”Poison or Spice in the Language?”

A Study of the Attitudes of Finnish University Students of English Philology towards Different Accents of English

Noora Sallinen
Tampere University
School of Modern Languages and Translation Studies
English Philology
Pro Gradu Thesis
September 2009

Tampereen yliopisto
Englantilainen filologia
Kieli- ja käännöstieteiden laitos

SALLINEN, NOORA: *”Poison or Spice in the Language?”* A Study of the Attitudes of Finnish University Students of English Philology towards Different Accents of English

Pro gradu -tutkielma, 80 sivua + liitteet (8 sivua)
Syksy 2009

Tässä tutkielmassa käsitellään kieleen kohdistuvia asenteita eri englannin aksenttien näkökulmasta. Tutkimuksen teoreettisena lähtökohtana pidetään ristiriitaa, mikä on syntynyt englannin kielen muuttuneesta asemasta maailmassa ja siitä seurannutta eräiden aksenttivarianttien suosimista toisten kustannuksella. Englannin kielen leviäminen globaalin kaupan ja teollisuuden, poliittisen vallan sekä liikkuvuuden ja verkostoitumisen helpottumisen myötä on johtanut siihen, että enemmistö englannin kielisestä kommunikaatiosta nykyään on kahden tai useamman sitä ei äidinkielenään puhuvan välistä. Seurauksena tästä englantia toisena tai vieraana kielenään puhuvien aksentit eri puolilla maailmaa ovat muokkautuneet kauas natiivipuhujanormista, saaden vaikutteita esimerkiksi puhujansa äidinkielestä. Tämä ei kuitenkaan ole muuttanut uusiin variantteihin suhtautumista myönteisemmäksi samassa suhteessa. Perinteisesti arvossa pidetyt britti- ja amerikanenglannin standardit aksentit ovat edelleen suosituimmat esimerkiksi kielenopetuksen piirissä, ja niihin pyritään siitäkin huolimatta, että puhujan ei ole ymmärryksen kannalta välttämätöntä tai edes mahdollista saavuttaa sellaista aksenttia.

Aihetta on tutkittu Suomessa aiemmin, mutta lähinnä lukioikäisten kielenoppijoiden ja kieltenopettajien kannalta. Iso osa kansainvälisestä tutkimuksesta taas on pureutunut tutkimaan englantia äidinkielenään puhuvien asenteita vierasperäisiä aksentteja kohtaan. Tästä syystä tutkimus, joka keskittyy selvittämään suomalaisten yliopisto-opiskelijoiden asenteita, koettiin tärkeäksi. Tutkimuksen kohderyhmänä olivat Tampereen yliopiston englantilaisen filologian opiskelijat. Tarkoituksena oli selvittää, mitä mieltä he ovat omasta englannin aksentistaan, millaisia asenteita heillä on eri aksentteja kohtaan ja mitkä seikat näyttäisivät vaikuttavan näihin asenteisiin. Tutkimuksessa haluttiin myös selvittää, olisiko ensimmäisen vuoden opiskelijoiden ja opintojensa loppuvaiheessa olevien opiskelijoiden asenteiden välillä eroja ja miten aksentin vierasperäisyys vaikuttaa sen ymmärrettävyyteen. Opiskelijat kuuntelivat ohjatusti kuusi eri englannin aksenttia nauhalta, joista jokaisen kuullun jälkeen he vastasivat kyselyyn. Aksentit valittiin The Speech Accent Archive – nettisivustolta ja niistä kaksi oli natiivipuhujien ja neljä englantia toisena tai vieraana kielenä puhuvien.

Tulokset osoittavat, että brittienglannin aksentti on suosituin variantti näiden yliopisto-opiskelijoiden keskuudessa, mutta moni tunnistaa oman aksenttinsa olevan altis useammalle vaikutteelle. Enemmistö oli kuitenkin sitä mieltä, että sekä omassa puheessaan että muiden aksenteissa ymmärretyksi tuleminen on natiiviaksentin omaksumista tärkeämpää. Molemmat tutkimuksen natiiviaksentit hyväksyttiin ehdoitta sekä arvioitiin muita helpommiksi ymmärtää, mutta ne eivät suinkaan olleet pidetyimmät variantit kaikkien tutkimukseen osallistuneiden kesken. Opiskelijan ikä tai opintojen vaihe ei suoraan osoittautunut ratkaisevaksi tekijäksi asenteiden suvaitsevaisuudessa vaan tärkeimmäksi osoittautui henkilön kokemus erilaisista aksenteista, joko ulkomailla oleskellessa tai muissa kontakteissa eri äidinkieltä puhuvien kanssa.

Avainsanat: lingua franca englanti, aksentti, asenne, ymmärrettävyys, hyväksyminen

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

There is no denying that English is a true World Language. It is spoken by hundreds of millions of people around the world and its different varieties are constantly growing in number and strength. Crystal (2003, 67-69) sheds light on the statistics: there are approximately 400 million native speakers of English in the world, English-based pidgin and creole varieties included. The number of *English as second language* (L2) speakers is only slightly higher, reaching an estimated 420 million, but it is the *English as foreign language* (EFL) speakers that form the majority totalling in roughly 750 million. English is connecting people not only in the United States and United Kingdom, but also on political ground in the United Nations, in the academic world, global trade, media and the World Wide Web, and in more than 70 countries, such as India and Nigeria, where it has been granted a "special status" alongside hundreds of native languages (ibid., 4). As the ratio of 1:3 of every native to non-native speaker suggests, situations where English is chosen for communication by people who do not share the same *first language* (L1) are rapidly increasing, both intranationally and internationally.

Evidently the changes brought by these second language and English as a foreign language based *New Englishes* are moulding the language to a direction different from the native usages (Jenkins 2002). It goes without saying that in a situation as the one we are now facing, mutual understanding among the different native language influenced varieties is harder and harder to achieve, and yet, perhaps more important than ever. This is even more so in pronunciation, since it is there where L1 transfer is seen most clearly. As the role of non-native speakers of English has become drastic in shaping the future of English, the importance of language education in ensuring intelligibility is also seen in a spotlight. Whether it is best to continue teaching the language with a native and standard speaker model as a goal, as has been the tradition until now, or turn the page and offer the learners the tools they need to understand different varieties and to be understood themselves, without demanding a native-like accent, is something that has to be resolved.

