Non-native speaker attitudes toward non-native English accents

by

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Abstract

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The increasing number of proficient, non-native English speakers, both in U.S. academic institutions and around the globe, warrants considerable investigation into possible norms developing within non-native to non-native interactions. This report analyzes attitudes toward accent, a prominent indicator of foreignness, within non-native English speaker interactions. It presents relevant research on this topic, and it summarizes some of the major findings of an online survey that examined what attitudes, if any, non-native listeners may form on the basis of accent alone when listening to other non-native English speakers. The results suggest that listeners base attitude judgments more on native-likeness than on intelligibility. Also, speakers' perceptions of their own non-native accent are more negative than how they actually rate themselves as compared to others.

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Introduction

In 2006, the University of Texas at Austin's annual international statistical report estimated that the foreign-born student population at the university reached 4,500, nearly ten percent of the total student body. Of that ten percent, 3,200 were graduate students (Statistical Report: International Student and Scholar Services, 2006). When added to the 1,000 foreign-born faculty, visiting scholars, and other researchers, these numbers present an environment rich with possible adaptations to the English language. Academia in the U.S. offers a unique platform for non-native English speakers - a place in which they must exhibit maximal control and advanced performance with only minimal language ownership. Yet, international scholars thrive. They compete and perform in English, their second or nth language, alongside native speakers *and alongside other non-native speakers*, an interaction that requires specific negotiation and strategy. How do international graduate students live up to the English standards performed by surrounding native colleagues? How are those standards modified when a native speaker is not present? What norms develop between two speakers with different first languages when they must collaborate in English? The present study focuses specifically on the effect of perceived accent, a salient indicator of foreignness, on judgments of character. This paper aims to investigate this question in the precise context of the academic environment.

Part One: Background

Extensive scholarly research and interest exists into the development of English as a world language. Broadly, this research aims to observe and understand both the way in which English is used and who is using it around the world. Deciphering the "who" portion of this aim, however, proves to be a tricky endeavor. Traditionally, native English speakers are considered to be the primary, standard-providing users of the language – Kachru's "Inner Circle" of his Three Concentric Circles model (Kachru, 1992). When looked at globally, however, this perspective may not properly account for the enormous numbers of non-native English users worldwide and the influence these speakers may have toward propagating linguistic change within the language.

Because of their sheer numbers, non-native speaking populations provide particularly interesting information about the growth of English as a world language. In 2005, for example, Kachru calculated that English users in India and China alone approximate 533 million, a population of users larger than the sum of English speakers from the U.S., the U.K., and Canada combined (Kachru, 2005). Furthermore, statistics compiled by Crystal in 1997 suggested that non-native speakers could possibly reach 1,000 million (Crystal, 2003), depending on how one defines proficiency and frequency of use (Schell, 2008). Within the US alone, the population of foreign-born residents has increased dramatically in the last 30 years, from 10 million in 1970 (four percent of the U.S. population) to 37 million in 2007 (15 percent of the population), a record high (Migration Policy Institute, 2007). By all estimates, non-native English speaking populations have long surpassed the total number of native English speakers. The growth

and development of World Englishes as compared to native standards have long been documented. However, in light of the growing numbers, changes *within* non-native English that look beyond native norms have only recently begun being scholarly investigated.

Beyond numbers, it is important to consider the environments in which non-native English is being used. In this sense, non-native speakers can be separated into two groups: those for whom English is an institutionalized or historical language of the government or other national entity or class, as is the case in India and other former British colonies, for example, and those for whom English is an unofficial performance variety (Kachru, 1982). This last group is often referred to as Kachru's "Expanding Circle," the outermost of the Three Concentric Circles, which, according to the traditional Kachruvian model, is wholly dependent upon native standards to provide its norm (Kachru, 1992). The Expanding Circle includes speakers from countries such as China, Russia, Japan, and much of Europe, and, as suggested by the circle's name, includes a rapidly increasing number of other countries (Crystal, 2003) where English is prevalent in the media, and English as a foreign language is often mandatory by the time students reach secondary school (The European Union, 2004). English speakers from the Expanding Circle are the primary focus of this study, and henceforth will be referred to as non-native speakers, or NNSs.

The expansion of English use among NNSs has sparked considerable debate over norms and standards for this group. Within this debate, many scholars have argued that because NNSs are so abundant, because of the numerous variety of native languages, and

because they must so frequently interact, native standards are no longer a realistic, pertinent, practical target for this group of speakers (Mollin, 2006; Modiano, 2008; Schell, 2008; & Dauer, 2005). As a result, a body of research identifying English as an International Language (EIL) has developed that investigates what, if any, linguistic norms are emerging within non-native English(es).

One major impetus for this movement is an observation that, although not impossible, the most proficient speakers of a second language have minimal odds of achieving native-like performance, even given the most ideal conditions (Birdsong, 2007). Most importantly, research shows that eliminating the first language's influence on second language pronunciation is the most difficult task for second language learners to overcome (Flege, 1987). Accent is statistically the last skill to attain native-likeness and it is thus the most common first language artifact that is rarely eliminated.

Because of the inherent obstacles that NNSs face in adopting native-like pronunciation and usage, an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) movement has developed. This movement aims to ignore native standards altogether and to instead identify those structures NNSs have in common. Similar to Selinker's *Interlanguage* (1972), scholars that share this goal aim to classify those syntactical and phonological features that are common among all NNSs.

