

ATTITUDES TOWARDS ACCENTED SPEECH:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS
OF AMERICAN ENGLISH

By

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This study investigated the attitudes of Native and Non-Native Speakers towards non-native accents of English. The providers of the non-native accents were 8 second language speakers of English of Eastern European, Latino, South-East Asian and Arabic first languages, including 4 males and 4 females. The participants were 32 Native Speakers of General American English and 39 Non-Native Speakers from East and South-East Asia.

The instrument included bi-polar adjective scales, divided into two main factors, Manner of Speaking and The Speaker, as well as Likert scale and open-ended questions about the importance of pronunciation and structure in the acquisition of a second language. The data were analyzed through univariate and multivariate analyses of variance and content analyses.

The results revealed quantitative and qualitative differences between the Native Speakers and the Non-Native Speakers in their attitudes to and perceptions of non-native accents of English. The Non-Native Speakers showed a significantly more positive attitude to the non-native accents of English, as well as a high awareness of the difficulties involved in acquiring a non-native accent. The effect of Gender was slightly significant, as the Female subjects revealed a more positive attitude to four of the eight

non-native x gender accents. There were also interesting Nationality and Gender related differences regarding the most liked and the least liked individual accents. The findings are interpreted in view of the familiarity principle in light of language typology, second language learning experience, gender and ethnic empathy. Factors of socio-political nature were associated with negative familiarity, mainly observed on the Latino and Arab Male accents.

DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother
Cherifa Ben Braham.

“And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth,
and the variations in your languages and your colours:
verily in that are signs for those who know”.

The Noble Qur’an
(*Ar-Room* ~ The Romans – Chapter 30, Verse 22)

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The issue of accents has been an area of discussion and research in several branches of linguistics, such as phonetics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, second language acquisition and language teaching. Consequently, each sub-field has defined accent in a slightly different way to match its own theoretical framework and focus of research interest.

Since this paper draws ideas from almost all existing perspectives on accent, I consider it important to elaborate on the meanings of accent in the context of each of the above-mentioned branches of linguistics and identify the aspects that were put together to serve as the theoretical framework of reference for this study.

Therefore, in the following section I will provide an illustration of how the concept of accent has been defined in light of the aforementioned areas of research. Following this, I will delimit my main research focus by progressively outlining the main area of accented speech which I intend to examine.

1.1 Definitions of Accent

In this section, I will point to the interdisciplinarity of accented speech by showing how the investigation of accents can range over a multitude of different disciplines of interest. In this respect, I will look at how an accent is defined in some core areas of linguistics such as phonetics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, second language acquisition and language teaching.

1.1.1 General Definition

In light of the definition of the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary¹, an accent is a “way of speaking typical of a particular group of people and especially of the natives or residents of a region”. Accordingly, an accent is the outward manifestation of a person’s way of speaking and is a noticeable feature of speech. This feature can thus be a crucial factor in determining the similarities and differences in speech between speakers based on whether they share the same language or not. Although an accent can be used as a fairly reliable predictor of a speaker’s origin (language or nationality) it can also carry pejorative stereotypes. Commenting on this particular issue, Abercrombie (1956) argues that:

Accent (...) is a word which, in its popular use, carries a stigma: speaking *without* an accent is considered preferable to speaking *with* an accent (...). The popular, pejorative, use of the word begs an important question by its assumption that an accent is something which is added to, or in some other way distorts, an accepted norm. (p. 42)

In this regard, English by virtue of the considerable number of speakers it has in the world², but also due to the rich variety of its dialects, (American, British, Australian, Canadian, Cockney, Yorkshire, Indian, Pidgin etc.) is more likely to be subjected to accented speech than any other language. This fact has served as one of the underlying motivations for the present study, and I will return to it later and discuss it in more detail.

¹ This source offers 6 different entries for the term ‘accent’, I have selected the definition which best fits my research interest.

² According to Crystal (1995), English is spoken as a native language by over 377 million people around the world.

1.1.2 Accent in the Context of Phonetics

Phonetics, the sub-area of linguistics that studies the sounds of speech, defines an accent as a specific pronunciation which is determined by the phonetic habits of the speaker's native language carried over to his or her use of another language (O'Grady, Archibald, Aronoff, Rees-Miller, 2005). This field of linguistics focuses on the differences between languages in terms of phonetic and phonological features rather than in terms of grammar or lexis. Rogers (2000) emphasizes this specific notion by stating that the term accent is used to refer solely to phonetic aspects of a dialect. In this light, an accent is shaped by the phonetic ability to produce certain sounds and features and/or the inability to produce certain sounds due to the fact that they are not present in the speakers' native language phonetic inventory.

1.1.3 Sociolinguistics

While phonetics views accent from a narrow perspective, focusing on the articulation of specific similarities and differences, sociolinguistics examines accent in view of variations on all levels of language, phonetic, lexical and grammatical, in the context of diverse social settings. In effect, sociolinguistics perceives accents as a badge of social identity. According to Becker (1995) "An accent is the part of a person's language that serves to identify the speaker's regional origin or national/ethnic identity no matter what language the person is speaking" (p. 37).

Thus, accents in the context of sociolinguistics define people and also act as a means of showing their belonging to a particular speech community. However, it is

important to note that in the context of sociolinguistics a distinction is made between accents and dialects.

In effect, sociolinguistic studies have emphasized the fact that accents are not always tantamount to dialects. Gill (1994) identifies the distinction between accents and dialects as follows:

Although dialects and accents are often used as synonyms, the former traditionally refers to regional variations in language and the latter refers to differences among national groups. (...) For example, the differences in sound between a Bostonian and Iowan would be a matter of dialect while the differences between a New Zealander and an American would be a matter of accent. (p. 348)

Following the same line of thought, Giles (1970) quoted in Hiraga (2005) provides a more detailed differentiation between accent and dialect by pointing out that:

The term 'dialect' basically implies variations from the standard code at most levels of linguistic analysis, whereas 'accent' merely implies a manner of pronunciation with grammatical, syntactical, morphological and lexical levels being regarded as more or less commensurate with the standard. (p. 291)

This distinction is crucial both in the field of sociolinguistics, but also in the context of this study whose central aim is not to examine dialectal differences, but to investigate attitudes towards the accents of non-native speakers of English.

Commenting on the perception of accented speech from a sociolinguistic standpoint, Cargile (2000) argues that accents are usually classified into two main categories, as

either standard or nonstandard. In this light, standard accents are usually associated with higher status, power and the media; whereas nonstandard accents are usually associated with lower levels of socioeconomic success.

1.1.4 Psycholinguistics

Whether a person speaks with an accent, and how this person perceives himself or herself, will create a particular image for both native and non-native speakers. Some accents, for instance, are believed to be more attractive than others, and in this sense these judgments of value affect our way of perceiving people. Several studies, which investigated the role of stereotypes in shaping attitudes towards accented speech (Elayan, 2001; Lippi-Green, 1997), clearly revealed that stereotypes are usually transmitted in the media. This idea is also at the heart of Alford and Strother's (1990): Stereotypes may sometimes be formed by individuals as a result of direct experience with members of the stereotyped groups. For the most part, however, such impressions are learned by word of mouth or from books or films (p. 481).

Such stereotypical associations, which have been the focus of scientific research, usually characterize people's psychological perceptions of accented speech as deviant and flawed (Giles & Coupland, 1991; Giles & Powesland, 1975). In effect as stated by Dixon and Mahoney (2004), speakers with standard accents are "rated as more intelligent, competent, and fluent than speakers with nonstandard accents" (p.64).

People thus categorize varieties of speech and types of accents according to a particular hierarchy which reflects their respective impressions of the speakers. This specific matter is addressed by Podberesky, Deluty and Feldstein (1990) who state that:

Speech cues are sometimes used by listeners to make inferences regarding an individual's personal characteristics (e.g., age, gender, intelligence), social group membership (e.g., regional, ethnic, occupational), and psychological state (e.g., need for social approval, anxiety, depression) (pp. 53-54).

The investigation of the role of psychological factors in people's judgments of accented speech is hence very interesting and worthy of investigation. Yet, this specific problem has not been sufficiently explored, one of the reasons being that a better understanding involves complex issues related to human psychology which presents a challenge to researchers by its unrevealed and concealed mysteries.

1.1.5 Second Language Acquisition

Second Language Acquisition, (SLA hereafter) has offered an additional characterization of accented speech and more specifically foreign accents. Southwood and Fledge (1999) define a foreign accent as: "Non-pathological speech produced by second language learners that differs in partially systematic ways from the speech characteristics of native speakers of a given dialect" (p. 335).

In this respect, second language research on accent can focus on two broad questions of interest; a) How are different non-native accents of a particular language perceived by native speakers of the same language? and b) How do non-native

speakers of a second language perceive the accents of other non-native groups of speakers? To a certain degree, both of these aspects have been included in the design of the present study, and they will be elaborated on later in the presentation of the methodology, results and conclusions.

1.1.6 Language Teaching and Perceptions of Accented Speech

The perceptions of accents within an ESL perspective have been vastly examined in the literature (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, and Goodwin, 1996; Derwing, Munro and Wiebe, 1997a, b; Varonis and Gass, 1982) and can be broadly categorized in two areas of interest, from the perspective of the teacher and of the learner. A teacher's role usually consists of improving the learners' pronunciation skills³ through the use of various methodological techniques in order to ameliorate non-native speakers' pronunciation skills (Jones, 1997). As regards the perspective of learners on the issue of accented speech, it mainly revolves around how learners view or judge their performance. In effect, second language learners usually have negative perceptions of their speech when they are in the process of learning the target language. This is mainly due to the fact that they are comparing their performance to the accent-less model of native speakers as outlined in Derwing (2003). In this light, learners' negative attitudes towards their accents may constitute an impediment in the early stages of ESL acquisition.

So far, I have attempted to provide a multidimensional definition of accent in the context of several interdisciplinary areas of linguistics and applied linguistics.

³ This notion can refer to prosodic (grammar, sentence structure), segmental (phonetic pronunciation of vowels and consonants) and supra-segmental (pitch, stress, intonation) aspects of language pronunciation.

However, the abovementioned topics of linguistic research, despite being very worthy of investigation are yet peripheral to the primary interest of this study. Thus, in the following section, I will describe the specific type of accented speech which this research offers to examine known as non-native accents and how it is perceived by both native and non-native speakers.

1.2 Investigating Non-Native Accented Speech

What this study seeks to achieve is not an examination of accents as a whole, but it aims at investigating attitudes to non-native accents of English. According to the Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics (1992), a non-native accent is characterized as: “The cumulative auditory effect of those features of pronunciation which identify where a person is from, regionally or socially” (p.2). In this sense, a non-native accent is a perceivable entity which is markedly differentiated from the native speaker’s way of speaking. It should be mentioned that the variety of English which will be examined in this research is General American English (GAE hereafter), and I will thus investigate the accented speech of non-native speakers of GAE. It is important to note, however, that GAE serves merely as a comparison entity. It is not the purpose of this study to establish it as a standard towards which non-native speakers should conform.

More precisely, this study aimed to investigate and compare the attitudes of native and non-native speakers of GAE to accented American English. For this purpose, the construct *linguistic attitudes* has been operationalized in view of the

definition provided in the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1992), according to which:

The attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language (p. 198)

In addition to investigating native and non-native attitudes towards non-native accented speech, another objective of this research was to examine whether gender had a significant effect on the participants' judgments of non-native accents. This study thus follows a substantial tradition of research which has been performed within the area of accented speech. However, it also aimed to add some new dimensions in view of the research methodology, the research instrument and the variables of interest and control.

1.3 Language Typology

Another interesting dimension that this study offers is an examination of the attitudes towards non-native accents of GAE in view of language typology. That is, this research examines how attitudes towards accented speech can be explained by the linguistic closeness between the first languages of the participants and those of the stimulus providers.

As shown from the above-mentioned depiction of accented speech, this specific area of research has a wide array of perspectives and can be accessed from a diversity of fields. In the next chapter, I will review some of the major studies that have been done in the area of accents, and more specifically focus on those that have examined attitudes towards non-native accents.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter presents a summary of related research, which has been organised in three subcategories: 1) Studies that have investigated attitudes to and perceptions of non-native accents of English; 2) Studies that have examined attitudes to and perceptions of non-native accents of languages other than English; 3) Studies that have looked at non-native accents in view of pedagogical issues pertaining to undergraduate teaching assistants (TAs) in the US context and second language learners of English overall. Therefore, the presentation of the literature review follows the logic of the three categories described above.

2.1 Attitudes towards the accented speech of non-native speakers of English

Studies that have examined attitudes to accented English have mainly investigated the effects of gender and status (mostly related to education, work and socioeconomic level) or solidarity (conveyed by traits such as friendliness, social attractiveness or sense of humour), on the perceptions of accented speech by native and non-native speakers of English. Of these, studies that included native speaker subjects were more numerous than studies that included non-native speaker subjects.

2.1.1 Native Speakers' Attitudes towards Accented English

An early quantitative study by Brennan and Brennan (1981) examined both Anglo-American and Mexican-American attitudes towards Mexican accented English

speech⁴. The primary purpose of this research was to investigate whether the degree of accent in the English of Mexican American speakers significantly affected the judgement of both Anglo-American and Mexican-American raters. A focal issue of this study was to understand how the variables of status and solidarity influenced Anglo-American and Mexican-American raters' judgements. Following an established tradition of studies on attitudes to accents, this research adopted an attitudinal scale of status and solidarity adjectives⁵.

Eighty participants (24M, 56F) who resided in the same Midwestern area of the U.S. were selected to take part in the study. They were from the same senior high school and had an average age of 16. Subjects were divided into 2 groups, composed of 43 subjects of Mexican origin (14M, 29F) and 37 white of non-Hispanic origin (10M, 27F). The main statistical procedure used to inter-correlate among the status and solidarity adjectives was a factor analysis. Other statistical procedures included Scheffé multiple range tests, Kendal's coefficient of concordance and ANOVA.

The results of this experiment revealed that higher status was allocated to speakers with lower degrees of accented speech in comparison to speakers with higher degrees of accentedness. This investigation also revealed an interesting finding, previously outlined by Ryan, Carranza and Moffie (1977), that there was a high correlation between the respondents' ratings of accentedness and the ratings of the speakers' possible occupation. It was also shown that in line with studies performed by Ryan and Carranza (1977) evaluations of accents played a crucial role in the judges' attribution of status. However, accentedness did not have a significant

⁴ The stimulus providers used in this study were bilingual English-Spanish Native American speakers.

⁵ Status – educated-uneducated/wealthy-poor/successful-unsuccessful/intelligent-unintelligent
Solidarity – good-bad/friendly-unfriendly/kind-cruel.

impact on solidarity since while the rate of accented speech increased, judgements of solidarity by both Anglo and Mexican-American respondents remained equal.

In a more recent quantitative research, Podberesky, Deluty and Feldstein (1990), focused on the issue of attitudes of Native speakers of American English to both native and non-native varieties of English. This research, which addressed the question of whether accented speech significantly affected native speakers' (NSs hereafter) judgements of native and non-native speakers' (NNSs henceforth) performance, also examined the effects of the gender of the speaker and of the hearer.

The initial hypothesis postulated that speakers having Spanish-accented English would be assigned less positive traits than speakers with oriental-accented English. Besides, it was also hypothesized that both groups of non-native accented speakers would have less positive traits ascribed to them in comparison with the respondents speaking with unaccented English.

The respondents in this study were 134 American college students (60M, 74F) with a mean of age of 19.50. They were divided into four separate groups consisting of 104 non-Hispanic Caucasians, 14 African Americans, 12 Asian Americans, and 4 Hispanics. The analysis investigated three independent variables (type of speech, gender of the speaker and gender of the judge) and three dependent variables (competence, personal integrity and social attractiveness).

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) revealed that the initial hypothesis stating that the accented speech of NNSs would be associated with negative traits was disconfirmed. Thus, results of this investigation contradict findings from previous research which have consistently shown that accented speech

was rated more negatively than unaccented speech. Additionally, the respective gender of the speaker and of the judges was shown to have a significant effect on the evaluation of accentedness. More specifically, while male stimulus providers received lower evaluations on the competence and social attractiveness scales than female, male respondents were more positive than female respondents in their judgements of both male and female speakers.

In a quantitative research, Johnson and Frederick (1994) analyzed American native speakers' attitudes towards non-native speech with regard to both grammatical errors and more interestingly phonetic or pronunciation errors. The fundamental rationale behind this study was to elicit native speakers' attitudes with respect to two key variables, namely the first language of the speakers and error type. The central research question asked whether the respective variables of first language of the speakers and error types would significantly affect American native speakers' judgements of non-native speech.

In order to assess this research question, four informants were chosen to provide a stimulus audio file. Each informant selected for this investigation provided two speech samples in their native languages⁶, respectively Arabic, German and Spanish. This examination also included a supplementary control stimulus provider who was a native speaker of American English. The first sample consisted of speech with only one grammatical error while the second included only one phonetic error. As regards the group of respondents, they were 124 college freshmen from the Florida State University.

⁶ All the informants selected for this research were males.

The statistical procedures involved a repeated-measures ANOVA and a Scheffé post-hoc analysis. The results showed that pronunciation errors were assigned less positive ratings than grammatical errors. This finding suggested that although grammatical errors were more critical to the understanding of the speech sample, they were less negatively judged than pronunciation errors which nonetheless did not obstruct or hinder the understanding of the speech. This suggests that American native speakers' negative perceptions of non-native speech pertains to the accentedness of the speaker rather than the grammatical accuracy of his/her speech. These findings also revealed that while the Spanish and German accents were rated equally, native speakers of American English assigned more negative judgements to the informant with an Arab-accented speech.