But language does not only serve the purpose of getting the message through. For many of us, the way we speak is an important marker of our identity. As Jenkins states, feelings of personal or group identity are closely tied to the way we speak (2003, 37) and hanging on to that personal twitch helps to let others know where we come from and belong to, both geographically and socially. Hence it is easy to see why mimicking a native-like accent seems unpleasant and irrelevant for some speakers of English. How then are the users of English able to manage this controversy when learning and using the language? And when they do reach a compromise between intelligibility and identity, is it still accepted by others? It is said that spoken language and foreign or unfamiliar accents tend to provoke immediate attitudinal reactions and have quite an influence on the perceptions of one's interlocutors. Unfortunately, and yet very typically for us human beings, these accents are not rated equally; it seems that the colonial echoes of the British and American standard varieties being the most prestigious are still heard across the seas.

The aim of this study is to tackle the existing controversy between having the right to speak different accents of English, and being understood and accepted by the rest of the great English speaking community. This will be done by focusing on examining how Finnish university students of English philology perceive different accents of English, in other words, what are their attitudes towards these native and non-native accents. To what extent is variation tolerated and to what extent does it affect intelligibility? It is of importance to find out how future language experts, some of whom will work as language teachers, feel about English in this context. It is only by accepting and acknowledging different ways of pronouncing English that the overall view of World English accents will start to widen and spread. The study will also concentrate on finding out what seem to be the factors behind different attitudes, how the students feel about their own accent and whether there are any differences between first year students and students closer to graduation in this respect. Here the previous studies of the opinions of Finnish high school students and Finnish teachers of English are used as reference. Comparison with similar research in other countries will

be done as well.

Chapters 2-4 introduce the theoretical background for the study and some previous research closely related to the topic. Chapter 5 then concentrates on the actual study. Conclusion and final remarks are found in chapter 6.

2. English as a World Language

To begin with, there are quite a few terms that need to be defined before going on to discuss English in international contexts. Let us start with what determines a *world language*. Brutt-Griffler (2002, 110) offers the following explanation: firstly, a world language must have econocultural functions in the global society. ‘Econocultural’ is one way for saying that the language is economically or commercially in a central position and has also a cultural or intellectual role. Secondly, a world language possesses the “transcendence of the role of an elite lingua franca”. The last two features include the coexistence with other languages in bi- or multilingual contexts and language change via the processes of world language divergence and convergence. English meets all these requirements, as will become explicit in the rest of this chapter.

Another term in frequent use is *English as a lingua franca* (ELF). It is a relatively new notion in the history of linguistics (Jenkins 2007, 109), although during the recent years, it has been quite a hot topic for conversation and in publications. The term *lingua franca* refers to a language that is used in communication by people who do not speak the same native language (ibid., 2-3). As was stated in the Introduction, this is exactly what English has become for many as a consequence of its changed status in the world today. Wardhaugh (1998, 55-56) points out that a lingua franca language “can be spoken in a variety of ways” and gives the historical Vulgar Latin as an example. In addition, he mentions that the users' skills in the lingua franca can vary considerably. The question of whether or not to include native speakers (NSs) in the concept of ELF has been treated from several different perspectives but has not quite reached a consensus. Jenkins (2007, 1-2) offers one solution: in her opinion, NSs are not excluded from ELF but are not included either in the data collection and are not a reference point in ELF interactions. Seidlhofer (2005) treats English as a lingua franca as a separate variety of English and conforms to Jenkins’s view of it being a *contact language*. She goes on to say that “defined in this way, ELF is a part of the more general phenomenon of `English as an international language´ (EIL) or `World Englishes´” (Seidlhofer

2005, 339). Together with `English as a global language´, `English as a world language´ and `World English´, EIL has been used as a "general cover term" for uses of English within and across Kachru's (1985, 12) *Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles*. According to him, *Inner Circle* refers to countries where English is spoken as the mother tongue, like the UK and New Zealand, and *Outer Circle* refers to former colonies of Britain, where English still plays a major role, for example India and Sri Lanka. The term *Expanding Circle* is used when talking about countries where English is a foreign language studied for international communication and acts as a major vehicle of globalisation. This is the case with for instance China and Finland.

The question of who can be labelled a native speaker complicates the situation a little further. Higgins (2003, 616) argues that since no single norm for Standard English exists anymore (for more, see section 2.2.), this seems to be more of a social construction than a linguistic parameter. This is true of course, because for example the Outer Circle countries have both native and non-native speakers of English and also people for whom English can be a first, second or a foreign language. According to Higgins (ibid., 617), though, some linguists like Kachru, to name but one, consider the Institutionalised Varieties of English of the Outer Circle countries non-native speaker varieties. In the end, Seidlhofer reminds us that whenever English is spoken by people who do not share the same first language (L1), when it is used "across linguacultural boundaries", English as a lingua franca is the preferred term (2005, 339). In spite of that, the terms English as a lingua franca, English as an international language and World English are used interchangeably in this study, due to the variation in some of the other studies referred to.

To clarify, the different varieties discussed in this thesis do not include *English-based pidgins and creoles* unless specified. The difference between for example lingua franca English and an English-based creole is the following. All creole languages are based on a pidgin language, that is to say, on a language chosen for example for trade purposes, when there is no common language. So far the same applies for lingua franca. But a pidgin is not necessarily any existing language, as is

English or French used for lingua franca purposes, but can have been developed of features of two or more native languages involved in the contact situation. When a pidgin becomes the mother tongue of a new generation, it no longer is a pidgin but becomes a creole language. Brutt-Griffler (2002, 134) presents her reason for differentiating pidgins and creoles from New Englishes. She states that a pidgin is a restricted or a minimal language without full functional and linguistic range. The reverse is true of New English varieties. Furthermore, new varieties remain second languages whereas a creole is a mother tongue. Lastly, the acquisition of a pidgin and a new variety takes place in a different type of a situation: pidgins are generally acquired in natural settings and New Englishes through education. Linguistically speaking, English-based creoles like *Tok Pisin* in Papua New Guinea are languages of their own but sociolinguistically they belong to the world's English speaking community (Graddol 1997, 10).

