

Thai tertiary English majors' attitudes towards and awareness of world Englishes

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The purposes of the present study were to investigate Thai university English learners' attitudes towards and awareness of varieties of English, in relation to the ideology of English as an international language, which sees English in its pluralistic rather than the monolithic nature. The results show that the learners held more favorable attitudes towards mainstream inner-circle Englishes (American English and British English) than nonnative Englishes. In detail, the inner-circle speakers were perceived to possess

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better attributes (e.g., status, competence and personality) than nonnative speakers. The findings suggest that the English learners, in the present study, were linguistically prejudiced as they stereotyped others based on accent. In terms of accent awareness, the learners did not have sufficient awareness of varieties of English since the majority of them failed to identify the speakers' country of origin from the speakers' voices. It was found that the Thai English voice was the only stimulus that was successfully recognized by half of the informants, whereas the other varieties were inappropriately identified. This paper ends with proposing pedagogical suggestions and implications in raising learners' awareness of the changing contexts of English so that they become more tolerant towards linguistic diversity.

Keywords: Language attitudes, EIL, accent, linguistic discrimination, World Englishes

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาทัศนคติ และ ความสำเนียงของนักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษต่อความหลากหลายของสำเนียงภาษาอังกฤษ ภายใต้กรอบแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติ ซึ่งพิจารณาภาษาอังกฤษจากมุมมองพหุรูปแบบ มากกว่ารูปแบบเดี่ยว ซึ่งผูกติดกับเจ้าของภาษาเพียงอย่างเดียว ผลการศึกษาสามารถสรุปได้ดังนี้ นักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษส่วนใหญ่ มีทัศนคติต่อสำเนียงภาษาอังกฤษในกลุ่มวงใน (ภาษาอังกฤษแบบอเมริกัน และแบบอังกฤษ) ดีกว่า สำเนียงภาษาอังกฤษในกลุ่มวงนอก (ภาษาอังกฤษแบบฟิลิปปินส์ และแบบอินเดีย) และสำเนียงภาษาอังกฤษในกลุ่มวงชายขอบ (ภาษาอังกฤษแบบญี่ปุ่น และแบบไทย) อย่างมีนัยสำคัญ โดยผู้พูดจากกลุ่มวงใน ถูกมองว่า มีคุณสมบัติ (เช่น สถานะ ความสามารถ และบุคลิกภาพ) ที่ดีกว่า

ผู้พูดที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษา (กลุ่มวงนอก และวงขยาย) ผลการวิจัยครั้งนี้สะท้อนให้เห็นว่าทัศนคติต่อคุณสมบัติของผู้พูดที่นักศึกษาได้แสดงออกมาผ่านสำเนียงบ่งบอกถึงการเหยียดภาษา นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่านักศึกษามีความสำคัญต่อความหลากหลายของสำเนียงในภาษาอังกฤษน้อย เนื่องจากนักศึกษาส่วนใหญ่ ไม่สามารถจำแนกสำเนียงที่ได้ยินได้ว่าผู้พูดมาจากประเทศใด ผลการศึกษาพบว่า นักศึกษาสามารถจำแนกผู้พูดที่มาจากประเทศไทยได้มากที่สุด ซึ่งจำนวนนักศึกษาที่จำแนกสำเนียงนี้ได้เป็นครั้งแรกหนึ่งของนักศึกษาทั้งหมด สำหรับสำเนียงอื่นๆ นักศึกษาสามารถจำแนกได้น้อยมาก อย่างไรก็ตาม นักศึกษาสามารถจำแนกสำเนียงของเจ้าของภาษาและสำเนียงที่ไม่ใช่ของเจ้าของภาษาได้ดีมาก จากผลวิจัยดังกล่าว ผู้วิจัยได้นำเสนอข้อเสนอแนะทางการศึกษาและการนำผลการศึกษาไปใช้ที่หลากหลาย เช่น ความจำเป็นในการเสริมสร้างความรู้ความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับภาษาอังกฤษในบริบทที่เปลี่ยนไป เพื่อให้ นักศึกษาเกิดการยอมรับความหลากหลายทางภาษาศาสตร์

คำสำคัญ: ทัศนคติต่อภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติ สำเนียงการเหยียดภาษา ความหลากหลายในภาษาอังกฤษ

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Introduction

English is the most effective and widespread language for international communication. Many people learn and use English to achieve success and mobility in modern, pluralistic societies. Worldwide diffusion of English has made international tourism, business, science and technology, and education possible. The language has been used as a lingua franca by its speakers to communicate both locally and internationally, serving a wide range of communicative purposes (Crystal, 1997; McKay, 2002). English is no longer used solely in native-speaking nations, but serves as a wider communicative medium for organizations and individuals around the world. There are approximately 380 million native speakers (e.g., American, British, Canadian, Australian, Irish, etc.), but there are an even greater number of nonnative speakers who also use English to communicate in a wide variety of forms and functions (Crystal, 1997; Kachru, 1992; Jenkins, 2000; Medgyes, 1994; McKay, 2002; Modiano, 1999; Seidlhofer, 2001).

As the world has become more internationally connected, Thailand welcomes millions of foreign visitors, both native and nonnative speakers. English is the language used most often in interactions between Thais and the foreign visitors. Hence, Thai people encounter many types of English users, such as Indian tourists, Filipino teachers, Chinese investors, British businesspeople and Russian vacationers, and many varieties of English usage.