A quantitative study by Cargile and Giles (1997) examined the influence of non-native speakers' accent and fluency of speech on American native speakers' reported affective state/mood. The predictions of this study were that the degree of national identity of the raters would vary according to the informants' accent and message, but also that the measured degree of national (American) identity would increase with exposure to non-standard accented voices in comparison to exposure to American unaccented speech. Additionally, it was hypothesized that respondents having strong national identity would rate accented speech as less attractive (and potentially as having lower rates on status and dynamism related traits) than respondents with a less salient national identity, especially in cases where the message was critical of Americans.

This research took place in a major western American University and included 240 non-Asian American undergraduates of whom 222 reported their background as Anglo; while 18 were neither Anglo nor Asian American. One of the informants was a perfectly bilingual (Japanese/English) Japanese male who modified his accent, thereby following the matched-guise technique procedure⁷.

The statistical procedures used in this investigation involved both univariate and multivariate analyses and revealed that respondents reacted more positively to unaccented speech than to varying degrees of Japanese-accented speech. It was also shown that the aggressive message delivered in American unaccented speech triggered more negative perceptions than the non-aggressive message conveyed with the same accent. Interestingly, when assessing the different Japanese-accented speeches, the study revealed that the aggressive and non-aggressive messages were judged equally thus revealing no significant differences. Thus, as pointed out by the authors, the positive attitudes seemed to be triggered not so much by the message, but by the accent of the speaker. That is, the Japanese accented delivery was deemed to generate negative attitudes regardless of the tone of the message.

A follow-up quantitative research by Cargile and Giles (1998) can also be cited as one of the few studies that have explored American native speakers' attitudes to Japanese-accented varieties of English. This investigation of native attitudes to varying degrees of non-native accents had two interesting research hypotheses. First, the authors postulated that when comparing Japanese-accented speech with American native speech, the more the non-native informant's speech was accented, the more

⁷ This technique developed by Lambert (1960) involves the same speaker providing all stimuli by modifying his own accent.

negatively he would be rated by native speakers of American English. Specifically, respondents would assign negative ratings to the accented speech on attractiveness-related traits, but nonetheless they would still perceive the accented informant as having high ratings on status-related traits. The second hypothesis that was examined in this research related to the quality of the message conveyed by the informant. In this respect, the authors argued that informants who delivered an aggressive message would be judged more negatively on status and attractiveness traits, but more positively with respect to traits of dynamism than speakers whose message was not aggressive.

While this study was very interesting in exploring native speakers' attitudes to non-native accents, it also carried another fundamental dimension as it provided an examination of how Native speakers of American English judge the speech of International Teaching Assistants. Since respondents were instructed that the sample was taken from a lecture given by a teaching assistant, this investigation could as well be classified in a category of studies related to native speakers' attitudes to non-native teaching assistants' accents.

In order to test the validity of these hypotheses, a matched-guise technique was used with one Japanese male informant providing four different accents. The respondents were 240 non-Asian American undergraduate students at a major California university, 222 of whom were Anglo-Americans. There were two main independent variables in this investigation, message content (aggressive, non-aggressive) and speaker's accent fluency (standard American, moderate Japanese,

heavy Japanese and heavy/disfluent Japanese). There were three dependent variables, attractiveness, status, and dynamism.

The MANOVA results showed that Japanese moderately-accented speech was rated equally with accent-less speech on status-related traits, but was negatively perceived on attractiveness traits. In the same light, the increasing rate of accented speech was revealed to cause more negative judgments of status and attractiveness. Finally, results pertaining to the quality of the delivered message suggested that when compared to the non-aggressive message, the aggressive message resulted in more negative ratings of attractiveness, but surprisingly it was rated more positively on the dynamism-related traits.

A quantitative study by Bresnahan, Ohashi, Nebashi, Liu, and Shearman (2002) investigated whether differences in attitude and affective responses toward accented English could be explained by variation in the speaker role identity (friend vs. teacher) and the degree of intelligibility of the foreign accent. An interesting contribution of this research was to examine how the strength of the subjects' ethnic identities affected their attitudes toward accented speech. The subjects were 310 American native speakers (160F, 150M); among them 80% whites, 11% blacks and 9% Asian, Hispanic, or Jewish. Three main independent variables were investigated, including the three accent conditions (American English, intelligible foreign accent and unintelligible foreign accent), the two role identities (friend vs. teaching assistant) and two ethnic identities (American, foreign). The dependent variables were two, attitude and affective responses.

Following a MANOVA, it was revealed that despite the marked preference for American English, attitudes as well as affective responses were more positive toward intelligible foreign accent than to unintelligible foreign accent. With respect to the two role identities, it was shown that on the two dependent variables, friends were more positively rated than teaching assistants regardless of accent. The ethnic identity variable suggested that participants who were categorized as having a strong ethnic identity preferred American English, and respondents who exhibited weak ethnic identity were more lenient and accepting of accented speech.

Lindemann (2003) raised two key questions in her quantitative investigation of native speakers' reactions to Korean non-native speakers' accented English speech. More specifically, this research inquired whether Korean non-native speakers' accented English speech would significantly affect American Michiganders' perceptions and attitudes. In addition to this, an essential aspect of this study was to determine if American native speakers were able to predict the ethnicity of the speakers based solely on their accented speech.

The stimulus providers were two native speakers of a North Midwestern variety of American English as well as two non-native speakers of English with Korean as their first language. Alongside, two distracter stimulus providers were added, namely a British female and a non-Midwestern American male. The participants were 39 undergraduate native speakers of English who were all first year students at the University of Michigan. The variables investigated were grouped into 2 broad categories of status and solidarity, and a free-answer questionnaire aimed also at examining the variable of ethnicity of the speaker.

The statistical procedure used was a one-way ANOVA, and it revealed that while Korean speakers were perceived as out-group, the informant native speakers were rated as in-group and dominant. More to the point, Koreans were rated low on status traits and this very finding clearly confirmed the conclusions of previous studies (Ryan, Giles and Sebastian, 1982) which have shown that higher status scores were usually assigned to either the dominant group or the in-group. The ethnicity variable, however, suggested that the raters were not successful in their identification of the speakers as Koreans. In fact, for most of the cases the speakers were identified more frequently as Chinese and even more surprisingly as Indians. This, as interpreted by the authors, could partly be explained by the fact that American native subjects ordered the speakers into salient and stigmatized groups (Chinese, Indian, Japanese...), because they perceived these non-native accents as an ethnically undifferentiated category.

Young (2003) examined the attitudes of English native speakers learning Spanish towards Spanish-accented English. The author addressed the question whether the stimulus provider's gender and the speaker's voice quality⁸ could significantly affect respondents' judgements. Additionally, Young investigated whether participation in a bilingual (English/Spanish) education program could influence students' attitudes towards different accents, and whether exposure to Spanish language and accents could help to develop a positive attitude toward the Hispanic community.

The stimulus providers selected for this investigation were three bilingual (English/Spanish) female speakers. The respondents were 23 (9M, 14F) students with

⁸ These variables are described in the literature as *paralinguistic features*.

a relatively homogenous background and with an age ranging between 18 and 21 years old. All respondents were native English speakers in the process of learning Spanish as a second language.

The findings revealed that both language choice and accent affected the linguistic attitudes of respondents. Besides, it was suggested by the author that respondents in this examination assigned higher scores to accents which they identified with, thus displaying an ethnocentric attitude to accented speech. Some interesting findings concerning the variable of gender of the stimulus provider showed that the non-native Spanish speaker with the lowest proficiency in English was surprisingly rated more favourably in English than the other stimulus providers by female participants. While this finding may have been due to paralinguistic factors (i.e. voice), it showed that proficiency was not the dominant factor when evaluating a non-native speaker of a given language.

Quantitative research by Niestas (2005), examined the problem of accent level and nationality in determining Anglo-Americans' attitudes towards Mexican and Mexican Americans. The postulated hypothesis stated that standard American English would be favoured over Mexico-born or heavily accented Mexican English speech. The stimulus providers involved a group of 8 speakers with varying degrees of accented English speech ranging from Standard English to mildly Spanish-accented English and strongly Spanish-accented English. The Anglo-American respondents⁹ were 102 college students (18 Males and 84 Females) with an age ranging between 18 and 52 years old (Mean age 23).

⁹ The title Anglo-American refers to Americans of European descent (e.g. Northern European, Irish, British, etc.)

This study focused on the examination of two central independent variables, degree of accentedness (Standard English, mildly Spanish-accented English, and strongly Spanish-accented English) and country of birth (US-born and Mexican-born). The central dependent variable was Anglo-Americans' attitudes to American accented speech with respect to status, solidarity and activity/potency. A peripheral independent variable, also investigated in this research, was Anglo-Americans' social distance in its effect on attitudes towards Mexicans and Mexican-Americans.

The statistical procedures used in this study were respectively three two-way ANOVAs to analyse the three subscales of status. The analyses indicated that the participants valued unaccented speech more positively than Spanish-accented speech and ascribed higher status to standard accents vis-à-vis accented speech. The effect of nationality revealed that Mexicans were assigned more negative ratings when speaking with a strong accent than with a mild one. The Mexican-American population showed the reverse pattern by rating strong accent higher than mild accented speech. The social distance factor showed that Anglo-Americans were more likely to have close ties with Mexican-American speakers than with Mexicans.

2.1.2 Non-Native Speakers' Attitudes towards Accented English

A quantitative study by Manzano (1997)¹⁰ examined the effects of native and non-native varieties of English on listening comprehension and attitudes. The author investigated how native speakers of Puerto Rican perceived professors with varying degrees of English-accented speech. The accents included in this research were

¹⁰ This research also belongs to a category of pedagogical studies since it involves judgements towards the accented speech of teachers of English.

Standard American English, US Southern, Puerto Rican and Greek. The central problem examined in the context of this investigation reflected on eliciting students' attitudes towards both native and non-native accents. Additionally, the effect of accented speech on students' comprehension of lectures was examined. In this light, a pertinent question raised by the author was whether students' comprehension of lectures was related to their attitudes to accents of English.

The stimulus providers included in this investigation were four female professors who provided the four degrees of accented English speech. There were 152 native Puerto Rican respondents (65M, 87F), all freshmen at the University of Puerto Rico, of whom 44 were 17 years old or less, 107 were between the ages of 18 and 23 and one subject was between 24 and 35.

The results revealed that with regard to the comprehensibility variable, all accents were equally rated. The highest-ranking accent on attractiveness, dynamism and superiority scales was Standard American, followed by Greek, Puerto Rican and U.S. Southern, respectively. The results of this examination indicated that Standard American was overwhelmingly preferred as the accent which conveyed the highest ratings, and which students wished to imitate the most. Thus, as suggested by the author Puerto Rican raters seemed to display a marked preference for professors having a standard American accent which would be explained by the American cultural influence (television, music etc.) exerted on Puerto Rican youth. According to the researcher, a potential explanation of why subjects preferred the Greek over the Puerto Rican accent could be that the latter had become highly stigmatized in comparison to the prestigious standard American accent.

A mixed study by Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck, and Smit (1997) analyzed Austrian's attitudes to varieties of English. This research, which primarily examined whether the variety of English spoken influenced subjects' judgements of accented speech, also analyzed how exposure to English in its native environment¹¹ significantly affected participants' judgements of different English accents.

The study took place in Austria in an academic setting and involved a pool of 5 university educated female stimulus providers between 30 and 40 years old, respectively native speakers of General American English, British English Received Pronunciation (RP), near British English RP¹², Austrian British English and Austrian American English. The participants were 132 students of English between 19 and 22 years of age, the majority of whom were L1 speakers of German. Interestingly 65% of the subjects intended to become English teachers in the future, thus having an interest in the language under investigation. The female to male ratio was of 7 to 1 (114F, 17M). Two independent variables were investigated, type of accent preferred by the raters (American English versus British English) and time spent in an English-speaking country (no visits, more than one month stays in Great Britain, more than one month stays in the United States, and a fourth category of more than one month stays in both Great Britain and the United States).

The findings clearly revealed that native speakers were rated higher than non-native speakers. More specifically, standard accents such as RP were rated the highest, whereas the non-standard variety and more specifically the Austrian British English was rated poorly. In addition, subjects who had experienced English language

¹¹ EFL vs. Learning English in English speaking countries

¹² This distinction between RP and near RP is justified by the authors in light of the big continuum of standard British speech.

exposure first hand in countries where English is spoken as a native language, showed fewer stereotypes towards the standard varieties and more situation-specific attitudes than learners who did not have the same type of exposure. These results supported previous findings (Chiba, Matsuura and Yamamoto, 1995; Forde, 1995) by revealing that Austrian EFL advanced learners consistently displayed negative attitudes towards their own accented non-native English. With respect to the native accents, the results indicated that participants had a marked overall preference for accents they were more familiar with. As outlined by the authors, these findings emphasized the importance of personal contact with the speech community of the target language in shaping learners' attitudes and reducing the negative stereotypes of the EFL learner.

In a quantitative study by Basu-Jenckes (1997), high school students' attitudes towards bilingual speakers were examined in the context of Micronesia. This investigation specifically aimed at analyzing students' evaluations of the respective English and Chamorro performance of bilingual speakers, thus involving attitudes towards not only native Chamorro speakers of English, but also native English speakers of Chamorro. In this respect, numerous research questions were addressed, some including the relationship between the perceptions of accented speech and three major independent variables, listener's social judgements, listener's ethnicity and gender of the speaker. An additional question asked whether there was a significant difference between the judgements of English speakers and Chamorro speakers, especially with respect to competence, attractiveness and integrity. The stimulus providers were six bilingual speakers of English and Chamorro with varying degrees of accentedness, both native speakers of English speaking Chamorro and native

speakers of Chamorro speaking English. The respondents, who were 100 high school students between 17 and 20 years old, were mostly Micronesians, but they also included Koreans and Filipinos. These participants were bilingual English-Chamorro speakers.

The analysis, using an ANOVA with repeated measures, showed that when judging speakers of Chamorro, raters attributed the highest scores to the accent of Chamorro speakers educated in the United States, followed by accents of Chamorro speakers educated in Micronesia. It was also revealed that accented English speech was negatively perceived when compared to the Chamorro speech of speakers educated in both the United States and Micronesia. The gender variable clearly indicated that female speakers were assigned more positive scores than males. Finally, this study demonstrated that gender and ethnicity were the variables which mostly affected attitudes towards accented speech.

In a quantitative study by Mugler (2002), non-native speakers' attitudes towards four different accents of English were investigated. The participants were ESL learners from Fiji and other Pacific nations. The two central research questions explored in this analysis examined whether the type of accented English (independent variable) significantly affected NNSs' perceptions, and also if variables such as age, status, power solidarity and competence could influence NNSs' judgements of these accents.

The stimulus providers consisted of male and female English speakers with four different native English accents (Australian, New Zealand, North American and British English). As regards the respondents, they included 156 students (96F, 56M)

representative of the Pacific area countries. According to their age, ranging from 19 to 47, they were distributed as follows, 70% (108) between 18 and 23 years old, 20.5% (32) between 24 and 35 years old and 10% (16) over 35 years old.

This study, although not involving tests of significance, offered to investigate a number of different variables of interest such as Gender of the Speakers as well as 22 other variables grouped into 4 dimensions of Status, Power, Solidarity and Competence.

The findings of this study revealed that on status, respondents rated highly the British English accent only. On the other hand, American English was shown to be one of the most easily recognizable accents. According to the authors, British English was perceived high in status mainly due to the fact that it was regarded as a prestige accent. There was also a suggestion that attitudes, cultural influence and exposure to the media could be gradually changing this tendency observed in the fact that American and Australian accents received somewhat positive attitudes by Pacific listeners. A close examination of the gender variable revealed that overall female speakers were rated the lowest on status related traits. However, it was also shown that American female speakers received the most positive judgements in solidarity, competence and power traits.

2.1.3 Native and Non-Native Speakers' Attitudes towards Accented English

A few studies have investigated both native and non-native speakers' attitudes towards accented English. One of these was a quantitative research by Alford and Strother (1990) which examined attitudes towards American regional varieties. The

central target of this research was to compare the reactions of native and non-native subjects to selected American English accents and to see whether there was a significant difference between these two groups in their judgements and perceptions of regional US varieties.

The respondents/listeners were 97 university students at the Florida Institute of Technology, divided into two distinct groups of 66 non-native advanced ESL learners and 31 native speakers. As regards the stimulus provider group, the authors selected a female and a male native speaker of each of the following respective accents: Southern (South Carolina), Northern (New York) and Midwestern¹³ (Illinois).

The results of an ANOVA with repeated measures revealed that while native speakers rated the Midwestern accent as the highest on status-related traits and the Southern accent as the highest on the solidarity scale, the non-native speakers rated both of these accents equally showing no overall hierarchy/preference in their judgement between these two accents. Interestingly, both native and non-native respondents rated the New York accent as very low on both status and solidarity related traits. As emphasized by the authors, this study points to the issue that perceptions of native and non-native speakers vis-à-vis accents may differ significantly, and that comparing the attitudes of these two groups may reveal interesting findings in future research.

¹³ The Midwestern accent is often reported in the literature under the title of *Network American* by virtue of the fact that it is the variety which has less accentedness and is usually the one used by broadcasters as a standard form in the same way as RP is used in the UK.