Within this framework, Modiano (2006) suggests investigating the developing norms within Europe by focusing on particular grammatical constructions and idioms shared within Euro-English. In addition, Jenkins (2000) has established a phonological inventory based on those segmental phonemes with the highest frequency and greatest

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intelligibility between NNSs from all native languages. The presumptions of this

inventory date to Flege's (1987) findings that NNSs approximate unfamiliar sounds with

similar phonemes in a manner consistent with phonemes from the speaker's first

language. To devise her syllabus, Jenkins essentially eliminated all sounds that were not

shared or could not be approximated by all NNSs. Jenkins claims that the ELF syllabus

eases learner acquisition and comprehension, although this claim has been contradicted in

a study by Riney (2005) which found that Japanese listeners depended more on

suprasegmental cues like intonation and fluency than segmental phonemes to detect non-

native Japanese accent.

Setting aside native standards has additional pedagogical benefits. Canagarajah

(1999b) estimated that nearly 80% of the world's ESL/FL teachers are NNSs. A

considerable conflict has arisen in TESOL teaching standards and practices, which

analyzes the value of NNS teachers of English. Research shows many strengths of NNS

teachers, specifically that they are role models for learners and that they can present a

metacognitive view of English learning from the non-native perspective (A. Berns, 2005).

Although they may not strictly follow norms identical to the ELF syllabus, NNSs may

indeed benefit from a shift from native English targets toward adopting norms established

by the larger NNS community.

The ELF movement faces many criticisms. By ignoring native English standards,

the movement challenges a history of pedagogical canon. It assumes that speakers share

a common target that is not standard English, yet scholars can only provide weak

evidence defining precisely what that common target *is*. Advocates of ELF predict that

NNSs do not *want* native English targets, a fact which is currently debated in conflicting studies. A case in point, Dalton-Puffer, et al. (1995) found that Austrian students of English preferred native accents over non-native accents when asked contextual questions such as which speaker would be a good radio presenter and which speaker the subject would like to befriend. This study is one indication that despite conscious awareness of the low odds of attaining native performance, NNSs prefer to subscribe to a native ideal. Also, M. Berns (2008) outlines further problems with ELF, particularly that it restrains the NNS with a limited set of unchanging sounds rather than provides them with the flexibility of understanding other important factors of cross-cultural communication. This argument is supported by evidence from Smith and Nelson's (2006) study highlighting the importance of not only intelligibility, but also interpretability and comprehensibility among NNSs. Their study concluded that being or sounding native is not as important a factor for attitudes as is being fluent in English and being familiar with several international varieties of L1 accent. Also argued by Berns (2008), and most pertinent to the current study, the views of ELF are overly prescriptive, and they do not account for the target preferences and negotiating strategies that NNSs actually use.

Within international, English-only environments such as English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/FL) classrooms, international organizations such as the United Nations or the World Bank, and, of particular interest to this study, English-dominant universities, non-native interactions in English between speakers of various native languages are not only common but pervasive. Despite the debate over norms and standards, the question of how to descriptively research, address, and classify NNSs still

remains. The growth in the number of the international members of such communities

nonetheless warrants considerable research into NNS - NNS interactions.

Part Two: Methodological, Theoretical Approach and Supporting Research

In the context of the debate over non-native English norms, standards, and attitudes, this study aims to take a sociolinguistic, descriptive approach to investigating NNS – NNS dynamics. Its focus is on speaker – listener attitudes, and its task is to ask and describe what the NNS – NNS community does, how it evaluates itself, and how it wants to use the English language.

This study is relevant because, beyond the debate over standards and norms, and alongside considerations of emerging NNS linguistic phenomena, it is important to also investigate precisely how NNSs negotiate prestige among one another. Because of the saliency of pronunciation as an indicator of non-nativeness, research into NNS attitudes toward non-native accent is needed. To date, peripherally related studies have been conducted, particularly those that incorporate native judgments toward non-native speech, but little significant research exists on NNS attitudes towards non-native accent in English. The following study seeks to address this research gap.

Language attitude research provides a significant indicator of language preference and language change. Attitudes guide how interlocutors interact with one another, evaluate one another, negotiate prestige based on those evaluations, and then adjust their speech accordingly (see Cooper & Fishman, 1977). Attitude studies of accent are revealing because of the saliency of pronunciation as an indicator of foreign versus familiar speech and the likelihood that listeners will make attitude judgments based upon accent (Moyer, 2007a). Additionally, NSs frequently change their speech to accommodate to the listener, a fact that most saliently plays out through adjustments in

accent variation (Giles et al., 1987). Several questions arise based on these attitude and accommodation phenomena. How do NNSs accommodate their accent to one another? How does each NNS interlocutor determine whose speech is the most or least foreign? How is the "other" constructed, or do NNS interlocutors identify more easily with one another because the speakers are both non-native?

Research on language attitudes presents several quantifiable difficulties, and designing a study that reveals precise data can be problematic. As with other investigations that require researcher observation or mono-directional communication, it is nearly impossible to construct a study that is naturally interactive and conversational between subjects. The observer's paradox limits extracting real, authentic communication. Additionally, language attitudes are based upon numerous factors such as appearance, ethnic affiliation, cultural and social context, sociological and ethnographic background, pragmatic cues, and many others, making it nearly impossible to singly assess one of these variables without considering all of the others. Also, attitudes are often uncomfortable for subjects to discuss because they highlight underlying social stereotypes and prejudices. Unfortunately, this is precisely the information that makes attitude studies socio-culturally revealing. In spite of its various methodological difficulties, the qualitative data retrieved from language attitude studies reveal interesting generalizations about a speech community's norms and expectations for negotiating prestige.

Literature on non-native accent and attitudes consist of two main groups. The first and most predominant group investigates native speaker (NS) attitudes toward

foreign accented speech, and the second group comprises various combinations of the three speakers – listener possibilities: NS – NNS, NNS – NS, and NNS – NNS.