When nonnatives, in this case Thais, speak English, native speakers first notice the *accent* (Munro, Derwing & Sato, 2006). It is sensible to say that people with different accents tend to be judged differently by listeners. This phenomenon is well-characterized by the following quote: Like it or not, we all judged others by how they speak, and at the same time are judged by them. The way we speak, the words we choose, and the way we sound all carry information that tells our listeners a lot about us and our background. (Cavallaro and Chin, p. 143)

Accent is the most observable feature in spoken language. Socially and psychologically speaking, one's accent can mark a speaker as being fluent, slightly intelligible, competent, very diligent, or very annoying, to name a few. An accent also reflects one's mother tongue, identity and culture. Thus, when people speak, "it seems to be accent that most enables people to index who they are..." (Jenkins, 2008: 2), and determines how they are seen by others. According to Sifakis and Sougari (2005), accent and/or pronunciation suggests an individual's identity with respect to social class, solidarity, integrity, personality and so forth. Studies around the world show that for most listeners, a speaker's accent immediately

categorizes him with respect to social class, socio-economic status, personality, or competence. A particular accent may simply reduce intelligibility, or worse, it may foster undemocratic hiring practices, or cause ridicule or create a sense of social inferiority (Holliday, 2006; Jenkins, 2007; Lippi-Green, 1997; Munro et al., 2006).

In Thailand, there has been debate over which English accents should be taught in school. Based on the observation of web-boards (e.g., Pantip.com, OKNation.com and EduZone.com) and pronunciation-related literature, accent has long been a hot subject of discussion. Some argue that, to help them approximate native-like pronunciation, students should simply get more exposure to English spoken by native speakers, or that they should be drilled in native-speaker segmental and suprasegmental phonological features. However, the question arises as to which “native accent” should be adopted since not all have the same one. Others emphasize that accent is not as important as intelligibility, and nonnative English accents can also be attractive and safely effective in the educational system if the speakers are fluent and educated (see e.g., Buripakdi, 2012; Jindapitak & Teo, 2011; Methitham, 2009).

The situation has changed recently in the sense that English has dispersed into many new Englishes. Many scholars have questioned the *native-speaker-teacher-only* school of thought as the most appropriate model for ELT and have called for the development of a new model that makes use of a greater variety of English in order to expose L2 learners to a wider range of sociolinguistic contexts (Mauranen, 2003). In Thai society, it has been found that Thai learners

of English will typically use English with other nonnative speakers (Todd, 2006). However, Thai English learners' attitudes towards and awareness of different varieties of English remains largely unexplored. This study measures the attitudes of Thai university English learners towards different varieties of English in relation to the ideology of English as an international language (EIL). As EIL has begun to challenge and take the place of the traditional role of English in the world, many scholars (e.g., Graddol, 2006; Holliday, 2006; Jenkins, 2000, 2007; Kachru, 1992; Modiano, 1999; Widdowson, 1994) have called for the need to be aware of linguistic diversity. It is, thus, useful to investigate Thai English learners' attitudes towards and awareness of varieties of English, in order to understand how these varieties are stereotypically placed in society and recognized by the English learners. The findings may provide a clearer understanding as to what extent EIL has gained ground in Thailand. To achieve these objectives, two main research questions were addressed:

- (1) What are the Thai English learners' attitudes towards varieties of English? Do they hold prejudiced attitudes towards accented English?
- (2) Are they aware of the different varieties of English? What recognition patterns do they contribute to their correct identification of specific varieties of English?

The findings may contribute to the understanding of what stereotypes are associated with various accents, and which varieties are perceived favorably or unfavorably. This study also tries to gain a better understanding of the extent to which English learners are aware of varieties

of English prevalent in Thailand and what patterns of recognition are associated with their awareness.

Approaches to language attitudes

Ever since the origin of language attitudes research began in the 1930s (Giles & Billings, 2004), a variety of methods have been used to measure attitudes of respondents towards language variation. But the most effective and commonly used approach has been the ‘match-guise test’ (MGT), or more recently, the verbal-guise test (VGT). An overview of this indirect approach is given below.

Many researchers (e.g., Dalton-Puffer et al., 1995; Giles & Billing, 2004; McKenzie, 2006) believe that an indirect elicitation is the most useful approach to measure informants’ hidden perceptions, which are often masked under social façade. This method allows a researcher to tap a deeper level of the informants’ perspective. In measuring attitudes towards accented speech, it is generally desirable to mislead the informants into thinking that they are being asked about the other things rather than the aspect of language. In other words, the purpose of the study is only loosely explained to the informants so as not to prejudice their responses (e.g., Kim, 2007; McKenzie, 2006).

The most frequently used technique for indirect elicitation is the matched-guise test, originally introduced by Lambert and his associates in Canada in the 1960s. They developed this technique to investigate the informants’ privately-held perceptions of French and English in the inter-ethnic context of Canada. This was carried out by the use of speech samples

of French and English produced by the same bilingual speakers (Giles & Billings, 2004). That is, in the use of the MGT, speech guises are presented to the informants or listeners in a way that they feel as though they are listening to and rating speech varieties produced by different speakers, when in fact they are listening to the same speaker.

The MGT is based on the assumption that when a speaker fluently produces various utterances pretending he/she belongs to a particular speech community, variables relating to the speaker's judgment such as level of education, friendliness, social class, credibility and so on are then controlled except for the dialect or accent. Giles and Billing (2004, p. 190) comment that the MGT is "a rigorous and elegant method for eliciting apparently private attitudes" of listeners who rate different varieties of the language. They also mention that the matched-guise approach is an essential factor in establishing a cross-disciplinary interface between sociolinguistic and socio-psychological analyses of language attitudes.

However, there have been several criticisms about the authenticity of the speech uttered by the same speaker. For example, Garrett, Coupland and Williams (2003) criticize that when a speaker produces many different accents, it is difficult to claim that the accents are reliable or accurate. This brought about the modified version of the MGT which is known as 'verbal-guise test' or what Dalton-Puffer et al. (1996) call the "watered-down matched guise technique" (p. 79). This technique has received great attention and has been employed in many recent studies to measure informants' reactions to varieties of English (e.g., Bayard et al., 2003; Kim,

2007; McKenzie, 2006). The VGT differs from the MGT in that different speakers are possibly involved in creating speech samples. It is believed that the VGT dispenses with the problem of the artificiality of speech by using different speakers from original speech communities (Garrett et al., 2003).