2.2 Attitudes towards the accented speech of non-native speakers of other languages

A second set of studies has investigated attitudes towards accents of languages other than English. These studies, focusing on languages such as Spanish, French and Russian, have explored the influence of age, gender, social distance, regionality, quality of speech and other variables on the attitudes towards accentedness.

A study by Gynan (1984) examined the attitudes of native speakers of Spanish towards both native varieties of Spanish and non-native speakers' accented speech. Although this investigation examined attitudes to accents of languages other than English, it could be cited among a teaching-oriented category of research literature in the sense that it included an empirical investigation of interlanguage attitudes. The stimulus providers in this survey involved 5 Spanish speakers both native and non-native, with varying degrees of accentedness and 162 respondents, native speakers of Spanish from several South American countries.

The main dependent variables which were investigated were language, affect and social distance. The statistical analyses involved an ANOVA which revealed that non-native learners of Spanish with a heavy accent received negative evaluations of their speech and they were deemed as less suitable for professional recruitment than more native-like speakers. The findings of this study also indicated that attitudes towards accented speech were not influenced by affective factors, but were mostly evaluative in nature, in the sense that they were significantly distinctive from attitudes towards the person speaking.

A quantitative study performed by Paltridge and Giles (1984) investigated attitudes towards regional accents of French. The interplay of independent variables

included regionality, age and sex and their influence on the perceptions of accented French as produced by native speakers of this language. A central hypothesis postulated by Paltridge and Giles was that the Parisian accent would be favoured to other accents. The authors also aimed to determine the factors that could explain the high prestige assigned to Parisian French and whether there was a fixed status hierarchy in people's perceptions of accents.

Two male stimulus providers between 21 and 23 years old were used for each respective accent in the study. The dependent variable included four accents, Parisian, Provençal, Breton and Alsatian, these were judged on 20 traits ranging from Trustworthiness to Pleasantness of Voice. The independent variables constituted the listener's regional membership (Paris, Provence, Brittany and Alsace); the listener's sex; and the listener's three age groups. The respondent group consisted of 244 subjects equally representing both sexes and divided into three age groups. The first group involved first year secondary school pupils, the second group included young adults, and the last group included retired people.

The MANOVA analyses revealed that as predicted by the initial hypotheses, the Parisian accented speech was rated higher than the other accents especially on competence related traits, and more specifically on the professional appeal dimension. The most negatively rated accent was shown to be Alsatian with particularly negative ratings on status and profession related traits. The age variable revealed that the oldest group rated all the accents equally without any hierarchical differentiation between the regional varieties.

A quantitative study by Schairer (1992) approached the issue of attitudes to accentedness from a segmental-based perspective and focused on the examination of phonetic and phonological analyses of speech. In her research Schairer addressed a central research question and investigated the impact of different accents of Spanish on native speakers' attitudes. She also asked whether there was a strong correlation between native speakers' attitudes towards non-native speakers' accents and the accuracy of the pronunciation of vowels vs. consonants.

This study which was performed in a centre for bilingual studies in Cuernavaca, Mexico, included 28 subjects, all native speakers of Spanish (12M, 16F), of whom 15 spoke English and 13 did not. The variables involved in this research were manifold, including comprehensibility, agreeableness, nativeness of accent, gender, English speaking vs. non-English speaking and teacher vs. non-teacher rater. The statistical analyses included a Spearman-Rho correlation and a Stepwise Regression in order to examine the relationship between native speakers' evaluations of comprehensibility and phonetic features of the speech samples.

Although this experiment focused more on phonetic aspects of accents in comparison to studies which have reported attitudinal and affective perceptions, it revealed interesting findings related to the gender of the respondents and whether they were teachers versus non-teachers. More specifically, it was shown that female respondents judged accents which conveyed low comprehensibility far more negatively than male raters. With regard to the teacher and non-teacher groups, teachers' judgements of accent comprehensibility were stricter.

A quantitative study by Mc Lendon (1999) investigated Russian native speakers' attitudes towards the accented speech of American non-native speakers of Russian with varying degrees of accentedness. An additional objective of this examination was to establish whether the attitudes of native speakers of Russian would significantly affect the language learning process of non native speakers. In this respect, this study could also be identified with a category of research which is more pedagogical in nature.

The primary research question addressed in this investigation explored whether native speakers of Russian would prefer grammatical accuracy over good pronunciation when judging non-native speakers. In addition, the author investigated whether native speakers of Russian would rate more positively non-native speakers with a literary style or non-native speakers using a colloquial speech. A third problem questioned whether factors such as age, gender, education, exposure to American media, contact with foreigners and place of residence (City: Moscow vs. Provincial City: Novosibirsk) affected attitudes towards non-native speakers' accents.

In order to investigate these research questions, four American speakers were selected as stimulus providers. All four of them were enrolled in Russian courses at the University of Texas at Austin and represented two groups of language proficiency. Two stimulus providers were classified as having a "good pronunciation"¹⁴ and two had a "weak pronunciation". As regards the respondents, they were 102 native speakers of Russians (44 males and 58 females) of whom 52 were from Moscow and 50 from Novosibirsk. The average age of these participants was 29.8 years, with 62 being 30 or less and 40 aged over thirty.

¹⁴ Pronunciation was defined on the basis of segmental, supra-segmental and oral discourse criteria.

The variables included in this investigation were manifold, but they were merely divided into two sets; 1) demographic variables including age, sex, city of residence, level of education, contact with foreigners and exposure to American media, and 2) 288 evaluation variables.

Following a t-test and an ANOVA with repeated measures, it was shown that while style of speech had no significant effect on the judgement of non-native speakers' accented speech, good pronunciation was assigned higher rates than weak pronunciation regardless of the level of grammar. As far as the gender variable was concerned, the findings revealed that female subjects assigned overall higher ratings than the male ones. Besides, this study indicated that the more respondents were exposed to American media, the more they were likely to make distinctions between good and weak pronunciation in their ratings of non-native speakers. These results suggested that when judging non-native speakers of Russian, native speakers were more critical of pronunciation than grammaticality, indicating that pronunciation was more liable to stigmatization than structural errors.

2.3 Attitudes towards accented speech in pedagogical contexts

Finally, a third set of studies has examined attitudes towards accented speech from a pedagogical perspective. Overall, the variables investigated were mostly related to comprehension of the lecturer/teacher and comprehensibility and intelligibility of the learner's speech. In this respect, these studies have examined attitudes towards accented speech from two different perspectives, specifically attitudes towards teachers and attitudes towards learners.

2.3.1 Attitudes towards the teacher/instructor

A quantitative study by Gill (1994) analyzed the attitudes of North American students towards native and non-native accents of their teachers. This research raised the question of whether the instructors' accents, respectively British, North American and Malaysian English, would significantly affect their students' perceptions.

Another fundamental issue which was examined in the context of this investigation was to determine whether there was a significant relationship between stereotypes and perceptions of teachers. Gill also addressed the problem of whether accents significantly affected students' listening comprehension. It was hypothesized that as the accents of the teachers became more dissimilar from the students' accents, students' perceptions of the teachers would accordingly become less favourable. In addition, it was also suggested that an increase in accentedness would negatively affect the subjects' listening comprehension. The study included 6 stimulus providers separated into three English accent levels, American, British and Malaysian with two speakers in each group. There were 90 Native American undergraduate respondents (39M, 51F).

Following a Cronbach Alpha Analysis and a MANOVA, the overall results indicated that students were more positive towards teachers with standard North American accents. The level of accentedness affected comprehension that is, the respondents remembered more information from North American teachers than from British or Malaysian ones. However, no significant differences were observed between the British and Malaysian accents. Stereotypes were also shown to play no role on either perception formation or comprehension. Overall, this study confirmed

the findings of previous research by showing that North American respondents were ethnocentric and ascribed higher or more positive attitudes to accents similar to their own.

Quantitative research by Boyd (2003) examined how non-native speakers with different first languages, involved in a teaching context, were judged by native speakers of Swedish. In particular, this investigation primarily aimed at measuring the attitudes of Swedish school principals, teacher trainers and pupils towards foreign-born teachers with regard to the instructors' language proficiency and suitability to teach in Swedish schools. The research questions addressed in this investigation evolved around the issue of whether factors such as teachers' language skills and professional aptitude could significantly influence the subjects' judgements of accentedness. It was also hypothesized that when exposed to the non-native accented speech of teachers, the respondents would have different attitudes regarding accents, pedagogical skills and professional aptitude.

In order to test the validity of these premises, foreign-born teachers from different L1 backgrounds were selected as stimulus providers. The experiment was performed twice, the first time including school principals and teacher trainers, and the second time including students from six different high schools in the Göteborg area. While the first group was entirely composed of native speakers of Swedish, the second group included also students who were non-native speakers. The stimulus tape, administered to both groups, represented a short clip of each teacher's classroom interaction and elicited respondents' answers to a set of different questions related to pedagogical skills, language proficiency and suitability to teach.

Following an ANOVA and a Fisher's PLSD post-hoc, it was revealed that high levels of accentedness in teachers' speech played a negative and discriminating role, excluding nonetheless qualified teachers from employment opportunities in Sweden. In this respect, a fundamental contribution of this study was to show that a teacher's accent reflected on how he/she was judged on his/her professional competence and suitability to teach. In other words, heavily accented non-native speech jeopardized teachers' suitability for recruitment.

2.3.2 Attitudes towards learners/students

A quantitative study by Munro and Derwing (1995) examined native Canadian English speakers' perceptions of ESL learners' non-native accents of English. This ESL study evolved around examining the impact of accentedness on intelligibility by investigating the factors which mostly affected intelligibility and comprehensibility. Two factors were hypothesized to account for the intelligibility/comprehensibility of non-native speakers' accent: 1) grammatical, (errors of structure and vocabulary) and 2) pronunciation errors. Overall, this investigation had teaching implications and aimed at improving non-native speakers' pronunciation skills.

The setting used for this experiment consisted of a formal classroom situation in Alberta, Canada and involved both speakers and listeners. The stimulus providers were 10 native speakers of Mandarin (5M, 5F) who were proficient in English as well as 2 native speakers of Canadian English (1M, 1F) who were used as a control group. The subjects included 18 native speakers of Canadian English.

The main variables which were investigated in this study were accent, intelligibility and perceived comprehensibility. The results showed that prosodic errors affected intelligibility more than phonetic errors. More interestingly, a fundamental finding of this investigation was that even heavily accented speech was rated highly on the intelligibility scale. This suggested that contrary to common beliefs, highly accented non-native speech may be well understood by native speakers of English. Yet, a follow up study (Munro and Derwing, 1995b) revealed that despite these findings, foreign accented speech requires nonetheless greater processing time than native speech.

A mixed study by Derwing (2003) examined ESL learners' perceptions of their own accents. More specifically, this research predominantly analyzed whether non-native ESL learners' perception of their pronunciation difficulties could affect their judgements about their own accented speech. The interests of this experiment were twofold as it both examined learners' assessment of their pronunciation problems, but also analyzed learners' perception of listeners' attitudes towards their accents. Additionally, Derwing investigated whether the relationship between accent and integration significantly affected ESL learners' judgements about accented English, and explored the impact of minority status (visible minority group vs. invisible minority group) on students' perceptions of their accented speech.

The survey, which was conducted in Edmonton in Alberta, Canada, involved 100 adult immigrants participating in an ESL program (64 F, 36 M) of whom 58% were visible minorities. The participants were from 19 different language

backgrounds at three intermediate levels of English, 30% low intermediate, 43% intermediate, 27% high intermediate.

Following a chi-square analysis, the results revealed that when interviewed on the perceptions of their own accents, adult ESL learners did not accurately identify the source of their pronunciation problems. Although the ESL learners did not generally state that they were discriminated against, they however, still considered their accent as an impediment for integration. As regards to whether they belonged to a visible or non-visible minority group, the participants who belonged to a visible minority were more likely to feel discriminated due to their accent than participants who belonged to a non-visible minority.

So far, this review of related literature has revealed that in investigating accented speech a substantial number of studies has been carried out in view of non-native accents of English. This fact is not surprising when we consider the large number of speakers English has in the world and its wide use in educational, scientific, political, and multimedia discourse. It is also important to mention that the majority of studies either included NS participants or NNS participants, but very few compared these two groups. Another emerging observation is related to the independent variable gender, which although considered by most of the studies discussed in this chapter, has rarely been examined in view of both the subject group and the stimulus-providers' group.

Additionally, a variety of studies have only included stimulus-providers from one gender (either male or female), but very rarely investigated both genders. Interestingly, the abovementioned studies most often used solely male accents to

investigate attitudes and this is indeed a tendency noticed in a plethora of studies. In fact, in most of the studies the investigation of gender was either concerned with the gender of the stimulus provider or the gender of the participants. In view of this fact, this study aims to include both male and female stimulus providers as well as both male and female subjects.

Another frequent limitation in the majority of reviewed studies was that they have included only one group of non-native speakers which delimits the scope of the investigations in relation to generalizing the findings to other non-native speaker groups. In order to expand on this aspect of accent-related research, the present study set it as its purpose to investigate 4 different non-native speaker groups.

Many studies, which have been examining linguistic attitudes, have been using Lambert's (1967) matched-guise technique (MGT)¹⁵. However, this procedure has different flaws and shortcomings. One of the problems of the MGT concerns the construct validity of the instrument; more specifically, it is difficult to say whether the use of one speaker modifying his/her accent could be considered a valid operationalization of different accents. In this respect, the present study has involved a data collection instrument that included stimulus providers from authentic non-native accents, also of similar age, level of proficiency in English and of both genders.

Finally, none of the previously reviewed studies examined accents in view of linguistic typology and more precisely how the common genetic closeness between the L1s of the participants (judges) and the L1s of the stimulus providers could affect their judgments towards non-native accents.

¹⁵ For a short rationale of the MGT see Hiraga (2005, p. 291).

Overall, the present study was conceived in view of the plethora of previous research designs and instruments and with a well informed intention to expand and contribute to the existing tradition and methods used to examine attitudes to accented speech. The next chapter will elaborate on each aspect of the methodology that guided this investigation.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present chapter describes the methodology of this study, which falls into the category of mixed designs since it involved both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analyses, with the quantitative part being the predominant one. More specifically, the present study can be defined as a quasi-experimental one of a retrospective cohort type since the subjects were selected on the basis of the independent variable Group which included two levels, native and non-native speakers of General American English.

3.1 Research Problems

The primary objective of this research was to investigate whether Native Speakers (NSs) and Non-Native Speakers (NNSs) of General American English have different perceptions of and attitudes to non-native accents of English. It also aimed to determine whether NSs and NNSs have different attitudes to Latino, Middle-Eastern, East European and South East Asian accents of GAE, each representing a salient minority in the US. In addition, the present research examined gender differences in view of participants' attitudes to the four non-native accents, and in view of the accents themselves. Finally, the study made an attempt to explain some of the observed differences by examining participants' views about the importance of pronunciation and structural accuracy in the acquisition of a second language.

3.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this investigation in the way it was designed and carried out. In view of their nature, the questions are organized in two sections, quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative Questions:

Question 1: a) Is there a significant difference between NSs and NNSs of American English in their overall attitudes to non-native accents of English?; b) Does gender significantly affect attitudes to non-native accents of English?; c) Is there a significant interaction between group (NSs and NNSs) and gender (Male vs. Female) in view of attitudes to non-native accents of English?

Question 2: a) Is there a significant difference between NSs and NNSs of American English in their attitudes to the following non-native-by-gender accents of American English?

- 1) Arab Male
- 2) Arab Female
- 3) Latino Male
- 4) Latino Female
- 5) East European Male
- 6) East European Female
- 7) South East Asian Male
- 8) South East Asian Female

b) Does gender of the participants have a significant effect on their attitudes to the following non-native-by-gender accents of English?

- 1) Arab Male
- 2) Arab Female
- 3) Latino Male
- 4) Latino Female
- 5) East European Male
- 6) East European Female
- 7) South East Asian Male
- 8) South East Asian Female

c) Is there a significant interaction between groups (NSs and NNSs) and gender (Male vs. Female) in view of attitudes to the eight non-native-by-gender accents of English?

Question 3: Which are the most liked and the least liked non-native-by-gender accents of English?

Questions 4: a) Do NSs and NNSs of American English differ significantly in their perceptions of the importance of pronunciation and structure in the acquisition of a second language?; b) Does Gender significantly affect NSs' and NNSs' perceptions of the importance of pronunciation and structure in the acquisition of a second language?; c) Is there a significant interaction between group (NSs vs. NNSs) and gender (Male vs. Female) in perceiving the importance of pronunciation and structure in the acquisition of a second language?

Qualitative Questions:

Question 5: How do participants explain their perceptions of the importance of pronunciation and structure in the acquisition of a second language?

3.3 Variables

3.3.1 Independent Variables

There were 2 independent variables that this study was interested in, Group and Gender. The independent variable Group included two levels, NSs and NNSs of American English. The independent variable Gender, included two levels as well, Male and Female. Given the categorical nature of these variables, they were assigned nominal values.

3.3.2 Dependent Variables

Question 1 – The Dependent Variable in question 1 was calculated as the Total of attitude scores for all non-native accents.

Question 2 – The Dependent Variables in question 2 were eight, representing the four non-native accents for each gender. They were calculated as separate attitude scores, including:

- 1) Attitude Score for the Arab Male Accent
- 2) Attitude Score for the Arab Female Accent
- 3) Attitude Score for the Latino Male Accent
- 4) Attitude Score for the Latino Female Accent

- 5) Attitude Score for the East European Male Accent
- 6) Attitude Score for the East European Female Accent
- 7) Attitude Score for the South East Asian Male Accent
- 8) Attitude Score for the South East Asian Female Accent

Question 3 – This question involved identifying the highest and lowest *Mean* scores on all pair-wise adjectives that were used to evaluate participants' attitudes toward the accents of interest. It involved simple descriptive statistics and because of the high number of adjective pairs, it was considered inappropriate to carry out tests of significance.