2.1. Spread of English

Historically speaking, the English language has been in the hands of only two nations: United Kingdom, the greatest of all the former colonial empires; and the USA, world’s leading economy in the twentieth century. Taking turns in spreading political views, knowledge and the gospel they have ensured that English is known all over the globe. Widdowson (1994, 377) wittily calls this the result of “a luxuriant growth of an imperial seed”. Interestingly, on an earlier occasion he has said that English is a world language “by a historical accident” (in Brumfit 1982, 13). Probably both have a seed of truth in them.

Ever since its origins on the British Isles, English has been on the move, so to speak. It has constantly changed, being affected by the language of the new rulers of the island after each conquest: the Romans, the Anglo-Saxon tribes, The Scandinavian Vikings and last, the French. It is justifiable to say that English is a *hybrid language* (Graddol 1997, 5) and that language contact has been an important driver of its change. This is proved by for instance the numerous loanwords that

established their place in English already hundreds of years back. At the time of Old and Middle English, the language was spread from the area now known as England and almost made the old Celtic languages in Scotland, Wales and Ireland obsolete. As a world language, the story began with the first settlements in America at the beginning of the 17th century (ibid., 6). From there on, English was taken to Australia and New Zealand with the English speaking immigrants. In United States, it was not only English speakers who invaded the new continent, of course, but as sometimes may happen, the other native languages were at least partially forgotten in the quest for a new start in life and a new identity (Wardhaugh 1987, 5). Brutt-Griffler (2002, 11) points out that in addition to migration, another important way in the spread of English was *macroacquisition*, which refers to the social side of language spread. In other words, English has been spreading to a great extent because of, and thanks to, second language learning and social acquisition. Brutt-Griffler here refers to language spread outside the British Isles, but education has played its part also in the linguistic history of the United Kingdom itself. Honey speaks of the educated class in helping a standard accent spread (1989, 17) and of the role of the public school system as a unifying force in the same task later on (ibid., 27).

The first of the main vehicles in the global spread of English, however, was military and imposing in nature: the British imperialistic reign. What started in the 17th and 18th centuries in India and other parts of South-East Asia for example, did not finish until the returning of Hong Kong to China in 1997. The effects of the politics are clearly reflected in the Asian zone today. Wardhaugh (1987, 7-8) compares the colonial motives of France and England and interestingly points out that whereas the French saw their language as a tool in enlightening and civilizing the colonial tribes, as they were often called those days, the English considered the reason for spreading their language a pragmatic one and did not wish the imposed people to adopt British identity.

Around the time of World War I, the colonial empire of the British had started to fall apart and USA to gain ground in the world economy. The impact of this change in global power was different

compared to that of British imperialism; in order to trade with the United States, one had to be able to use English and this time it was the learners' desire, not imposed on them. The medium of language spread was not, however, solely finance and commerce, although it can be said to have been commercial. Music, films and other forms of leisure and especially the youth culture in the 20th century have played a part in more and more non-native speakers of English becoming acquainted with the language. The United States also quickly became world leader in the development of science and technology (Wardhaugh 1987, 13-14).

But the British Empire is now a thing of the past and the citizens of the USA have had to witness the Asian tigers catching up on the race for the next global economic power. What the current status of these two super powers is can be debated upon but one thing is still clear: English remains as the language that the sun never sets upon (Crystal 2003, 75). As a result, different forms of written and spoken English, varying according to their level of standardisation and on the continuum of native norms versus non-native characteristics have emerged around the world. Although, already back in the 1980's, Kachru (1986, 13) claimed that these "new nativized (non-native) varieties have acquired an ontological status and developed localized norms and standards", there continues to be a lot of confusion and disagreement as to what their status really is. In the case of the so called native varieties of Australia and South-Africa, for example, an agreement has been reached a long time ago, but the latest comers to the language family, New Englishes, International English or English as a lingua franca still need to face some turbulence. Some linguists have treated them as interlanguages, others as standard languages. It is of course true that all Englishes have distinctive characteristics from "mother English", that is, English in Great Britain. Nigerian English, Canadian English and even Euro-English[1] can each be defined based on, for instance, the accent their speakers have. Furthermore, if not a native speaker of English, the accent is always

[1] The term 'Euro-English' is used to refer in general to the phenomenon of European citizens using L2 English in intercultural communication with each other, sometimes even at the expense of minority languages. What is more, the English spoken on the European mainland presents some distinctive but consistent characteristics that are against the traditional native norms. In this respect, it can be compared to English as a Lingua Franca. For example Modiano (2006) offers a nice introduction to the topic and its on-going discussion (see also Jenkins 2003).

affected by the speaker's mother tongue. It must be pointed out though that any speaker of any language in the world has their own personal accent (Honey 1989, 1) and thus no national or group accent can be defined exhaustively. Partly because of history, partly because of general associations and partly because of aesthetic impressions, accents of English are rated differently, depending on the point of reference and the person rating them. Some people compare the accents of lingua franca English to dialects, but instead of dialects within a country, these operate on international level (Crystal 2003, 144). According to others, vocabulary and perhaps grammar are influenced by most variation, but pronunciation would not be that much in a risk (ibid., 146). The biggest controversy seems to be whether these new varieties of English are seen as "poison or spice in the language", quoting Andersson & Trudgill (1990, 50). Honey (1989, 15) tells us that ever since Shakespeare was born, there has already been an idea of what correct pronunciation of English should be like. Naturally this pronunciation was associated with "good birth and education", but also with London and its closest surrounding areas. Today the majority of English accents represent everything else but these qualities, something that has upset the native speakers. This is the case especially with those who feel very strongly about their ownership of the language and do not agree with the direction English is developing in (Crystal 2003, 2). The very first comments on "language decay" were directed towards the mother tongue variants of American, Australian and Canadian Englishes, which were criticised for developing in the wrong direction (Kachru 1986, 27). This leads us already to the discussion of two unfortunate phenomena: *linguistic imperialism* (Phillipson 1997) and *linguistic purism* (Thomas 1991). Before that, bear with us for one moment to have a glimpse of some of the scenarios presented of what will be the future development of World English.