Methodology

Subjects

The informants consisted of 52 third-year English majors from Thaksin University in southern Thailand. The reason for choosing this group of informants was that they were considered future users of English who would be confronted with many Englishes and be judged in their professional lives with competence, intellect, and character based on accent. Hence, their attitudes towards different varieties of English are considered important and might provide some empirical insights into the field of EIL or the notion of world Englishes. 49 (94.6%) of the informants recruited for the current study were females and 3 (5.8%) were males. These informants had been studying English for between 12-17 years. The majority of the informants reported not having lived, studied or traveled abroad. Four informants (7.7%) claimed to have traveled abroad (mostly in Malaysia) for a short time.

Instruments

In order to discover the informants' attitudes towards and awareness of the different varieties of English, a questionnaire was used. Three Applied Linguists from the Department of Languages and Linguistics at Prince of

Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus were asked to independently check the questionnaire, to determine whether each part of the questionnaire was in line with the research aims. The questionnaire had two sections (excluding the demographic part): the verbal-guise test and accent recognition (see Appendix A). A description of each part of the questionnaire is provided below.

1. Verbal-guise test

In this part, six varieties of English (American English (AmE), British English (BrE), Indian English (InE), Filipino English (FiE), Japanese English (JpE) and Thai English (ThE)) were selected and used to evaluate the informants' attitudes towards and their ability to recognize varieties of English. To conduct the VGT in the present study, the following detail needs to be pointed out: first, stimulus providers; second, variable control for the speech samples; and last, bi-polar semantic differential scales.

1.1 Stimulus providers

The voices of six educated female English speakers from the countries mentioned above, all of whom read the same neutral text, were used in the investigation. All speech varieties, except for the Filipino variety, were downloaded from The University of Kansas's International Dialects of English Archive (2000) website: <http://web.ku.edu/idea/>. This site was designed for a "dialect researcher to examine a reader's English pronunciation across a wide variety of phonemic contexts." However, the Filipino variety of English in the abovementioned website was not available in a female's voice, so the Filipino voice was recorded by the researchers (using a

Sony IC recorder ICD-P620). The stimulus providers' reading speed rates were in the range of 40 to 42 seconds. Their ages (at the time of recording) ranged from 20 to 25 years old. The neutral text was a reading passage entitled "Comma Gets a Cure". It was composed by Jill McCullough & Barbara Somerville and edited by Douglas N. Honorof, following J. C. Wells' standard lexical sets. The text is considered neutral in the sense that it does not contain culturally-biased and culturally-specific information. Moreover, as claimed by the authors, the text was created based on a list of words that could be used to disclose speakers' regional phonological behaviors (The University of Kansas's International Dialects of English Archive, 2000).

1.2 Variable control for the speech samples

The researchers conducted a three-stage procedure in order to derive the six speech samples to be included in the VGT. Figure 1, presented below, shows the three stages of variable control for the speech samples.

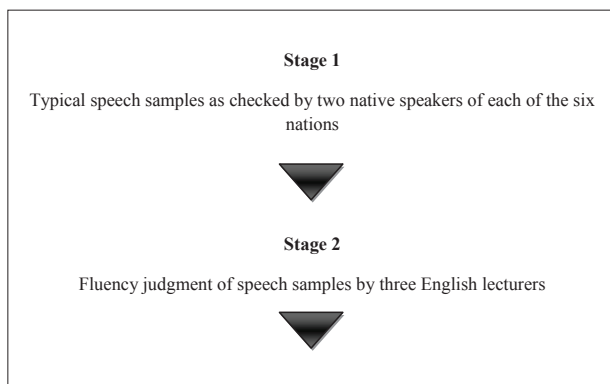


Figure 1. The three stages of variable control for the speech samples

First, to ensure that each speech sample was authentically representative of the stimulus provider's nation and safe to use in the main study, at least two native speakers from the same nation as the stimulus provider were consulted. They were asked to identify their own English varieties from a good many speech stimuli (a total of 30 stimuli for the six varieties) as collected from The University of Kansas's International Dialects of English Archive website (2000) and as recorded by the researchers themselves. The stimuli that were successfully recognized by their native speakers were considered typical and safe to use (i.e., if an Indian English voice was correctly identified by its native speakers, it was considered typical and representative of the 'Indian English' variety). It was found that 27 collected speech samples were representative of their own varieties. Said another way, only three voices failed to be identified by their native speakers.

Second, it was also necessary to ensure that all were fluent English speakers. To do so, a total of three English lecturers (both native and nonnative speakers) were asked to judge each stimulus on the basis of "fluency" not "accent". Initially, 12 speech samples (two for each of the six varieties) as carefully selected from the 27 regionally-representative stimuli from the previous stage and the fluency judgment form were presented to the three lecturers to judge the speakers' fluency. It was hoped that the qualified stimulus to be used in this study would have a fluency score of 100%: a safe-to-use voice must be rated as 'fluent' by all the three lecturers. It was found that, of the 12 stimuli, 9 received a 100% fluency score. Lastly, the researchers chose only 6 speech samples to be used in the VGT.

Finally, concerning voice qualities, each speech audio was edited using the Adobe Audition Software 2.0 in which noises and other disturbing sounds were removed. The volume level of all speech samples was also adjusted to ensure that the audio was loud enough for the listeners.

1.3 Bi-polar semantic differential scales

The VGT approach in several studies was always presented in the form of several bi-polar semantic differential scales which were designed to let listeners rate their impression of the speakers based on each pair of attributes (such as Not Friendly-----Friendly).

As Fasold (1987) observes, little attention has been paid to the selection of adjectival attributes to be included in the bi-polar scales questionnaire for most of the previous studies. Therefore, to maintain the validity of the selection of speakers' attributes, a separate checklist was administered in this study to examine the most appropriate stereotypical adjectives that describe speakers of the selected six varieties of English. To do this, 10 English major sophomores at Thaksin University were asked to describe their impression of each speaker (in English) by selecting adjectives from the predetermined list of 20 adjectives. The eight most commonly chosen adjectives were impressive, uneducated, friendly, unconfident, gentle, generous, smart and incompetent. Each of these adjectives was then paired with its antonym and included as stereotypical attributes in the bi-polar scales questionnaire. The semantic differential scales used in this study were seven-point scales, ranging from 1 (meaning "not at all") to 7 (meaning "very much").