NS – NNS studies highlight the sociolinguistic expectations and barriers that NNSs face in their interactions with NSs. These are often conducted by native speakers on native attitudes toward non-native accents of English, typically for pedagogical purposes (Kachru, 1990, p. 100). These studies also assume native speaker pronunciation to be the norm-providing target, despite the low probability that NNSs will attain that target pronunciation.

This is an understandable stance given that native speakers have political and economic control over language, and the repercussions of these kinds of studies often reflect "the attitude of one important segment of our profession toward those varieties of English which are not used as first languages," e.g. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) who, by definition, must define their work by a prescriptive attitude of what target English (and thus accent) must be (Kachru, 1990, p. 101). On the other hand, studies of NS attitudes toward non-native accents *do* provide a comparative means of investigating the power of the two groups, as well as establishing how NS judgments of NNSs influence NNS judgments toward one another's non-native accents.

A large body of literature exists on international teaching assistants (TA) and professors that further our understanding of NS – NNS accent attitudes. These studies investigated attitudes that native undergraduate college students have toward non-native international TAs, which are overwhelmingly negative. Rubin (1990) found that forty percent of their undergraduate sample said that they "preferred to avoid classes taught by

foreign teaching assistants." Bresnahan et al. (2002) found consistently strong correlations between stronger foreign accent and negative attitudes.

However, Podberesky et al. (1990) conducted a study on native evaluations of Oriental and Spanish NNS accents in English and found evidence that opposed many of the negative attitudes of natives in the teaching assistant literature. They found that accented speakers were *not* perceived a having less positive traits, but that the gender of the speaker and listener played a larger role in determining negative judgments, despite NNS accent (Podberesky et al., 1990).

Although such studies typically find that NS attitudes toward non-native accents are generally negative, related research supports that the more that native speakers are exposed to intercultural sensitization and familiarization with non-standard accents, the more positive their reactions are to foreign-accented speech (Plakans, 1997; Rubin, 1990; Lindemann 2005).

Smith and Nelson (2006) found that this is also the case for NNS judgments. They sought to determine "whether the spread of English is creating greater [or lesser] problems of understanding across cultures," so the researchers tested listening intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability of NSs and NNSs by combinations of both groups and varying proficiency levels. The researchers found that listeners relied more on intelligibility than on comprehensibility or interpretability when listening to NS and NNS stimuli of varying proficiencies, but they also concluded that familiarity with native language varieties affected the listener's perceptions of how well they had understood the speaker in the stimuli. Also, proficiency (as determined by TOEFL

scores) was more important for comprehensibility than the other two factors (Smith & Nelson, 2006). Surprisingly, the study also found that native speakers, from England and the United States, "were *not* found to be the most easily understood, nor were they, as subjects, the best able to understand the different varieties of English" (Smith & Nelson, 2006).

Similar to Smith and Nelson's (2006) work, interlanguage intelligibility studies provide more comprehensive, empirical support for this discussion. This research focuses on how intelligible speakers from the same native language are to one another when they speak in and listen to a second language. In a study on the intelligibility of native and non-native speakers of English, Bent and Bradlow (2003) established that although native listeners found native speakers most intelligible, non-native speaker and listener pairs found non-natives from the same *and* from different native languages as intelligible as the native English speakers. This phenomenon has been named the "interlanguage speech intelligibility benefit," and it has been supported by a number of related studies (Major et al., 2002; Munro et al., 2006; and Smith and Nelson, 2006). Additionally, NNS listener proficiency proves to determine whether NNS listeners find non-natives speakers more intelligible (van Wijngaarden et al., 2002). Smiljanic and Bradlow (2007) found that proficient NNSs prefer and gain greater intelligibility benefit from native conversations and native clear speech, as compared to non-native speech from the same native language. On the other hand, Bradlow and Bent (2002) found low proficiency NNSs to have more of a preference toward other NNS speech. Intelligibility studies bring to light the pertinence of analyzing proficient NNS – NNS interactions

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between users who are close to their end state of English acquisition. These studies further suggest that speaker and learner proficiency must be taken into account and that speakers of varying proficiencies have very different preferences. Despite the pertinence of these finding to NNS – NNS accent attitude studies, the study at hand seeks to focus directly on accent judgments.

Though providing important insights, the NS – NNS and NNS – NS types of attitude studies do not address this study's primary goal of analyzing language usage and attitudes solely among NNSs of English. Despite its pedagogical interest in maintaining native standards for non-native English, research from TESOL and related fields provides the most literature related to this primary investigation. Chiba et al. (1995) investigated the attitudes of Japanese middle school students toward Japanese-accented speech and found that students who have more instrumental motivation to learn English, e.g. motivation to learn with a particular extra-linguistic goal, are more positive toward NNS accents. They also found that students level of respect for NNS languages affects those attitudes, and, similar to the findings cited above on accent familiarity, students' familiarity with NNS accents makes them more accepting of NNS varieties of English (Chiba et al., 1995). Other research on non-native English instructors in foreign language classrooms indicates that instructors have deep anxieties about their own accent in the classroom (Horwitz, 1996). These studies reveal that how a person learns English to begin with, whether "acquisitionaly, socioculturally, motivationally, or functionally," and how the teacher conveys his or her attitude toward non-native accent is a tremendous factor in determining varying speaker proficiencies and attitudes toward prescriptivism

(Kachru 1990). Also, in order to improve ESL/FL learning and classroom management, many studies in applied linguistics seek to evaluate cross-cultural attitudes. Thus, TESOL and language teaching pedagogy may provide important sources for gauging the relevance of non-native attitudes toward non-native English (Gatbonton et. al. 2005).