Several linguists have presented their view of the future of English. Despite the drastic changes in the language so far, Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 157-8) argue that the growth of linguistic diversity has now come to a turning point and that the future will be one of increasing uniformity, both in linguistics and culture. Crystal (2003, 177) predicts a multidialectal and/or

multilingual future for English and refers to what happened to Latin hundreds of years back. Graddol (1997, 56), on the other hand, assures “there is no need to fear” for too much fragmentation of English since there have always been major differences between the varieties. He also remarks that language teaching will take care of what is necessary to maintain a world standard in vocabulary and grammar, areas which are taught without much variation. Then again, he emphasizes that the future of English will be more complex, more demanding on part of understanding and more challenging for native speakers than what has been expected so far (ibid., 3). Crystal further proposes the idea of a *World Standard Spoken English* (WSSE), which would not alter the status of English from its current state but simply mean that one dialect enables communication between speakers of different varieties (2003, 185). This view is partly shared by Brutt-Griffler (2002, 179-181): she suggests there should be a world speech community, to which the local communities would refer to for standards and where the different varieties of English would be equal.

2.1.1. Linguistic Imperialism

Phillipson (1992) discusses imperialism and linguistic imperialism in particular in the context of *English language teaching* (ELT) starting from the colonial times to our time. Phillipson's opinion is that we are, unfortunately, currently living in a world characterized by inequality – of gender, nationality, race, class, income, and language. He sees the teaching of English language, an “educational aid”, as having been a part of modernization but also in the construction of these inequalities. (1992, 46-47).

Nowadays the general theories on imperialism include also the political, social and ideological dimensions of exploitation in addition to the traditional economic point of view (Phillipson 1992, 46). *Linguistic imperialism*, in the context of English, is a phenomenon where “the dominance of English is assured and maintained by the establishment and continuous

reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (ibid., 47). These inequalities can have both material and immaterial, or ideological, properties. According to Phillipson, attitudes belong to the ideological side of inequalities and this way are a result of linguistic imperialism as well (for more of attitudes, see chapter 3). The fact that linguistic imperialism exists, benefits those proficient in English - or any other language for that matter. Mastering English equals power. It gives access to or has a dominant position in science, technology, medicine, and computers; research books, periodicals, and software; transnational business, trade, shipping, and aviation; diplomacy and international organisations; mass media entertainment, news agencies, and journalism; youth culture and sport; and finally, education (ibid., 6). Other examples of the benefits the standard language ideology creates and maintains are the popularity of the English language and culture, or *anglocentricity*, as well as the claimed superiority of pedagogy and professionalism of native English speaking language teachers. This could not be more clearly expressed by the numerous books and other material for EFL teaching published in the UK and US and the insecurity that non-native teachers of English experience towards their own abilities as language experts. The gatekeepers are definitely keeping an eye on the industry.

In spite of the strong control, however, every now and then throughout the years there have not been enough (native) resources to put into education and the English taught around the world has not been acquired similarly (Brutt-Griffler 2002, 38). Another case of perhaps unplanned results of imperialism is the English speaking and educated elite of the former colonial countries acting as the head of the anti colonial movement (ibid., 73-4). Suddenly the language of oppression turned into "language of liberation".

The other, certainly harsher view, on the native and standard English language being better than for example New Englishes or a very stigmatised, although native, local variety of English will be briefly discussed next.

2.1.2. Linguistic Purism

Thomas (1991, 3) says it short and clear: *linguistic purism* is a theory of what a language should be like. Purism is essentially *prescriptive* in nature, which means that it formulates norms and rules without considering real language use as a starting point. The opposite view is that of *descriptivists* who believe that human intervention in language should be noted (ibid., 5). Thomas goes on to say that purism can, nevertheless, be defined in several ways, as it has never really been terminologised (1991, 10). Another quotation is worth introducing here to give a better picture of the concept. Hall (1942, in Thomas 1991, 10-11) argues purism to consist in essence of "considering one language as 'purer' and therefore 'superior' to other types". The ultimate result of this type of thinking, be it rather utopian, could be that the lazy belief of the superiority of a language will make (learning) all other languages unnecessary (Crystal 2003, 17).

It was already hinted at in the previous section that some native speakers of English feel desperate to keep hold of "their" language and do not let anyone else modify it or misuse it. These people might see other varieties as ugly, evil, dirty, shabby, wrong or low in prestige compared to their variety that is beautiful, good, clean, stylish, right and highly prestigious (Andersson & Trudgill 1990, 35). What they do not see is that it is only so in their eyes and might appear completely the opposite to someone else. They want to "free their native language of the 'contamination' of foreign influences" (ibid., 36). Thomas complements Andersson & Trudgill's statement by pointing out that this ridding of undesirable elements applies also to dialects, sociolects and other styles of the same (native) language (1991, 12).

Both linguistic imperialism and purism apply on all linguistic levels, making the prescriptive nature of native English quite evident. Most of the puristic criticism is found against lexis. In phonology, however, only normative attitudes can be generally seen as an example of a puristic take, as is argued by Thomas (1991, 63). According to linguistic purism, then, the native English model for the teaching of English pronunciation is the only possible one.