2. Accent recognition/identification

After rating the speaker on the bi-polar semantic differential scales section, the informants were asked to guess each speaker's country of origin and also provide reasons for their guess. The informants' comments provided for the justification of each speaker's provenance were originally in Thai and translated into English by the researchers. The objective of this part was to ascertain whether the informants had awareness of the six varieties of English.

Results and discussions

The present study utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyzing data. Since two research objectives (learners' attitudes towards and awareness of varieties of English) were addressed in this study, the presentation of results and discussion were divided into two separate parts to aid comprehension.

Learners' attitudes towards varieties of English

In an attempt to investigate the informants' attitudes towards varieties of English, the informants were asked to rate each of the six specified accents on eight pairs of adjectives on a scale of 1. to 7. To look at the informants' overall evaluation of the six speakers, we calculated descriptive statistics for the ratings of the six speakers (BrE, JpE, ThE, AmE, InE and FiE speakers) for each of the eight adjectival attributes. Table 1 reveals the overall mean values and standard deviations of the evaluation of the six speakers.

Table 1. Overall mean values and standard deviations of the evaluation of the six speakers

Speaker	Mean	SD	N
AmE	4.79	1.131	52
BrE	4.74	.887	52
ThE	4.20	.670	52
JpE	4.19	.928	52
FiE	4.18	.995	52
InE	3.69	.852	52

Note: The most positive mean value of the rating scale is 7.0.

The findings shown in the table indicate that, on the whole, the informants rated both speakers from the Inner Circle (AmE and BrE speakers) higher than the other four peripheral speakers: JpE, ThE, InE and FiE speakers. The AmE speaker received the most positive evaluation with the mean value of 4.79, followed by the BrE speaker (4.74). It should be noted that, even though those nonnative speakers (except for the InE speakers) were judged less favorably than the two native speakers, they were still considered positive since the mean values of the evaluation of these speakers exceeded the neutral evaluation of 4.0 (4.20 for the ThE speaker, 4.19 for the JpE speaker, and 4.18 for the FiE speaker). InE was, on the other hand, the only speaker who was clearly perceived negatively by the informants with the mean value of 3.69.

The table below shows how the six speakers were evaluated on each attribute: It presents the rank ordering of the informants' accent evaluation means.

Table 2. Evaluations of the speakers (by rank order): Individual attributes

impressive		gentle		confident		friendly	
AmE	4.79	ThE	4.65	AmE	4.88	AmE	4.60
BrE	4.71	AmE	4.58	BrE	4.88	BrE	4.60
ThE	4.17	BrE	4.52	FiE	4.15	ThE	4.48
FiE	4.15	JpE	4.48	JpE	4.13	FiE	4.38
JpE	4.12	FiE	4.40	ThE	4.12	JpE	4.35
InE	3.69	InE	3.98	InE	3.19	InE	4.02

generous		smart		competent		educated	
BrE	4.63	BrE	4.88	AmE	4.96	AmE	5.04
AmE	4.60	AmE	4.85	BrE	4.85	BrE	4.87
JpE	4.46	FiE	3.98	ThE	4.02	JpE	4.13
FiE	4.46	JpE	3.92	JpE	3.96	FiE	3.98
ThE	4.33	ThE	3.88	FiE	3.94	ThE	3.92
InE	4.04	InE	3.52	InE	3.56	InE	3.54

Note: The most positive mean value of the rating scale is 7.0.

Some obvious similarities can be observed once the evaluation mean values are organized into descending order for each of the eight attributes. The most recognizable similarity to the ranking task is the appearance of the two NS accents in the first two places on the eight attributes (except for the attribute “gentle” in which the ThE was rated most highly, leaving the AmE and BrE, second and third, respectively). While the AmE was rated better than the BrE for “impressive”, “competent” and “educated”, the BrE did slightly better than the AmE on the attribute

“generous” and “smart”. The result of this kind is not surprising since NS discourses are prevalent in all kinds of media and classroom materials in nonnative contexts (Canagarajah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; McKenzie, 2006).

The remaining four speakers from both the Outer and Expanding Circles (the JpE, ThE, FiE and InE) were perceived to be inferior to the mainstream inner-circle ones. These speakers were evaluated with the mean scores spread along both positive and negative ends of the bi-polar scales. In particular, the InE speaker was rated least favorably on most adjectival attributes relative to the other speakers. This is a surprising result given the status of InE as one of the nativized or institutionalized Englishes (Kachru, 1992; Jenkins, 2007). Perhaps due to its Indianization, InE has acquired distinguishing linguistic properties that make it harder to understand (among the informants), and hence low rating.

The picture becomes fuzzy, and an attempt to place the remaining three speakers in a hierarchical order is difficult since the ThE, FiE and JpE speakers took turns being ranked third, fourth, and fifth, with the mean scores located relatively close to each other on the eight attributes. With this observation, the informants did not seem to differentiate among the three accents mentioned above. One notable feature deserving attention is that the informants gave the ThE speaker the most positive evaluation on the attribute “Gentle.” This may be due to the possibility that the informants were able to trace Thainess (whether consciously or unconsciously) in the speaker’s pitching of

voice, nasality, cadences, etc. Moreover, it is not exaggerated to say that the concept of gentleness is likely to be considered as one of the solidarity tokens representing Thai value or Thainess in both speech and manner. This concept is even defined as one of the guiding Dhamma principles advocated and practiced by His Majesty the King. *Maddava* or the concept of gentleness “means to speak gently and to act gently, not showing roughness and rudeness... Whenever one speaks one should speak gently and politely” (The Government Public Relation, 2006, para 28). Hence, it leads to the result of the ThE speaker being judged the most gentle speaker.