The question remains for NNS – NNS interactions: do accent judgments between NNSs align with those of NS' consistently negative judgments? Or, between NNSs, is the target ideal perhaps dampened or more flexible? Indeed, how and upon what do NNSs base their judgments, especially if it may be difficult for NNSs to establish what the norm should be? The current study aims to broadly shed some light on the questions posed in this review.

Part Three: Study

The goals of the study were to develop preliminary components of a descriptive model of non-native speaker to non-native speaker (NNS – NNS) attitude judgments and to explore the relationships between perceived accent strength and listener attitudes. The study's primary research question was: how do NNS – NNS language attitudes correlate with perceived accent strength?

This research question is divided into two components. First, the study sought to understand how NNSs determine and rate strength of accent, i.e., are NNSs' perceptions of accent strength shaped more by the native target or by intelligibility? The study operationalized these two factors by asking subjects to rate speakers on how "native-like" he or she sounded and on how well the subject could understand the speaker. Second, after establishing listeners' perception of accent strength, the study sought to use that information to find how perceived accent strength might influence positive or negative attitudinal judgments of character.

Based on previous research on NS – NNS and NNS - NS accent attitudes, this study made the following three predictions about NNS – NNS speech interactions: first, perceived accent strength will be determined more from the speaker's intelligibility than from a native standard; second, there will some connection, positive or negative, between non-native listeners' attitudes toward accents of the same L1; and third, attitudes will be based more on accent strength than on native-likeness.

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Methodology

In order to obtain data for the study, non-native English speaking University of Texas graduate students were asked to volunteer to complete a four-part, online questionnaire that surveyed the subjects' attitudes toward non-native English accents. In part one of the survey, subjects answered questions related to their demographic and language background. In part two, subjects rated their beliefs and attitudes about their own accent as well as about other NNS accents in general using five-point semantic differential scales, Likert scales, and frequency Likert scales. For parts three and four, subjects listened to audio recordings of five speakers with different non-native accents. These recordings served as the basis for eliciting accent-based judgments. In part three, subjects used five-point semantic differential scales to report their attitudes toward each of the five accents individually. Finally, in part four, the subjects ranked all five speakers as a group. Subjects first completed parts one and two of the questionnaire. Then, after silently reading the elicitation paragraph for clarification and with the opportunity to report any unfamiliar words, subjects listened to the recorded stimuli and completed parts three and four. For the full questionnaire, see Appendix A.

Because of the difficulty of "transferring the matched guise technique from a monolingual to a multilingual context," the speech sample stimuli were similar to matched guise techniques, but were "watered down" to include different speakers, replicating similarly constructed studies (Dalton-Puffer et al., 1995). The material used for recorded speech stimuli was obtained from The Speech Accent Archive (SAA), an online Creative Commons Licensed database of English accents from around the world.

The speech samples on the archive website are recorded anonymously, and SAA subjects are from a variety of first language backgrounds. Each speaker recorded on the SAA read from the same elicitation paragraph, focusing the listener specifically to accent.

The first languages of the speakers for each sample were Turkish, Mandarin, German, Korean, and Spanish, presented to subjects in that order. These five first languages were selected in order to correspond to the university's largest populations of international students, as reported in the University of Texas at Austin's International Office 2006 Statistical Report.

The five recordings were also selected based on several criteria. First, from the judgment of one NS, the investigator, samples were chosen that approximated a uniform level of accent strength. This method of selecting the samples proved to not be ideal; a more quantified selection process by more than one person would have better established a uniform level of proficiency among the accented speakers. Second, they were also chosen on the basis of the clarity and quality of the recordings and on the length of the speech sample. In addition, the recorded speakers that were chosen were all female so as to lessen variation of gender-based attitudes; gender was found in Podberesky et al. (1990) to be a salient judgment of accent.

Recordings selected by various language-specific variables such as particular phonemes would have been a more preferable selection process because it would have rendered more accurate and focused stimuli upon which to base listener responses. However, compiling such recordings was not plausible within the scope of the current study; this leaves this possibility open for further research. Also, in hindsight, it would

have been beneficial to have included NSs as a control for speech sample quality, text content, and other variables that may not be accounted for with only NNS subjects. The results of this study will therefore be to find qualitative generalizations that provide a broad foundation upon which to develop more concrete research for future investigations.

Subjects

Participant subjects were non-native English speaking graduate students from the University of Texas at Austin. As graduate students, the subjects had to pass mandatory, standardized language entrance exams including the TOEFL and the GRE, among others. Subjects thus maintained, at a minimum, this mutual baseline of proficiency in English. Subjects' accents were not screened as criteria for participating in this study. Ideal subjects had a study focus on Liberal Arts, where language use is fostered within the discipline. In addition, ideal participants were *not* English teachers or students of English as a Second Language disciplines. Similarly, ideal subjects were not students of linguistics with a focus on phonology, phonetics, or accent. These subject preferences were specified in the recruitment email, but because the online survey was completely anonymous, only minimum screening of these traits was possible via email.

All subject responses were anonymous and were completed on the subjects' own time. The questionnaire took an average thirty minutes for subjects to complete. 41 subjects, of whom nine were male and 32 were female, responded to the questionnaire. The average age of respondents was 32 (range = 24-53), and the average age of English

language acquisition was 12 (range = 4-32). Ethnic and first language backgrounds

varied, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: First language backgrounds of 41 respondents:

L1	Number of respondents
Spanish	17
Portuguese	6
Korean	3
Mandarin, German, French	2 from each language
Turkish, Russian, Hindi,	
Hungarian, Balinese, Hindi,	
Japanese	1 from each language

Summary of Findings

The data retrieved from this questionnaire were used to analyze the correlation

between the accent strength that non-native listeners perceived and the attitudes the

listener made toward each non-native accented speaker. The preliminary research

questions were:

1. Are NNSs' perceptions of accent strength shaped more by the native target or by

   intelligibility?

