STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD ACCENTEDNESS OF NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE
SPEAKING ENGLISH TEACHERS

By

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ABSTRACT

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My goal for this study was to examine participants' familiarity with specific accents, whether participants were able to identify if a speaker was a native speaker (NS) or a non-native speaker (NNS), and what accent the speaker had. I also examined how the participants rated speakers on four Likert-scales of comprehensibility, intelligibility, accentedness, and acceptability as a teacher (the four dependent variables). I included 38 NS and 94 NNS participants from a range of first-language backgrounds. The participants listened to three NSs (Midwestern U.S., Southern U.S., and British) and two NNSs (Chinese and Albanian) and completed the identification and Likert-scale tasks outlined above. Results showed that NNSs were significantly less able than NSs to identify a speaker's nativeness and accent. Results revealed that familiarity with an accent correlated with comprehensibility and acceptability as a teacher. For familiar accents, familiarity was a significant predictor of the participant ratings on the four dependent variables, though the predicted changes in ratings were small. Overall, participants had generally positive attitudes toward NNSETs; in relation to acceptability as a teacher, accent was the least influential of the dependent variables. I conclude by discussing that students should be exposed to a range of different accents, as familiarity with an accent facilitates comprehension. These findings also challenge current language center hiring practices that exclude NNSETs from jobs based on a non-native status; this study supports the notion that administrators should hire English language teachers based on professional credentials, and not based on accent.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the wake of a recent law passed in Arizona that is based on the No Child Left Behind Act (see Title III, Sec. 3116, c), which threatens the jobs of non-native speaking English teachers (NNSET), the qualifications of both native speaking English teachers (NSET) and NNESTs have come into question. Some argue that this law, which mandates that K-12 English language teachers must be proficient speakers of English (which Arizona has partially interpreted as having a near-native accent, or a least not having a noticeable foreign accent) is clearly employment discrimination (Blum & Johnson, 2012) that has been justified by the myth that English language learners (ELL) will not be able to acquire native-like English from non-native speakers (NNS). In a study conducted by Moussu (2010), around 60% of English language program administrators surveyed admitted that the primary factor they consider when hiring new teachers is being a native speaker (NS). Because of this continued practice of what could be viewed as discrimination again NNSETs, many in the English-as-a-second-language (ESL) field have sought to defend NNSETs by highlighting their natural strengths as English teachers. Among these qualities are the ability to serve as successful role models for ELLs, a more comprehensive knowledge of English grammar, a better grasp of learning strategies, an anticipation of potential language problems, and a greater empathy for student needs and problems (Hertel & Sunderman, 2009; Moussu, 2010). Furthermore, when there is a match between the teacher's and students' L1, the teacher may be able to use the L1 as a beneficial teaching tool: some have argued that some use of the L1 is beneficial (Hertel & Sunderman, 2009; Marian, Blumenfled, & Boukrina, 2008; Thoms, Liao, & Szustak, 2005; Park, 2012). Despite this realization of what NNESTs bring to the classroom, language center administrators are still more likely to hire NSETs. This practice is based on the idea that NSETs are better and

more qualified, which is a belief Philipson (1992) termed a *native speaker fallacy*. This fallacy has even been perpetuated in a way that impacts education policies, as it has in Arizona.

Many in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) profession argue that administrators should hire teachers on the basis of linguistic ability and professional skill (Holliday, 2008; Moussu, 2010; Todd & Pojanapunya, 2008), and not based on accent, as many fear the new law in Arizona is advocating. This employment discrimination disregards the benefits of exposure of language learners to a variety of cultures and accents and, whether intended or not, will promote "linguistic sterilization" (Blum & Johnson, 2012, p. 175). This may be especially concerning when one considers the growth in the number of non-native English speakers around the world. Canagarajah (2005) estimated that almost 80% of English speakers worldwide are non-native. Because of this, notions of World English, English as an international language (EIL), and English as a lingua Franca (ELF) are becoming more prevalent (Llurda, 2004; Blum & Johnson, 2012; Moussu, 2010). Providing persuasive evidence for this argument is the inclusion of accented, non-native English on some versions of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) listening section (Harding, 2012; Moussu, 2010) and the recent creation of the Vienna-Oxford ELF Corpus, a corpus that compiles English language samples from the non-native English speaking world (Llurda, 2004).

English language teachers, both teachers of ESL and English as a foreign language (EFL), need to help their students become aware of the varieties of English used across the globe. This is because non-native English, such as EIL and ELF, are becoming stabilized languages and are used frequently in educational, political, and economic contexts. Alptekin (2002) suggested that NNESTs have a strong role in filling the gaps between the native-speaker and nonnative-speaker reality:

With the increasing establishment of English as the world lingua franca, non-native speakers will be in optimal positions to lead their students into the realm of EIL. Teachers of EIL should incorporate instructional materials and activities rooted in local as well as international contexts that are familiar and relevant to language learners' lives. (p. 318)

Blum and Johnson (2012), among others, argued that there is no longer such a thing as pure or "proper" English. Even among English speakers who learned English as their native language, such as people from Nigeria, Guyana, Australia, and Singapore, there is no universal standard, especially in terms of accent and lexicon. Considering this, it would seem rather odd to enforce a law under which teachers could only be employed if they had a local English accent. This law would seem quite unreasonable, especially in a collegiate ESL context where the majority of international students plan to return to their own country where many expect to use English for international business purposes. Not only this, but international students attending large American universities will likely also encounter a number of international teaching assistants during their time as undergraduates. As I will review shortly, having an exposure to nonnative speakers throughout their ELL career would benefit learners and aid in their comprehension with other non-native speakers.

Despite these benefits for ELLs, the question still remains about the legitimacy of the Arizona law and the hesitancy to hire NNESTs. To help answer this question, in this study I investigate the issue of non-native-teacher accents from the perspective of the learner by measuring student judgments of comprehensibility and intelligibility of native and non-native English accents in relation to students' perceptions of a speaker's acceptability as a teacher. Before describing the study in depth, I highlight past research on accent, student perceptions, and

native and non-native teachers.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Alford and Strother (1990) conducted a study to capture native and non-native students' attitudes toward regional U.S. accents. They showed that non-native speakers were able to detect differences between the accents, which is contradictory to research by Derwing and Munro (1997), Mousssu (2010), and Scales et al. (2006), who demonstrated that ELLs had difficulty in distinguishing between different accents, whether they be native accents, non-native accents, or a mix of the two. This was also evidenced when students reported that they wished to acquire an American accent, yet they could not identify an American accent, even after having lived in the U.S. for a number of months or years (Scales et al., 2006). Scales et al. suggested that a desire to have an American accent, paired with an inability to identify one, possibly reflects an idealized conception of what a native accent really is (Timmis, 2002). If students find it difficult to identify a native accent, perhaps their attitudes toward NNSETs based on pronunciation are invalid.

Despite learners' inability to distinguish between NS and NNS accents, in Munro et al. (2006), the participants were able to reliably rate speakers' intelligibility, comprehensibility, and accentedness. This was true across groups of students with different L1 backgrounds, including a group of native speakers, and their assessment of speakers was surprisingly comparable. In Scale et al.'s (2006) study, students tended to like an accent more if they rated it as more comprehensible. This suggested that students are concerned with listening comprehension, which likely plays a role in student perceptions of teachers.

A number of studies (Gass & Varonis, 1984; Winke, Gass, & Myford, 2013; Harding, 2012; Derwing & Munro, 1997) have also looked at how familiarity relates to comprehension and listener bias. Gass and Varonis looked at four aspects of familiarity: topic familiarity,

different L1 background familiarity, same L1 background familiarity, and speaker familiarity. Results showed that being familiar with a topic, a specific speaker, and non-native speech in general facilitates comprehension. They also showed that being familiar with a particular non-native accent facilitates comprehension of other non-native speaker with the same background. This last finding was also consistent with Winke, Gass, and Myford's findings, showing that raters who were familiar with a speaker's L1 were better able to orient themselves to the speaker's language. In the same vein, for testing purposes, Harding (2012) looked at accent familiarity among ELL students of the same L1 as the speaker. Results showed that students were sometimes able to comprehend more from someone who was speaking English and had the same L1, calling this an *L1 advantage*. These finding suggest that the more familiar a student is with their teacher and his or her linguistic background, and even his or her L1, the easier it will be for them to understand their teacher. Moussu's (2010) findings (that student ratings of their teachers (both NSETs and NNESTs) over the course of a semester improved) provide additional evidence that exposure to an accent and a particular speaker facilitates comprehension. This is important when thinking about students who have NNESTs who *do* have an accent. These studies suggest that it is only a matter of time before a student will become comfortable with their teacher's speech, if they wish to do so.

In the case that a teacher, or speaker, has a strong accent, it does not necessarily mean that the speaker is incomprehensible. This conclusion was consistent with Derwing and Munro's findings (1997, 2005) in which participants rated accent most harshly, followed by comprehensibility, and then intelligibility. In other words, though the participants judged a speaker to have a heavy accent, the raters admitted to being able to understand the speaker. The researchers suggested that the harsh ratings for accent and comprehensibility might have been

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due to the fact that a strong accent requires more processing time, and in turn is more difficult to understand.

It's important to consider why accent might be important in terms of the NSET versus NNSET debate. According to Moussu (2010), a teacher's L1 is only one of the many variables that affect how students view their teacher. In her study, Moussu collected data at the beginning and end of a semester and found that students' views of their NNESTs became more positive over the semester. This finding was corroborated by Todd and Pojanapunya (2009) in their findings that, while students made explicit indications that they preferred NSETs, their implicit attitudes suggested that the students value NNSETs equally and that they had "warm feelings" toward NNESTs and not toward NSETs. Hertel and Sunderman (2009) also found that, while students prefer NSET for pronunciation purposes, students recognized NNESTs' ability to give grammatical rules and explain vocabulary. Among other factors that affect students' perceptions toward teachers are the students' expected grades, the students' majors, and a teacher's country of origin (Moussu, 2010).

Drawing upon the conclusions from these studies, it is clear that more research needs to be done that will clarify the issues that have seen mixed results. In this study, I seek to add to the literature on accentedness, student attitudes, and NESTs and NNESTs. Especially considering the current policies coming into play regarding English-teachers' accents (i.e., the law in Arizona that prohibits heavily accented NNSs from teaching), I hope to shed light on students' attitudes toward such teachers.

Research questions:

    1a. Are ESL learners able to distinguish between native and non-native speakers of English?

1b. If so, can the ESL learners identify the speakers' accents?

2a. Do students who are familiar with a particular accent rate speakers differently in terms of comprehensibility, intelligibility, accentedness, and acceptability as a teacher?

2b. If so, is how they rate related to their attitudes about acceptability as an English teacher?