When the origins of puristic ideology are considered, a link between linguistic purism and cultural or political nationalism is often seen. Thomas also thinks that purism can be motivated by the search for, or the need to preserve, national identity. As a consequence it could be argued that the British ought to be allowed to cherish their variety of English but not at the expense of other, equally valuable ones. One must take a critical stand towards Thomas's statement that purism has not taken a hold in English. (Ibid., 43-44)

2.2. Ownership and Identity

Approximately ten years ago, Graddol (1997, 2-3) predicted that the number of English as second language speakers would exceed that of native speakers, the effect of which would be the shifting of the center of authority for World English. His prediction has now become a reality and the status of English has definitely changed. “Whereas once Britain ruled the waves, now it is English which rules them.” (Phillipson 1997, 1). Still there does not seem to be an agreement of who is in charge. As the notions of linguistic imperialism and linguistic purism in the previous sections confirmed, the ownership of English continues to be a tough nut to crack. Perhaps one reason for this is the undeniable relationship between language and identity. We humans are individuals with a strong sense of belonging – to a region, family, country, fellow countrymen, but also to the world community. Language gives us the power to express all these needs. Andersson & Trudgill (1990, 158-9) add that language is a very important tool in proclaiming that we are members of a particular community and not of some other.

In expressing our own personal identity on one hand and a global identity on the other in lingua franca contexts, it all boils down to which language and which variety to use – how should we speak? Is it the International English or the ethnic language variety and culture? Crystal says that “the need for intelligibility and the need for identity often pull people ... in opposing directions” (2003, 127). According to him, however, there is no reason why a peaceful coexistence of these two

could not be a reality (ibid., 22), and in fact, it already exists. The key here are the phonologically distinct national varieties of English and bilingualism, in other words *code-switching*[2] according to the context. To put it differently: for a bilingual, the mother tongue is used in local communities, and English, be it tinted with first language influence or not, for the global community. In this respect, it is perfectly acceptable and even necessary for the speakers' needs to have their own accent, the one that comes naturally and expresses their identity. And if English is already the speaker's mother tongue, never mind the non-standard accentedness, embrace it! As long as one is understood, differences are only enriching.

Chapter 3 looks into the attitudes these non-standard accents evoke in more detail, but let us consider one, also attitudinal, issue that is related to the ownership of language: standardisation. According to Ryan, Giles and Sebastian (1982, 3), a language is standardised when it has its norms on correct usage. But who dictates the norms, in other words, the standards of World English? Obviously it is the native speakers who believe they have the strings in their hands to pull, but what makes matters interesting is that, as for now, there is no *official* global standard for English (Kachru 1986, 87). To continue, no phonological codification for non-native Englishes exists either (Bamgbose 1998, 7, see also Seidlhofer 2001, 133 and Jenkins 2007, 59) and oral varieties in general are less likely to be standardised (Ryan et al. 1982, 3). Widdowson's opinion is that, this being the case, the emphasis should be on vocabulary because the words also carry the most meaning. In other words, the lexis serves the communal needs of a community, preserving its conventions and values (1994, 381). In fact, it could be argued that it is Standard Written English that needs to be regulated and preserved, if anything. Pronunciation is important, yes, but its role is mostly communicative and not communal. Whether or not this is agreed on, as a consequence of the lack of a descriptive model of lingua franca English accents, the native norms persist as the only

[2] 'Code-switching' means to switch "back and forth between English and another language" in one's speech (Jenkins 2003, 15) but can also take place when using more than two languages. This is normally done between bi- or multilingual interlocutors, sometimes even without noticing it in any particular way. According to Crystal (2003, 164), code-switching has increased noticeably in contexts including New Englishes.

model and the ELF speakers are not given the rights of an authentic language variety users (Seidlhofer 2001, 133). One recent attempt to improve the situation that is certainly worth mentioning is Jenkins's Lingua Franca Core (LFC) presented in her book (2000). This debated suggestion of features common and obligatory for mutual understanding among English as lingua franca speakers offers an interesting solution to the intelligibility-identity "problem" as it disposes of certain native English phonemes that are difficult to produce and irrelevant for successful communication among non-native speakers.

One thing the purists and imperialists continually bring up are the so called *errors* committed by the non-native users of English. It is important to note whether these are discussed as errors per se or as *deviations*, the latter not being so clearly wrong. Graddol (1997, 16), for instance, sees new pronunciations rather as linguistic *innovations*, across rural areas and national borders. Kachru (1982, 63) talks about these deviations and states that the tolerance of one depends on "the attitude towards the user, as well as the level of language in which the deviation occurs", for example, whether it is a liked professor or a foreign teaching assistant who says something against the norm. Kachru also claims that a deviation in phonology is better tolerated than in lexis or grammar but one could easily argue for exactly the opposite being true. Regardless of the fact where in language use it is better tolerated, Bamgbose (1998, 3-5) lists codification and acceptability as the most important factors for an innovation to obtain a norm status. Still, it is deviations from the old norms that allow the development of new local varieties – and identities. Brutt-Griffler (2002, 160) points out that this has happened ever since the African-American slaves first altered their language to separate themselves from their masters and to preserve their group identity. Kachru (1986, 9-10) offers an alternative point to using language to express one's identity: he reports situations in which English is chosen for communication because the interlocutor does not wish to reveal his local origins. In this way, English can also neutralise identities. This or that way, language user has the choice and, as Widdowson (1994, 384) puts it, to be able to truly express oneself in any language, one must

make it their own.

Brutt-Griffler (2002, 107-8) concludes that originally English was spread by native speakers but it has been non-native speakers who have shaped it to what it is now. She continues: “World English is not simply made *through* them but made *by* them [Africans and Asians]” and that as a national language, English is only the source of world language and one variety among the others, not the world language itself (ibid., 180-1). As regards the future of English and its ownership, one view is that English will continue to evolve, “reflecting and constructing the changing roles and identities of its speakers” (Graddol 1997, 6). Kachru (1986, 31) accompanies this view and concludes that because English is acquiring new identities and, at the same time, new ownerships, there is no need to lose one's identity when using it. In Crystal's words, “language is an immensely democratising institution. To have learned a language, is immediately to have rights in it. You may add to it, modify it, play with it, create in it, ignore bits of it, as you will.” (2003, 172).