Question 4 – The dependent variables in this question were two: 1) a score on participants' perceptions of the importance of pronunciation, and 2) a score on participants' perceptions of the importance of structure.

Question 5 – Since this question was addressed to the qualitative data, it did not require identification of dependent and independent variables. The purpose was to elicit information that may cast light on the findings of the quantitative analyses.

3.4 Participants

Two groups of participants were selected for the purpose of this investigation. The first group was composed of 32 (11M, 21F) undergraduate native speakers of American English from a Midwestern American University. The second group involved 39 non-native speakers of English (16M, 23F) from the same University. These participants were students from five different East and South-East Asian countries namely Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea, Japan and China. The choice of

NNSs from an exclusively Asian background was solely motivated for convenience due to the large Asian population on the university campus. Some variables regarding the participants were not investigated, but they were controlled to minimize threats to the internal and external validities of the study.

Age was controlled by focusing only on a target population of 20 to 30 year olds. Additionally, the NSs' group was asked to provide information about their experience of learning second languages. Thus, it became clear that out of the 38 NSs who completed the questionnaire, six were monolingual and the rest fell into the category "studied an L2 before". Therefore, the six monolingual NSs were taken out of the sample, controlling for the final NS group to be representative only of NSs who have had some experience in learning other languages.

3.5 Stimulus Providers

The stimulus providers selected for this study were 8 different speakers (4 Males, 4 Females) of the four accents of interest, Middle-Eastern or Arab, Latino, Eastern-European, and Asian. The Middle-Eastern pair included a male speaker from Jordan and a female speaker from Lebanon, the Latino pair involved a male speaker from Colombia and a female speaker from the same country. As regards the East-European pair, it was composed of a male speaker from Romania and a female speaker from Bulgaria. Finally, the Asian pair consisted of a male and a female speaker from Taiwan.

All speakers were recorded separately and were instructed to read a short passage about the geographic location of the US. They were also given the

opportunity to practice reading the passage prior to the actual recording. This precaution was taken to guarantee a relaxed, clear and uninterrupted delivery of the reading. When recording the voices, several variables were controlled in view of the validity of the instrument, including age, level of proficiency, and tendency for hypercorrection. Age was controlled by selecting speakers of the same age group as the participants, (20-30).

Also, it was made sure that all stimulus providers were of equal level of proficiency in English. Since level of proficiency was difficult to measure, the speakers were selected from the population of international graduate teaching assistants, based on the fact that for international students to be given an assistantship they should pass an oral International Teaching Assistants exam that determines their ability to use English as a language of instruction.

Initially, 20 stimulus providers read the passage and were tape-recorded. Since the study required 8 non-native accents, equally divided between male and female voices, the initial pool of readers were carefully evaluated on the quality of their delivery, and those who were not fluent, or did not have good voice projection were excluded until the final set of speakers were identified. In order to rule out tendencies for hypercorrection, the speakers were told that the recording was aimed at assessing their punctuation marking rather than their accents; thus, keeping them blind to the purpose of the study. Also, two American NSs (1 Male, 1 Female) distractor stimuli were added in order to keep the participants blind to the real interest of the study, that is non-native accents, and in this way to minimize certain biases. The distractor voices were of the same age group as the participants.

3.6 Languages involved in the study

Since this study makes reference to language typology, in order to explain some of its findings, it was considered important to include a brief description of the languages involved in this investigation. These included the first languages (L1s thereafter) of the participants and the stimulus providers. More precisely, the L1s of the participants were Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, and Thai; and those of the stimulus providers included Romanian, Bulgarian, (comprising the Eastern European group), Arabic (the Arabic group), Spanish (the Latino group), and Mandarin (the South East Asian group).

The typological classification of language families, as described in O'Grady (2005), was used to categorize the L1's of both the participants and the stimulus providers. In this respect, the first languages of the participants were classified into three major families, Sino-Tibetan (Mandarin), Altaic (Japanese and Korean)¹⁶, and Austro-Asiatic (Thai)¹⁷. Regarding the L1s of the stimulus providers, they fell into three broad language families, Indo European (Spanish, Romanian, and Bulgarian), Semitic (Arabic), and Sino-Tibetan (Mandarin).

¹⁶ Actually, the categorization of Japanese and Korean into the Altaic family is an issue of debate.

¹⁷ There is no clear consensus among linguists as to the classification of the Thai language family (Tai-Kadai) and different categorizations classify it as belonging to either the Austronesian language family, or the Austro-Asiatic language family, or the Sino-Tibetan language family.

3.7 Research Instrument

3.7.1 Speech Samples and Preparation of the Stimulus Tapes

Stimulus providers were selected according to the accents which were of interest to his study. The speech samples were recorded at different occasions, then organised in a random order and copied into an audio CD. Randomization of the accents was achieved as each accent was assigned a respective number from one to ten. These numbers were then put in a box and were picked randomly.

The passage was a neutral text describing the geography of the United States and was read by all speakers. The choice of a neutral passage was motivated by the desire not to include material which could bias or influence the responses of the participants in any respect. Neutrality was opted for to avoid sensitive or controversial topics which may have affected the responses, but also to include a topic which everybody would be able to relate to. By providing one single passage and setting the delivery context to formal, variables such as syntax, word choice and voice quality were controlled thus leaving accent as the only variable under consideration in this study. (See appendix C for the complete instrument)

The length of the passage was also controlled against being too long or too short. If too short, the participants would not have had enough information to evaluate the accent. If too long, it could have affected the quality of the reading as well as the involvement of the listener. Therefore, the average reading length of the passage was set at 20 seconds.

3.7.2 Attitudinal Survey

The survey used to collect the data included two main parts, with two subsections in each part. Section One of Part One aimed to elicit participants' attitudes to the specific accents by using a Likert Scale with 5 bipolar adjectives (e.g. unpleasant vs. pleasant, ordinary vs. romantic, etc.), each measured on a scale of 1 to 5. The higher the number, the more positive the attitude to non-native accent. The maximum achievable score on this part of the questionnaire was 25, the minimum was 5. Example 1 illustrates the format of the questions in this Section.

Example 1: *How do you find this person's way of speaking?*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
<i>Unpleasant</i>	<i>Pleasant</i>
1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
<i>Ordinary</i>	<i>Romantic</i>
1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
<i>Cold</i>	<i>Warm</i>
1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
<i>Unrefined</i>	<i>Refined</i>
1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
<i>Difficult to Understand</i>	<i>Easy to Understand</i>

Section Two of Part One aimed to elicit participants' perceptions of the bearers of the respective accents, also measured by a Likert Scale with 5 bipolar adjectives (e.g. uneducated vs. educated, low class vs. high class, etc.). The maximum achievable score on this part of the questionnaire was 25, the minimum was 5. The

higher the number, the more positive the perceptions of the carrier of the accent. The type of questions included in Section Two is shown in Example 2.

Example 2: *How would you describe **the speaker?***

1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
<i>Uneducated</i>	<i>Educated</i>
1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
<i>Low class</i>	<i>High class</i>
1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
<i>Unpleasant</i>	<i>Pleasant</i>
1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
<i>Bossy/Authoritative</i>	<i>Friendly</i>
1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
<i>Unconfident</i>	<i>Confident</i>

The choice of adjectives for Part One of the questionnaire was influenced by several studies on accents (Bradford, Farrar and Bradford, 1974; Edwards, 1977; Lambert, 1967), but also based on the feedback provided by consultants in linguistics and outside the field. Thus, the final version of the instruments deviated from the established tradition of following Lambert's three attitude categories of *Competence*, *Social Attractiveness*, and *Personal Integrity*. In effect, as seen from the examples above, a two-category measure was accepted, one focusing on the accent itself, and the other on the bearer of the accent.

Part Two of the survey aimed to elicit information about participants' perceptions of the importance of pronunciation and grammar (lexical and structural) in speaking a second language. For this purpose, participants were given statements regarding the above-mentioned aspects and asked to express their level of agreement

with what was stated, using a Likert scale (1 = disagree, 5 = agree). More specifically, Section One of Part Two included the following statement “*When I hear a speaker of another language speak my language, I want to hear it accurately spoken and without accent.*” On the other hand, the statement in Section Two was: “*I believe that for second language learners, it is more important to acquire the grammar and vocabulary of the language, than to achieve accurate native-like pronunciation.*” Each one of these statements was followed by an open-ended question which asked the participants to explain their responses (See Appendix D for complete instrument)

3.7.3 Procedures

The native speaker participants were administered the survey as a group in an undergraduate lecture class. Overall, it took 40 minutes to complete the whole questionnaire. However, the same procedure was not possible with the non-native participants since they were not enrolled in the same classes. That is why, the non-native participants were administered the survey on an individual basis in the researcher’s office. The average time for completing the survey was the same as for the native group, but the collection of the data was done over a long period of time, taking approximately 3 months.

Prior to taking the survey, participants were given instructions about the specifics of the tasks. In order to keep them blind to the real purpose of the experiment, a partial deception was used by telling them that the purpose of the questionnaire was to assess perceptions of spoken English rather than non-native accents.

3.8 Analysis of the Data

The analyses of the data involved both statistical and qualitative methods, among which the statistical were predominant. More specifically, the analyses related to the 5 research questions were as follows:

Question One: To answer this question, a two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed at $\alpha = .05$. This procedure was considered appropriate since there was one dependent variable (Total score) and two independent variables, group (native vs. non-native) and gender (male vs. female).

Question Two: This question was addressed by performing a two-way Multivariate Analysis (MANOVA) at $\alpha = .05$. The procedure was chosen because the interest was in eight dependent variables, and the two independent variables mentioned in Question 1.

Question Three: The analysis involved descriptive statistics of calculating the *Means* and identifying the highest and lowest values.

Question Four: Since this question investigated two dependent variables (Pronunciation and Structure), and two independent variables (Group and Gender), the data were analyzed through a MANOVA at $\alpha = .05$.

Question Five: The data related to this question were analyzed through qualitative methods by recording individual answers, categorizing them into thematic units, counting the frequency of each thematic unit, and calculating the percentages contributed by each subgroup, e.g. Native Male, Native Female, Non-Native Male, Non-Native Female. In addition, within the non-native group, the responses were further categorized in view of the five different groups of Asian participants.

Throughout the qualitative analyses, interesting individual quotes provided by native and non-native speakers were identified for inclusion in the Discussion Chapter of this paper.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This Chapter presents the results of the data analyses following the logic of the research questions as they were outlined in Chapter 3. Overall, five research questions were formulated, of which three involved statistical tests of significance and the other two used descriptive and content analyses. All statistical tests were performed at $\alpha = .05$.

Research Question One was formulated as: Is there a significant difference between NS and NNS of English in their attitudes to non-native accent? The dependent variable in Question One was the overall attitude score, derived from 10 items, each including 2 bipolar adjectives, measured on a scale of 1 to 5. The higher the number, the more positive the attitude to accented speech. The maximum score on each individual accent was 50, illustrating a highly positive attitude to the examined accent; the minimum score was 10, showing a very negative attitude. Since eight individual accents (4 non-native accents x 2 gender) were studied, the total maximum score amounted to 400, and the lowest to 80. The independent variables included Gender (Male vs. Female), and Group (Native vs. Non-Native). The interaction between Gender and Group was also included in the statistical model. The descriptive statistics for the effect of Group, Gender, and Group*Gender are summarized in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Native/Non-Native Speakers Group

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Native Speakers	32	230.37	24.37	180	279
Non-Native Speakers	39	259.64	30.25	210	338

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Male	27	235.37	25.34	180	279
Female	44	253.25	32.77	184	338

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for Group by Gender

Group	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Native Speakers	Male	11	216	20.02
	Female	21	237.90	23.39
Non-Native Speakers	Male	16	248.68	19.54
	Female	23	267.26	34.23

In order to see if the differences in Means between the levels of the independent variables were significant, that is systematic and not due to chance, the data were further analyzed through a two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Before performing the two-way ANOVA, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was conducted to rule against the possibility of unequal variances. The results showed that the variances were homogeneous and not significantly different, $F(3, 67) = 2.66, p = 0.55$. This allowed the ANOVA analyses to be performed without concern for a violation of the underlying assumptions.

The omnibus two-way ANOVA test revealed that the independent variable Group (Native vs. Non-native) had a significant effect on the attitude towards accented speech, $F(1, 67) = 22.69, p < .000$. Since Group had two levels, comparing the *Means* was sufficient to establish the direction of the difference. Thus, it became clear that the Non-native speaker group ($Mean = 259.64$) had a significantly more positive attitude than the Native speaker Group ($Mean = 230.37$).

The effect of Gender was also significant, $F(1, 67) = 9.65, p = .003$. More precisely, the Female subjects ($Mean = 253.25$) had a significantly more positive attitude to accented speech than the Male group ($Mean = 235.37$). However, the interaction effect between Group and Gender was not significant, $p = .799$.

Research Question Two investigated attitudes to four non-native accents of GAE for each Gender, which resulted in a total of eight accents. It involved the examination of three interrelated questions: (a) Does being a native or non-native speaker of GAE have a significant effect on people's attitudes to Male and Female Middle-Eastern, Latino, Eastern-European and South-East Asian accents of English?; (b) Does Gender have a significant effect on people's attitudes to Male and Female Middle-Eastern, Latino, Eastern-European and South-East Asian accents of English?; (c) Is there a significant interaction between Group (Native vs. Non-native speaker of GAE) and Gender on people's attitudes to Male and Female Middle-Eastern, Latino, Eastern-European and South-East Asian accents of English?

The dependent variables investigated in question two were the attitude scores on the four non-native accents, Middle-Eastern, Latino, Eastern-European and South-East Asian with 4 Male and 4 Female stimulus providers for each accent (a total of

eight dependent measures). Attitude scores were obtained from each respective accent using the same data as in Research Question One, but this time rather than taking the total attitude *Mean* score, the *Mean* score on each dependent variable was calculated separately. High numbers conveyed more positive attitudes to the examined accent, with a maximum possible score of 50, and a minimum score of 10.

The independent variables included Group with two levels, Native vs. Non-native, and Gender, with two levels, Male vs. Female. The interaction between Group and Gender was also included in the statistical equation. The descriptive statistics for the independent variables Group and Gender are reported in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Native/Non-Native Speaker Groups

Accents	Native Speaker			Non-Native Speaker		
	Mean	St. D.	N	Mean	St. D.	N
Arab Male	22.43	4.89	32	27	3.84	39
Arab Female	30.12	5.41	32	32.38	6.57	39
Latino Male	29.12	5.57	32	35.58	8.45	39
Latino Female	29.78	5.17	32	32.48	5.77	39
East European Male	33.56	4.18	32	36.41	5.20	39
East European Female	33.28	4.66	32	34.02	6.35	39
South East Asian Male	22.90	5.56	32	27.15	5.62	39
South East Asian Female	29.15	6.23	32	34.58	6.89	39

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Male/Female Genders

Accents	Male			Female		
	Mean	St. D.	N	Mean	St. D.	N
Arab Male	25.22	5.42	27	24.77	4.58	44
Arab Female	29.96	6.17	27	32.22	6.03	44
Latino Male	31.11	7.01	27	33.63	8.38	44
Latino Female	29.77	5.45	27	32.18	5.61	44
East European Male	33.85	4.81	27	35.90	4.92	44
East European Female	31.77	5.30	27	34.86	5.55	44
South East Asian Male	23.51	5.37	27	26.29	6.09	44
South East Asian Female	30.14	4.27	27	33.36	8.18	44

Since there were eight dependent variables (4 accents x 2 genders), it was considered appropriate to use a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), in order to examine the effect of the two independent variables on all dependent variables in one statistical procedure. The MANOVA was preceded by Box's M test of equality of covariance matrices at $\alpha = .05$ to test whether the covariance matrices for the dependent variables were significantly different. The results of the Box's M test showed that the covariance matrices were not significantly different and that the assumption of equal covariance matrices was observed $Box's M = 148.07, F(108, 5507.03) = 1.02, p = .402$. Thus, MANOVA was performed and the results revealed that the independent variable Group had a significant effect on the attitude towards the eight non-native accents, $\lambda = .65, F(8, 60) = 3.98, p = .001, Partial \eta^2 = .347$. The MANOVA also showed that the independent variable Gender had a slightly significant effect on the attitudes to the eight respective accents, $\lambda = .78, F(8, 60) = 2.04, p = .057$,

Partial $\eta^2 = .214$. The fact that Gender yielded an overall effect that only slightly approached significance could be, as revealed later by the test of Between-Subjects effect, because the significant differences were only observed on half of the Dependent Variables. The interaction effect between Group and Gender was not significant, $\lambda = .88$, $F(8, 60) = 1.01$, $p = .433$

The significant MANOVA test was followed by univariate Between-Subjects' analyses in order to identify more precisely where exactly the significant differences were. Beforehand, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was also conducted to rule against the possibility of unequal variances. Levene's results, as summarized in Table 6, revealed that the assumption of equal variances was observed at alpha = .01.

Table 6

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

Dependent Variables	F (3, 67)	Significance (<i>p</i> value)
1 Arab Male	2.26	.08
2 Arab Female	.65	.58
3 Latino Male	3.87	.01
4 Latino Female	.48	.69
5 Eastern European Male	.77	.51
6 Eastern European Female	2.72	.05
7 South East Asian Male	1.45	.23
8 South East Asian Female	3.07	.03

Note: The alpha level for Levene's test was set at .01 since this test is very sensitive to minor differences (George and Mallery, 2005).