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Participants

As shown in Table 1 and Table 2, 132 individuals participated in this study. I recruited

these participants from nine classes at a large Midwestern university. The participants included

Table 1

Participants by L1 Group

		Chinese	Arabic	Korean	English	Other	Total
NNS of English	Male	42	11	4	0	5	62
	Female	14	8	3	0	7	32
	Total	56	19	7	0	12	94
NS of English	Male	0	0	0	5	0	5
	Female	0	0	0	33	0	33
	Total	0	0	0	38	0	38
Total	Male	42	11	4	5	5	67
	Female	14	8	3	33	7	65
	Total	56	19	7	38	12	132

Table 2

Participants by Program

		B.A.	Master's	Ph.D.	VIPP	ESL2	ESL4	ESL5	Total
NNS of English	Male	0	3	0	0	19	17	23	62
	Female	1	4	2	3	7	8	7	32
	Total	1	7	2	3	26	25	30	94
NS of English	Male	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
	Female	31	2	0	0	0	0	0	33
	Total	35	3	0	0	0	0	0	38
Total	Male	4	4	0	0	19	17	23	67
	Female	32	6	2	3	7	8	7	65
	Total	36	10	2	3	26	25	30	132

Note. VIPP refers to visiting professionals and scholars. ESL refers to students who are

currently enrolled in English-as-a-second-language classes; ESL2 is equivalent to intermediate

low. ESL4 to intermediate high, and ESL5 to advanced low.

93 international students, the majority of whom were enrolled in part-time or full-time ESL

classes in three proficiency levels: level 2 (n=26), level 4 (n=25), and level 5 (n=30). Of these

international students, Chinese was the largest L1 group (n=56), followed by Arabic (n=19),

Korean (n=7), and several other languages spoken by three or fewer participants, from this point

on referred to as *other* (n=12). I also recruited a control group (n=38) of American L1 English

speakers from two undergraduate and one graduate-level linguistics courses. All participants

ranged in age from 18 to 51 years, with a mean of 22.4 years of age. For a more detailed report

of the participants, see Appendix A.

Materials

In this study, I had one main instrument, a multi-faceted, web-based survey. The survey

had four main components: a background questionnaire, Likert scale questions to be answered in

response to listening tasks, a dictation task, and an indication of the speakers' native status and

accent.

Background questionnaire. I adapted the questions on the background questionnaire

from Harding (2011). The questions addressed the participants' exposure to other languages and

to English spoken by a variety of native and non-native speakers. The participants used the

questionnaire to indicate their preferred accent or accents when listening to English and their

general attitude about their own native-like-accent goals.

Audio files and Likert-scale questions. The audio files, which native speakers

(American Midwestern from Michigan, British from Northern English, American Southern from

Alabama, and Nigerian from Lagos) and non-native speakers (Chinese, Albanian, Malagasy, and

Italian) recorded, are of three kinds: a lecture about a familiar topic that ranged between 20 and

24 seconds (classroom expectations given at an assembly that each ESL student attends, see

Appendix B); a lecture on an unfamiliar topic that ranged between 20 and 24 seconds (pottery making, adapted from Sueyoshi & Haridson (2005), see Appendix C); and unrelated sentences for transcription that are similar in syntax, topic, and length that ranged between 5 and 7 seconds (see Appendix D). The final group of sentences served as an audio prompt for a series of sentence-dictation tasks that could serve as an alternate measure of intelligibility, as has been done previously in research studies on accent (Derwing & Munro, 1997; Munro et al., 2006). Because of findings that topic familiarity influences comprehension (Derwing & Munro, 1997; Gass & Varonis, 1984), I have included familiar and unfamiliar topics.

Dictation Task. The third component of the survey was a sentence-dictation task similar to those used in Derwing and Munro (1997) and Munro et al. (2006) in which a participant listens to and transcribes an audio segment.

Nativeness and Accent. The final component of the survey required participants to indicate their guess about whether the speaker was a NS or a NNS. They were also required to guess the speakers' accents. For a sample of a listening page for one speaker in the survey, see Appendix E.

Procedure

The first round of participants in this study was an intact graduate-level linguistics class. During class, the participants met in a computer lab to complete the survey. Each student had their own computer and a set of headphones for the listening portion of the survey. The participants first completed a familiarization task that is similar to the listening portion. In this familiarization task (and the listening section), participants responded to 9-point Likert-scale questions after hearing the lectures. The scales measured, for each participant, his or her estimation of the speaker's intelligibility, comprehensibility, accentedness, and acceptability as a

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teacher, with the participant considering the lecturers being ESL teachers. These Likert scales were presented in a random order to eliminate bias or an ordering effect. Following Munro et al.'s (2006) definitions, I define intelligibility as "the extent to which a speaker's utterance is actually understood" (p. 112), comprehensibility as "the listener's estimation of difficulty in understanding an utterance" (p. 112), and accentedness as "the degree to which the pronunciation of an utterance sounds different from an expected production pattern" (p. 112).

Next, the participants completed the background questionnaire and the listening task with Likert-scale questions (as described above). The participants listened to each lecture from the familiar topic and unfamiliar topic groups twice. Each time participants listened to a lecture, they answered two of the Likert-scale questions. Thus, each participant listened to each lecture twice and, in total, answered four Likert-scale questions per lecture. For counterbalancing purposes, the participants listened to the speakers and answered the Likert-scale questions at random (which SurveyMonkey automatically arranges). Each participant listened to one familiar and one unfamiliar lecture from each speaker, totaling sixteen lectures.

Next, the participants completed a dictation task. In this task, each participant completed one dictation per lecture. This task was presented at the end of each Likert-scale evaluation for each speaker. The participant listened to the recorded sentence once and then transcribed the sentence, to the best of their ability, using a text box.

Finally, the participants indicated their best guess about the nativeness and accent of the given speaker. The first round of participants, however, completed an expanded survey that included eight speakers, four native and four non-native. After this group of participants completed the survey, they gave feedback to the researcher, and from a combination of the initial data and the feedback collected, this allowed me to remove any speakers that either had no

perceivable accent or that have such a strong accent that they are unintelligible. At this point, I narrowed the listening portion to include only the American Midwestern (from Michigan), American Southern (from Alabama), British (from Cumbria, Northern England), Chinese and Albanian speakers.

Next, each of the remaining classes, with the exception of one undergraduate linguistics course, completed the survey in a computer lab during class time. They followed the same procedure; however, they did not give feedback, and they completed the shortened survey of only five speakers (10 total lectures). For one undergraduate linguistics class, I oriented the students to the survey and gave instructions during class time, but the students completed the survey on their own time.

Analysis

To gain an overall picture of the participant population, I calculated descriptive statistics that included nationality, age, sex, program enrollment, and L1. Then to answer the first research question, I calculated descriptive statistics to determine whether participants accurately identified the speakers' accents and accurately identified whether the speaker was a NS or a NNS. To see if NS participants and NNS participants performed differently in their identification of speakers, I calculated an independent samples *t*-test. To answer the second research question, I calculated Spearman's correlations for ordinal data using students' self-reported familiarity with an L1 and their actual rating of comprehensibility, intelligibility, accentedness, and acceptability as a teacher for corresponding L1 speakers. I also calculated simple linear regressions to determine if familiarity with an L1 predicted ratings for comprehensibility, intelligibility, accentedness, and acceptability as a teacher.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Research Question 1

To answer the first research question, I calculated descriptive statistics of participants'

ratings of speakers as NS or NNS. These statistics revealed that NS participants, in general,

were more able than NNS participants to distinguish between NSs and NNSs. On average, NS

participants correctly identified the speakers' native status 91% of the time, as compared to NNS

participants, who correctly identified speakers only 68% of the time. Next, to see if these

differences were significant for each speaker, I calculated an independent samples *t* test. Results

from the *t* test revealed that in all cases, except for the British speaker, NS participants were

significantly better at determining the native status of the speaker. This was true for both the

familiar and unfamiliar lectures given by each speaker. Table 3 reports these results.

Table 3

Correct Identification of Speakers as NS or NNS by Participant Group (NS and NNS)

	Familiar					Unfamiliar				
	NS	NNS	*t*	df	Sig.	NS	NNS	*t*	df	Sig.
Midwestern	100%	61%	-7.649	91	0.000*	100%	69%	-6.44	93	0.000*
Southern	100%	83%	-4.368	93	0.000*	97%	77%	-4.06	130	0.000*
British	68%	58%	-1.124	72	0.265	60%	60%	-0.03	68	0.974
Chinese	97%	86%	-2.538	127	0.012*	100%	86%	-3.86	93	0.000*
Albanian	95%	57%	-5.960	127	0.000*	92%	42%	-7.37	117	0.000*

Note. An asterisk denotes a significant *p* value of less than .05. The percentages reflect the mean

for each participant group, which are also the percentage of participants who correctly identified

the speaker as a NS or NNS.

Table 4

Summary of Correct Identification of Speaker Accent by Participant Groups

		Participant Group	
		NNS of English	NS of English
Midwestern	Familiar	**38%**	**100%**
	Unfamiliar	**33%**	**89%**
Southern	Familiar	**12%**	**87%**
	Unfamiliar	**27%**	**63%**
British	Familiar	**30%**	**74%**
	Unfamiliar	38%	45%
Chinese	Familiar	56%	45%
	Unfamiliar	34%	39%
Albanian	Familiar	2%	11%
	Unfamiliar	**3%**	**21%**
Average	Familiar	**28%**	**63%**
	Unfamiliar	**27%**	**52%**

Note. Bolding across pairs denotes a significant difference between NS and NNS ratings.

To answer the latter part of the first research question, I calculated descriptive statistics on participants' guesses of speakers' accents. Table 4 is a summary of these results. Raw scores for correct and incorrect answers revealed that, for every lecture, NSs were better able to identify the accent of the speaker, and in six of the ten lectures, NSs were at least 17% more accurate in their identification of the speakers' accent. I then calculated independent sample *t* tests to see if the differences observed between participant groups were significant. Results revealed that differences between NS and NNS guesses were significant for the familiar Midwestern lecture, $t(130) = -12.52$, $p = .000$, the unfamiliar Midwestern lecture, $t(130) = -8.05$, $p = .000$, the familiar southern lecture, $t(130) = -11.60$, $p = .000$, the unfamiliar southern lecture, $t(130) = -3.99$, $p = .000$, the familiar British lecture $t(130) = -5.07$, $p = .000$, and the unfamiliar Albanian lecture, $t(130) = -2.57$, $p = .014$. Results for the averages were also significantly

Table 5

Group Statistics from an Independent Samples T-Test between NS and NNS Participants for Correct L1 Accent Guesses

Lecture	Participant Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Midwestern Familiar	NNS	94	**.372**	.4860	.0501
	NS	38	**1.000**	.0000	.0000
Midwest Unfamiliar	NNS	94	**.330**	.4727	.0488
	NS	38	**.895**	.3110	.0505
Southern Familiar	NNS	94	**.117**	.3232	.0333
	NS	38	**.868**	.3426	.0556
Southern Unfamiliar	NNS	94	**.266**	.4442	.0458
	NS	38	**.632**	.4889	.0793
British Familiar	NNS	94	**.298**	.4598	.0474
	NS	38	**.737**	.4463	.0724
British Unfamiliar	NNS	94	.372	.4860	.0501
	NS	38	.447	.5039	.0817
Chinese Familiar	NNS	94	.553	.4998	.0516
	NS	38	.447	.5039	.0817
Chinese Unfamiliar	NNS	94	.340	.4764	.0491
	NS	38	.395	.4954	.0804
Albanian Familiar	NNS	94	.021	.1451	.0150
	NS	38	.105	.3110	.0505
Albanian Unfamiliar	NNS	94	**.032**	.1767	.0182
	NS	38	**.221**	.4132	.0670

Note. The mean can be read as the percentage of participants that correctly guessed the accent of the speaker, where 1.00 equals 100% of the participants guessing correctly, and .00 equals 0% of the participants guessing correctly. Bolding denotes that NS and NNS participants' guesses were significantly different, as noted in Table 4.