3. Language Attitudes

Language does more than conveys a message. This “more than” includes the speaker’s identity but also attitudes and beliefs (Jenkins 2007, 110). It is these attitudes that we now turn our focus to. In general, there has been some confusion when it comes to terminology; the use of the terms *attitude* and *belief*, and even *opinion*, is often confusing or attention has not been paid to clearly defining which one is the phenomenon under investigation. In Edwards's words, there has been no universal agreement on the concept of *attitude* (1982, 20). Allport (1995) discusses the terms in his socio-psychological work and defines ‘belief’ as something that is, often erroneously, overgeneralised and ‘attitude’ as a disposition that is either favourable or disfavourable. To continue, he says that when one is found, usually the other follows. Jenkins (2007, 111) differentiates them like this: attitudes are affective and latent in nature and are normally not consciously perceived, whereas beliefs are cognitive and overt. According to her, others see beliefs as underlying and supporting attitudes. As for this study, it was decided to use ‘attitude’ as a cover term for both concepts, as Jenkins says is sometimes done in attitude research. For the current purposes, it is what has been introduced here that is understood as an attitude – a disposition in favour or not in favour of an accent, if not unconscious then at least not paid very much attention to.

3.1. Language Attitude Studies in General

Quite a lot of studies have been carried out on language attitudes. The first studies came out in the 1930s but it was the 1960s that witnessed an actual boom in language attitude research (Jenkins 2007, 66). For example Ryan & Giles (1982) and a more recent publication of Montgomery's (1995) provide a good account of the research area (see also Downes 1998 and Jenkins 2007). Traditionally the topic has been studied by sociolinguistics and socio-psychologically oriented linguistics (Pihko 1997, 48) but Edwards has criticised the two fields, namely social psychology and linguistics, of not having worked together effectively enough (1999, 104). In his opinion, a much more thorough perspective could be gained if sociologists, psychologists and linguists united their expertise in the study of language attitudes. After all, language attitudes belong to each branch of these humanistic and social sciences. In the early days of language attitude research, the work of Lambert et al.'s was perhaps the most influential. They devised a *matched guise technique* to investigate which personality characteristics English and French speaking Canadians attributed to each native speaker group respectively (Lambert et al. 1960). Their technique included one or more persons reading and recording the same passage of text with several different language varieties, that is, languages, dialects or accents. This way the participants were, without knowing it, actually not evaluating the person himself but the variety. Quoting Jenkins (2007, 66), “[s]ince that time, the matched guise technique (MGT) has been the standard social-psychological method used in studying how people evaluate social groups on the basis of their linguistic varieties.” Jenkins (ibid., 67) points out another, in her opinion surprisingly rarely cited, work by Wolff done in 1959 about the relationship of attitudes and intelligibility. Both these studies and the majority of language attitude research have been made from the point of view of native speakers, both towards NS and NNS varieties (for example Kachru 1986, 100, Pihko 1994, 20 and Chiba et al. 1995, 78). The current study makes a contribution to the study of the less investigated non-native speaker attitudes.

Ryan et al. (1982, 1) say that in every society, power is always reflected in language variation

and further on in attitudes to that variation. It can be said with an almost 100 per cent certainty that it is the higher social group's variety that is given higher prestige, the one that equals success (Chambers & Trudgill 1998, 70). As always, there are exceptions. Honey (1989, 33) mentions young boys in a British public school who wanted to identify with their non-RP speaking peer group and for this they adopted another accent, undermining RP's prestige at the same time. Edwards (1999, 102) suggests that attitudinal evaluations of language varieties may reflect intrinsic linguistic superiority or inferiority of one variety over the other, aesthetic differences and/or social perceptions of the speaker, but he persists that the last option is the most likely one. Honey (1989, 64) claims the basis for rating accents differently is found in aesthetics. Andersson & Trudgill (1990, 136) counter-argue that no language or language variety can be ugly in any absolute sense. Similarly, no language is linguistically better than any other, and so, when we look at the phenomenon more closely, it becomes clear that language attitudes are really attitudes towards social groups and not the varieties themselves (Cargile & Giles 1997, Andersson & Trudgill 1990, 7). One more factor in how popular or accepted a variety is seems to be its perceived *vitality* (for example Ryan et al. 1982, 6), defined by Gentry El-Dash and Busnardo (2001, 60) as the perceived power and/or importance of a language. Edwards (1999, 102) continues to explain how exactly a person is evaluated: the social status is reflected in perceptions of speaker competence which entails intelligence and industry, and solidarity is evaluated by personal integrity (helpfulness and reliability) and social attractiveness (friendliness, sense of humour). Here it is worth pointing out that speakers of a standard variety are often evaluated more favourably as regards competence, or status, but regional or class varieties tend to score higher on solidarity (Edwards 1982, 30). These attitudes are, of course, very often unjust because, as Edwards (1999, 103) says, “[i]ndividuals – with all their personal strengths and weaknesses – are viewed in stereotypical group terms”. Thus it is not by any means a matter of indifference how we react and take up attitudes, consciously or unconsciously, to language and spoken language in particular. In the most extreme case, our whole

opinion of a nation may depend on one simple interaction with a foreigner who is a non-native speaker of English communicating with us in this lingua franca. Andersson and Trudgill conclude by saying that attitudes play an important role in the life of language and, for this reason, should be taken seriously (1990, 28).

Attitudes are normally passed on from parents to children or from teachers to students. As young as three year old children have been observed to project attitudes (Day 1982, 116) and already a very short exposure to for example a dialect different from our own may trigger discriminative attitudes (Edwards 1999, 105). Expectations of what is good and worth aspiring to are rooted in cultural norms, though, and thus, they *can* change. Edwards (ibid., 108) gives a lovely, albeit rather comical example of this as he explains that the attractiveness of a male face changed from that of Arnold Schwarzenegger to Leonardo DiCaprio. Why could the attractiveness of Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA) not diminish and Indian or Euro English be crowned the new beauty queen?