2. What correlations exist between perceived accent strength and attitudinal

   judgments of character?

The hypotheses were:

1. Perceived accent strength will rely more on mutual intelligibility than on the

   native standards.

2. There will be a significant correlation between non-native listeners attitudes

toward NNS accents of the same L1 as the listener.

3. Attitudes toward character will correlate more with perceived accent strength than with native-likeness.

For hypothesis one, respondents confirmed that accent strength is perceived differently from native-likeness, and NNS listeners found accent strength to be a more acceptable standard than native-likeness. Hypothesis two was neither confirmed nor falsified; the data sample was too small ($n \leq 3$) for all native language subject groups besides Spanish ($n = 17$), so no speaker-listener native language relationship was found for any of the scales. For hypothesis three, it was found that character judgments were more closely connected to native-likeness and not to intelligibility. The survey probed respondents for many other interesting beliefs about attitudes toward accent that are not included in these findings, but are nonetheless available for further research (see Appendices A and B).

Discussion of Findings

Three survey questions probed subjects' beliefs about the importance of sounding native (A1 and A2, 1 being *crucial* and 5 being *not important*), and how frequently they pay attention to other NNSs accents (A10, 1 being *always* and 5 being *never*). 41 percent of respondents reported that they *often* pay attention to accent when speaking to a NNS, but that it is not important that he or she has a native-like accent: on the question of the importance of accent for other speakers, 41 percent reported *neutral* and 38 percent

reported *not important*, an average response of 3.8. At the same time, when asked how

important is was for the subject to sound like a native English speaker, 38 percent of

respondents reported that it was *very important*, an average score of 2.8, evidencing that

speakers are more critical of themselves to uphold a native standard than they are of other

NNSs. Yet, when asked to rank their own accent by degrees of native-likeness (A9), the

average response was a 3.4 with 1 being *native-like* and 5 being *absolutely not native*.

Thus, even though 38 percent of respondents thought it was very important to sound

native, most respondents rated their own accent relatively low (p = .029). Overall, it

appears that NNSs often pay attention to other speakers' non-native accent, that they

claim to not care if someone else sounds native or not, but speakers have a high

expectation of themselves to sound native even though they rank their own native-

likeness relatively low. Table 2 summarizes these findings, and Appendix A provides the

corresponding scales to questions A1, A2, A9, and A10.

Table 2: Attention to accent and expectations of native-likeness
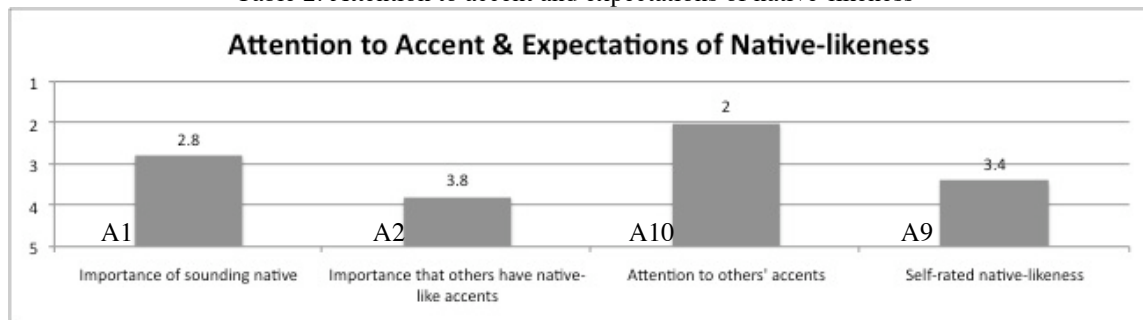
Interestingly, these reported high self-expectations of native-like standards and

low native-like expectations of others are the opposite of subjects' actual judgments of

the accented stimuli. For question A9, subjects' self-rating of native-likeness averaged

3.4, yet their average rating of the speakers in the stimuli on native-likeness (B3) was a

3.7. Also, subjects' self-rating of having a light or heavy accent (A8, 1 being a *light*

accent and 5 being a *heavy accent*) averaged 2.6, while their ratings of the speakers in the

stimuli having a light or heavy accent averaged 3.15. So, in all cases except for the

Portuguese-native subjects, respondents consistently rated themselves better on these

scales (more native, lighter accent) than they rated the speakers in the stimuli samples,

both on average and in judgments of speakers of the same native language. This suggests

that they are in fact more critical of others' accents than of their own. Table 3 shows this

relationship.

Table 3: Rating of self and others on native-likeness, light-heavy accent rating, and understandability

	Self-rating (A9, A8, A6, A7)	Mean rating of others (B3, B2, B1)
Native-likeness	3.4	3.7
Light-heavy accent	2.6	3.2
Understandability	1.7 (with NS)	2.2
	1.9 (with NNS)	

Questions A6 and A7 asked subjects to report their beliefs about their own

intelligibility ("understandability"), asking subjects how often they are understood when

speaking to an NS (A6) and a NNS (A7). On average, subjects rated themselves between

1.7 and 1.9, respectively, on a frequency scale of 1 being *always* and 5 being *never*. For

question B1, however, subjects' ratings of other speakers' intelligibility averaged 2.2. As

with native-likeness and light-heavy accent ratings, subjects rated themselves higher on

intelligibility scales than they rated the speech samples, indicating that subjects were

more critical of others' accents than of their own.

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When compared to native-likeness and light-heavy accent ratings, intelligibility received the highest ratings. All subjects' ratings on native-likeness (of self and of others) were the lowest when compared to light-heavy accent and intelligibility scales. Judgments progressively became more lenient as expectations of native-likeness decreased (see Table 3). This leads to the question posed in the third hypothesis: do attitudes toward character correlate more with perceived accent strength or with native-likeness?