Table 6

Independent Samples T- Test between NS and NNS Participants for Correct L1 Accent Guesses

							95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
		t	df					
Midwestern	Familiar	-12.521[a]	93.000	.000*	-.62766	.05013	-.72721	-.52811
	Unfamiliar	-8.053[a]	102.720	.000*	-.56495	.07016	-.70410	-.42580
Southern	Familiar	-11.888	130	.000	-.75140	.06321	-.87645	-.62635
	Unfamiliar	-3.992[a]	63.029	.000*	-.36562	.09159	-.54864	-.18260
British	Familiar	-5.008	130	.000	-.43897	.08765	-.61238	-.26556
	Unfamiliar	-.795	130	.428	-.07503	.09442	-.26183	.11177
Chinese	Familiar	1.099	130	.274	.10582	.09631	-.08471	.29636
	Unfamiliar	-.586	130	.559	-.05431	.09263	-.23757	.12895
Albanian	Familiar	-1.596[a]	43.661	.118	-.08399	.05263	-.19007	.02210
	Unfamiliar	-2.572[a]	42.583	.014*	-.17861	.06946	-.31872	-.03850

Note. An asterisk denotes statistically significant differences between NS and NNS participant guesses. a = equal variance was not

found, thus the *t* and *p* values reflect the Levene's test adjustment for that violation.

Table 7

Participant Guesses of Speaker Accent by Participant L1 Group

| | | Midwestern (Familiar) | | | | | | | |
| | | Accent Chosen by Participant | | | | | | | |
Participant Group	Participant L1	Midwestern	Southern	British	Chinese	Albanian	I don't know	Other	Total
NNS of English	Chinese	**16**	8	6	2	0	8	15	55
	Arabic	**10**	1	2	1	0	5	0	19
	Korean	**1**	2	0	0	0	2	1	6
	Other	**8**	0	1	0	1	2	0	12
	Total	**35 (38%)**	11 (12%)	9 (10%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	17 (18%)	16 (17%)	92
NS of English	English	**38**	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
	Total	**38 (100%)**	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	38
	Total	**73 (56%)**	11 (8%)	9 (7%)	3 (2%)	1 (1%)	17 (13%)	16 (12%)	130

		Midwestern (Unfamiliar)							
NNS of English	Chinese	**18**	12	2	2	1	13	8	56
	Arabic	**7**	3	1	0	0	7	1	19
	Korean	**2**	0	0	0	0	4	1	7
	Other	**4**	1	0	0	0	6	0	12
	Total	**31 (33%)**	16 (17%)	3 (32%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	30 (32%)	11 (12%)	94
NS of English	English	**34**	1	0	0	0	3	0	38
	Total	**34 (89%)**	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (8%)	0 (0%)	38
	Total	**65 (49%)**	17 (13%)	3 (2%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	33 (25%)	11 (8%)	132

Table 7 (cont'd)

Southern (Familiar)

Participant Group	Participant L1	Midwestern	Southern	British	Chinese	Albanian	I don't know	Other	Total
NNS of English	Chinese	29	**8**	1	2	0	7	9	56
	Arabic	12	**0**	0	1	0	6	0	19
	Korean	2	**1**	0	0	0	3	1	7
	Other	7	**2**	1	0	0	2	0	12
	Total	50 (53%)	**11 (12%)**	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)	18 (19%)	10 (11%)	94
NS of English	English	5	**33**	0	0	0	0	0	38
	Total	5 (15%)	**33 (87%)**	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	38
	Total	55 (42%)	**44 (33%)**	2 (2%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	18 (14%)	10 (8%)	132

Southern (Unfamiliar)

Participant Group	Participant L1	Midwestern	Southern	British	Chinese	Albanian	I don't know	Other	Total
NNS of English	Chinese	14	**18**	6	1	0	7	10	56
	Arabic	5	**4**	1	1	0	8	0	19
	Korean	1	**1**	0	0	0	4	1	7
	Other	5	**2**	1	0	0	4	0	12
	Total	25 (27%)	**25 (27%)**	8 (9%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	23 (24%)	11 (12%)	94
NS of English	English	10	**24**	0	0	0	3	1	38
	Total	10 (11%)	**24 (63%)**	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (8%)	1 (3%)	38
	Total	35 (27%)	**49 (37%)**	8 (6%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	26 (20%)	12 (9%)	132

Table 7 (cont'd)

British (Familiar)

Participant Group	Participant L1	Midwestern	Southern	British	Chinese	Albanian	I don't know	Other	Total
NNS of English	Chinese	3	5	**14**	3	2	10	19	56
	Arabic	3	3	**3**	0	0	8	2	19
	Korean	0	0	**4**	0	0	1	1	6
	Other	0	1	**7**	0	0	1	3	12
	Total	6 (6%)	9 (10%)	**28 (30%)**	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	20 (22%)	25 (27%)	93
NS of English	English	0	0	**28**	0	0	1	9	38
	Total	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**28 (74%)**	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	9 (24%)	38
	Total	6 (5%)	9 (7%)	**56 (43%)**	3 (2%)	2 (2%)	21 (16)	34 (26%)	131

British (Unfamiliar)

Participant Group	Participant L1	Midwestern	Southern	British	Chinese	Albanian	I don't know	Other	Total
NNS of English	Chinese	9	5	**17**	2	0	8	15	56
	Arabic	4	0	**6**	3	0	3	2	18
	Korean	1	0	**4**	0	0	2	0	7
	Other	0	1	**8**	0	0	0	3	12
	Total	14 (15%)	6 (6%)	**35 (38%)**	5 (5%)	0 (0%)	13 (14)	20 (22%)	93
NS of English	English	0	1	**17**	0	0	1	19	38
	Total	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	**17 (45%)**	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	19 (50%)	38
	Total	14 (11%)	7 (5%)	**52 (40%)**	5 (4%)	0 (0%)	14 (11%)	39 (30%)	131

Table 7 (cont'd)

<div align="center">Chinese (Familiar)</div>

Participant Group	Participant L1	Midwestern	Southern	British	Chinese	Albanian	I don't know	Other	Total
NNS of English	Chinese	1	3	0	**41**	0	5	5	56
	Arabic	3	0	1	**2**	0	9	2	18
	Korean	0	0	0	**4**	0	1	2	7
	Other	1	1	1	**5**	0	5	1	12
					52			10	
	Total	5 (5%)	4 (4%)	2 (2%)	**(56%)**	0	20 (22%)	(11%)	93
NS of English	English	0	0	0	**17**	1	6	14	38
					17			14	
	Total	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**(45%)**	1 (3%)	6 (16%)	(37%)	38
					69			24	
	Total	5 (4%)	4 (3%)	2 (2%)	**(53%)**	1 (1%)	26 (20%)	(18%)	131

<div align="center">Chinese (Unfamiliar)</div>

Participant Group	Participant L1	Midwestern	Southern	British	Chinese	Albanian	I don't know	Other	Total
NNS of English	Chinese	1	3	2	**25**	2	10	13	56
	Arabic	1	0	3	**2**	0	11	2	19
	Korean	0	0	0	**1**	1	4	1	7
	Other	0	0	0	**4**	0	5	3	12
					32			19	
	Total	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	5 (5%)	**(34%)**	3 (3%)	30 (32%)	(20%)	94
NS of English	English	0	0	0	**15**	3	5	15	38
					15			15	
	Total	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	**(39%)**	3 (8%)	5 (13%)	(39%)	38
					47			34	
	Total	2 (2%)	3 (2%)	5 (4%)	**(36%)**	6 (5%)	35 (27%)	(26%)	132

Table 7 (cont'd)

<p style="text-align:center">Albanian (Familiar)</p>

	Participant L1	Midwestern	Southern	British	Chinese	Albanian	I don't know	Other	Total
NNS of English	Chinese	12	5	0	8	**2**	11	17	56
	Arabic	6	2	0	2	**0**	7	1	18
	Korean	2	0	0	1	**0**	4	0	7
	Other	2	0	0	0	**0**	6	4	12
	Total	22 (24%)	7 (8%)	0 (0%)	11 (12%)	**2 (2%)**	28 (30%)	22 (24%)	93
NS of English	English	0	0	0	7	**4**	9	17	38
	Total	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (18%)	**4 (11%)**	9 (24%)	17 (45%)	38
	Total	22 (17%)	7 (5%)	0 (0%)	18 (14%)	**6 (5%)**	37 (28%)	39 (30%)	131

<p style="text-align:center">Albanian (Unfamiliar)</p>

	Participant L1	Midwestern	Southern	British	Chinese	Albanian	I don't know	Other	Total
NNS of English	Chinese	16	10	2	3	**1**	13	10	55
	Arabic	8	1	0	2	**0**	6	1	18
	Korean	4	1	0	0	**0**	1	0	6
	Other	2	0	0	0	**2**	5	3	12
	Total	30 (33%)	12 (13%)	2 (2%)	5 (5%)	**3 (3%)**	25 (27%)	14 (15%)	91
NS of English	English	1	0	0	3	**8**	7	19	38
	Total	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (8%)	**8 (21%)**	7 (18%)	19 (50%)	38
	Total	31 (24%)	12 (9%)	2 (2%)	8 (6%)	**11 (9%)**	32 (25%)	33 (26%)	129

Note. Bolded columns correspond with the correct accent. Percentages are calculated per participant group. Grand totals are calculated per total number of participants.

different between NSs and NNSs on the familiar lectures ($t(130) = 5.1139$, $p = .0001$) and on the unfamiliar lectures ($t(130) = 3.0147$, $p = .0031$). For full results, see Table 5 and Table 6. Table 7 is an expanded table that includes all accent guesses by participants.

Looking further into this question, I ran descriptive statistics for percentage of correct NNS ratings on nativeness and L1 accent by program level to uncover if there were differences in rating based on a participant's English proficiency level. Here, I was interested in looking specifically at students currently enrolled in English language courses (ESL2- intermediate low, ESL4-intermediate high, and ESL5- advanced low) and master's students (TOEFL[1] score of 100+). I did not include NNS participants from the VIPP or B.A. level because their proficiency level was not available. Results show that there were differences between these groups. Table 8 summarizes these findings, which are also graphically represented in Figure 1. These numbers show a clear trend; when proficiency level increases, ability to identify nativeness and accent increase.

Table 8

Percentage of Correct Identification of Nativeness and Accent by NNS Participants by Program Level.