The preliminary findings presented above reveal the informants’ preconception about a particular speaker’s speech or what stereotypical attributes were salient in particular varieties. The findings indicate that the six speakers received different evaluations. However, the difference has not yet been tested for its significance. That is to say, the previous analysis and discussion could not tell us whether the six speakers were evaluated significantly differently from each other. Hence, to examine whether statistically significant differences exist in the informants’ evaluations of the six speakers, a one-way repeated measure ANOVA was calculated. The main result of ANOVA indicates that there was a significant effect of the six speakers, $F(5, 255) = 18.03, p < .001$.

As the test of within-subject effects demonstrates a statistically significant difference between the six speakers, it is necessary to conduct a Post-hoc Test to further examine individual mean differences. The Post-hoc Test is

designed to explore the differences among mean values so that we can compare all different combinations of all the speakers as judged by the informants. Using the Bonferroni procedure, the Pairwise Comparisons in Table 3 below illustrate the comparisons of each of the six speakers with each of the others to isolate exactly where the significant differences lie.

Table 3. Post-hoc test: pairwise comparisons

Speaker Speaker	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.(a)	95% Confidence Interval for Difference (a)	
				Upper Bound	Lower Bound
BrE	.548(*)	.131	.002	.144	.952
JP	.546(*)	.105	.000	.221	.870
ThE	-.043	.150	1.000	-.504	.417
AmE	1.050(*)	.139	.000	.623	1.478
InE	.560(*)	.156	.011	.080	1.040
FiE					
JP	-.548(*)	.131	.002	-.952	-.144
BrE	-.002	.115	1.000	-.355	.351
ThE	-.591(*)	.150	.004	-1.052	-.131
AmE	.502(*)	.106	.000	.177	.828
InE	.012	.126	1.000	-.376	.400
FiE					

Table 3. Post-hoc test: pairwise comparisons (Cont.)

Speaker Speaker	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.(a)	95% Confidence Interval for Difference (a)	
				Upper Bound	Lower Bound
ThE	-.546(*)	.105	.000	-.870	-.221
BrE	.002	.115	1.000	-.351	.355
JpE	-.589(*)	.140	.002	-1.020	-.158
	.505(*)	.116	.001	.148	.861
AmE	.014	.139	1.000	-.414	.442
InE					
FiE					
AmE BrE	.043	.150	1.000	-.417	.504
JpE	.591(*)	.150	.004	.131	1.052
	.589(*)	.140	.002	.158	1.020
ThE	1.094(*)	.151	.000	.628	1.560
InE	.603(*)	.161	.007	.107	1.099
FiE					
InE	-1.050(*)	.139	.000	-1.478	-.623
BrE	-.502(*)	.106	.000	-.828	-.177
JpE	-.505(*)	.116	.001	-.861	-.148
	-1.094(*)	.151	.000	-1.560	-.628
ThE					
AmE	-.490(*)	.144	.019	-.933	-.047
FiE					
FiE	-.560(*)	.156	.011	-1.040	-.080
BrE	-.012	.126	1.000	-.400	.376
JpE	-.014	.139	1.000	-.442	.414
	-.603(*)	.161	.007	-1.099	-.107
ThE	.490(*)	.144	.019	.047	.933
AmE					
InE					

Based on estimated marginal means

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

a Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

The result shows that both the AmE and BrE speakers were evaluated significantly more positively than the other four speakers. In addition, the AmE speaker was judged more favorably than the BrE speaker (see Table 1), but the difference was not significant (as shown in Table 3). Regarding the negative evaluation, the InE speaker was perceived significantly less favorably than the rest. It is interesting to note that the difference of mean scores among the JpE, ThE and FiE speakers did not reach statistical significance. This may be explained by the fact that since the informants in the present study were tertiary English majors in the field of ELT, they might have been routinely exposed to pedagogical principles favorably and profoundly rooted in the native-speaker ideology which considers an English native speaker to be an ideal source of information about the language (Buripakdi, 2012; Holliday, 2006; Jindapitak & Teo, 2011; Methitham, 2009). Thus, the dichotomy of native and nonnative speakers tends to be somewhat strong in the learners' minds.

The results displayed above are consistent with a good many studies in language attitudes literature (e.g., Bayard et al., 2002; McKenzie, 2006; Scales et al., 2006; Zhang & Hu, 2008) in that the mainstream inner-circle voices, AmE and BrE, were judged as having better attributes than the voices of nonnative speakers. This finding suggests that there exists a certain level of linguistic prejudice in the learners' opinions and confirms Jenkins (2007), Lippi-Green (1997) and Lindemann (2005) that the English varieties were rated in a hierarchical manner. Given that the informants tended to make judgment about people's attributes on the basis

of accents, many scholars (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 1997; Jenkins, 2000, 2007, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2007b; Lippi-Green, 1997; Levis, 2005) explain that the assumption of the degree of accentedness depicting particular speakers' intelligence or competence does not hold true or, in other words, is a linguistic myth. Is it linguistically rightful to use "accent" as an ideological means to evaluate or estimate a person's level of education, generosity, competence, gentleness or friendliness? Without knowledge of the speaker's background, how did the informants in the current study really know that the Indian speaker (the stimulus provider), for example, was less educated than the British counterpart; that the Thai speaker was not as generous as the American speaker; or that the Japanese speaker was less confident than the British speaker? These findings proved the effectiveness of the instrument in eliciting the informants' biased attitudes towards nonnative varieties/speakers of English. However, it should be noted that the nature of the informants' stereotyped judgments about varieties of English, whether negative or positive, is a complex issue. This is because the attempt to understand why the informants placed native speakers on a positive continuum of stereotypical attributes can be a matter of politics rather than linguistics (Holliday, 2006). When politicizing the issue, what can be clearly understood from this study is that instead of being used as a tool for communication, language is used politically as a tool for socially classifying others. What is particularly interesting here is the emergence of the unequal social 'power' as characterized by different styles of language use. Ryan et al. (1982) shows an inextricable link between language variation and power :

In every society the differential power of particular social groups is reflected in language variation and attitudes towards those variations. Typically, the dominant group promotes its patterns of language use as the model required for social advancement; and use of a lower prestige language, dialect, or accent by minority group members *or people with socially stigmatized variety of English* reduces their opportunities for success in the society as a whole. (Emphasis added, p. 1)

In addition, social conventions or social pressures may influence the informants' judgments about language varieties and their speakers. Thus, it becomes clear that certain spoken varieties are believed to have greater prestige, or are aesthetically superior to others (Bezooijen, 2002; Giles et al., 1974; Hiraga, 2005; Jenkins, 2000; Wells, 1982). Kirkpatrick (2006) provides the clearest articulation of this phenomenon: because of the historical authority that certain varieties hold, people tend to argue for their intrinsic superiority as linguistic models over recently-developed varieties. This process of thought is theoretically known as the 'Imposed Norm or Context-driven Hypothesis' (Giles et al., 1974).

