somtam is a spicy salad consisting of shredded fresh papaya, with tomatoes, chili, garlic, lime juice and fish sauce. Thais love this spicy dish.

Appendix 2

Section one: General Biographical Information.

Kindly fill out your biographical information.

1. Gender: male female
2. Age:
3. Nationality:

Section two: General Questions on English Language.

Circle one alternative for each of the following questions.

1. What do you consider to be the Standard English Accent?

- a. American English accent.
 - b. Australian English accent.
 - c. Indian English accent.
 - d. Thai English accent.
 - e. South American English accent.
 - f. South African English accent.
2. Which of the following accents do you easily understand?
 - a. American English accent.
 - b. Australian English accent.
 - c. Indian English accent.
 - d. Thai English accent.
 - e. South American English accent.
 - f. South African English accent.
 3. Which of the following accents would you prefer as your teacher of English Language?
 - a. American English accent.
 - b. Australian English accent.
 - c. Indian English accent.
 - d. Thai English accent.
 - e. South American English accent.
 - f. South African English accent.
 4. In your education which of the following accents have you been exposed to?
(You may circle more than one alternative in this question)
 - a. American English accent.
 - b. Australian English accent.
 - c. Indian English accent.
 - d. Thai English accent.
 - e. South American English accent.
 - f. South African English accent.

Section Three: Recordings

You will hear a tape recording of a text read by 5 people. The text will be read in English. As you form your impressions about the voice kindly indicate your responses by filling out the form.

Person One: In your opinion to what extent is this person:

	not at all	// not very	// average	// rather	
<i>// very</i>					
5. Intelligent	0	1	2	3	4
6. Educated	0	1	2	3	4
7. Responsible	0	1	2	3	4
8. Trustworthy	0	1	2	3	4
9. Is this person's pronunciation clear?	0	1	2	3	4
10. Is their English understandable?	0	1	2	3	4
11. Would you learn English with this person? Why?					
12. What is the nationality of this person?					

A. American B. Australian C. Indian D. Thai E. South American F. South African

Person Two: In your opinion to what extent is this person:

	not at all	// not very	// average	// rather	
// very					
1. Intelligent	0	1	2	3	4
2. Educated	0	1	2	3	4
3. Responsible	0	1	2	3	4
4. Trustworthy	0	1	2	3	4
5. Is this person's pronunciation clear? 4		0	1	2	3
6. Is their English understandable?	0	1	2	3	4
7. Would you learn English with this person? Why?					
8. What is the nationality of this person? A. American B. Australian C. Indian D. Thai E. South American F. South African					

Person Three: In your opinion to what extent is this person:

	not at all	// not very	// average	// rather	
// very					
1. Intelligent	0	1	2	3	4
2. Educated	0	1	2	3	4
3. Responsible	0	1	2	3	4
4. Trustworthy	0	1	2	3	4
5. Is this person's pronunciation clear? 4		0	1	2	3
6. Is their English understandable?	0	1	2	3	4
7. Would you learn English with this person? Why?					
8. What is the nationality of this person? A. American B. Australian C. Indian D. Thai E. South American F. South African					

Person Four: In your opinion to what extent is this person:

	not at all	// not very	// average	// rather	
// very					
1. Intelligent	0	1	2	3	4
2. Educated	0	1	2	3	4
3. Responsible	0	1	2	3	4
4. Trustworthy	0	1	2	3	4
5. Is this person's pronunciation clear? 4		0	1	2	3
6. Is their English understandable?	0	1	2	3	4
7. Would you learn English with this person? Why?					
8. What is the nationality of this person? A. American B. Australian C. Indian D. Thai E. South American F. South African					

Person Five: In your opinion to what extent is this person:

	not at all	// not very	// average	// rather	
// very					
1. Intelligent	0	1	2	3	4
2. Educated	0	1	2	3	4
3. Responsible	0	1	2	3	4
4. Trustworthy	0	1	2	3	4
5. Is this person's pronunciation clear?		0	1	2	3
4					
6. Is their English understandable?	0	1	2	3	4
7. Would you learn English with this person? Why?					
8. What is the nationality of this person?					
A. American B. Australian C. Indian D. Thai E. South American F. South African					

Section Four: Comparing the speakers

Which person would make a better teacher of English Language?

A. Person One B. Person Two C. Person Three D. Person Four E. Person Five

In your opinion why would this person make a better teacher of English Language?