	Nativeness		L1 Accent	
	Familiar	Unfamiliar	Familiar	Unfamiliar
ELC2	63%	68%	17%	20%
ELC4	66%	67%	25%	26%
ELC5	70%	61%	31%	27%
MA	83%	83%	40%	43%
Total	69%	67%	27%	27%

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[1] The TOEFL, or the Test of English as a Foreign Language, is an academic English proficiency test administered by Educational Testing Services. For more information, see the TOEFL
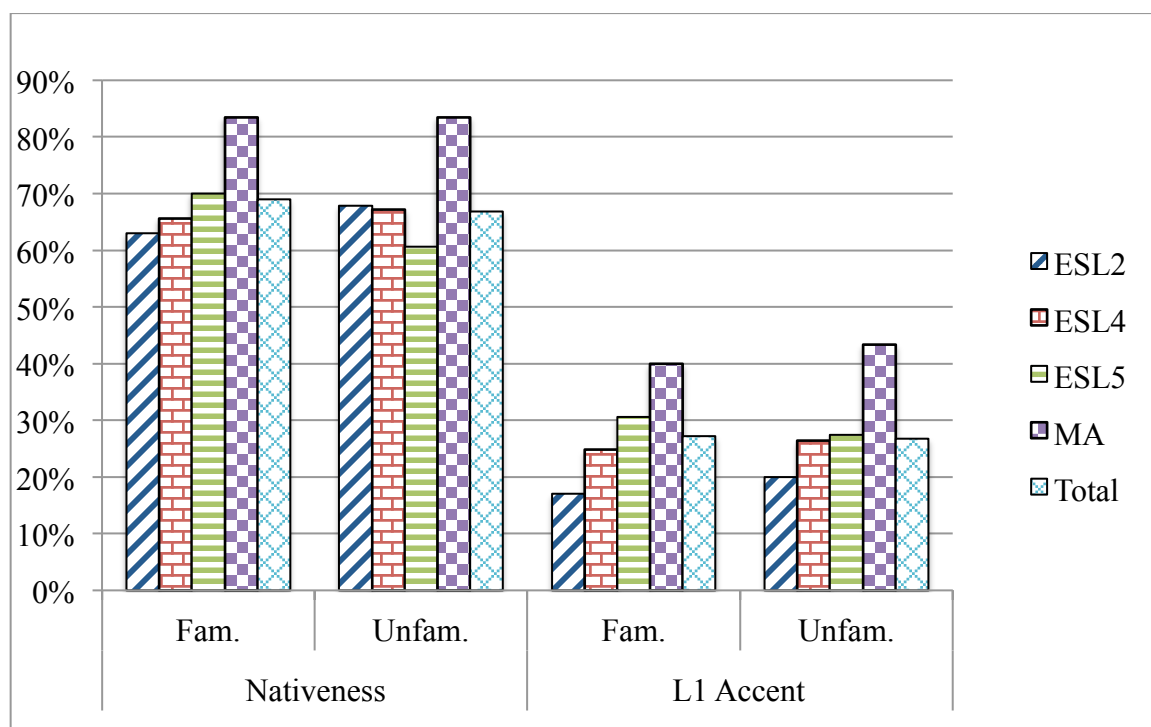
Figure 1. Percentage of correct identification of nativeness and accent by NNS participants by program level.

Note. For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this thesis.

The only exception to this trend that I found was when participants listened to the unfamiliar lecture and rated the speakers' nativeness. In this case, the scores for participants in ESL2, ESL4, and ESL5 were different than expected; ESL2 was higher than expected and ESL5 was lower than expected.

Research Question 2

To answer the second research question, I began by calculating Spearman's correlations to uncover significant relationships between students' reported familiarity with an L1 and their actual rating of the speakers' comprehensibility, intelligibility, accentedness, and acceptability as

a teacher, as shown in Table 9. The results show that the correlations between participants' self-reported familiarity with an accent and their actual ratings of the four variables were, at best, moderate (my benchmark for moderate being a coefficient ranging between .3 and .5, as outlined in Field (2009)). The strongest correlation was between Midwestern familiarity and comprehensibility of the familiar Midwestern lecture, r_s=.44, $p < .001$, followed by British familiarity and intelligibility of the unfamiliar British lecture, r_s=.41, $p < .001$, and Midwestern familiarity and acceptability as a teacher of the familiar Midwestern lecture, r_s=.40, $p < .001$. All other coefficients were less than .39. It is worthwhile, however, to note that, across the board, every correlation with Albanian was less than .10 and was not statistically significant. With all other accents, most (if not all) of the correlations ranged between .10 and .39. In addition, Midwestern familiarity was significantly correlated with every variable for both the familiar and unfamiliar lectures. Importantly, in terms of categorical variable correlation, familiarity correlated with comprehensibility and acceptability for both lectures (with the exception of Albanian), whereas accentedness and intelligibility revealed mixed results.

To obtain a deeper understanding of the answer to this research question, I also calculated simple linear regressions to see if familiarity with a particular accent would predict participants' ratings on the four variables when listening to a speaker of the accent. These linear regression results are provided in Table 10. Within each regression, I wanted to see if familiarity with an accent (the independent variables: Midwestern, etc.) was associated with the four dependent variables (comprehensibility, accentedness, intelligibility, and acceptability as a teacher) and if so, to what extent. Results showed that, for both the familiar and unfamiliar Chinese lectures, familiarity with Chinese was a significant predictor of ratings given on all four variables. With

the exception of accentedness, this pattern was also true of the British lectures. With the

exception of comprehensibility in the familiar lecture, familiarity with the Midwestern accent

was a significant predictor of all of the variables in both of the Midwestern lectures as

well. For Albanian and Southern, however, the results were quite different. For Albanian,

familiarity with the accent was not a significant predictor for any of the variables in either lecture.

Similarly, the Southern lectures did not show significant predictions, with the exception of

comprehensibility and acceptability for the unfamiliar lecture.

The strongest predictions between familiarity with an accent and ratings of the four

variables can been seen for the unfamiliar British lecture (comprehensibility, B=-.378;

accentedness, B=.177; intelligibility, B=-.395; and acceptability as a teacher, B= -.475), the

unfamiliar Chinese lecture (comprehensibility, B= -.418.; accentedness, B= -.322; intelligibility,

B= -.383; and acceptability as a teacher, B= -.406), and the unfamiliar Midwestern lecture

(comprehensibility, B=-.449; accentedness, B=.375; intelligibility, B=-.379; and acceptability as

a teacher, B= -.513). Here the B value, or the regression gradient, indicated the predicted

movement on the rating scale of the dependent variables as they relate to the rating given for

familiarity. In other words, if a participant moves one point up the familiarity scale (e.g. from 2

to 3), then the B value predicts that, in the case of acceptability as an English teacher in the

unfamiliar Midwestern rating, the rating will move negatively (toward a lower number, or

toward "acceptable") on the scale by 51% of one point (i.e. the rating for acceptability would

move half of a point toward "acceptable").

To answer the second half of the second research question, I calculated Spearman's

correlations to see if there were significant relationships between participants' ratings of

acceptability as a teacher with the other three variables. As shown in Table 11, results revealed

Table 9

Spearman's Correlations between Participants' Reported Accent Familiarity and Participants' Actual Ratings of Four Variables for

Corresponding Speakers

	Familiar Lecture				Unfamiliar Lecture			
	Comp.	Accent.	Intell.	Accept.	Comp.	Accent.	Intell.	Accept.
Midwestern Familiarity	-.269**	**-.368**	-.244**	**-.300**	**-.439**	-.295**	**-.397**	**-.403**
British Familiarity	-.293**	0.054	-.292**	-.245**	**-.341**	0.076	**-.408**	**-.306**
Southern Familiarity	-.178*	0.109	-0.144	-.203*	-.288**	-0.158	**-.303**	-.257**
Chinese Familiarity	-.217*	**-.320**	-0.126	-.212*	-.268**	-.225**	-.207*	-.277**
Albanian Familiarity	-0.021	0.073	0.015	-0.151	0.029	0.038	0.08	0.031

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Bolded coefficients are greater than or equal to .3.

Table 10

Familiarity as a Predictor for Participant Ratings of Comprehensibility, Accentedness,

Intelligibility, and Acceptability as a Teacher (Simple Linear Regressions)

Midwestern (Familiar Lecture)		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comp.	(Constant)	2.120	.397		5.342	.000	1.335	2.906
	Midwestern Familiarity	-.131	.098	-.118	-1.340	.183	-.325	.063
Accent.	(Constant)	4.475	.711		6.297	.000	3.069	5.882
	Midwestern Familiarity	-.422	.175	-.208	-2.403	.018	-.769	-.075
Intell.	(Constant)	2.079	.332		6.256	.000	1.421	2.736
	Midwestern Familiarity	-.152	.082	-.162	-1.859	.065	-.315	.010
Accept.	(Constant)	2.804	.391		7.169	.000	2.030	3.578
	Midwestern Familiarity	-.283	.097	-.251	-2.932	.004	-.474	-.092
Midwestern (Unfamiliar Lecture)								
Comp.	(Constant)	4.192	.491		8.534	.000	3.220	5.164
	Midwestern Familiarity	-.449	.121	-.309	-3.707	.000	-.688	-.209
Accent.	(Constant)	4.728	.633		7.470	.000	3.476	5.980
	Midwestern Familiarity	-.375	.156	-.207	-2.408	.017	-.684	-.067
Intell.	(Constant)	3.756	.498		7.544	.000	2.771	4.741
	Midwestern Familiarity	-.379	.123	-.261	-3.088	.002	-.621	-.136
Accept.	(Constant)	4.562	.570		8.003	.000	3.434	5.690
	Midwestern Familiarity	-.513	.140	-.305	-3.654	.000	-.791	-.235

Table 10 (cont'd)

Southern (Familiar Lecture)		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comp.	(Constant)	1.899	.277		6.846	.000	1.350	2.448
	Southern Familiarity	-.124	.075	-.144	-1.660	.099	-.273	.024
Accent.	(Constant)	2.873	.553		5.192	.000	1.778	3.968
	Southern Familiarity	.008	.149	.005	.054	.957	-.288	.304
Intell.	(Constant)	1.771	.246		7.199	.000	1.284	2.258
	Southern Familiarity	-.109	.066	-.143	-1.644	.103	-.241	.022
Accept.	(Constant)	2.012	.278		7.227	.000	1.461	2.563
	Southern Familiarity	-.133	.075	-.153	-1.767	.080	-.282	.016

Southern (Unfamiliar Lecture)

		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comp.	(Constant)	2.483	.338		7.347	.000	1.815	3.152
	Southern Familiarity	-.199	.091	-.188	-2.181	.031	-.380	-.019
Accent.	(Constant)	3.701	.527		7.019	.000	2.658	4.744
	Southern Familiarity	-.247	.142	-.150	-1.733	.086	-.528	.035
Intell.	(Constant)	2.293	.317		7.230	.000	1.666	2.921
	Southern Familiarity	-.151	.086	-.152	-1.759	.081	-.320	.019
Accept.	(Constant)	2.667	.371		7.187	.000	1.933	3.401
	Southern Familiarity	-.215	.100	-.185	-2.145	.034	-.413	-.017

Table 10 (cont'd)

British (Familiar Lecture)		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comp.	(Constant)	2.908	.351		8.293	.000	2.214	3.601
	British Familiarity	-.234	.100	-.201	-2.327	.022	-.433	-.035
Accent.	(Constant)	4.270	.560		7.622	.000	3.161	5.378
	British Familiarity	.132	.161	.072	.820	.414	-.186	.449
Intell.	(Constant)	2.497	.288		8.677	.000	1.927	3.066
	British Familiarity	-.239	.082	-.247	-2.898	.004	-.402	-.076
Accept.	(Constant)	3.340	.419		7.975	.000	2.511	4.168
	British Familiarity	-.292	.120	-.209	-2.433	.016	-.529	-.055

British (Unfamiliar Lecture)