3.2. Accent Attitudes

“Accent, in many ways, seems to go to the heart of the native-speaker issue” (Timmis 2002, 241). There is something special about accents compared to grammar and vocabulary; accents are either liked or disapproved of, and the same applies to accents of native languages as well. According to Jenkins, “a consensus seems to have emerged”: accent is the most salient factor to “evoke images” (2007, 78). In other words, accent has the strongest effect on language attitudes. The topic of this study is English and its different, today mostly non-native, accents. Generally speaking, non-natives themselves are the ones who are more intolerant towards these accents (Pihko 1994, 23). An opposing argument comes from Cargile and Giles (1997, 5-6) who say that if a person has a very strong, say British identity, they are quite likely to react strongly and negatively to non-standard accented speakers. Language learners' reactions on the other hand, may be those of intolerance and notions of unclear and ugly speech (Pihko 1997, 50), simply because they find the variety harder to understand. It will be interesting to see how the participants of the current study, all non-native in English, evaluated the different accents they heard.

Pihko (1994, 19-20) speaks about the communicative satisfaction and success of the interactants and how the impressions they get from one another contribute to it. Among the factors here can be cross-language contexts, style of speech, foreign accent and non-native speech in general, correctness of speech, shared background knowledge and comprehension of speech. Especially in communication via a language that is not mastered completely, pronunciation, accent, vocabulary, etc. may yield for more attention compared to native language communication. Listeners can react either to stereotypes or to some specific speech qualities (Pihko 1997, 48-49). Very often it is *intelligibility* of speech that is given as the reason for disliking an accent (Jenkins 2007, 83), and in some cases, strong accent is almost seen a synonym to ‘unintelligible’ (Keys & Walker 2002, 299). Mutual intelligibility is said to be crucial for any communication to take place but it is also the factor that separates language and dialect from each other (Chambers & Trudgill

1998, 3-4) in that dialects of the same language are intelligible whereas two different languages are not. As a reminder, an accent concerns only pronunciation and can be either standard or belong to a particular dialect. Nevertheless, it can be on the way of mutual intelligibility. It is not self-evident that the interlocutors understand each other; Chambers and Trudgill suggest that mutual intelligibility depends on, for instance, the listener's exposure to the other language and their willingness to understand and overcome the deviations from standard or familiar language. Be the reason for intelligibility problems what it may, they tend to cause *listener irritation*, affective reactions of annoyance that deviant speech arouses, and definitely *listener judgements*, of which intelligibility already is one example. So far, it has been impossible to demonstrate whether irritation is the result of unintelligibility or vice versa. (Pihko 1994 21-22) Also, it is good to note that *intelligible* can be a different thing than *being understandable*, as Kachru points out (1982, 61) and thereby hints that the first is something that includes a person's will, while the latter is only technical.

It is often said that a non-native English speaker is immediately recognised by their accent (Bamgbose 1998, 7), an accent that is not on the top of the English accents tower. Especially in language teaching and from the point of view of native speakers and non-native speakers alike, the British Received Pronunciation (RP) and the American variety General American (GA) are the most liked accents around the world, and those which have gained value because of their speakers but also for being well-documented models for pronunciation (Kachru 1986, 86, but see section 2.2.). A drastic example is given by Crystal (2003,174): the prime minister of Singapore plead for Singaporeans not to use their local variety of English – Singlish – but standard English instead so that the country could make an international breakthrough. This *standard language ideology* can be traced all the way back to colonial times, which still up to day operates as the reason behind the hierarchy. These views are further reflected in our opinions of the speakers: the way we think of a person's abilities and even personal characteristics seems to be affected by the feeling we have

when listening to our interlocutors speak, as Isokääntä (2003) and Lepistö (2004) both argue. Of course there are differences in how native accents are perceived in a native speaking country, too, due to exactly the same social reasons that apply on the international level (Honey 1989, 9) but that will be the topic of another paper.

Jenkins, who speaks for English as a lingua franca research and in particular ELF accent attitudes research reminds us that neither the first mentioned nor the latter have been studied in the traditional language attitudes research (2007, 106). She brings up what has already been touched upon several times in this study; that English as a lingua franca – or New Englishes, English as an international language, you name it – is not seen in a positive light by very many in the world today (ibid., 7, see also Seidlhofer 2005, 339), even those who themselves are users of this variety. As Jenkins (2007, 37) puts it, the attitudes towards the non-native accents of ELF are also reflected in linguistic publications. Some scholars ignore ELF and its implications completely, some marginalise it whenever they can and others disparage it directly. Whatever the linguist's take on ELF is, generally speaking the view given in linguistics still reinforces the false superior status of native, standard English (Jenkins 2007, 65). Research also shows that even teachers who speak English as a second language do not trust their own skills and variety but rather resort to British or American sources of authority when in need of advice (see Tsui & Bunton 2000). We hardly need to go that far before we discover insecurity in the way English is spoken: it is enough to go to an average language classroom and find students worried to open their mouth in fear of what comes out not sounding “right” (see also Bamgbose 1998, 7 on the fear of being incomprehensible). It is about time these attitudes are turned around and English to be used to celebrate the diversity of different language backgrounds and the fact that there is a language for more people to share than ever before.

How can this be done? A few good tips are offered by Crystal (2003, 176) and his colleagues: people who use one mixed variety or several could be given a more influential position and more

acceptance will be gained. Jenkins (2002) suggests that raising the awareness of English as lingua franca should lead to a better tolerance and acceptance of different accents as equal varieties of English. Domyei et al. (2006, 17-18) introduce the idea of Allport's *Contact Hypothesis*, which claims that intercultural contacts would change attitudes into more positive, but remind that the conditions of equal status, common goals and shared striving towards them, mutual interests and institutionalised support must be fulfilled (see also Allport 1995). Chambers and Trudgill (1998, 72) assure that speakers seem to be more interested in and aware of the significance that the forms involved in the linguistic change have socially. Maybe we are on our way towards positive deviation instead of deficiency (Kachru 1986, 98).

Results of previous research on the topic are presented next, as we move closer to the empirical part of this study.