Learners' awareness of varieties of English

In this part, the informants were asked to indicate the speaker's country of origin and provide reasons for their answers. We examined the informants' recognition/identification of accent variations, differentiation of native and nonnative accents and investigated patterns of correct identification of the six accents. Findings, obtained from the accent recognition test, were divided into two main sections:

first, the informants' recognition of accents; and second, the recognition patterns of the informants who correctly identified the speaker's provenance.

The number of correct and incorrect identification of each speaker's country of origin was analyzed so as to examine whether the informants were aware of varieties of English. The results are detailed in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Correct and incorrect identification of the speakers' country of origin

Speaker	Correct identification	Incorrect identification
ThE	26 (50.00%)	26 (50.00%)
AmE	14 (26.92%)	38 (73.08%)
BrE	14 (26.92%)	38 (73.08%)
JpE	9 (17.30%)	43 (82.70%)
FiE	7 (13.46%)	45 (86.54%)
InE	7 (13.46%)	45 (86.54%)

The data shows that the informants had difficulty identifying the six accents since none of the correct recognition rates for speakers exceeded 50%. The most correctly identified accent was, of course, the Thai English in which 26 out of 52 informants (50%) were able to accurately identify it. This finding was somewhat surprising since it was expected that the correct recognition rate of ThE should have been even higher than this. This finding did not seem to be consistent with the related literature on accent recognition (e.g., McKenzie, 2006; Scales et al.,

2005). In the study by McKenzie (2006), whose subjects were Japanese college students, there was a more than 90% correct identification of Japanese English. Correspondingly, Scales et al. (2005) discovered that almost all of the Chinese respondents were capable of recognizing the Chinese English accent. A possible explanation for the somewhat low recognition rate of the ThE speaker is that there is so little spoken English in the everyday life of Thais, including in the English classroom, where teaching remains mostly non-communicative and continues to consist for the most part of explaining English grammar in Thai and writing columns of new words with their Thai equivalent, which the students dutifully and silently copy and memorize.

Considering the recognition patterns of the ThE speaker, the informants' comments provided for this speaker were analyzed. It was found that a relatively large proportion of the informants, who made a correct guess, commented exclusively upon the speaker's specific features of pronunciation (e.g., clarity of speech and L1 interference). These features were perceived as typical characteristics of Thai English accent. Many also focused on the lack of clarity in the speaker's pronunciation. As two of them said:

- *Having unclear and heavily accented English pronunciation, very bad English.*
- *Like a typical Thai speaking in English, her pronunciation is not clear.*

Some informants brought certain phonological aspects into focus. They seemed to be aware of phonemic variations between Thai and English in both the segmental and suprasegmental levels. For example, in the segmental level,

they remarked that specific English phones which do not exist in the Thai phonological system or differ from the Thai equivalents with regards to distribution of sounds seem to be a problem for Thai speakers in general. Moving away from the observed segmental features of the speaker's pronunciation, on the suprasegmental level, the speaker's stress, pitch and intonation were also recognized. They seemed to be aware that the Thai speaker always pronounces every word with strong form (every word is pronounced with stress) and realize the speaker's tonal language. A few arguments given below illustrate these points:

- *She cannot pronounce the sounds /ʒ, v, θ/ accurately like a native speaker.*
- *She speaks slowly and tends to unnecessarily stress every single word.*
- *Her speech is monotonous which is typical of Thai people speaking in English; that is, pitch movement is often absent in the utterance.*
- *She has a problem in pronouncing the sounds /b/ and /t/ especially when they occur in the final position of a word.*

The next most successfully identified accents were AmE and BrE with the equal percentages of 26.92. Contrary to expectation, these two inner-circle varieties were somewhat poorly identified even though there appears to be a prevalence of American and British English in media and in learning materials (e.g., movies, music or classroom listening audios) in Thailand. A possible explanation for the comparatively low rates of recognition of these two varieties is that the informants might not have sufficient contrastive phonological knowledge of American and British English. Consequently, they were not

aware of the phonological distinctions between these two accents.

When the informants' comments provided for the guess of the BrE and AmE speaker's provenance were analyzed, it was found that the relatively high proportion of them tended to associate the speaker's voice with "standardness", "correctness", "clarity", "naturalness" and "fluency." As many of the informants claimed:

For the BrE speaker

- *She has standard and clear pronunciation, like a British.*
- *Good and correct pronunciation! She has the Queen's English accent-like pronunciation.*

For the AmE speaker

- *She speaks good and beautiful English.*
- *I guess she could be from America because her English sounds natural and indistinguishable from a native speaker.*
- *Her English is better than the previous speaker, and it seems like she is speaking standard American English.*

Some phonological features commonly recognized as typical of American English and British English were also observed by some informants. For example, one informant, who made the correct guess of the AmE speaker's provenance, pointed out that words such as "to" and "of" are unstressed or toneless, while the others observed the pronunciation difference of the vowel "a" between British and American English and seemed to realize that British English in the speech sample is a non-rhotic accent which does not allow for phoneme /r/ to be pronounced before consonants.