		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comp.	(Constant)	3.650	.387		9.426	.000	2.884	4.416
	British Familiarity	-.378	.111	-.287	-3.407	.001	-.597	-.158
Accent.	(Constant)	4.006	.548		7.310	.000	2.922	5.091
	British Familiarity	.177	.157	.099	1.130	.261	-.133	.488
Intell.	(Constant)	3.377	.319		10.592	.000	2.746	4.008
	British Familiarity	-.395	.091	-.356	-4.324	.000	-.575	-.214
Accept.	(Constant)	4.096	.443		9.256	.000	3.220	4.971
	British Familiarity	-.475	.127	-.314	-3.752	.000	-.726	-.225

Table 10 (cont'd)

Chinese (Familiar Lecture)		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comp.	(Constant)	3.031	.332		9.118	.000	2.373	3.688
	Chinese Familiarity	-.217	.088	-.212	-2.461	.015	-.392	-.043
Accent.	(Constant)	5.971	.526		11.347	.000	4.930	7.012
	Chinese Familiarity	-.492	.140	-.296	-3.515	.001	-.768	-.215
Intell.	(Constant)	2.398	.295		8.118	.000	1.814	2.982
	Chinese Familiarity	-.181	.079	-.199	-2.302	.023	-.336	-.025
Accept.	(Constant)	4.121	.463		8.891	.000	3.204	5.037
	Chinese Familiarity	-.306	.123	-.214	-2.485	.014	-.550	-.062

Chinese (Unfamiliar Lecture)

Comp.	(Constant)	4.558	.415		10.975	.000	3.737	5.380
	Chinese Familiarity	-.418	.111	-.314	-3.773	.000	-.637	-.199
Accent.	(Constant)	5.649	.480		11.776	.000	4.700	6.598
	Chinese Familiarity	-.322	.128	-.216	-2.519	.013	-.576	-.069
Intell.	(Constant)	3.907	.404		9.665	.000	3.107	4.707
	Chinese Familiarity	-.383	.108	-.298	-3.555	.001	-.597	-.170
Accept.	(Constant)	5.023	.518		9.704	.000	3.999	6.047
	Chinese Familiarity	-.406	.138	-.250	-2.938	.004	-.679	-.133

Table 10 (cont'd)

Albanian (Familiar Lecture)		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comp.	(Constant)	2.143	.256		8.372	.000	1.636	2.649
	Albanian Familiarity	-.020	.158	-.011	-.128	.898	-.333	.292
Accent.	(Constant)	3.466	.380		9.122	.000	2.715	4.218
	Albanian Familiarity	.384	.235	.143	1.638	.104	-.080	.848
Intell.	(Constant)	1.850	.226		8.199	.000	1.404	2.297
	Albanian Familiarity	-.101	.139	-.064	-.725	.470	-.377	.175
Accept.	(Constant)	2.863	.271		10.547	.000	2.326	3.400
	Albanian Familiarity	-.303	.168	-.157	-1.806	.073	-.634	.029

Albanian (Unfamiliar Lecture)

		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Comp.	(Constant)	2.202	.284		7.757	.000	1.640	2.764
	Albanian Familiarity	.084	.176	.042	.476	.635	-.265	.433
Accent.	(Constant)	3.069	.366		8.390	.000	2.345	3.793
	Albanian Familiarity	.158	.227	.061	.694	.489	-.292	.608
Intell.	(Constant)	1.899	.266		7.134	.000	1.372	2.425
	Albanian Familiarity	.096	.165	.051	.580	.563	-.231	.423
Accept.	(Constant)	2.247	.301		7.472	.000	1.652	2.842
	Albanian Familiarity	.057	.187	.027	.306	.760	-.313	.427

that, across the board for both familiar and unfamiliar lectures, acceptability as a teacher showed, at the very least, a small correlation for those that were noted as significant (which includes 68 of the 70 correlations), with the correlation coefficients ranging from r_S=.19 to r_S=.86. For accentedness of both lectures, 12 of the 20 ratings were moderately (.3 to .5) to highly (.5 and above) correlated, with correlation coefficients ranging from r_S=.32 to r_S=.67. Notably, neither lecture for the British speaker had a moderate or stronger correlation (ie. these correlations were weak, at best). Also, for the Albanian and Southern lectures, either one or both of the lectures showed small correlations. For intelligibility, 18 of the 20 ratings were moderately to highly correlated, with the correlation coefficients ranging from r_S=.32 to r_S=.84. The only lectures that did not show this trend were the unfamiliar Chinese and Albanian lectures. Finally, comparing acceptability ratings between the familiar and unfamiliar lectures, the correlation coefficients were moderate to strong across the board, ranging from r_S=.49 to r_S=.63.

Table 11

Spearman's Correlations between Participants' Ratings of Acceptability as a Teacher and Comprehensibility, Intelligibility, and

Accentedness

		Midwestern Acceptability		Southern Acceptability		British Acceptability		Chinese Acceptability		Albanian Acceptability	
		Fam.	Unfam.	Fam.	Unfam.	Fam.	Unfam.	Fam.	Unfam.	Fam.	Unfam.
Comp. (Fam)	Correlation Coefficient	.619**	.437**	.724**	.471**	.708**	.515**	.583**	.382**	.603**	.445**
Accent. (Fam)	Correlation Coefficient	.499**	.556**	.381**	.252**	.195*	0.161	.337**	.204*	.339**	.260**
Intell. (Fam)	Correlation Coefficient	.726**	.531**	.711**	.530**	.579**	.470**	.458**	.322**	.537**	.475**
Accept. (Fam)	Correlation Coefficient	1	.493**	1	.556**	1	.632**	1	.598**	1	.507**

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Table 11 (cont'd)

		Midwestern Acceptability		Southern Acceptability		British Acceptability		Chinese Acceptability		Albanian Acceptability	
		Fam.	Unfam.	Fam.	Unfam.	Fam.	Unfam.	Fam.	Unfam.	Fam.	Unfam.
Comp. (Unfam)	Correlation Coefficient	**.427****	**.858****	**.609****	**.689****	**.496****	**.671****	**.413****	**.704****	**.341****	**.710****
Accent. (Unfam)	Correlation Coefficient	**.378****	**.673****	**.361****	**.556****	0.053	.215*	**.315****	**.457****	.208*	**.476****
Intell. (Unfam)	Correlation Coefficient	**.473****	**.839****	**.586****	**.762****	**.562****	**.685****	.295**	**.634****	.282**	**.569****
Accept. (Unfam)	Correlation Coefficient	**.493****	1	**.556****	1	**.632****	1	**.598****	1	**.507****	1

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A bolded coefficient means that it is .3 or larger and could be considered a moderate (or stronger) correlation.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this study, I sought to gain a greater understanding of student attitudes toward NSETs and NNSETs by testing their accent perception ability and by assessing their reactions to a variety of native and non-native accents. The first research question is as follows: 1a) Are ESL learners able to distinguish between native and non-native speakers of English? 1b) If so, could the ESL learners identify the speakers' accents? Answering these questions gives insight into students' ability to differentiate between English accents (including native and non-native accents), and also helps to shape the interpretation of the results of the second research question, which focuses on participants' attitudes about each type of English accent as related to their exposure to a given accent. The second research question is as follows: 2a) Do students who are familiar with a particular accent rate speakers differently in terms of comprehensibility, intelligibility, accentedness, and acceptability as a teacher? 2b) If so, is how they rate related to their attitudes about acceptability as an English teacher?

Research Question 1

As shown in Figure 2, NNS participants were usually able (68% of the time) to correctly identify a speaker as being native or non-native. Notably, however, NNS participants were significantly less able than NS participants, who made correct identifications 91% of the time. In looking at the correct identification of accent, however, these percentages dropped; NNS were only able to correctly identify an accent 28% of the time, and NS, 57%. This was different from the findings of Derwing and Munro (1997), who found that NNSs were able to correctly identify an accent 52% of the time. In their study, participants had a forced choice between the four accents, which likely made it easier to identify the accents and could explain the higher percentage of correct identification. Similar to the current study, in Derwing and Munro's study,
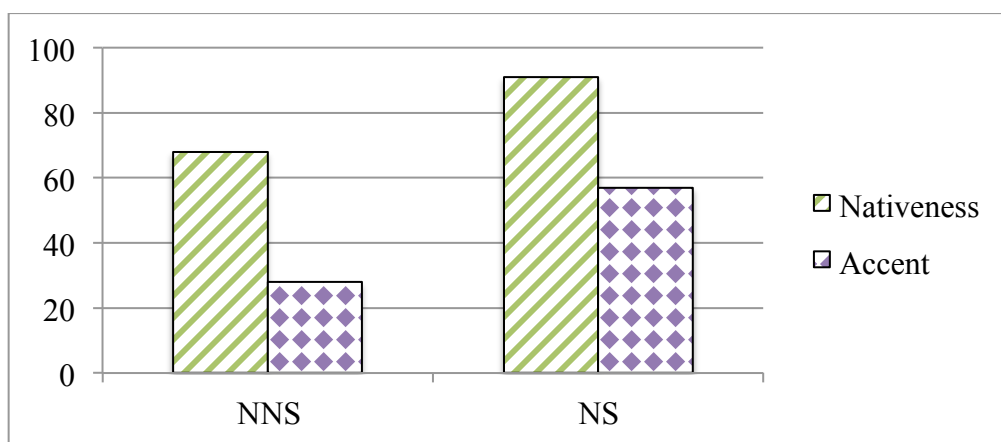
36

Figure 2. Percentage of correct identification of nativeness and accent by NNS and NS participants.

a sizable portion of incorrect guesses were given to languages or accents from the same language family (e.g. Chinese and Japanese, Spanish and Italian). This could account for a portion of the incorrect guesses, but what other factors could explain this low rate of correct identification on the part of both NS and NNS participants?

One possible explanation is discussed in Moussu's (2010) study of student attitudes. She conducted a beginning and end-of-the-semester survey of ESL student attitudes toward their NSETs and NNSETs. A review of the latter survey revealed that, even after spending an entire semester with a teacher (and having lived in the U.S. for a semester or more), some students could not correctly identify whether their own teacher was a NSET or a NNSET. The students were clearly familiar with their teacher's accent (and the American accent spoken in their greater community), so factors other than familiarity with the accent were influencing their identification of the teachers' native status. Moussu hypothesized that this misidentification could have been related to the teachers' appearances or presentation styles. In the current study, as in Moussu's study, many of the students had spent a semester or more in the U.S. and would undoubtedly

have spent a great deal of time being exposed to the local accent (in this case, the Midwestern accent). However, Moussu's explanation would not fit the current situation because the current participants lacked familiarity with the speaker and lacked visual cues that might influence their decisions.

Another possible explanation for this difference was given in the Scales et al. (2006) study, in which 62% of the ELL participants indicated that they wanted to acquire a native-like accent, yet only 29% of the students were able to identify an American accent. Similarly, in the current study, 40% of the ELLs indicated wanting to acquire a native-like accent, but only 30% of learners were able to identify the native English speakers (Midwestern, Southern, and British). As Scales et al. wrote, there was a "mismatch between these learners' own accent goals and their ability to perceive accents" (p. 728). This mismatch between an idealized accent by a student and the lack of ability to identify the real accent could partially account for the significant differences seen between NSs and NNSs participants in the current study.

A number of the factors cited in previous research, such as language families, visual cues, teaching style, and a distorted perception of a native accent, could potentially account for the inability of some participants to correctly identify a speakers' nativeness (whether they are a native or non-native speaker) and their specific accent. I hypothesize, however, that there are two additional factors that could account for this. As shown in Table 8 and Figure 1, there is a clear trend that shows that as proficiency increases, the ability to distinguish between native and non-native accents and the ability to identify specific accents also increases. As a student becomes more proficient in English, their capacity to notice nuances in pronunciation is also likely to increase, which would explain why more proficient ESL speakers are more adept at detecting accent differences.