All responses to questions related to character evaluation (B5-B9 and C9-C12) were used to establish an overall judgment of character ("character"). It should be noted that a majority of the subjects' reactions to these questions, as reported in their commentaries (see Appendix B, comments B1-5 and C1 and 2 for specific examples), were highly and emotionally negative. Some respondents (n = 4) refused to answer these questions, and instead, ended the survey. With these criticisms in mind, all responses to these questions were averaged for each speaker to acquire a broad judgment of character ranking for each speaker. Despite the negative reports, the overall results were revealing. Table 4 shows these averaged character ratings according to speech sample, as compared to native-likeness, light-heavy accent rating, and understandability.

Table 4: Character ratings as compared to native-likeness, light-heavy scales, and understandability ratings across all five L1 speech samples (with 1 being a positive trait and 5 being a negative trait)

	Mean	Turkish	Mandarin	German	Korean	Spanish
B3 Native-likeness	3.7	3.8	4.4	2.5	4	3.9
B2 Light/heavy	3.2	3.4	3.7	1.8	3.4	3.7
Character	**2.8**	**2.5**	**3**	**1.8**	**3.4**	**3.1**
B1 Understandability	2.2	3	2.5	1.4	2.1	2

In order to compare "character" to each speaker's average rating for native-likeness, light-heavy accent scales, and understandability, light-heavy accent scales and understandability were combined into one set of averages to provide a score of "overall intelligibility," as shown in Table 5. Scores for character were then compared to scores for native-likeness and overall intelligibility. As shown in Table 6, the correlation between character (mean = 2.7) and overall intelligibility (mean = 2.7) was not significant (p = .92), whereas the correlation between character (mean = 2.7) and native-likeness (mean = 3.7) was approaching significance (p = .055).

Table 5: Composite "overall intelligibility" averaged from light-heavy accent scales and understandability

	Light-heavy	Understandability	Overall intelligibility
Turkish	3.4	3	3.2
Mandarin	3.7	2.5	3.1
German	1.8	1.4	1.6
Korean	3.4	2.1	2.8
Spanish	3.7	2	2.9

Table 6: Correlations between character and native-likeness as compared to character and overall intelligibility

	Native-likeness	Character	Overall intelligibility	Character
Turkish	3.8	2.5	3.2	2.5
Mandarin	4.4	3	3.1	3
German	2.5	1.8	1.6	1.8
Korean	4	3.4	2.8	3.4
Spanish	3.9	3.1	2.9	3.1
Mean	3.72	2.76	2.72	2.76
Correlation	p = .055		p = .923	

Thus, judgments of character were more positive for speakers who were more intelligible (as a composite of light-heavy accent scales and understandability) and more negative for speakers who were less intelligible. However, judgments of character were found to be more correlated to native-likeness than to overall intelligibility. This finding

suggests that attitudes toward character are more closely dependant on judgments of

native-likeness than on judgments of intelligibility.

Conclusions and Future Research

The results of this study showed that NNSs have biases about NNS accents. Specifically, this study found that NNSs pay attention to other NNSs accent, but that subjects do not think it is important that other people uphold a native-like accent. At the same time, subjects generally upheld higher expectations of themselves to sound native. While their reported beliefs indicated that it was important for the rater to sound native, but not important for others to sound native, subjects consistently rated other speakers more critically than they rated themselves on native-likeness, the opposite of subjects' professed beliefs about native standards. Also, subjects as judges were most critical of speakers' native-likeness, less critical of heavy accents on a light-heavy scale, and the most accepting of accents on the basis of intelligibility. When compared to ratings of judgments of character, it was found that character judgments are perhaps based more on a speaker's native-likeness than on intelligibility.

Although NNS – NNS judgment pairings were not revealed in this particular data set, this study also showed that speakers from different specific native languages are partial toward and against other non-native accents. Interestingly, across the board, all subjects (with the exception of Korean subjects) rated the German speaker with the highest scores for all areas. Koreans (n = 3) gave the Turkish speaker the highest ratings. Specific explanations for these phenomena are unknown and require further research and a larger subject pool; furthermore, no correlations in this data were found between subjects' ratings and speaker L1, age, sex, or age of acquisition.

In connection with world Englishes research, this study reveals several issues regarding NNSs individual preferences, beliefs about themselves, and expectations toward accents and standards. Specifically, speakers' expectations of themselves and of others are discordant with how they actually make judgments. Furthermore, it is clear that making generalizations about specific NNS – NNS pairings is difficult to decipher, and, indeed, begs the question of whether or not it is possible to make such generalizations about a possible English as a Lingua Franca.

Also, in a setting where high proficiency is required, NNSs may have unique socio-cultural struggles with identity require more investigation. For example, one issue that was not addressed in this study but that is an unavoidable factor in NNS - NNS attitude studies is ethnic affiliation. In this regard, Gatbonton, et al. (2005) studied accent code switching based on ethnic affiliations, and Lindemann (2005) found strong linguistic discrimination based on the native country identified with a speaker's foreign accent. Further related to speaker identity, questions A4 and A5 of the survey asked how speakers felt when talking to natives versus non-natives. Respondents were significantly ($p = .022$) more embarrassed about their accent when speaking to a native speaker (mean = 2.2) than when speaking to a NNS (mean = 2.7). This finding certainly is rooted in deeper sociological and language learning causes, and whether or not it should be remedied in the context of world Englishes pedagogy is an unanswered question.