Below are their arguments illustrating this justification:

For the BrE speaker

- *Normally, English speakers do not pronounce /r/ as in the word “deserted”.*

For the AmE speaker

- *There is the use of weak form in such the words as “to” and “of”.*
- *The word ‘Sara’ is pronounced as [səra] in American English, but as [sara] in British English.*

Apart from the above recognition patterns associated with aesthetic values of speech (inherently or intrinsically pleasant qualities of sound) and distinctive BrE and AmE phonological features, to a lesser extent, familiarity with the accents was also mentioned. The informants’ comments below show that frequent exposure to the NS varieties either in the classroom or in everyday media is the contributing factor in the ability to recognize the provenance of these two inner-circle speakers. Three of them commented:

For the BrE speaker

- *I’m quite familiar with this accent.*
- *Her accent is like what I have often heard from several listening tapes in the classroom.*

For the AmE speaker

- *She is American. I often hear this kind of accent from everyday English news (CNN).*

After the first three accents analyzed above the next most successfully identified accents was JpE. The recognition

rate of the JpE speaker was as low as 17.30%. A relatively high proportion of the informants tended to generally comment on their familiarity with this accent. In fact, experience in hearing and conversing with Japanese native speakers seemed to be the major factor that made them familiar with this accent. As two of them commented:

- *I think her accent is similar to my previous English teacher who was from Japan.*
- *I used to hear Japanese people speaking English before, and their accent is very much similar to this speaker.*

Aside from the comments on speech familiarity, some informants negatively described the speaker's accent to be "unclear", "unsmooth" and "stiff". As two of them mentioned:

- *Her accent sounds a little stiff.*
- *Her accent is not quite clear and smooth. I have difficulty understanding what she is saying.*

The informants demonstrated considerable difficulty in identifying the FiE and InE accents. In addition, these two outer-circle Englishes were the most incorrectly identified varieties: The success rates stood equally at only 13.46%. This result was consistent with a plethora of related literature showing that peripheral accents were the most difficult to recognize. Probably, in consequence of less exposure to these peripheral types of English, the informants did not seem to have awareness of phonological variations of these varieties of English. For those who were able to recognize these speakers, their responses were exclusively based on negative descriptions of the speakers' pronunciation. Within

this number of informants, some generally remarked upon the “unnaturalness” or “incorrectness” of the speakers’ pronunciation.

For the FiE speaker

- *Her pronunciation is unnatural.*
- *I think she speaks English with incorrect accent, very much like most Filipino teachers.*

For the InE speaker

- *Strong accent. Difficulties with pronunciation.*

Just as those who judged the outer-circle accents negatively, so were these informants, but they tended to focus on distinctive features of the FiE and InE speaker’s pronunciation. Followings are typical statements representing their cognizance of noted features of Filipino and Indian English pronunciation. For example, *an absence of the aspiration of /p, t/* was observed in the FiE voice while the prominent unaspirated sound of phoneme /t/ the articulation of trill /r/ was observable/noticeable in the InE speaker’s speech.

For the FiE speaker

- *Wrong pronunciation! There is always an absence of the aspiration of /p, t/.*
- *She could be from the Philippines because she pronounces every word with the same length of sound.*

For the InE speaker

- *She seems unconfident, and her aspirated sound of /t/ is very salient.*
- *She speaks fair English but sometimes stresses some words in wrong positions.*

- *What a strange accent! The sound /r/ is pronounced in a trill manner, like typical Indian Malays.*

Overall, what do the findings of this section signify? We learned that the informants did not have sufficient awareness of varieties of English. Simply put, they had difficulty identifying varieties of English accent. The most successfully identified accent was ThE which half the informants were able to recognize. However, this finding is somewhat contrary to the researchers' expectation. It was expected that the success rate should have been greater than it actually was, based on the assumption that the informants, were familiar with the Thai variety of English. Thus, a more substantial number of informants should have been able to recognize their home accent. The informants' lack of awareness of linguistic diversity was also reflected in their inability to identify the other five varieties: BrE, AmE, JpE, InE and FiE. It was possible that the informants had less exposure to these varieties of English. To seek the informants' recognition patterns of the correct identification of the six speakers' country of origin, their responses were analyzed. The findings suggest that differences in the speakers' pronunciation or certain distinctive phonological features in the speakers' voices seemed to play a key role in the informants' degrees of recognition, which was reflected in their correct identification of the six speakers' country of origin. To a lesser extent, the informants' familiarity with certain varieties of English and beliefs about standardness-nonstandardness and correctness-incorrectness and perceptions of intelligibility-unintelligibility of certain varieties also clarified the informants' recognition patterns.

Additionally, the findings of the recognition patterns analysis also provide more insights for the findings discussed in the VGT section. When the informants' recognition patterns of the correctly identified varieties were looked at, discriminatory attitudes towards varieties of English emerged. That is to say, the informants seemed to provide positive or favorable reasons for their guessed inner-circle varieties. Contrastively, many stigmas (e.g., “non-standard”, “unclear”, “stiff”, etc.) were repeatedly provided for the guessed NNS voices. This leads to an argument that it is not always different phonological characteristics or actual speech that triggers different attitudes towards language variations. Instead, some speakers were evaluated and comprehended with reference to perceived geographical origin (Jenkins, 2007). In this case, listeners' perceived that the regional provenance of certain speakers could blind them to the degree of correctness or even the degree of naturalness of the specific speech.

Closing remarks and pedagogical suggestions

With the use of the VGT, the evaluation of the informants' attitudes towards the six speakers based on eight stereotypical attributes, reveals that the two mainstream inner-circle speakers, the AmE and BrE speakers, were judged more favorably than nonnative speakers, the FiE, InE, JpE and ThE speakers, in almost all of the attributes. In contrast, the InE speaker was always perceived most negatively in all attributes. This finding suggests that the informants were, to a certain extent, linguistically prejudiced since they tended to make judgment about people's attributes based on the ways they

speak. Given that these judgments were more likely to be a political matter than a linguistic matter—the way a language or language variety is viewed through the lens of discursively mediated socio-political and social-psychological actions (Pennycook, 1994), social conventions or social pressures, as explained by the Norm-driven Hypothesis, may play a key role in the informants' judgments on certain spoken varieties to be more prestigious and better than others.