Research Question 2

In the second research question, I asked whether students who are familiar with a particular L1 rate speakers differently in terms of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and accentedness, and acceptability as a teacher. Perhaps the most strongly evidenced claim that I can make based on the correlation results, provided in Table 9, is that familiarity with an accent is significantly related to a student's judgment of how easy it is to understand a speaker of that accent and a student's judgment about the speaker's acceptability as a teacher. Both of these variables (comprehensibility and acceptability as a teacher) were positively correlated with familiarity; in other words, the more familiar a participant was with an accent, the easier it was to understand the speaker, and the more acceptable the speaker was as a teacher. This relationship between familiarity and comprehensibility aligns with results by Gass and Varonis (1984), who clearly showed that familiarity facilitates comprehension. This observation is further supported by Winke, Gass and Myford (2013), who demonstrated that accent familiarity contributes to comprehension.

Looking deeper into the relationship between comprehensibility and acceptability as a teacher is also telling. In looking at the correlations between these two factors, every correlation was significant, and was moderate to strong, with a coefficient ranging between .341 and .858. The relationship between intelligibility and acceptability as a teacher patterned similarly, with coefficients ranging between .282 and .839. These positive correlations are not surprising, considering that the easier it is to understand a teacher (or, in terms of intelligibility, the more of a teacher's speech a student is able to understand), the more likely a student is to rate the teacher as acceptable as a teacher. Similar results were also born out in Scales et al.'s (2006) study, where they found that comprehension was a high priority for students, and the students tended to

prefer an accent (or teacher) if the teacher's accent was easy to understand (p. 725).

The results for the linear regressions, provided in Table 10, were also telling. While familiarity with an accent was not a significant predictor of ratings on the four variables in every case, it was overwhelmingly a significant predictor of the four variables for the Midwestern, British, and Chinese accents. Where these were significant predictions, however, the effect sizes were small. In other words, a one-point movement on the familiarity scale would, at most, predict a half-a-point movement on the scales for the four variables. For example, if a student rated themselves as being very familiar with an accent (5), then they would be likely to move 2.5 points down the scale for acceptability as a teacher (toward acceptable, 1). Considering that the four variables are ranked on a 9-point scale, this type of .5 movement seems rather inconsequential. Putting this in classroom terms, if two students of the same proficiency level are assigned to a classroom with a NNSET whose L1 is Chinese, and one student is very familiar with a Chinese accent and the other student is not, their ability to understand the teacher may only be mildly different, as is the case with their attitude toward the acceptability of the teacher, based on accent alone.

This classroom scenario is especially interesting in light of Moussu's (2010) findings: in her study, students' attitudes toward their NNSETs became more positive over the semester. This scenario is also supported by Gass and Varonis (1984), who found that familiarity with a speaker, with non-native speech in general, and with a non-native accent in particular, all facilitate comprehension. As seen in the current study, comprehension and acceptability as a teacher are positively correlated, meaning that (drawing on Moussu's findings) the more a student interacts with their NNSET teacher, (and also drawing on Gass and Varonis,) the easier it will be to understand their teacher, and (drawing on the current study,) the more positively the

students will view their teacher. While this may be true on paper, we know that ESL classes are not a vacuum devoid of other factors that would influence a student's attitude toward their teacher; yet the evidence is nonetheless compelling in suggesting that the current study showed that students' judgments of the strength of a teacher's accent influences the students' view on whether they find the teacher acceptable as a teacher. As shown in the correlations in Table 11, accentedness and acceptability as a teacher correlated (small to moderate) with the exception of the British accent. However, as discussed in the previous paragraph, even if a teacher was viewed as having a moderate to strong accent, their students may gradually understand more and more of the teacher's speech, and the students will understand the teacher with greater ease over time.

Alford and Strother (1990), who asked NS and NNS participants to listen to speech samples and rate them on bipolar adjectives scales (e.g. professional/non-professional, intelligent/unintelligent, etc.), found that ELLs were able to detect differences in accents. These were extrapolated from differences in their expressed attitudes toward the speakers of different accents. In other words, students used different adjectives to describe different accents, and the researchers interpreted this as evidence of the students being able to differentiate between accents. These results also clearly showed that they did have different attitudes toward accented English. Though the ELL participants in the current study were largely unable to overtly decipher a speakers' nativeness and accent, like Alford and Strother's findings, the students' varied ratings of acceptability as a teacher for different speakers does evidence differences in attitudes based on accent.

Unfamiliar Accents

In general, there were some inconsistencies in the data that mostly revolved around the

Albanian accent and the Southern accent. One explanation for the variations found in relation to these accents is that, for Albanian, the vast majority of the participants had no exposure to Albanian and could not place Albania on a map. This was true for NS and NNS participants alike. Because this language is relatively novel to the participants, I assume that some participants were blindly guessing accents, or that some were making educated guesses, drawing from other semantically related or phonologically related languages (i.e. Indo-European languages, particularly Balto-Slavic or Germanic languages). This could explain the large variance in results for the Albanian accent.

For the southern accent, during data collection, many of the NNS students asked what a southern accent was (what it sounded like), or if it was the same as a South American accent. This confusion or misunderstanding could likely have been experienced by many more participants, and thus could be a possible explanation for the variation in the Southern accent data. Whereas ratings for Albanian and Southern varied widely in the data, the results for Midwestern, British, and Chinese were undoubtedly more consistent. This consistency could be attributed to a greater general knowledge or general true familiarity with these cultures and accents, whereas ratings for Albanian and Southern could have been compromised by the misunderstanding and general unawareness that was noted during collection. Another important note about familiarity is that participants rated themselves as being most familiar with the British accent. This could be explained by the largest NNS groups represented in their participant population, Chinese and Saudi. The educational systems in these countries largely train their students in Received Pronunciation, also know as standard British English, which accounts for the high reporting of British familiarity. I would contend, however, that many of these students only have a superficial exposure to Received Pronunciation. For example, students in China

often are strong readers, but lack oral communicative competence due to the lack of focus on speaking and listening in the Chinese classroom. For both of these groups (Chinese and Saudi), the majority have never studied abroad, or even traveled outside of their countries, and have very limited experience with spoken English. I would, therefore, assume that students have overreported their familiarity with the British accent, and have perhaps underreported their familiarity with the Midwestern accent (especially since the majority of the NNSs had lived in the Midwest for 6 months or more at the time of data collection). For reference, a graph of the composite self-reported ratings is given in Figure 8, Appendix F.
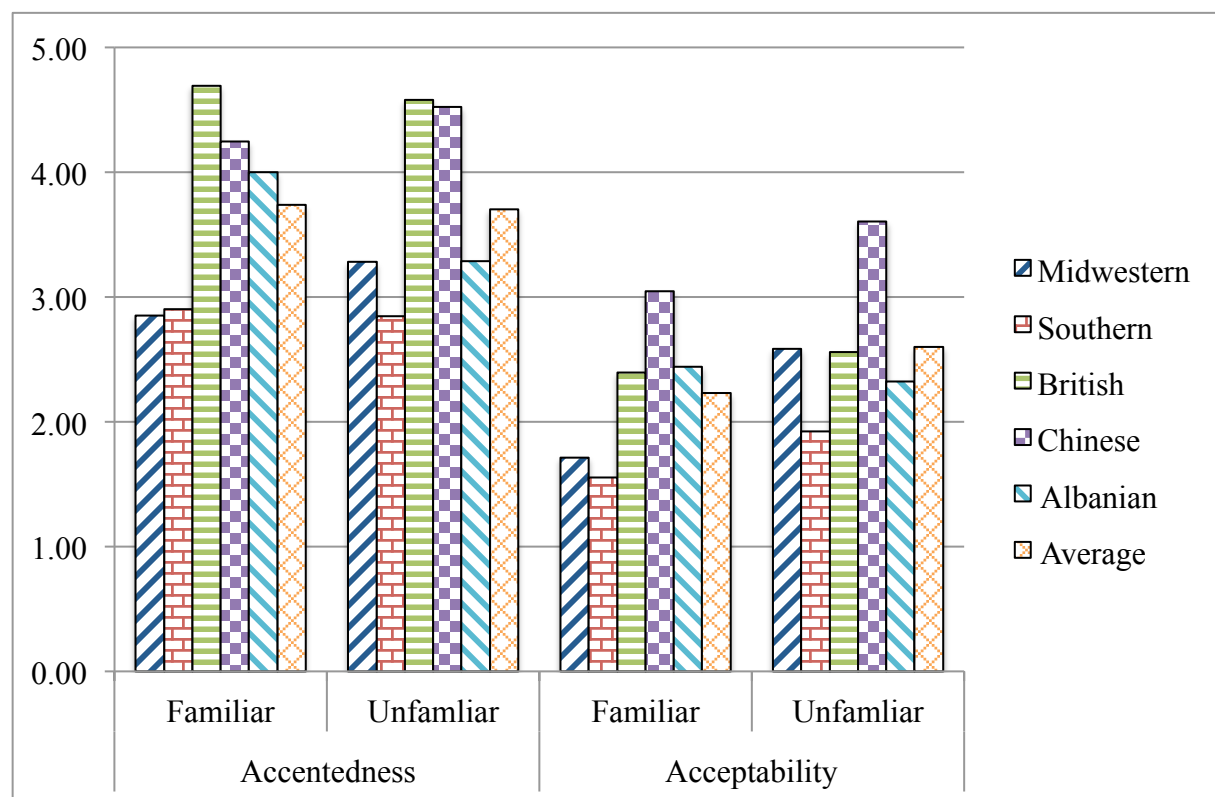
Figure 3. Composite ratings of accentedness and acceptability as a teacher by all participants.

Note. 1= Acceptable as an English teacher/No accent. 9= Not acceptable as an English teacher/Strong Accent.

Inconsistences aside, participants' ratings have clearly shown that accentedness is not synonymous with being an *unacceptable teacher*. Ratings for accentedness were higher than ratings for acceptability as a teacher, shown in Figure 3. On average, participant ratings for accentedness of the familiar and unfamiliar lectures were 3.74 and 3.70, respectively (where 1 is "no accent" and 9 is "very strong accent"), and ratings for acceptability as a teacher were 2.23 and 2.60, respectively (where 1 is "acceptable" and 9 is "not acceptable"). The ratings for acceptability were an average of 1.5 and 1.0 points lower than participants' ratings of accentedness. These ratings, relative to one another, reveal a general acceptance and positive attitude toward teachers with any type of accent.

Students' acceptance of accented teachers provides evidence that challenges the assumptions of language center administrators, such as in Moussu's (2010) study, which reported that one of the major factors in hiring English language teachers is their native speaker status. Many administrators claim that they continue in these hiring practices because of "native speaker demand" on the part of students. Results in this study, however, provide insight into student attitudes toward NNSETs, based on their accents, which shows that student attitudes toward NNSETs are generally positive.