One other issue needing further research regards establishing how attitudes may or may not correlate with varying non-native accent proficiency levels between speakers (one scoring 600+ and another scoring 500 on the TOEFL, for example). Teufel (1995,

cited in Dalton-Puffer 1995), determined that second language learners "with little or no noticeable foreign accent in the target language are generally rated more favorable by native speakers than learners with a strong foreign accent." Though this point may seem obvious, it begs several questions. For example, how subtly can an NNS detect the proficiency of another NNS? (see van Wijngaarden et al., 2002). Do NNSs change the degree of their accent depending on the listener's degree of English? If they do, is this decision based on the speaker's judgments of the listener's comprehension level or the speakers' perceptions of how he will be judged by his accent? Several of the online survey commentaries in Appendix B provide insight into some of these questions, and a case study of respondents' comments would prove to be beneficial for further research.

Further research into the predicament that NNSs find themselves when establishing what they believe is expected of them, what they expect of themselves and others, and how they actually perform would also prove beneficial to second language research. Many studies look at these issues individually and in detail, but broader generalizations need to be made to provide a global research perspective into NNS – NNS interactions, especially in light of their increasing frequency. This study has provided a starting point and framework for such research.

Appendix A

	Survey Questionnaire & Rating Scales					
	Question	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
A1	How important is it for you to sound like a native English speaker?	Crucial	Very Important	Neutral	Sometimes Important	Not Important
A2	When you are speaking to another non-native speaker, how important is it to you that he or she has a native-like accent?	Crucial	Very Important	Neutral	Sometimes Important	Not Important
A3	How do you feel about your accent when you speak English?	Proud				Embarrassed
A4	How do you feel about your accent when you speak to another non-native speaker?	Proud				Embarrassed
A5	How do you feel about your accent when you speak to a native speaker?	Proud				Embarrassed
A6	When you are speaking to native speakers, how often are you completely understood?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
A7	When you are speaking to a non-native speaker, how often are you completely understood?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
A8	How would you rate your English accent in terms of degree?	Lightly Accented				Heavy Accented
A9	How would you rate your English accent in terms of nativeness?	Native-Like				Clearly Not Native
A10	When you listen to a non-native speaker, how often do you pay attention to his or her accent?	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

	Survey Questionnaire & Rating Scales					
	Question	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
B1	Speaker X is:	Easy To Understand		Understandable		Difficult
B2	Speaker X has:	A Light Accent				A Heavy Accent
B3	Speaker X sounds:	Very Native-Like				Absolutely Not Native
B4	Compared to your accent, Speaker X's accent is:	Weaker		Similar		Stronger
B5	Speaker X seems:	Intelligent				Unintelligent
B6	Speaker X seems:	Truthful				Dishonest
B7	Speaker X seems:	Nice				Mean
B8	Speaker X is probably:	Attractive				Unattractive
B9	Speaker X probably:	Completed Graduate School				Completed Undergrad. School

	Survey Questionnaire & Rating Scales					
	Question	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
C1	Please rate the five speakers on the following qualities:	Most intelligent	Honest	Nice	Attractive	Educated
C2	Please rate the five speakers on the following qualities:	Least Intelligent	Honest	Nice	Attractive	Educated
C3	Which speaker do you think you would best understand?	Speaker 1 (Turkish)	Speaker 2 (Mandarin)	Speaker 3 (German)	Speaker 4 (Korean)	Speaker 5 (Spanish)
C4	Which speaker do you think would be the most difficult to understand?	Speaker 1 (Turkish)	Speaker 2 (Mandarin)	Speaker 3 (German)	Speaker 4 (Korean)	Speaker 5 (Spanish)
C5	Which speaker has the lightest accent?	Speaker 1 (Turkish)	Speaker 2 (Mandarin)	Speaker 3 (German)	Speaker 4 (Korean)	Speaker 5 (Spanish)
C6	Which speaker has the heaviest accent?	Speaker 1 (Turkish)	Speaker 2 (Mandarin)	Speaker 3 (German)	Speaker 4 (Korean)	Speaker 5 (Spanish)
C7	Which speaker sounds the most native?	Speaker 1 (Turkish)	Speaker 2 (Mandarin)	Speaker 3 (German)	Speaker 4 (Korean)	Speaker 5 (Spanish)

C8	Which speaker sounds the most foreign?	Speaker 1 (Turkish)	Speaker 2 (Mandarin)	Speaker 3 (German)	Speaker 4 (Korean)	Speaker 5 (Spanish)
C9	Which person would you prefer to work with in a group?	Speaker 1 (Turkish)	Speaker 2 (Mandarin)	Speaker 3 (German)	Speaker 4 (Korean)	Speaker 5 (Spanish)
C10	With whom would you be able to have an easy conversation?	Speaker 1 (Turkish)	Speaker 2 (Mandarin)	Speaker 3 (German)	Speaker 4 (Korean)	Speaker 5 (Spanish)
C11	Which person would you trust the most?	Speaker 1 (Turkish)	Speaker 2 (Mandarin)	Speaker 3 (German)	Speaker 4 (Korean)	Speaker 5 (Spanish)
C12	Which speaker's personality seems most similar to yours?	Speaker 1 (Turkish)	Speaker 2 (Mandarin)	Speaker 3 (German)	Speaker 4 (Korean)	Speaker 5 (Spanish)