The results of the univariate analyses of Between-Subjects Effects as summarized in Table 7 showed that the independent variable Group had a significant effect on subjects' attitudes to the following six accents: Arab Male, Latino Male, South East Asian Male, South East Asian Female, Latino Female and Eastern

European Male. Group had no significant effect on subjects' attitudes to Arab Female and Eastern European Female.

Table 7

Between-subjects results for the effect of Group

Dependent Variables	F (1, 67)	Significance (<i>p</i> value)	Partial η^2
1 Arab Male	17.59	.000*	.208
2 Latino Male	14.03	.000*	.173
3 South East Asian Male	13.33	.001*	.166
4 South East Asian Female	11.12	.001*	.142
5 Latino Female	5.93	.018*	.081
6 Eastern European Male	5.83	.018*	.080
7 Arab Female	2.28	.135	.033
8 Eastern European Female	.84	.363	.012

Note: All statistically significant results are marked by an asterisk.

The Between-Subjects test for the independent variable Gender yielded significant differences for some accents and lack of significant differences for others.

Table 8 summarizes the results.

Table 8

Between-subjects results for the effect of Gender

Dependent Variables	F (1, 67)	Significance (<i>p</i> value)	Partial η^2
1 South East Asian Male	6.13	.016*	.084
2 East European Female	5.91	.018*	.081
3 South East Asian Female	4.62	.035*	.065
4 Latino Female	4.40	.040*	.062
5 Eastern European Male	3.47	.067	.049
6 Latino Male	2.83	.097	.041
7 Arab Female	2.46	.121	.036
8 Arab Male	.012	.914	.000

Note: All significant results are marked by an asterisk.

As seen from Table 8, the significant effect of Gender was observed only on the following accents: South East Asian Male, East European Female, South East Asian Female, and Latino Female. Gender had no significant effect on participants' attitudes to Arab Male, Arab Female, Latino Male, and Eastern European Male. The interaction between the independent variables Group and Gender had no significant effect on subjects' attitudes to any of the examined accents.

Research Question Three aimed at investigating which non-native accents were the most liked and the least liked and was also interested in examining how the preferences were distributed with respect to the Male and Female variants of each accent. In order to be able to better understand perceptions of specific accents, descriptive analyses were performed on each separate bipolar set of adjectives. Since the first five adjective contrasts examined perceptions related to the Manner of Speaking, and the second five adjective contrasts examined perceptions of the Speakers themselves, the descriptive analyses were performed separately for each set of five contrasts. The purpose was to identify accents that were perceived as the most positive or the least positive in both of the above mentioned categories. Accordingly, the summary of results is presented in two separate tables, Table 9 for Manner of Speaking, and Table 10 for the Speakers.

Table 9

The most and the least positively rated Accents in view of Manner of Speaking

Group	Score	Manner of Speaking				
		Pleasant	Romantic	Warm	Refined	Understandable
Native Speakers	Most Positive	Male E European (M = 3.50)	Male E European (M = 2.56)	Male E European (M = 3.06)	Male E European (M = 3.34)	Male E European (M = 4.09)
		Female E European (M = 3.46)	Female E European (M = 2.90)	Female E European (M = 3.28)	Female E European (M = 3.28)	Female E European (M = 3.59)
	Least Positive	Male Arab (M = 1.84)	Male Arab (M = 1.56)	Male Arab (M = 2.06)	Male SE Asian (M = 1.96)	Male Arab (M = 1.59)
		Female Arab (M = 2.90)	Female Arab (M = 2.31)	Female Arab (M = 2.93)	Female SE Asian (M = 2.34)	Female SE Asian (M = 2.40)
Non-Native Speakers	Most Positive	Male E European (M = 3.58)	Male Latino (M = 3.25)	Male Latino (M = 3.53)	Male E European (M = 3.66)	Male E European (M = 4.25)
		Female SE Asian (M = 3.58)	Female SE Asian (M = 3.38)	Female SE Asian (M = 3.94)	Female E European (M = 3.30)	Female Latino & E European (M = 3.79)
	Least Positive	Male Arab (M = 2.48)	Male Arab (M = 2.02)	Male Arab (M = 2.30)	Male SE Asian (M = 2.48)	Male Arab (M = 2.89)
		Female Latino (M = 2.92)	Female Latino (M = 2.76)	Female Arab (M = 3)	Female Latino (M = 3.20)	Female SE Asian (M = 3.17)

Table 10

The most and the least positively rated Accents in view of the Speakers

Group	Score	Speaker				
		Educated	High Class	Pleasant Speaker	Friendly	Confident
Native Speakers	Most Positive	Male E European (M = 3.43)	Male E European (M = 3.34)	Male E European (M = 3.43)	Male E European (M = 3.28)	Male E European (M = 3.50)
		Female E European (M = 3.43)	Female E European (M = 3.18)	Female E European (M = 3.43)	Female SE Asian (M = 3.84)	Female Arab (M = 3.43)
	Least Positive	Male SE Asian (M = 2.21)	Male SE Asian (M = 2.37)	Male Arab (M = 2.12)	Male Latino (M = 2.96)	Male SE Asian (M = 2.18)
		Female SE Asian (M = 2.81)	Female SE Asian (M = 2.87)	Female Arab (M = 2.93)	Female Arab (M = 2.90)	Female Latino (M = 2.71)
Non-Native Speakers	Most Positive	Male E European (M = 4.05)	Male E European (M = 3.84)	Male E European (M = 3.61)	Male Latino (M = 3.58)	Male E European (M = 4.10)
		Female Latino (M = 3.71)	Female E European (M = 3.53)	Female SE Asian (M = 3.61)	Female SE Asian (M = 4.20)	Female Arab (M = 3.66)
	Least Positive	Male SE Asian (M = 2.64)	Male SE Asian (M = 2.64)	Male Arab (M = 2.38)	Male Arab (M = 2.64)	Male SE Asian (M = 2.20)
		Female SE Asian (M = 3.17)	Female SE Asian (M = 3.10)	Female Latino (M = 3.07)	Female Arab (M = 3.07)	Female Latino (M = 2.97)

With respect to the Manner of Speaking, the investigation overall showed that the NSs had a marked positive preference for the Male and Female Eastern European accents on all adjectives. The same group revealed a negative attitude towards Male and Female Arab accents on the following adjectives: *Pleasant*, *Romantic*, *Warm*, and *Understandable* (The last one only for the Arab Male accent), and towards Male and Female South East Asian accents on the adjectives *Refined* and *Understandable* (The latter in reference to the South East Asian Female accent only).

As regards the NNSs, the results were more heterogeneous, giving preferences to a richer variety of accents on the different adjectives. For example, the most positive attitudes expressed for the Male Eastern European Accent were on the adjectives *Pleasant*, *Refined* and *Understandable*, while the Male Latino Accent was rated high on the adjectives *Romantic* and *Warm*. On the other hand, the attitudes towards the Female accents showed a clear preference for the Female South East Asian Accent on the adjectives *Pleasant*, *Romantic* and *Warm*; for the Eastern European Female on the adjectives *Refined* and *Understandable*; and for the Latino Female Accent on this same last adjective *Understandable*. Regarding the least positively rated accents, the NNSs predominantly rated the Male Arab accent negatively on the adjectives *Pleasant*, *Romantic*, *Warm*, and *Understandable*, and the South East Asian Male accent on the adjective *Refined*. The least positively rated accents for the NNSs were the Latino Female on the adjectives *Pleasant*, *Romantic* and *Refined*, the Arab Female on the adjective *Warm* and the South East Asian Female on the adjective *Understandable*.

Overall, both the NSs and NNSs had a marked preference for the Eastern European Male Accent on adjectives related to Pleasantness, Refinement and Understandability and for the Eastern European Female on adjectives related to Refinement and Understandability¹⁸. The least positively rated accents in view of Manner of Speaking, by the NSs and the NNSs were the Arab Male Accent on Pleasantness, Romanticism, Warmth, and Understandability; the South East Asian Male Accent on Refinement; the Arab Female Accent on Warmth; and the South East Asian Female Accent on Understandability.

The fourth question investigated by this study related to the participants' perceptions of the importance of pronunciation and structure in second language acquisition. More specifically, the questions were stated as follows: a) Do NSs and NNSs of American English differ significantly in their perceptions of the importance of pronunciation and structure in the acquisition of a second language?; b) Does Gender significantly affect NSs' and NNSs' perceptions of the importance of pronunciation and structure in the acquisition of a second language?; c) Is there a significant interaction between group (NSs vs. NNSs) and gender (Male vs. Female) in perceiving the importance of pronunciation and structure in the acquisition of a second language?

There were two dependent variables, pertaining to the importance of pronunciation and structure. These were measured on a Likert scale with a maximum possible score 5 and a minimum 1. A high score indicated that participants gave high importance to pronunciation or/and structure. A low score indicated the opposite tendency. The independent variables included Group (Native vs. Non-Native), and

¹⁸ The NNSs group rated the Eastern European Female and Latino Female equally on this adjective.

Gender (Male vs. Female). The interaction between Group and Gender was also examined. The descriptive statistics for the effect of Group, Gender and Group*Gender are summarized in Tables 11, 12, and 13.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for Native/Non-Native Speakers Group

Group	N	Pronunciation		Structure	
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Native Speakers	32	2.25	1.24	3.37	1.18
Non-Native Speakers	39	2.69	1.25	2.74	1.25

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics for Gender

Gender	N	Pronunciation		Structure	
		Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Male	27	2.59	1.15	3.03	1.12
Female	44	2.43	1.33	3.02	1.33

Table 13

Descriptive statistics for Group by Gender

Group	Gender	N	Pronunciation		Structure	
			Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
NSs	Male	11	2.36	1.43	2.81	1.16
	Female	21	2.19	1.16	3.66	1.11
NNSs	Male	16	2.75	.93	3.18	1.10
	Female	23	2.65	1.46	2.43	1.27

Since there were two dependent variables, Pronunciation and Structure, and two independent variables, the statistical analyses involved a two-way MANOVA. The MANOVA was preceded by Box's M test of equality of covariance matrices at $\alpha = .05$ to test whether the covariance matrices for the dependent variables were

significantly different. The results of the Box's M test showed that the covariance matrices were not significantly different and that the assumption of equal covariance matrices was observed, $Box's M = 11.79, F(9, 17360.78) = 1.23, p = .270$. Thus, MANOVA was performed and the results revealed that the independent variable Group did not have a significant effect on the participants' views of the importance of pronunciation and structure in second language acquisition, $\lambda = .94, F(2, 66) = 1.91, p = .155$. The lack of significant differences was also observed for Gender, $\lambda = .99, F(2, 66) = .10, p = .903$. However, the interaction effect yielded a significant effect, $\lambda = .89, F(2, 66) = 3.74, p = .029, Partial \eta^2 = .102$.

Since the interaction effect was significant, the Omnibus MANOVA test was followed by univariate Between-Subjects' analyses in order to identify more precisely where exactly the significant difference was. Beforehand, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances showed that the assumption of equal variances was observed at $\alpha = .01$. These results are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

Dependent Variables	F (3, 67)	Significance (p value)
Pronunciation	3.14	.03
Structure	.44	.72

Note: The alpha level for Levene's test was set at .01 since this test is very sensitive to minor differences (George and Mallery, 2005).

Levene's test was followed by univariate Between-Subjects analyses which confirmed the lack of significant effect for both independent variables, Group and Gender, as revealed by the overall MANOVA. The Between-Subjects tests also brought further clarity regarding the significant interaction effect. More specifically,

the interaction between the independent variables Group and Gender was not significant in view of the importance of Pronunciation ($p = .905$), but was significant in view of the importance of Structure $F(1, 67) = 7.60, p = .007, \text{Partial } \eta^2 = .102$.

Figure 1 illustrates the interaction effect between Group and Gender on the importance of Structure.

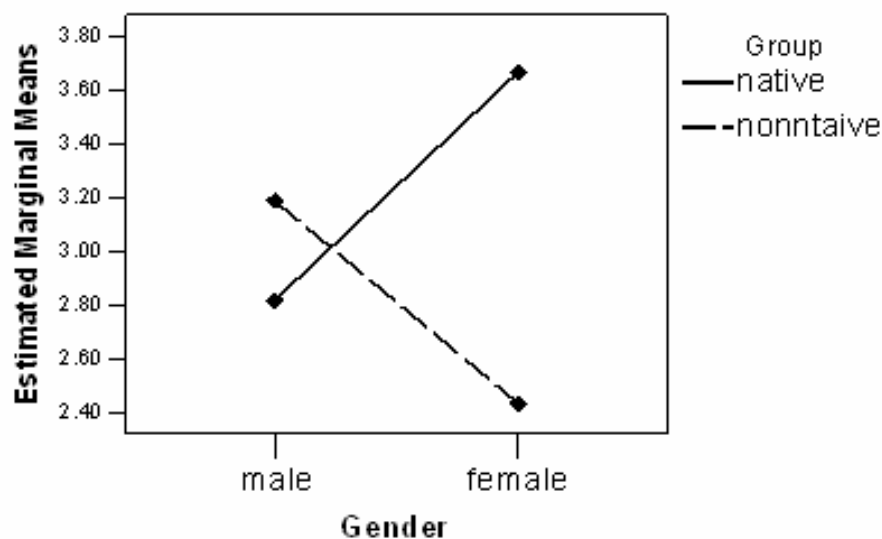


Figure 1. Interaction between Group and Gender on Structure

As seen from Figure 1, the significant interaction was due to the fact that the opinions of the Male and Female participants between the two Groups showed opposite patterns. In the NS group, the Female participants gave higher importance to Structure ($Mean = 3.66$) than the Male ($Mean = 2.81$), while in the NNS, the Male participants gave higher importance to Structure ($Mean = 3.18$) than the Female ($Mean = 2.43$).

Qualitative Data

Research Question Five was formulated as follows: How do participants explain their perceptions of the importance of Pronunciation and Structure in the acquisition of a second language? For this purpose, participants were asked to explain their numerical ratings of the importance of Pronunciation and Structure (grammar and vocabulary) in the acquisition of a second language. The response rate to the open-ended questions was surprisingly high within both the NS and the NNS group. More precisely, 93.75 % of the NSs contributed responses to the question about Pronunciation, and 100 % to the question about Structure. Within the NNS group, 97.44 % responded to the question about Pronunciation, and 100 % to the one about Structure.

The analyses of the qualitative data involved coding the answers into themes, and counting the frequency of occurrences of each theme across Group and Gender. The final results were summarized in tables, including the number of people who have contributed to a certain theme (answer). There were also very interesting individual comments and elaborations provided by both the NSs and the NNSs which I will quote in the Discussion Chapter of this paper. Table 15 summarizes the most frequent arguments that participants provided in order to explain their reaction to the statement *“When I hear a speaker of another language speak my language, I want to hear it accurately spoken and without accent”*.

Table 15

Importance of Acquiring a NS Pronunciation in Second Language Acquisition

Thematic Responses	Native Speakers			Non-Native Speakers		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Very Important	1	5	6	2	5	7
Important but difficult to achieve	1	2	3	1	5	6
Important, but not essential because even native speakers have accents		2	2	1		1
Not essential because it is difficult to acquire a perfect accent-less speech	4	5	9	6	8	14
Not essential because it takes away one's identity and origin	1	6	7		3	3
Accents are not problematic as long as they do not impede communication	3	1	4	5	2	7

Note: The number in each cell corresponds to the number of participants who contributed to a thematic response.

The results reported in Table 15 show parallel findings for NSs and NNS. Male NSs' responses were rather tolerant and did not consider accent to be of major importance as reflected by the results of the above table. More precisely, while 30% of the NS Males considered that Accents were not problematic as long as the communication was not disrupted, and 40% stated that speaking with a native-like accent was not essential because it is difficult for second language learners to acquire a perfect accent-less speech. With respect to the Female NSs, the answers were less homogeneous, that is, while 23.81% of the Female NSs stated that having a native-like accent was very important for second language speakers, 23.81% considered it less imperative stating that a native-like accent was difficult to achieve, and 28.57%

reported that a native-like accent was not important because it took away one's identity and origin. The results for NNSs revealed that Male subjects did not regard native-like pronunciation as fundamental in the acquisition of a second language, with 40% stating that it was not essential because it was difficult to acquire a perfect accent-less speech and 33.33% regarding accented speech as non-problematic if communication was not affected. As regards Female NNSs, the reactions were heterogeneous like the Female NSs', with 34.78% suggesting that accented speech was acceptable due to the difficulty to achieve a native-like accent, 21.74% being strongly in favour of achieving a native-like accent, and 21.74% judging it as important, but difficult to achieve.

When collapsed into Native vs. Non-native speaker, the results for the thematic responses, as illustrated by Figure 2, show that only approximately 20% of both groups considered the acquisition of accurate pronunciation important. Regarding the other five categories of responses (Figure 2), there were some observable differences, particularly regarding comments that recognized the difficulty in achieving a native-like accent. As seen from Figure 2, the NNSs reported this difficulty more than the NSs. Some other observable differences were that the NSs mentioned the role of accents in keeping identities more often than the NNSs, while the NNSs more often commented that as long as communication was intact, accents did not matter. These differences will be further elaborated on in the Discussion Chapter.