Concerning the informants' awareness of varieties of English, the informants were asked to identify each speaker's provenance as well as provide reasons for their answer (guessed country of origin). The results show that the informants lacked awareness of varieties of English. The most successfully identified accent was ThE, followed by AmE, BrE, JpE, FiE and InE, respectively. To discover the informants' recognition patterns of the six speakers' provenance, their written justifications were analyzed. The findings suggest that differences in the speakers' phonological features, familiarity, beliefs and perceptions about the standardness-nonstandardness, correctness-incorrectness and intelligibility-unintelligibility of certain varieties seemed to be the major criteria in the informants' correct identification of varieties of English.

Based on the findings of the current study, pedagogical suggestions and implications, resting on “the fundamental principles of world Englishes paradigm” (Modiano, 2009: 209), and considered useful and necessary for all parties involved in ELT in the Thai context, are provided. Without awareness of varieties of English or world Englishes, it is possible that English learners may hold a monolithic view

of the world and may “devalue their own status” (Matsuda, 2003a, p. 722) as well as other nonnative speakers in international communication. This layer of thought is eminently shared in the current study: The learners, as measured by the VGT, seemed to downplay NNS varieties of English while exalting NS Englishes. Also reflected is the learners’ reasons provided for their guessed nationality of the six speakers as detailed in the accent recognition part. Learners who identified nationality of the stimulus provider to be nonnative tended to give negative comments or prejudiced judgments about the speaker’s pronunciation and/or accent and tended to perceive NNS accents as “wrong”, “poor”, “non-standard”, “bad” or “stiff.” These stigmas applied to NNS accents clearly reflect the informants’ lack of tolerance toward linguistic divergence. To prevent English learners from developing such prejudiced reactions to nonnative speakers or foreign accented speech, the learners should be exposed to an awareness-raising activity so that they can reflect on whether they hold prejudiced judgments about accented English. Additionally, this activity, as developed by Munro, Derwing and Sato (2006), may help the learners “understand the process through which stereotyped attitudes are instilled and reinforced” (p. 73). The implementation of this activity, according to Munro and his associates (2006), is based on the following three steps:

- (1) Collecting speech samples from various speech communities;
- (2) Presenting collected speech samples to learners who evaluate stimulus providers on pre-determined dimensions; and

- (3) Tallying the results of the evaluations, followed by in-class discussion of the task outcomes.

The current study has already covered the first two steps. The last step addressed above is known as a follow-up discussion based on the result which indicates the degree of stereotyped attitudes held by learners. Topics such as accent discrimination, the nature of native and nonnative English accents, the fact of accent variations and the notion of standard accents should be brought up in the discussion. Learners should, in the end, come to realize that foreign accent cannot be used as a benchmark to judge people's abilities. That is, they should be made aware that the way they speak is really part of their identity (Jenkins, 2007; Kenworthy, 1987; Norton, 1997; Widdowson, 1994). This awareness-raising activity may not only help train language learners to be democratically-minded in viewing nonnative varieties of English as equal in status to native varieties, but also broaden their perspectives on linguistic pluralism that is fueled by the globalization of English.

Adding to this, in Kirkpatrick's (2007a, p. 23) words: "If English in ... Asia is used primarily for communication between nonnative speakers of English, then the way those people speak English becomes more important than the way native speakers speak English." That is to say, language pedagogy has to be geared towards realistic and authentic profiles of English, as Kramsch and Sullivan (1996, p. 199) note: "Authentic native-speaker discourse in London or New York might be quite inappropriate for speakers of English in other parts of the world; what is authentic in one context might need to be made appropriate to another."

Likewise, drawing on the implication of the global status of English, Larsen-Freeman (2007) puts it:

As ever increasing numbers of people learn English around the world, it is not just “more of the same.” There is a new model. English is no longer being learned as a foreign language, in recognition of the hegemonic power of native English speakers. Instead, it can be taught in an empowering way—where students do not just learn..., nor do they simply emulate a model. Instead, they ... enact a dynamic system and put it to the purposes they wish. (p. 73)

Given this changing architecture of English, instead of adopting a native-speaker model to be unquestionably used in the Thai context of ELT and gearing students towards a western-centered worldview, we need to critically think of “how to adapt global trends to meet local needs and adjust to local conditions” (Larsen-Freeman, 2007, p. 73) and consider the possibility of incorporating or using regional varieties of English in the classroom to broaden language learners’ linguistic capacity as well as strengthen their internationally-minded perspectives on the role of English in the world.

Concerning pedagogical practices, Matsuda (2003a) notes that one way to expose students to varieties of English is to bring in speakers from all the concentric circles. For example, ELT policy makers should begin recruiting educated nonnative speaking teachers. Alternatively, international visitors and residents in community could also be invited in class to raise students’ awareness of the existence of varieties of English. If face-to-face interactions cannot be

made possible, teaching world Englishes via the Internet is the one thing that teachers could do to overcome such practical difficulties (see also Baik & Shim, 2002). Matsuda goes on to argue that such interactions not only create opportunities for students to be involved in world Englishes community but also educate them that “being an effective EIL user does not require being an NS” (Matsuda, 2003a, p. 723). It is likeable to say that in the EIL paradigm, ideal English classes “could serve as a starting point for international understanding. Students can be exposed to cultures different from their own through learning English...” (Matsuda, 2003b, p. 436).

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Appendix 1. VGT questionnaire

Instruction: Listen to the recording and circle the number that indicates your impression of the speaker (1 means not at all, 7 means very much). Then guess each speaker's country of origin and provide reasons of the guess.

Speaker 1

Not generous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very generous
Not smart	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very smart
Incompetent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very competent
Uneducated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very educated
Unimpressive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very impressive
Not gentle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very gentle
Unconfident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very confident
Not friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very friendly

Guess the speaker's country of origin.....

Give reasons for your justification.....

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