Assuming that students do have a positive attitude toward NNSETs, Clarke and Garrett (2004) provided further evidence in support of Moussu's findings; Clarke and Garrett found that listeners quickly adapt to new accents, and applying this to the current study, students will adapt to the accents of their teachers. In their study, they investigated how long it takes NSs to adapt to foreign-accented English speech, and found that NSs can adapt to accented speech in as little as one minute. Presumably, the speech processing load placed on NNSs as they listen to English would be much heavier, and would therefore take NNSs longer to adapt to accented speech. This,

however, provides added insight into Moussu's finding, as discussed earlier, and could be a possible explanation of why students' attitudes toward their NNSETs became more positive as students were exposed to their teachers' speech over the semester. This process is also supported by the current research, which shows that familiarity, comprehensibility, and students' attitudes about a teacher' acceptability are all related.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In this study, I have sought to extend previous research on accentedness, native versus non-native speaking English teachers, and ESL student attitudes. As previously outlined, ESL students were usually able to distinguish between native and non-native speakers. However, they were generally not able to identify a speaker's accent. Some factors that might explain this inability to identify speakers are a confusion of languages in a language family, misconceptions concerning native accents, and a student's proficiency level. Results further uncovered that familiarity is correlated with comprehensibility and acceptability as a teacher. In this study, comprehensibility, intelligibility, and acceptability were highly correlated with one another. For truly familiar accents, familiarity was a significant predictor of participant ratings on the four variables (comprehensibility, intelligibility, accentedness, and acceptability as a teacher), though the predicted changes in ratings were small. The current research shows that students had generally positive attitudes toward NNSETS; based on previous research, students' attitudes toward their NNSETs only become more positive over time, and students may quickly perceptually adapt to their accented teachers, if they are willing to do so (Derwing, Rossiter, & Munro, 2002). Finally, this research has shown that accentedness does not, in the minds of students, translate to unacceptability as a teacher.

Limitations

Like any study, this research has its limitations. One is that the survey was long. The fatigue that students experienced from answering the same questions again and again could have resulted in a lack of concentration. A second limitation is that the audio clips embedded in the survey were not limited to a single play. This means that students could have listened to any audio file as many times as they wanted (though they were instructed to listen only once), which

could have given some students an unequal advantage. Finally, during one round of data

collection, the participants experienced technical difficulties with the survey, which frustrated

the participants. This also could have influenced how they approached the survey and the

answers that they gave.

Implications

I believe that the implications of these findings are most pointed for the hiring practices

(or in the case of Arizona, firing practices) of schools and language centers; as the results have

shown, student attitudes toward NNSETs were generally positive, and even when students

indicated that a teacher had a pronounced accent, the students still demonstrated a positive

attitude toward the teachers by rating them as acceptable. This shows that, from a student's

perspective, other factors may more heavily influence a student's attitude toward a teacher and

whether or not a teacher is acceptable. As TESOL[2] also argued, teachers should be hired on the

basis of their professional credentials, such as professionalism, teaching experience, and English

proficiency as a whole.

Educators should also consider what is best for students. Given the nature of diversity at

any university, the rapid growth of EIL and ELF, the overpowering number of non-native

English speakers, and the purposes for which many students are learning English, it is in a

university or a program's best interest to expose students to a wide range of global Englishes. As

shown in this study, as in many previous studies, a familiarity with an accent leads to greater

comprehension or intelligibility of language spoken with that accent (Gass & Varonis, 1984;

Winke, Gass, & Myford, 2013; Harding, 2012; Derwing & Munro, 1997) and this would benefit

students as they encounter various native and non-native speakers of English throughout the span

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[2] Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. For more information, see www.tesol.org.

of their academic, personal, and professional lives.

Directions for Future Studies

Even though the results of this study show quantitatively that students' attitudes towards their teachers are not largely based on accent, qualitative research needs to be done to corroborate this finding. In addition, though accent adaptability research has been done with NSs, further work that investigates the amount of time it takes ELLs to adapt to a new accent could provide insight into accent dynamics. This type of information could corroborate evidence based on comprehensibility, intelligibility, and attitudes toward encountering new accents.

APPENDICES

Table 12

Participants by Nationality

		Chinese	Emirati	Saudi	Thai	Korean	Mexican	American	Spanish
NNS of English	Male	42	1	10	1	4	1	0	0
	Female	14	0	7	2	3	1	0	1
	Total	56	1	17	3	7	2	0	1
NS of English	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	0
	Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	38	0
Total	Male	42	1	10	1	4	1	5	0
	Female	14	0	7	2	3	1	33	1
	Total	56	1	17	3	7	2	38	1

		Indonesian	Israeli	German	Japanese	Turkish	Canadian	Libyan	Total
NNS of English	Male	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	62
	Female	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	32
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	94
NS of English	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33
	Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
Total	Male	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	67
	Female	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	65
	Total	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	132

Appendix B

Familiar Topic Transcript: Orientation on Classroom Expectations

So, what do your teachers expect from you in your classes? The teachers expect that students will attend class. They also expect that students will participate actively in class. This means interacting with classmates, asking questions, and answering with critical thinking. The teachers also expect that you will do your own work. This means you won't use the Internet or have others help you to do the homework you were assigned to do. Because you are expected to do your own work, you will have to spend a lot of time and effort on your homework and assignments. You must take the time outside of class to work on improving your language skills. The English Language Center wants you to be successful! We, your teachers and advisors, will help you, but you are also responsible for your success!

Appendix C

Unfamiliar Topic Transcript: How to Make Pottery

Now that you've kneaded it out and gotten all of the bubbles out of the clay, you can now move to the wheel where we'll actually throw the clay. Okay, that doesn't mean you're throwing the clay at each other. It means you're putting it on a spinning wheel and it will take the shape and form of what you want by using your hands as the tools to guide them. Okay, so you'll place the clay onto the clay pot, or the thrower, and turn it on. And as it turns, it's going to spin around, and it's all controlled by your foot, so however fast you want the clay to spin, it's all controlled by a foot pedal. The faster, the more pressure you'll put on the pedal, the slower, the less pressure, okay? (Adapted from Sueyoshi & Haridson (2005))

Appendix D

Dictation Task Sentences

1. Since I prefer rice, I never eat pasta.

2. Because he cooks dinner, she often washes dishes.

3. Although they like chicken, they sometimes order steak.

4. When we have salad, we usually finish everything.

5. If she has cake, she always drinks milk.

6. Though you love desserts, you frequently refuse cookies.

7. Although he likes milk, he rarely drinks milkshakes.

8. While we make breakfast, they usually check email.

9. Unless she finds blueberries, she always uses strawberries.

10. Because she drinks coffee, she never chooses tea.

11. Even though I eat fish, I never eat sushi.

12. If they buy bread, they seldom get wheat.

13. Whenever you bake muffins, you normally burn them.

14. Wherever they sell salt, they always sell pepper.

15. As we eat lunch, we occasionally watch TV.

16. Until he has breakfast, he seldom does work.

Sample Listening Page

Sample Listening Tasks from Survey

▶ 00:00 ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ 00:00 ·(·ıllll|

Listen to this audio file ONE TIME.

1. How easy was it to understand this speaker? (please choose one number):

	1 (Very easy to understand)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 (Very difficult to understand)
Comprehensibility	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

2. How strong is this person's accent? (please choose one number):

	1 (No accent)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 (Very strong accent)
Accentedness	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

▶ 00:00 ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ 00:00 ·(·ıllll|

Listen to this audio file ONE TIME.

3. How much of this speech did you understand? (please choose one):

	100% (I understood everything)	88%	76%	54%	42%	30%	19%	10%	0% (I didn't understand anything)
Intelligibility	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

4. How acceptable is this speaker as an English teacher? (please choose one number):

	1 (Acceptable as a English teacher)	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 (Not acceptable as an English teacher)
Acceptability as an English teacher	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

▶ 00:00 ———————————————— 00:00

5. Listen to this audio file ONE TIME. Then, in the box below, type exactly what you hear.

[   ]

6. I think that this person is a:

○ native English speaker

○ non-native English speaker

7. I think that this speaker's nationality is:

○ Albanian   ○ I don't know

○ American (Midwestern)   ○ Indian

○ American (Southern)   ○ Japanese

○ Australian   ○ Malagasy

○ British   ○ Nigerian

○ Chinese   ○ Spanish

○ French

Appendix F

Additional Figures
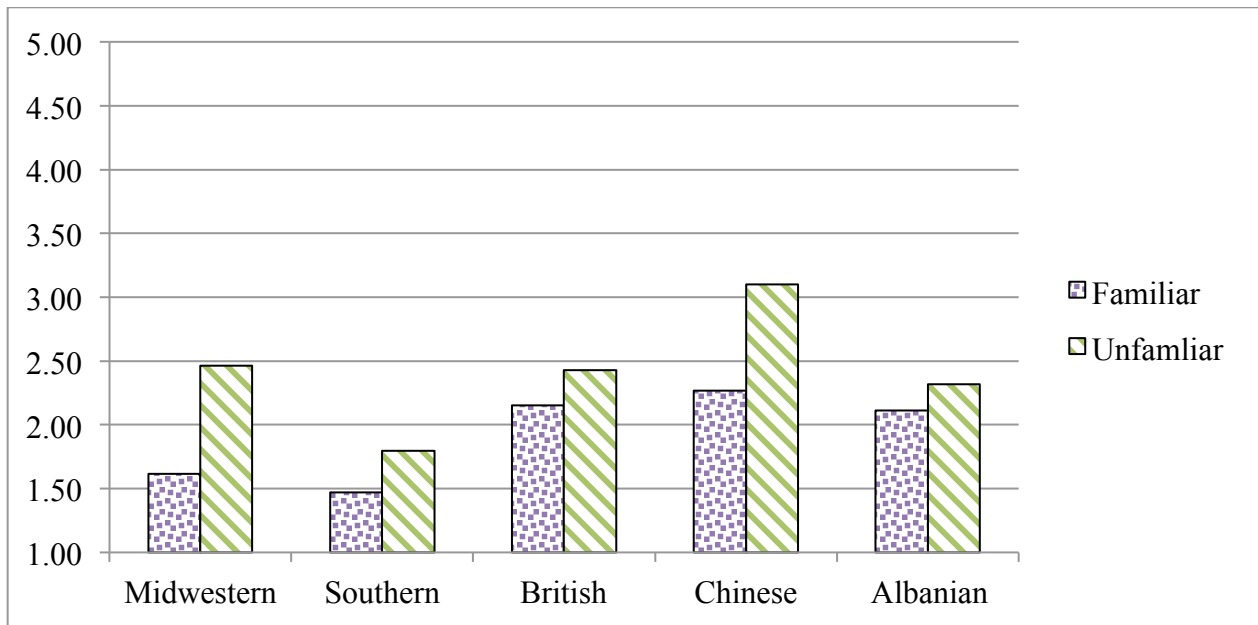
Figure 4. Composite ratings of comprehensibility by all participants.