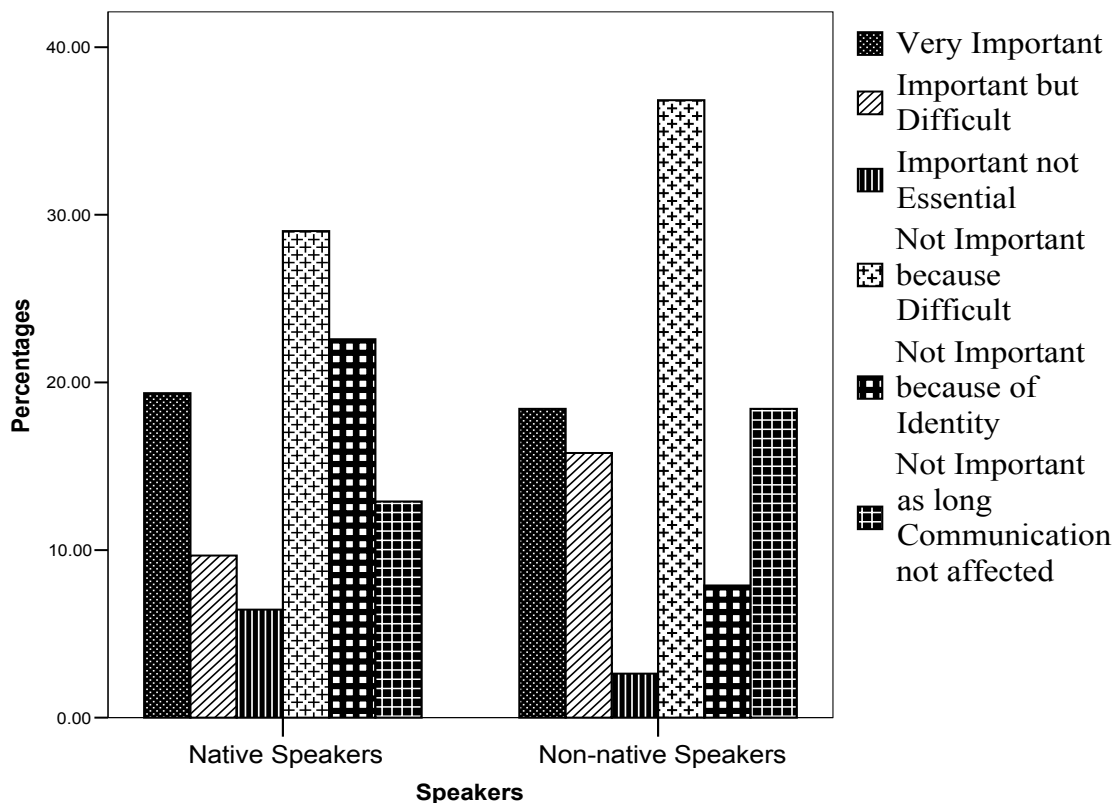


Figure 2. Importance of Pronunciation as perceived by NSs and NNSs

The next open-ended statement that participants had to react to was “*I believe that for second language learners, it is more important to acquire the grammar and vocabulary of the language, than to achieve accurate native-like pronunciation*”. The most frequent answers, organized in themes, are presented in Table 16.

Table 16

Importance of Structure vs. Pronunciation in the Acquisition of a Second Language

Thematic Responses	Native Speakers			Non-Native Speakers		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Structure is more important to teach/learn than pronunciation, which requires more exposure and practice.	3	12	15	4	3	7
Accurate pronunciation is more important than structure, since language is mainly used to communicate.	5	3	8	2	6	8
They are both equally important; While grammar and vocabulary are important in academic skills (writing), pronunciation is important in speaking and can only be improved through practice and conversation.	3	6	9	10	14	24

Note: The number in each cell corresponds to the number of participants who contributed to a thematic response.

The results revealed that there was an observable difference between NSs and NNSs in their evaluations of the importance of pronunciation vs. structure in second language acquisition. While 61.54% of the NNSs agreed that both structure and pronunciation were equally important in the acquisition of a second language, only 28.13% of the NSs believed so. In addition, it was also revealed that 46.88% of the NSs regarded structure as more important than pronunciation, and 17.95% regarded pronunciation as more important.

When collapsed into Native vs. Non-native speaker groups, the results for the thematic responses regarding this question, as illustrated by Figure 3, show that the percentage of NSs who gave priority to structure was noticeably higher in comparison with the NNS group. On the other hand, the percentage of NNSs who considered both

structure and pronunciation to be important was notably higher than the percentage of people who shared the same views in the NS group. Overall, both groups attributed equally lower importance to pronunciation than structure.

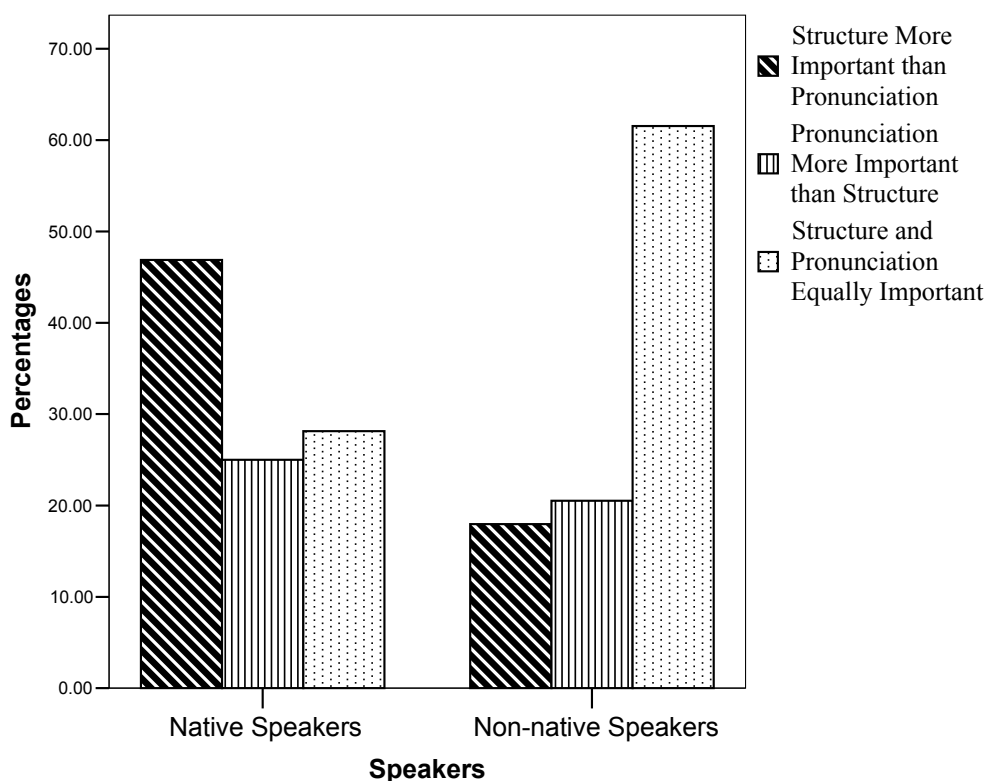


Figure 3. Importance of Structure vs. Pronunciation as perceived by NSs and NNSs

So far, this Chapter presented the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analyses. Some interesting differences and similarities between the native and non-native speakers and between the two genders were observed on all variables of interest. These findings and their pedagogical and research implications will be discussed and interpreted in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This Chapter presents a discussion of the results of this investigation and identifies potential pedagogical implications to the second language classroom. The major limitations of the study are also outlined together with some recommendations for future research. Finally, the contributions of this study to the areas of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and second language pedagogy are summarized. The overall discussion of the results follows the order of the research questions, however some qualitative observations are interwoven within the interpretations of the quantitative findings.

5.1 Discussion

The first research question included three sub-questions formulated as: a) Is there a significant difference between NSs and NNSs of American English in their overall attitudes to non-native accents of English?; b) Does Gender significantly affect attitudes to non-native accents of English?; c) Is there a significant interaction between Group (NSs and NNSs) and Gender (Male vs. Female) in view of attitudes to non-native accents of English? The results showed that NNSs viewed non-native accents in a significantly more positive way than the NSs. Also, the Female subjects showed a significantly more positive attitude than their Male counterparts. There was no significant interaction on any of the sublevels of the independent variables.

The significant differences regarding the NNSs and the NSs can not be directly compared to previous research since only very few studies have investigated attitudes to accents comparing these two groups, and from different perspectives. In fact, the existing research on this issue mainly focused on comparing NS groups with NNS groups on regional American English accents (Alford and Strother, 1990). The study by Alford and Strother found significant differences between the NSs and the NNSs in their perceptions of the regional AE accents that were the focus of interest in their study. The authors recommend further examination of the two groups regarding attitudes to accents.

The significant differences between the NS and NNS groups involved in this investigation were expected in view of the familiarity principle (Dalton-Puffer et. al., 1997; Young, 2003), according to which people show more positive attitude to things they can associate with. In the context of this study, all NN subjects were also second language learners who have had a substantial experience in learning English. This fact may explain why they were more tolerant of non-native accented English, and more aware of the difficulties related to achieving native-like proficiency and pronunciation. Yet, since this study involved NSs who had also had some experience in learning a second language, it was expected that the NSs would also show tolerance and understanding of non-native accents of English.

In this sense, examining the group *Means*, we can see that the actual difference -- despite the significant differences -- was not of great practical importance. That is, both NSs and NNSs showed a moderate rather than highly positive attitude to non-native accents. This result was to a certain extent in

contradiction to some of the participants' responses to the open-ended questions, where 93.75 % of NSs and 97.44 % of NNSs showed an obvious tolerance to and understanding of the nature of non-native accents. For example, a Male NS wrote "*I know that my language is spoken around the world, and if it is the second language for that person, I would not expect them to be perfect*".

One possible interpretation of this contradiction could be found in the fact that the two major parts of the survey were of a different nature. That is, Part One elicited participants' spontaneous reactions within short time limits, while Part Two gave them the opportunity to rationalize their responses. If participants were true to their beliefs expressed in the qualitative part, the only aspect of non-native accents they should have evaluated critically would have been the one related to whether an accent is Understandable or not.

The independent variable Gender had a significant effect on the attitude towards accented speech. More specifically, Female participants had a markedly more positive attitude towards the non-native accents than their Male counterparts. These findings are in line with the comments provided in the qualitative part of this research. For instance, one of the conservative comments provided by a Male NS was: "*Accurate pronunciation is part of speaking a language. It is a courtesy to others who speak the language*". Among the Female NSs who displayed less rigid attitudes towards accented speech, there were many interesting comments, among which one is particularly worthy of quoting here because it shows a deep awareness of the various variables involved in acquiring a native-like accent. As seen from the following quote, this Female subject was very conscious of the fact that age is an

important predictor of success in achieving a native-like accent, *“You can’t expect someone from another country to fully adapt to what may be a completely new and different language. With time they will become more fluent, but depending on how old they are they may or may not lose their accent”*.

With respect to NNSs, one Male participant commented: *“One’s accent can change the meaning of the word in my mother tongue. Therefore, when the speaker has a minimal accent, I can truly communicate with the speaker. I also think that when you want to do something, you want to do it right”*. This comment, provided by a Thai NS, was among the rare conservative comments by NNSs. It could be corroborated by the fact that Thai is a tone language and requires correct use of tones since the same word can have a different meaning depending on the tone.

On the other hand, some Female NNSs from Taiwan, China, and Japan, having tone or pitch L1s, showed less conservative attitudes towards accented speech. For example, a Taiwanese Female participant wrote: *“It’s so unfair to non-native speakers whatever language it is. He/She is from a different culture and different language system. Language skills should not only be limited to the fact of having an accent”*. Another comment provided by a Female participant from the same country was: *I am learning a second language right now. I know how difficult it is to speak another language without accent”*. Along the same line of thought, a Japanese Female observed: *“I wouldn’t expect a speaker of another language to speak my language accurately without an accent because I think my language has a totally different sound system than the others and I think it must be hard for non-native speakers to speak it accurately”*. A Female Chinese subject also wrote: *“For a*

foreigner it is hard to accurately speak my language. I will not put such a high requirement on them. As long as they can convey their thoughts clearly, they are fine for me". These and many other comments revealed that Female NNSs were highly aware of the factors involved in acquiring accentless pronunciation in an L2. Because of this awareness, they showed more tolerance to non-native accents.

The statistical and qualitative results, which revealed that the Female participants had an overall less conservative attitude to non-native accents than their Male counterparts, support the findings reported by Mc Lendon (1999). However, they contradict the results of other studies that have found the opposite tendency (Podberesky, 1990; Schairer, 1992). One potential explanation for this discrepancy is that these differences may be sample-specific and could not be really generalized over larger populations. That is, depending on the specific characteristics of different populations such as culture, social class, ethnic group, age-related factors, second language experience, etc., the effect of Gender may show different results.

The second research question involved three sub-questions which were expressed as follows: a) Does being a native or non-native speaker of GAE have a significant effect on people's attitudes to Male and Female Middle-Eastern, Latino, Eastern-European and South-East Asian accents of English?; b) Does Gender have a significant effect on people's attitudes to Male and Female Middle-Eastern, Latino, Eastern-European and South-East Asian accents of English?; c) Is there a significant interaction between Group (Native vs. Non-native speaker of GAE) and Gender on people's attitudes to Male and Female Middle-Eastern, Latino, Eastern-European and South-East Asian accents of English?

The findings pertaining to this research question showed that the independent variable Group had a significant effect on subjects' attitudes to the following six accents: Arab Male, Latino Male, Latino Female, South East Asian Male, South East Asian Female and Eastern European Male. Specifically, the NNSs viewed these six non-native accents in a significantly more positive way than the NSs. In fact, these results did not bring much additional information to the ones reported in relation to Question One. The new aspect which was revealed was that some of the accents were rated higher than other; with the Eastern European Male accent receiving the highest evaluations by both groups, and the Arab Male accent being the most negatively perceived by both groups.

As mentioned earlier in reference to the findings regarding Question One, attitudes to non-native accents in view of Native and Non-native groups have not been explored before, so they can not be interpreted in view of previous studies. With respect to the present study, one plausible reason why NNSs showed more tolerance to accents, could be attributed to their experience of being second language learners. Further evidence for this interpretation was provided through the analyses of the qualitative data. For example, a conservative view expressed by a NS stated: *"We grow up hearing one way of speaking and then we get people with accents and have to try and understand them. English is a really hard language to learn and it seems the people that try to learn it just get upset if we can't understand them."* In contrast to this, a NNS commented: *"Speaking a foreign language needs time and practice. I am totally fine with foreigners trying to speak my language with his mother tongue accent as long as the conversation is flowing"*.

In relation to the effect of Gender, the results showed that the Female participants displayed a significantly more positive attitude than their Male counterparts to the following accents: Latino Female, South East Asian Male, South East Asian Female and Eastern European Female. Thus, it became clear that the significant differences between the Male and Female participants were only on the above four accents, among which three were Female and one was Male. The overall differences between the Male and Female subject subgroups can be partially related to previous findings in the literature (Dalton-Puffer et. al., 1997; Young, 2003) according to which participants usually have a more positive attitude to accents they identify with and a more negative attitude to accents they do not identify with.

In the context of the present study, the Female group showed a more positive attitude to three out of the four female accents, which could be attributed to a gender-based solidarity or preference manifested by the Female subjects towards some Female non-native accents of English. The reasons why the same difference did not show on the only other Female accent, which was the Female Arab accent, might include the linguistic distance between the L1s of the subjects and Arabic, as well as the influence of socio-political factors. These will be discussed in more detail in relation to Question Three.

Examining the Means for the Male subject subgroup on the eight accents of interest, further evidence in support of the familiarity principle was provided. The Male subjects gave higher scores to two out of the four Male accents. More precisely, they rated the Male Latino and the Male Eastern European accents higher than the Female counterpart accents.

On the other hand, the Male subjects rated the Male South East Asian and the Male Arab lower than the respective Female accent. The reason why the Male subjects showed a highly positive attitude to the Male Latino and the Male Eastern European Accents, could be partially attributed to a gender-based affinity to accents of the same gender. Also, it could be due to the fact that these two non-native accents may resemble native-like accents because of the linguistic closeness between English, on the one hand, and Spanish and Romanian on the other. As mentioned in chapter three, the above three languages are classified as belonging to the Indo-European language family, while the rest of the L1s of the stimulus providers belong to the Semitic (Arabic) and Sino-Tibetan (Mandarin) language families (O'Grady, 2005). However, linguistic typology may not be the only factor that contributes to how accents are shaped and perceived. In a deeper interpretation of the familiarity principle, it is recommended that the above results be examined in the context of a possible complex four-way interaction between the Gender of the Participant (judge), the Gender of the Stimulus Provider, the L1 of the Participant and the Language of the Stimulus.

The statistically significant gender differences were further illustrated by some qualitative results. For example, a Male NS expressed the following biases: *“If it is my language, I want to hear it the way I speak it, so I don't have to strain to understand it”*. A Male NNS showed a similar opinion by writing: *“If you want to ‘communicate’ effectively with the native speaker, it is critical to achieve accurate native-like pronunciation”*.

On the other hand, Female subjects were more tolerant in their attitudes as shown by the following comment by a NS: *“Even though I am a native speaker of English, I myself sometimes don’t speak it accurately. Also I know first hand that learning a second language can be difficult, therefore I don’t expect speakers of another language to speak English accurately and without accent”*. This same idea was mentioned by a Female NNS: *“If the language is not the mother tongue of a speaker, I do not expect him/her to speak perfectly. It takes a long time and effort to speak a foreign language fluently and not many people are exposed to a foreign language for a long time”*.