Appendix B: Subject Commentaries

A1 Comments	A2 Comments	A3 Comments	A4 Comments	A5 Comments
It is convenient to sound like a native speaker. You can avoid the small talk about "where are you from?"	Listening to someone speak with an accent tells me they speak more than one language, & has at least one more quality than monolinguals	It can be helpful because people are more understanding & friendly when you're obviously foreign	Depends on how thick the other person's accent is.	I try to sound as native as possible
I want to be grammatically accurate, not have a native accent.	It is important because I need to understand what they say. Heavy accents sometimes get in the way of understanding.	I'm not concerned at all that I have it. I kind of like it actually.	I feel more confident speaking to a non-native speaker.	It depends on the attitude of the native speaker. If s/he is a sympathetic listener, i feel more comfortable in speaking English.
Having an accent and being proud of it it's my personal way of showing there's more than words and sounds: there's cognitive and reasoning systems as well.	Sometimes I enjoy hearing a bit of an accent.	I am more worried about not making grammar mistakes while I speak than about my accent	It also depends on the other person's accent.	I can't avoid comparing myself to them!
I am not really worried about it as long as I don't destroy English while I am speaking	As long as I can understand him/her I really don't care.	I'm concerned about is finding the right words, and the right way of organizing them in the way native speaker do.	Sometimes I feel uncomfortable when other people, native or non native, cannot understand me because of my accent.	I am rarely understood if I speak in my own accent-sometimes I am not understood even if I try to speak like a native speaker
It is what identifies you, and trying to sound native speaker of a language that you are not is a way of legitimizing that is embarrasing to be a foreign speaker, and I don't think it is.	S/he does need to have all the american "r".	I don't feel embarrassed about my own accent, I just feel frustrated when people don't understand me in my own accent		

A6	A7	A8	A10
Eventually, even if I have to rephrase. At least they seem to understand.	Sometimes their English is not so good.	well, it is heavily accented, but in a US accent, so I´m guessing you consider this to be lightly, right?	I pay attention to the accent only to the extent that this will allow me understand what he/she is saying.
If the person is familiar with accents they understand better than people that do not seem to speak with non-native speakers much	Depende a lot about the language the other speaker has	I am completely aware that I do have accent and that its immediately noticeable that I'm far from being native speaker	I am not able to say without any doubt that someone is a native speaker. If the person comes from Asia, I have to listen very carefully.
That depends on the level of the other speaker as well.	If he/she speaks a totally different language (from mine) there might be some problems there.		

Appendix B: Subject Commentaries

B1 Turkish	B2 Mandarin	B3 German	B4 Korean	B5 Spanish
I don't think question 9 is a nice question to ask.	To me, no one "sounds" more truthful than others...	I would guess this speaker's first language is English or she has been living in an English-speaking country for a while.	She sounds Russian. I think it is because she is talking so slow that it sounds as if she had no clue what she is talking about...	I am good at differentiating speakers from Western counties. Therefore, I have no clues about which specific country this speaker is from.
Sounds like a person that has been speaking English for a very long time, only not in the US.	Mispronunciation of "d", "th", and "w" makes it hard to understand.			
What does accent have to do with being or not being attractive?	A lot of intelligent people use highly accented English.	Sounds like a native English speaker, only not from the US.	The pronunciation, per se, was clear enough, but the flow of the words and sentences made it clear this speaker was not a native.	I don't feel that I'm in a position to make a judgment on questions 5-9. It does not seem to me that any of these characteristic can be associated with the speaker's accent (especially since the speaker is merely reading a passage and not simply talking).
I cannot infer the personality, apperance or knowledge of the person by their accent. I can infer that this person probally has a non-prestigious variety of English	It is hard to think if the accent is as similarly strong as mine. I think we both have strong accent, but in different ways.	She seems making a real effort on sounding native		
		Indian accent?	She doesn't seems making an effort to sound more native.	
It sounded as she was not trying any hard to sound like a native, almost like reading the sounds in her native tongue.		She seems Hispanic, from Spain or Latin America		
For question 8 : I scaled 3 because the way she speaks is very "neutral" without any liveliness.				

Appendix B: Subject Commentaries

C1	honestly, speakers' accents don't tell me anything about their niceness, attractiveness or intelligence.	Why there is not an option that is "no difference between all five speakers"? Please "adjust" my answers on this Q.	I really don't feel like I can make a judgment of these qualities merely based on the speaker's accent. I chose 2 and 3 since they seemed to be most easily understood. "Unable to judge" or "neither" should be an option.	can't tell the difference. My choice is rather arbitrary. this survey forces me to rank one.	I totally do not like this question. I cannot tell who's more intelligent, etc. etc., by their accent. So I just answered it because I can't complete the survey without answering it.
C1	non of them seems particularly smarter than the others.	This was really hard and confusing. I have little bases for judging, intelligence, honestly, niceness, attractiveness, and education based on the speaker's accent.	I cannot judge these characteristics by their accents. Professor Krifka had a very very strong german accent and he was the nicest, smartest and educated proffessor I ever had.	I prefer to not answer this question, but as did not have a choice, I rate speaker one, but I think all of them can be consider the most intelligent, honest, etc	How can I judge that through someone reading a phrase?
C2	I guess that you're trying to measure people's prejudices to non-native english speakers... According to how they sound people might think they are not intelligent, not educated, etc. But these are just prejudices...	I am guessing at this point! Accents and qualities don't go together!	intelligence, honesty and education were hard for me to judge among these woman	Awe, this is awful. I hate making these generalizations. Sometime I chose a speaker just because I didn't have the option of leaving it the whole thing blank.	It is really hard to answer this question. I have seen that if one has a strong accent and/or is grammatically inaccurate in a way that affects how people understand her/his pronunciation that person also will have less opportunity to succeed academically.
C2	I am sorry but it is really hard to answer this question, I wish I could leave it blank.	That can't be truly measured by hearing a reading passage.	I really cannot make out these qualities from their accents. Again, I do not know if I will be consistent with these if I were asked again	I do not agree with the criteria, the bad quality does not mean the least intelligent, for example	I cannot make these judgments only based on hearing them speak.

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