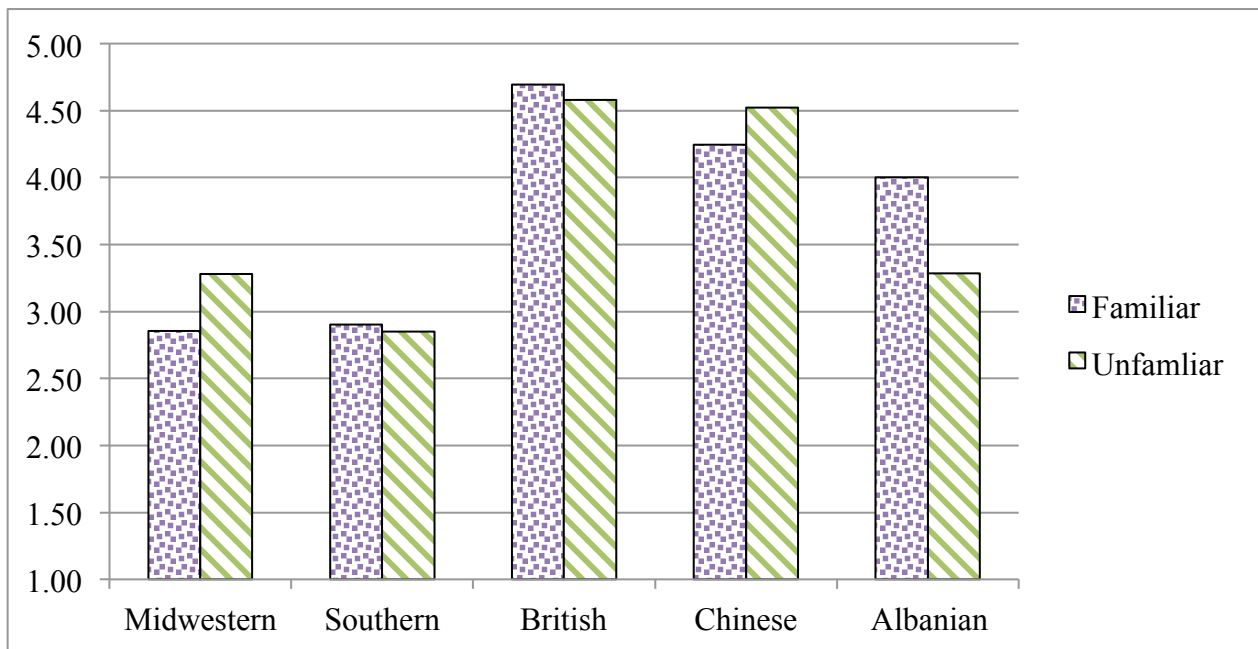*Note.* 1= Very easy to understand. 9=Very difficult to understand.

Figure 5. Composite ratings of accentedness by all participants.
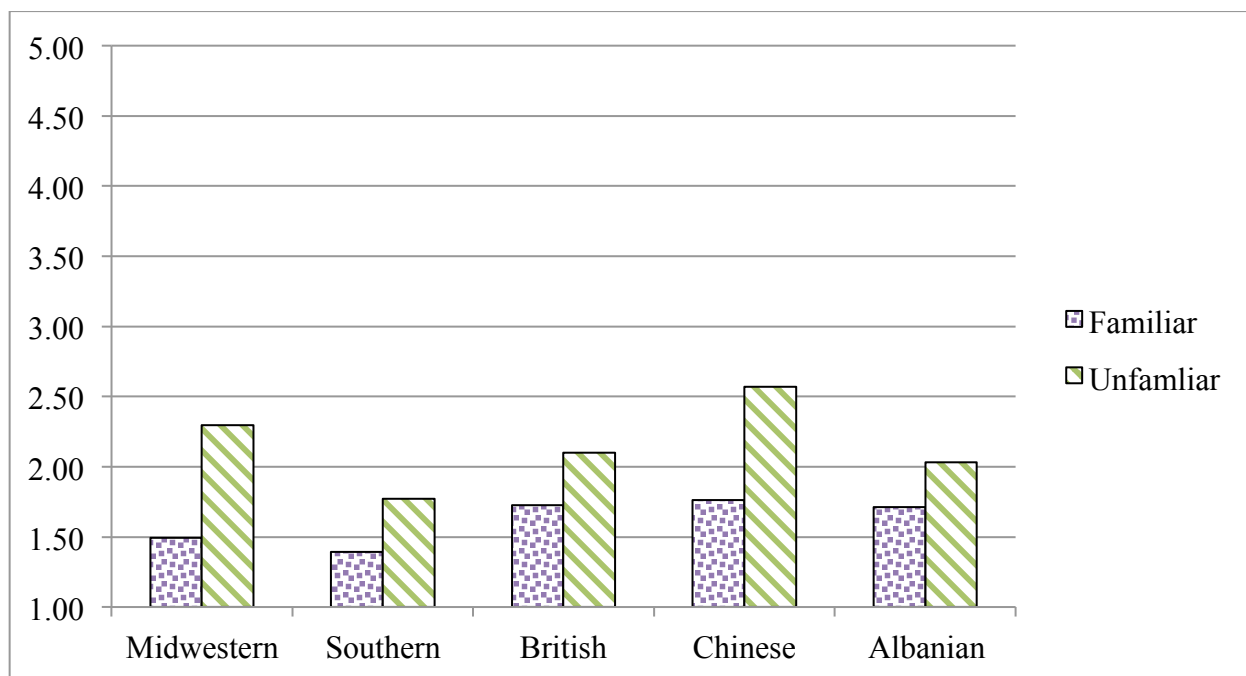
Note. 1= No accent. 9= Very strong accent.

Figure 6. Composite ratings of intelligibility by all participants.

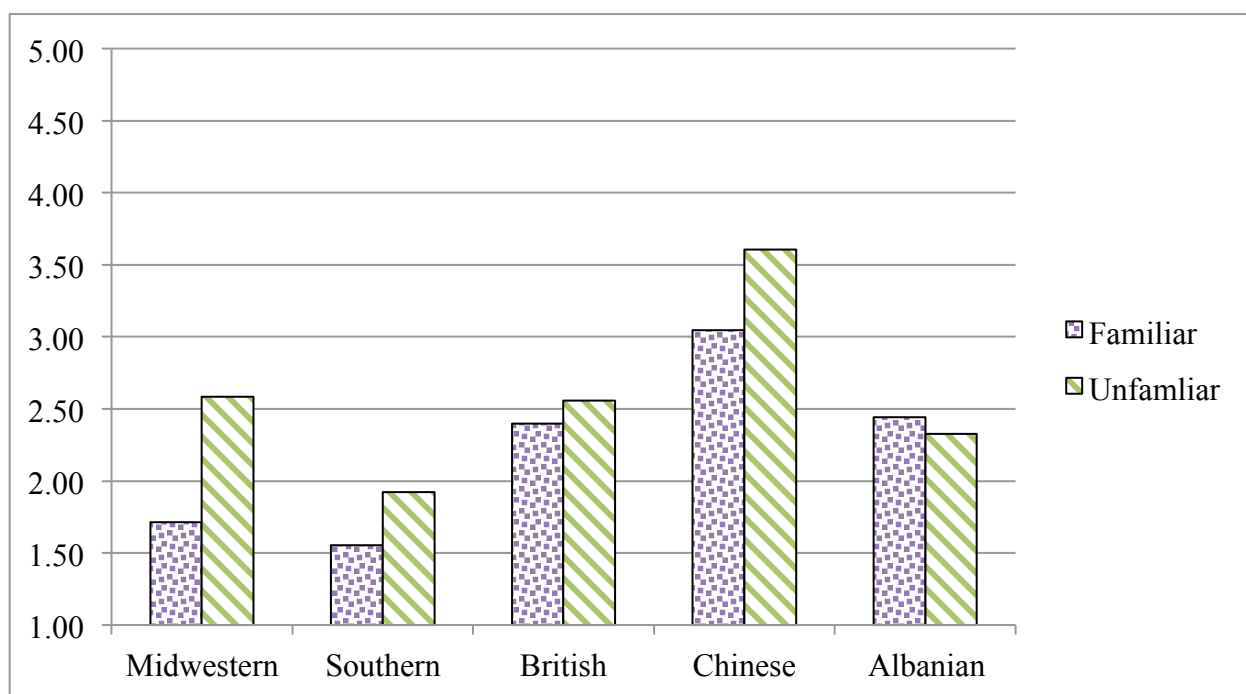*Note.* 1= I understood everything. 9= I didn't understand anything.

Figure 7. Composite ratings of acceptability as a teacher by all participants.

Note. 1= Acceptable as an English teacher. 9= Not acceptable as an English teacher.
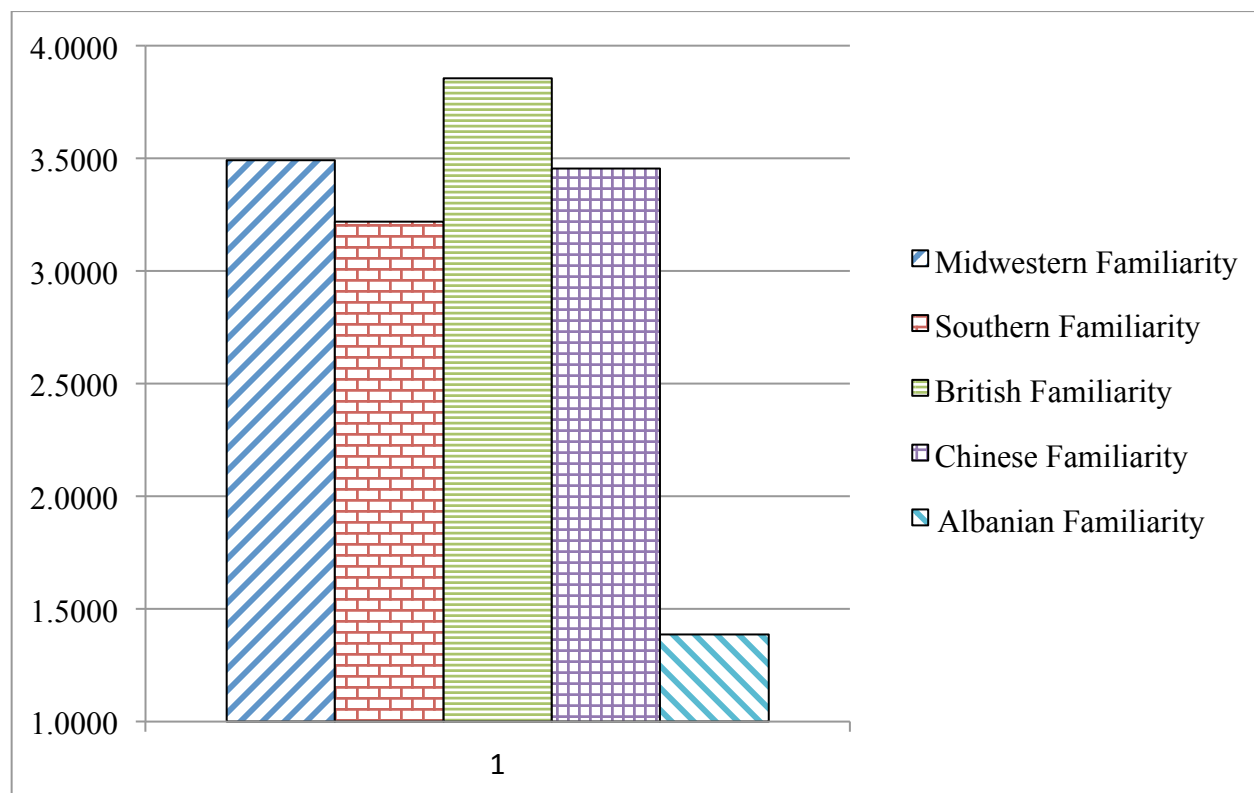
Figure 8. Composite ratings of familiarity with accents by all participants.

Note. 1= Not familiar. 5= Very familiar.

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