Overall, the results for Questions One and Two showed some statistical and qualitative differences that could be attributed to being a Native or a Non-native speaker as well as to being Male or Female. The main interpretations of these differences were made in relation to the familiarity principle (Dalton-Puffer et. al., 1997; Young, 2003), either in view of language typology or in view of second language experience. In the context of the present study, the variation of attitudes towards the above mentioned accents could be partially explained by the linguistic similarities and differences between the languages represented in the stimulus providers and the participants. For example, the more positive attitude of NNSs towards the Male and Female South East Asian Accents could be attributed to the similarities of the L1s of the stimulus providers and the NN subjects. That is, the L1 of the stimulus providers was Mandarin, while the L1s of the NNSs included Mandarin, Thai, Japanese and Korean. All of these languages share common features in their phonetic and suprasegmental systems which are usually reflected in the oral

production of a second language. There are other aspects of familiarity theory such as ethnic and social similarities and differences that will be referred to in the next question.

The third research question was formulated as: Which are the most liked and the least liked non-native-by-gender accents of English? This question was investigated both in view of the participants' perceptions of non-native speakers' Manner of Speaking as well as their perceptions of the Speakers themselves.

The findings pertaining to the most and least positively rated accents in view of the Manner of Speaking revealed that for NSs of GAE, the most preferred accents were the Eastern European Male and Female. With respect to the least liked accents, NSs assigned negative ratings to the Arab Male and Female accents, followed by the South East Asian Male and Female accents. Regarding the most liked accents, these results provide support for the findings of previous studies (Dalton-Puffer et al., 1997; Gill, 1994; Young, 2003) according to which North American respondents ascribed higher scores to accents similar to their own, thus displaying an ethnocentric attitude to accented speech.

NSs' preference for the Eastern European accent was expressed on all the adjectives relating to the Manner of Speaking. In the context of the present study, the Eastern European Languages, included among the stimuli of the present study, were Bulgarian and Romanian. By their phonetic and suprasegmental features these two languages are closer to English -- than are Arabic and Mandarin -- because of their common belonging to the Indo-European language family (O'Grady, et al., 2005). This linguistic similarity may, to a certain extent, explain the indisputable preference

of the NSs for the Eastern European accents. However, it cannot explain why NS did not assign higher ratings to the Latino (in this study, Spanish) accents since, as already mentioned, Spanish is also an Indo-European language. In the context of the U.S, the Spanish (Latino) accent is often associated with the image of the Latino immigrant workers who are perceived negatively because of their undocumented status (an issue that was a political “hot topic” at the time of this investigation). In this sense, it can be speculated that attitudes to accents are shaped under the influence of a myriad of variables that go above the level of linguistic and ethnocentric affinities and may include socio-political factors.

NSs’ less positive attitudes towards the Arab and the South East Asian accents confirmed findings by previous studies, particularly with respect to the Arab Accents (Johnson and Frederick, 1994). NSs’ negative judgements of this accent may be due to a number of factors such as: linguistic distance between Arabic and English due to their belonging to two different language families (Semitic and Indo-European); insufficient cultural contact between the Arab ethnic minority and the American NSs; recent reflections of socio-political tensions, and others.

On the other hand, the Male and Female South East Asian accents were the least positively rated on adjectives of Refinement, and the Female South East Asian accent was rated the lowest on the adjective of Understandability. Overall, the NSs judged the South East Asian accent as the least refined one. One possible interpretation, as already mentioned in relation to Question One, relates to the linguistic differences between English and Mandarin (the language of the stimulus

providers) inherent in their phonetic, phonological, suprasegmental, and structural systems.

The results for NNSs on Manner of Speaking showed a less binary pattern, mainly because the preferences were less clear-cut and more heterogeneous than for the NSs. Two distinct preference patterns were observed, one for the Male accents and another for the Female accents. That is, in view of the Male accents, there was still an overall preference for the East European Male accent on adjectives of Pleasantness, Refinement, and Understandability. NNSs also ranked high the Latino Male accent with respect to Romanticism and Warmth. Although it is difficult to provide a rationale for this finding, it could be speculated that the reason why the Male Latino accent was perceived as Romantic and Warm might stem from the image of the “Latin Lover”, promoted by a number of famous cinematographic productions, and particularly popular in the Western World. In view of the Female accents, the NNSs expressed preference for the South East Asian Female accent on adjectives of Pleasantness, Romanticism and Warmth. Contrary to the findings outlined for the NSs, the NNSs assigned the Female Eastern European accent high ratings only on Refinement and Understandability. The Latino Female accent was also ranked high on Understandability.

Interpreting these heterogeneous findings is challenging since there is not a clear indicator of why the NNSs would give higher scores to some accents on some adjectives and lower scores to other accents. The principle of familiarity can cast light on some of the findings, if not all. For example, the fact that the Eastern European accents were overall perceived positively by the NNSs, could be because second

language learners of English whose L1s are related to English by their common belonging to the same language family -- as is the case with English, Bulgarian and Romanian -- may have closer-to-native accents than second language learners with L1s less related to English. In other words, the Eastern European accents may have been perceived positively by virtue of the fact that they showed a lower degree of non-native accentedness.

As regards the least liked accents, the NNSs' judgements reflected NSs' attitudes since they also evaluated the Manner of Speaking of the Arab Male as the least positive. This tendency was observed on all adjectives except for Refinement, which was negatively marked for the Male South East Asian accent. This finding is interesting since it was not expected of the NNSs to assign negative ratings to an Asian accent since they, themselves, were Asian. However, this pattern was also observed in the case of the South East Asian Female accent which was the least positively rated accent on the adjective of Understandability. It is also noteworthy to mention that NNSs' negative attitudes towards both Male and Female South East Asian accents were expressed in relation to Refinement, Pleasantness, and Romanticism. A potential explanation of this deviation from the familiarity principle, could be the fact that the NNSs were also second language learners of English, and as already suggested by previous research (Dalton-Puffer et. al., 1997, Derwing, 2003) second language learners tend to have negative perceptions of their own accents.

The findings pertaining to the most and least positively rated accents in view of the Speaker indicated that NSs had again a marked preference for the Male Eastern European accent on all adjectives. This finding further supported the results discussed

in Questions One and Two. In view of negative perceptions, NSs judged the Male South East Asian speaker as predominantly the least liked one, while the Arab Male speaker was rated negatively only on Pleasantness. This was an interesting finding which suggested that NSs judged the Arab Male Speaker differently from his Manner of Speaking. In addition, the Latino Male speaker was rated low in view of Friendliness. As regards the least positively judged Female speakers, NSs evaluated both the South East Asian Female and the Arab Female negatively. The Latino Female accent achieved a low ranking on the adjective Confident. This pattern was analogous to the attitudes displayed towards Manner of Speaking. It showed that NSs were overall consistent in their judgements about the Manner of Speaking and the Speaker, showing only minor exceptions.

With respect to NNSs' attitudes in relation to the speakers, the Male Eastern European and the Male Latino speakers were evaluated highly on the adjective Friendly. This finding not only parallels NSs' judgements, but also reflects the tendency which was observed in the case of judgements towards the Manner of Speaking. These results could be explained by the fact that for NNSs both the Male Eastern European and the Male Latino were perceived as accents closer to the native-like variety and for this reason were evaluated positively in view of the Manner of Speaking and the Speakers.

Regarding the most liked Female speakers, NNSs gave a more favourable rating to the South East Asian Female on Pleasantness and Friendliness, a result that reflected the tendency observed in view of the Manner of Speaking. The other most positively ranked Female speakers were the Latino Female on Educated, the Eastern

European Female on High Class and the Arab Female on Confident. This diversity in the NNSs' evaluations of the Speakers in comparison to the NSs' predominant preference for the East European speakers, may be because the NNSs were more accepting of non-native accents than NSs. Therefore, they may have judged the Speakers objectively without being influenced by the Speakers' accents.

As far as the least liked speakers are concerned, NNSs evaluated the South East Asian Male the most negatively, followed by the Arab Male speaker. With respect to the Female Speakers, the least liked Speakers were respectively the South East Asian Female, the Latino Female and the Arab Female. Further classification revealed that the NNSs assigned markedly negative traits to the South East Asian Female Speaker, on the adjectives relating to status (Educated and High Class) and gave positive ratings on adjectives relating to the personality of the speaker (Pleasant Speaker and Friendly). The same pattern as referred earlier was observed in the case of NNSs towards the Male South East Asian Speaker. These observations suggest that the NNSs perceived the South East Asian speakers of English as low on status, but had a higher degree of positive projection in relation to Personality.

Overall, the results with respect to the Speaker showed two different patterns of perceptions; the one pertaining to the Status of the Speaker, reflected on the adjectives Educated and High Class, and the other pertaining to the Personality of the Speaker, and including the adjectives Pleasant, Friendly and Confident. In view of both Status and Personality, it appeared that NSs ascribed predominantly more positive ratings to the Eastern European Male and Female accents, and gave negative ratings to the Arab Male, Arab Female, South East Asian Male and South East Asian

Male accents. In this respect, NSs' attitudes to the speakers were rigid and undifferentiated from their perceptions of the Manner of Speaking. On the other hand, the NNSs' judgements showed a clearly different pattern. That is, the NNSs expressed positive attitudes not only towards the Male and Female Eastern European accents, but also towards the Latino Male Accent. NNSs' negative attitudes were primarily expressed towards the Arab Male accent, thus exhibiting a similar reaction as the NSs. Yet, this negative attitude was expressed only on the adjectives of Personality (Pleasant and Friendly) and not on Status. The Female Latino accent was also among the least liked accents for NNSs, especially on the adjectives of Personality (Pleasant and Confident). This heterogeneity in the attitudes of NNSs towards the non-native accents revealed a more balanced pattern of biases related to the Manner of Speaking and the Speakers themselves.

Another emerging observation that is worth mentioning was the fact that the NNSs showed a distinctive contrast in the way they perceived the South East Asian speakers in view of Status and in view of Personality. That is, the South East Asian speakers were rated low on Status adjectives (Educated, High Class) and high on Personality adjectives (Pleasant, Friendly). This finding further supports the conclusions made in Question Two and also in view of previous research (Derwing, 2003), according to which second language speakers tend to perceive their own accents negatively in terms of professional or status related criteria. However, in relation to Personality related criteria, they could identify with them on the basis of shared ethnocentric values.

Overall, the results related to the most liked and the least liked accents showed that participants' evaluations in view of the Manner of Speaking and in view of the Speakers were sometimes undifferentiated and other times distinctively separated. The reasons for this fluctuating tendency could be various, some stemming from linguistic typology, others from ethnocentric affinity, and yet others due to self-critical perceptions of the accents people associate themselves with. The complexity of these underlying factors is challenging and could not be interpreted fully in the context of a single study. However, they should become an objective to be investigated in future research on accents.

The fourth research question consisted of three parts and was formulated as follows: a) Do NSs and NNSs of American English differ significantly in their perceptions of the importance of Pronunciation and Structure in the acquisition of a second language?; b) Does Gender significantly affect NSs' and NNSs' perceptions of the importance of Pronunciation and Structure in the acquisition of a second language?; c) Is there a significant interaction between group (NSs vs. NNSs) and gender (Male vs. Female) in perceiving the importance of Pronunciation and Structure in the acquisition of a second language?

The results revealed that none of the independent variables, Group or Gender, had a significant effect on the participants' perceptions of the importance of Pronunciation and Structure in the acquisition of a second language. With respect to the interaction between Group and Gender, the results revealed a significant interaction only for the importance of Structure. That is, in the NS group Female participants gave higher importance to Structure than the Male, while in the NNS

group, the Male participants gave higher importance to Structure than the Female. Examining the group Means it was revealed that both Pronunciation and Structure were rated as moderately important rather than highly important by NSs and NNSs. However, the importance of Structure was rated higher than Pronunciation by both NS and NNS groups. This finding disconfirms the results of a study by Mc Lendon (1999), according to which NSs based their judgments of non-native accents more on pronunciation accuracy than on grammatical accuracy. The author explains this by the fact that pronunciation is more liable to stigmatization than structural errors. This study did not find strong evidence in support of this view.

The importance of Pronunciation was overall rated slightly higher by NNSs than NSs with a *Mean* of 2.69 for NNSs and a *Mean* of 2.25 for NSs. However, for Structure the opposite tendency was observed with NSs having a *Mean* of 3.74 and NNSs having a *Mean* of 2.74. Regarding the importance of Structure, the overall effects of Group and Gender were not of practical importance unless considered in view of the interaction between the two variables. In this respect, the following pattern was observed; in the NSs Group, Female participants gave higher importance to Structure than the Male (Female *Mean* = 3.66, Male *Mean* = 2.81) while in the non-native group, the Male participants gave higher importance to Structure than the Female (Male *Mean* = 3.18, Female *Mean* = 2.43). These overall findings cannot be compared directly to previous research except for the case of the Male NSs judgments of the importance of pronunciation vis-à-vis structure. Indeed, these findings confirmed the results of a previous study by Johnson and Frederick (1994), according

to which American NSs' negative perceptions of non-native speech pertained more to accuracy of pronunciation than accuracy of grammar.

Summing up the results in relation to question four, it becomes clear that both NSs and NNSs gave moderate rather than high importance to attaining accurate pronunciation and structure in the acquisition of a foreign language. The small differences between the two groups were not entirely due to being native or non-native speaker, but also to being a male or a female respondent. This insightful result sends a cautionary note to existing and future research about the fact that explaining people's perceptions of the importance given to certain aspects of language acquisition involves a myriad of variables and any simplified generalization is neither appropriate nor valid.

The fifth research question was of a qualitative nature and aimed at casting further light on participants' evaluations of the importance of Pronunciation and Structure in second language acquisition. It was formulated as: How do participants explain their perceptions of the importance of pronunciation and structure in the acquisition of a second language? The qualitative data in relation to the importance of Pronunciation was categorized in six main types of responses: 1) Very important, 2) Important but difficult, 3) Important but not essential, 4) Not important because it is difficult to achieve, 5) Not important because accent is a projection of one's identity, and 6) Not important as long as communication is not affected.

Comparing the NSs with the NNSs in view of these six categories of responses, some patterns emerged which supplemented the results discussed in Question Four. For instance, one emerging trend was that both NSs and NNSs gave

relatively small importance to the accuracy of pronunciation since only about 20% of both groups considered it to be very important. There were a number of individual comments that emphasized on the importance of native-like pronunciation within a pedagogical context. In this light a Female NS stated: *“I do want to hear the language without accent. It is really hard to understand a foreign teacher who teaches math. When you can’t understand someone, it makes things more difficult”*.

A similar opinion was expressed in a comment by a Female NNS from South Korea: *“I want to hear the language without an accent because it’s not my native language so it’s hard to hear English even without accent. So in lectures I want to hear English without an accent”*. The above comments, which underline the importance of a native-like pronunciation in teaching contexts, confirm findings of a previous study by Boyd (2003) which showed that students often provide negative evaluations of their teachers solely based on the teachers’ non-native accents. This was especially true in the case of Accents that affected the clarity and fluent delivery of instruction.

Another pattern that emerged was that NNSs recognized the difficulty of achieving native-like accent more than the NSs did. This was not surprising in view of the fact that the NNSs were also second language learners of English and thus had had first hand experience in facing this challenge.

A somewhat surprising finding was that the NSs more than the NNSs mentioned the fact that accents were a way to project one’s identity and for this reason should be viewed in a positive rather than negative light. An illustrative response in this respect was provided by a Female NS, *“It makes our country wonderful to have different languages and accents”*. As noted by this participant, the

reason why NSs considered accents as positive markers of identity could be due to the fact that the US is a multicultural country where a variety of native and non-native accents can be heard on a daily basis. Most probably, an exposure to different accents contributes to a more open-minded attitude. However, this interpretation should not be generalized beyond the population studied since the NSs in this study were all recruited in an academic setting which puts them in a different population group from the rest of the people living in the US. In this sense, depending on their place of residence, education, social class, exposure to accents, and other factors, people's attitudes may vary widely, from more liberal to more conservative. Finally, a relatively small percentage of both groups, but more from the NNS group, acknowledged that the main purpose of language is communication, and pronunciation accuracy is only important in view of being able to communicate with the others. This idea was well illustrated by the response of a Male NNS from China who wrote: “. . . *as a person using English as my second language everyday, I find it very difficult to do so [without an accent]. As long as a person speaks understandably, it's ok*”.

As regards the comments provided in relation to the importance of Structure vis-à-vis Pronunciation, they were mainly grouped in three thematic categories, 1) Comments emphasizing the importance of structure in comparison to pronunciation, 2) Comments favouring the role of pronunciation over structure, and 3) Comments attributing an equal importance to both structure and pronunciation. Regarding Category One responses, the NS group gave more importance to structure (versus pronunciation) than did the NNS group. This finding further supported the

conclusions made previously in Question Four and further disconfirmed the results of the study by Mc Lendon (1999), according to which NSs based their judgements of non-native accents more on pronunciation accuracy than on grammatical accuracy. The opposite idea was expressed in a number of interesting individual comments, among which one given by a Male NS provided the rationale for this opinion:

“Structure is more important and once you learn the fundamentals of the language then you can work on proper pronunciation and accents”.

The second category of comments, which attributed more importance to pronunciation than to structure¹⁹, did not display an observable difference between the NS and the NNS groups. Moreover, a relatively small percentage of participants in both NSs and NNSs groups expressed this opinion. A Female NS commented in this regard: *“If you can’t understand their pronunciation, what is the point of them knowing the grammar?”* Some comments from the NNS group expressed the same idea: For instance, a Male NNS from China argued: *“. . . although grammar and vocabulary are important, a language is mainly used to communicate. So it is very important to let others understand you and I think it is very helpful to achieve accurate native-like pronunciation”.*

With respect to the third category of comments, the findings revealed that the percentage of NNSs who attributed equal importance to both pronunciation and grammar was twice as high as that of NS. This pattern suggests that NNSs offered a more balanced perspective on the importance of structure and pronunciation in second language acquisition. This finding is well summarized by a Chinese Female NNS: *“Grammar and vocabulary are important, but pronunciation is also important,*

¹⁹ These responses replicated some of the results to the first open-ended question.

especially for oral communication. Personally I think pronunciation should be weighted the same as grammar and vocabulary". Similar opinions were expressed by the Male NNSs, among which one by a Taiwanese Male participant made an interesting point. That is, according to this participant, the importance of pronunciation was relative to whether one was communicating with NNSs or NSs of a language: *"If you are using the language in your domestic country, pronunciation may not be very important. But if you speak to native speakers daily, you need to speak as native-like as possible. So, I think pronunciation is as important as grammar and vocabulary"*.

To a much lesser extent, some comments from NSs also supported the view that pronunciation and structure were equally important in the acquisition of a second language. A Male NS, for instance, commented: *"It is the number one concern to acquire the grammar and vocabulary of the language, but the pronunciation should be just as important"*. A Female NS also expressed a similar opinion: *"I do believe it is important to acquire the grammar and vocabulary but it is just as important to pronounce correctly"*.

Overall, the qualitative data showed that both groups, the NSs and the NNSs, showed an understanding of the challenges and the myriad of factors involved in acquiring an accent-less second language. In this sense, they contradicted their own responses to the quantitative questions of the survey, where a number of biases were observed in relation to the nationality or the gender of the accent providers. However, the qualitative data was very useful in understanding and interpreting the quantitative

results, and despite the obvious contradiction, it actually brought a useful insight about the nature of spontaneous and rationalized attitudes to accented speech.

5.2 Overall Conclusion

Putting together the results of this study, two main conclusions can be made. First, the reasons why people perceive some accents more positively than others can be explained, to a great extent, by the principle of familiarity (or lack of it), which in the context of the present study was observed in the following aspects.

- 1) Linguistic closeness or distance between the L1s of the participants (judges) and the L1s of the stimulus providers.
- 2) Gender-based affinities to accents.
- 3) Personal experience in learning a second language.
- 4) Ethnocentric identification with an accent.

However, some findings of this study also suggested that the familiarity principle could not explain all patterns displayed in relation to accent. For example, there were some exceptions that pointed to the fact that other variables of socio-political nature may also influence people's attitudes to (non-native) accents and even have a much stronger impact than linguistic and gender factors or second language learning experiences. In this sense, it could be speculated that factors of socio-political nature may lead to negative familiarity. That is, accents that are linguistically similar to the target accent, and would have been positively perceived because of this linguistic closeness, may, in fact, elicit negative attitudes due to socio-politically shaped negative stereotypes.

Finally, on a different level, the present study made an insightful observation about the fact that people's spontaneous reactions to accents tend to be more negative and biased than their rationalized reactions. This finding indirectly showed that given opportunities to reflect and think, people can develop more open-minded attitudes to accents and accept them as a mark of personal identity and cultural diversity. Thus, it could be speculated that through education and exposure to accents, attitudes can be changed in a positive way.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

Stemming from the conclusions in the previous Section, this study identified three main recommendations that could be useful to pedagogical contexts where non-native teachers or teaching assistants are involved.

First, it is recommended that school or college curricula offer general education courses in language and culture that will familiarize students with the linguistic and cultural diversity in the world, and in this way, make them more open-minded to native and non-native accents.

Second, non-native teachers or teaching assistants should be aware that a non-native accent could be negatively perceived if it impedes their ability to provide clear instruction and understandable input. In this sense, they should work towards overcoming pronunciation inaccuracies that negatively affect their oral skills.

Third, second language teachers alongside trying to help their students develop accurate pronunciation and intonation proficiency, should also encourage

positive and open-minded attitudes to non-native accents in order not to instil psychological barriers and low self-esteem in the learners.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

This study has contributed to accent-related research by examining attitudes to non-native accents of GAE with respect to two central variables, Group (NSs vs. NNSs of GAE) and Gender (Male vs. Female). In the process of the data collection and analyses and in interpreting the results, some observations were made that could inform future research about areas that need further investigation. The most important of these are outlined below:

- 1) The stimulus providers in this study were speakers of four different L1s, one of each gender. Since a sample of two speakers is too small to generalize the results, it is recommended that future research include bigger samples that will allow the results to be interpreted with more certainty. Besides, using a larger sample of speakers will also reduce the Speaker effect in terms of voice quality, clarity of enunciation, timbre, diction, etc.
- 2) In view of the stimulus providers, the study also involved two Native General American English samples, but these two accents were solely used as distractors and for this reason were not examined in the data analyses. However, it might be interesting to future studies to include the native accents in the analyses in order to give another dimension to the interpretation of the results.

- 3) Regarding the participants, it is recommended for future studies to examine the effect of other demographic variables, such as age, education, social class, occupation, place of residence, etc. Another interesting area of investigation pertains to the group of NSs. In this study, all the NS participants had some experience in learning a second language, and the results could not be generalized to NSs who have never studied a second language. Future studies on accents may consider comparing these two groups.
- 4) This study made reference to language typology when interpreting the results. Some interesting associations between the L1s of the participants and the L1s of the stimulus providers were found in explaining certain patterns of attitudes to non-native Accents. Since previous research had not taken language typology in consideration, it was not possible to compare and triangulate conclusions made in this aspect. Therefore, it will be interesting and valuable if future studies try to examine their data in view of the linguistic similarities and differences between the languages involved.
- 5) Since the design of the present research involved quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analyses, it was found to be a very appropriate approach to examining attitudes to accented speech. The two methods complemented each other very well, allowing a more profound understanding of the problems under investigation. For this reason, it is recommended that future studies should also use mixed

designs rather than the established tradition of purely quantitative ones. Without the qualitative data, it wouldn't have been possible to find the difference between the spontaneous and rationalized responses of the participants. Otherwise, the findings would have been one-sided.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

This study has examined attitudes to non-native accents of GAE through a questionnaire which consisted of forced choice answers. More specifically, the range of answers was limited to a set of adjectives, which the participants might not have chosen had they been given the opportunity to provide their own answers.

The present study involved NSs of General American English who have all had some experience in learning a second language. Therefore, the results should not be extended to NSs who have never studied a second language. Besides, the NNS group involved participants from South East Asia, and for this reason the results can only be valid with respect to this specific group. In addition, both the NS and NNS groups were college students from a US university campus and the findings concerning these two groups should not be generalized beyond the samples studied.

Part one of this study included a questionnaire which consisted of forced choice answers limited to a set of adjectives. Had the participants been given the opportunity to define the accents using their own adjectives, they might not have selected the ones they were offered. Also, had they been given the option to “*disagree*” or mark a certain question as “*not relevant*”, they might have expressed fewer biases.

The number of stimulus providers of each accent was limited to two, and because of the very small samples, it is difficult to conclude whether all of the findings could be attributed to the effect of the accents or to the effect of the speakers. That is, the attitudes revealed in this study may have also been influenced by the speakers' voice quality, diction, enunciation, timbre, and other paralinguistic factors.

5.6 Contributions of the study

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, this research is one of the first which has compared NSs and NNSs of GAE on their attitudes to accented English. In addition, it has made a contribution by including a larger, more diverse, and authentic sample of accents of both genders. In contrast, previous studies mainly employed the matched-guise technique with one speaker.

Another unexplored area this study touched upon was related to the language typology of the L1s of the participants and the stimulus providers. More precisely, the linguistic similarities and differences between the languages involved were used in the interpretation of the results.

Finally, this study was among the first to use both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analyses and in this way provided a new dimension in interpreting attitudes to accented speech. Hopefully, it has offered new insights to understanding accents from psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and pedagogical perspectives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Informed Consent Form

Dear participant,

My name is Selim Ben Said. I am a graduate student in the Department of Linguistics at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. I am currently doing a research to complete my Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics. In this study, I will examine Native and Non-Native perceptions of spoken English. The study that I am planning to conduct requires two main groups of SIU students, namely American Native Speakers and Non-Native Speakers in the age range 20-30. The sample will include a total number of 40 people, hence 20 from each group. The subjects will be selected with an equal number of male and female students in each group.

You will be asked to listen to a tape of 12 different voices of people. After listening to the tape, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire with two sections which should take about 15 minutes to complete. All your responses will be confidential and anonymous. You will be asked to provide demographic information (sex, age, first language and whether you have knowledge of a second language) about yourselves, but not your names. Your participation in the survey is VOLUNTARY. If you agree to take part in the investigation, you need to sign this form. However, if you change your mind, you may withdraw at any time without hesitation.

The people who will have access to the data will be myself, the researcher, and my thesis advisor, Dr. Charkova. After the study is completed, the raw data sheets will be destroyed. All possible steps will be taken to protect you identity.

For additional information, you can contact me, Selim Ben Said, Project Researcher, 1645 Logan Drive, Apt. # 8, Carbondale, IL, 62901, tel.: (618) 457 0545, email: sloumabs@yahoo.fr or Dr. Krassimira Charkova, Research Advisor, Department of Linguistics, Faner Building 3225, SIUC, Carbondale, IL, 62901, Office tel.: (618) 453 6539 email: sharkova@siu.edu.

The project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois 62901-4709. Phone (618) 453-4533. Email: siuhsc@siu.edu

Thank you for your precious collaboration and assistance in this research.

.....

I have read the material above, and any questions that I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand a copy of this form will be made available to me for the relevant information and phone numbers. I realize that I may withdraw without prejudice at anytime.

Name _____

Signature _____

Appendix B
Demographics Questionnaire

Check the **appropriate** boxes

1 – What is your GENDER?

MALE

FEMALE

2 – What is your AGE?

Less than 20

Between 20 and 30

More than 30

3 – Are you a:

NATIVE SPEAKER OF ENGLISH

NON-NATIVE SPEAKER OF ENGLISH

4 – Do you speak a second language?

No, I have never studied a Second language before.

Yes, I have studied a second language, but for a short period of time
and I can't really use it.

Yes, I have studied a second language before, and I can use it
fairly well.

Appendix C – Survey Part 1

– You will hear 10 short monologues, performed by different speakers. After listening to each speaker, use the scales provided below to express your perception of his/her way of speaking. Please **do not skip any question** and make sure you **circle only one number**.

1

a) – How do you find this person's Way of Speaking?



Speaker # 1

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Ordinary *Romantic*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Cold *Warm*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unrefined *Refined*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Difficult to Understand *Easy to Understand*

b) – How would you describe the Speaker?



Speaker # 1

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Uneducated *Educated*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Low Class *High Class*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Bossy/Authoritative *Friendly*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unconfident *Confident*

2

a) – How do you find this person's Way of Speaking?



Speaker # 2

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Ordinary *Romantic*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Cold *Warm*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unrefined *Refined*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Difficult to Understand *Easy to Understand*

b) – How would you describe the Speaker?



Speaker # 2

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Uneducated *Educated*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Low Class *High Class*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Bossy/Authoritative *Friendly*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unconfident *Confident*

3

a) – How do you find this person's Way of Speaking?



Speaker # 3

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Ordinary *Romantic*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Cold *Warm*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unrefined *Refined*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Difficult to Understand *Easy to Understand*

b) – How would you describe the Speaker?



Speaker # 3

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Uneducated *Educated*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Low Class *High Class*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Bossy/Authoritative *Friendly*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unconfident *Confident*

4

a) – How do you find this person's Way of Speaking?



Speaker # 4

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Ordinary *Romantic*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Cold *Warm*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unrefined *Refined*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Difficult to Understand *Easy to Understand*

b) – How would you describe the Speaker?



Speaker # 4

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Uneducated *Educated*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Low Class *High Class*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Bossy/Authoritative *Friendly*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unconfident *Confident*

5

a) – How do you find this person's Way of Speaking?



Speaker # 5

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Ordinary *Romantic*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Cold *Warm*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unrefined *Refined*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Difficult to Understand *Easy to Understand*

b) – How would you describe the Speaker?



Speaker # 5

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Uneducated *Educated*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Low Class *High Class*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Bossy/Authoritative *Friendly*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unconfident *Confident*

6

a) – How do you find this person's Way of Speaking?



Speaker # 6

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Ordinary *Romantic*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Cold *Warm*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unrefined *Refined*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Difficult to Understand *Easy to Understand*

b) – How would you describe the Speaker?



Speaker # 6

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Uneducated *Educated*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Low Class *High Class*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Bossy/Authoritative *Friendly*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unconfident *Confident*

7

a) – How do you find this person's Way of Speaking?



Speaker # 7

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Ordinary *Romantic*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Cold *Warm*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unrefined *Refined*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Difficult to Understand *Easy to Understand*

b) – How would you describe the Speaker?



Speaker # 7

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Uneducated *Educated*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Low Class *High Class*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Bossy/Authoritative *Friendly*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unconfident *Confident*

8

a) – How do you find this person's Way of Speaking?



Speaker # 8

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Ordinary *Romantic*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Cold *Warm*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unrefined *Refined*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Difficult to Understand *Easy to Understand*

b) – How would you describe the Speaker?



Speaker # 8

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Uneducated *Educated*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Low Class *High Class*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Bossy/Authoritative *Friendly*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unconfident *Confident*

9

a) – How do you find this person's Way of Speaking?



Speaker # 9

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Ordinary *Romantic*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Cold *Warm*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unrefined *Refined*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Difficult to Understand *Easy to Understand*

b) – How would you describe the Speaker?



Speaker # 9

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Uneducated *Educated*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Low Class *High Class*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Bossy/Authoritative *Friendly*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unconfident *Confident*

10

a) – How do you find this person's Way of Speaking?



Speaker # 10

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Ordinary *Romantic*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Cold *Warm*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unrefined *Refined*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Difficult to Understand *Easy to Understand*

b) – How would you describe the Speaker?



Speaker # 10

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Uneducated *Educated*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Low Class *High Class*

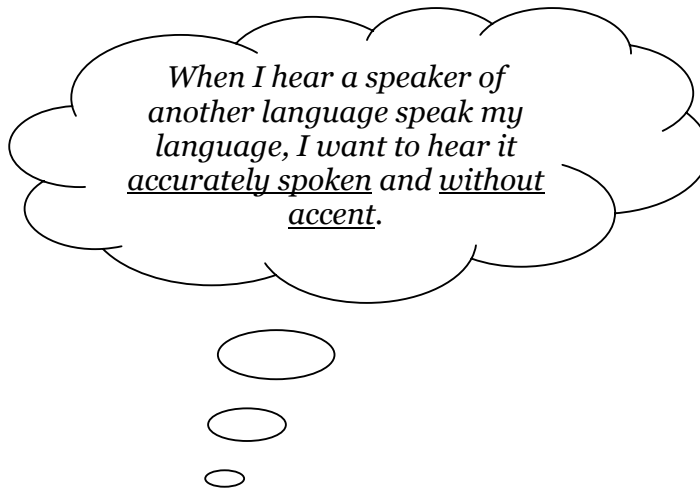
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unpleasant *Pleasant*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Bossy/Authoritative *Friendly*

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Unconfident *Confident*

Appendix D – Survey Part 2

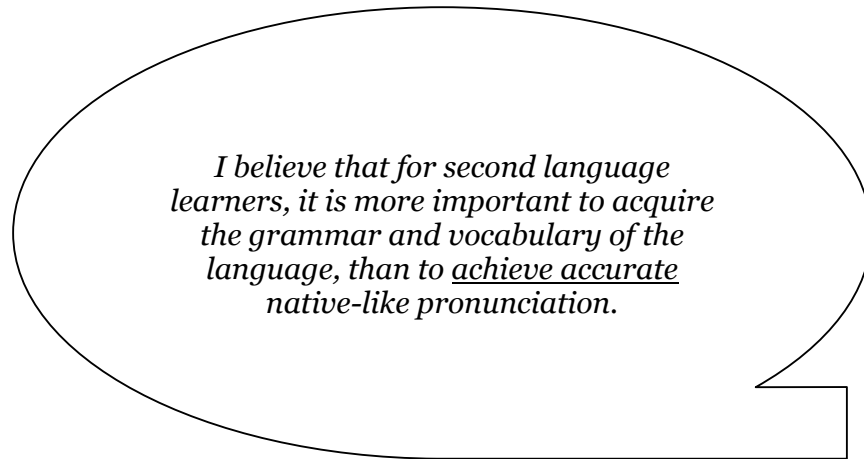
– Please read the statements below and use the scale to express how you feel about what is stated. Then, use the space that follows to provide a brief explanation for your answer”.



1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Disagree *Agree*

Please briefly explain your answer





1-----2-----3-----4-----5
Disagree *Agree*

Please briefly explain your answer



Appendix E

Stimulus Passage for Readers



➤ *Read this short passage while respecting the Punctuation*

🧠 The United States stretches across the central portion of North America from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west. Its territory also includes the states of Alaska, in the northwest corner of North America, and Hawaii, in the mid-Pacific Ocean. 👍

😊 *Thank you for your participation, your help was very much appreciated*

VITA

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Thesis Title:

ATTITUDES TOWARDS ACCENTED SPEECH:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS
OF AMERICAN ENGLISH

Major Professor: Dr. Krassimira Charkova