4. Previous Research

Two pro gradu theses with a similar topic than the one of this study have been published quite recently in Tampere University. Lepistö (2004) studied a group of Finnish upper secondary school students and their attitudes towards and use of two standard varieties, British and American English, as well as International English. Firstly, Lepistö (2004, 58) concluded that the overall evaluation by students of one upper secondary school for British English speakers was more positive than for speakers of American English. She argues that this may be due to the national stereotypes held by the students. The “various forms of non-native English” were also accepted and the attitudes towards International English were relatively positive. The main finding of her study concerning the varieties preferred and exposure to different varieties was that, surprisingly, the students were not interested in sounding like a native speaker of English and would rather be introduced to several varieties at school (2004, 58). The majority of the subjects also preferred International English both in their own language use and in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching (2004, 59). In other words, they did not mind sounding non-native as long as they thought they spoke “good English”. Thus, the only thing they were ultimately preoccupied with was not to sound like a person who speaks “bad English”, which, of course, raises the question of what such a concept entails. Lepistö also states that according to her study, it is British English that is the most commonly taught variety at school, with more than half of the subjects reporting it to be the most familiar to them (2004, 60).

The starting point for Ranta's (2004) thesis was the changed situation of English in the world today, something that this paper has also unravelled (see Chapter 2). Similarly to Lepistö, Ranta asked upper secondary school students for their opinions. In addition, she interviewed Finnish teachers of English and compared the results to see if there was any correlation between the teachers and their students in how they perceive the traditional and the new, more non-standard varieties of English. Her main conclusions were that 70% of all the students did not follow any specific variety in their own use of English, 23% reported to use more American English and only

7% used British English (2004, 62). What is more, 30% thought it was “phoney”, irrelevant or needless to follow a certain norm. Again, it is important to note that this concerns the variety as a whole and not just the accent. When asked more specifically, 40% of the students admitted they tried to follow a standard variety *in speech* (2004, 63). To conclude, Ranta found that 21% of the students were “genuinely *for* EIL” in that a native variety was not any kind of goal, or a lack of one, in their use of English (2004, 64). According to Ranta (2004, 65), most of the students also seemed to realize the importance of being able to communicate with both native and non-native speakers of English. This suggests the EFL teaching should offer tools necessary for understanding all kinds of accents. Something that is also found by Ranta if compared with Lepistö’s research is that the students still wish to sound “more acceptable”, as Ranta puts it (2004, 66). It is worth mentioning, though, that in her study, the students state to have been embarrassed by a person speaking English with a typical Finnish accent. In a way, this can be seen to demonstrate a disliking towards their own foreign accent.

In asking the teachers for their opinion, Ranta found that some were indeed ready to welcome the changes brought by English as a world language in their teaching (2004, 79). Altogether 32%, most of whom were younger teachers of English, came forward as supporters of EIL, 21% of the informants were against it. The latter group consisted mostly of older generation teachers. 47% could not be classified because of too much variation between one end and the other on the scale of the acceptability of non-nativeness, which testifies to the confusion that still hovers above the topic of International English. Based on these results and assuming there have been changes in the language (teacher) education in recent years, one would expect the students currently studying in university to represent the same generation as the younger teachers in Ranta’s study, and hence, to possess a more open mindset towards the different and colourful varieties of English.

A third study chosen as reference here is quite a famous Austrian one on the attitudes of 132 local university students of English towards both native and non-native accents of English (Dalton-

Puffer et al. 1997). Dalton-Puffer et al. agree that language attitudes play an important role in how we learn a foreign language and an accent. Having outlined this assumption, they set out to investigate the relation between how their target group perceives different accents and how well they acquire a foreign accent taught to them. Interesting about this study is that the students were given a task for the research situation. They were told that the purpose was to choose speakers for an audio-book (Jenkins 2007, 93-4), which made the study more meaningful to them. It was also thought that attitudinal reactions would be more representative if they take place inside a situational frame. The results show that the native speakers (RP, GA, near RP) were preferred to the non-natives (Dalton-Puffer et al. 1997, 125). To continue, the RP speaker was liked the best and the Austrian speaker with a British English accent the least; in between were the GA and near RP speakers and the Austrian with an American accent. The explanation offered for Received Pronunciation being the most popular was that it is the accent the students are the most familiar with. Nevertheless, it is rare that a foreign student acquires a native accent perfectly (1997, 116) and therefore, it cannot be said that positive attitudes are the sole key to happiness when it comes to learning. One of the most interesting findings of Dalton-Puffer et al.'s study was that the students who had stayed abroad longer seemed to have more flexible attitudes compared to the ones of the EFL learners without this kind of exposure (1997, 126). It is expected this finding can be observed also in the present study.

Similar (ELF) accent attitude research has been done quite actively around the world during the last 15 years. Jenkins (2007, 93) highlights this and says that the area has experienced a rapid increase in the number of studies since the turn of the millennium and predicts the growth in numbers will continue. Good examples of other studies are Chiba et al. (1995) on varieties of spoken English and the attitudes of Japanese university students, Timmis (2002) on students' and teachers' attitudes towards conforming to NS norms in the language classroom, and Ladegaard & Sachdev (2006) on "Language attitudes, vitality and foreign language learning in Denmark". All

agree on native varieties being favoured over non-native ones. Chiba et al. (ibid., 78-79) report that the American variety was the most popular, Timmis (2002, 242) gives two thought raising quotations the respondents in his study gave on being native-like in pronunciation ”It would be a sign of a good level of English”, ”If you speak English very well, other people can't hear your accent.”, but he also points out that the teachers were abandoning native speaker norms faster that their students and, in fact, valued ”accented intelligibility”(ibid., 248 and 243). Ladegaard & Sachdev (2006, 100-101) found that RP was the most favoured accent but American culture or a combination of British and American cultures the most preferred among the Danish learners of English. In Finland, an interesting account of accent attitude studies is found in the works of Pihko (1994, 1997), that have been referred to already in the theory part of this study.

As Lepistö and Ranta both concentrated on English as an International Language more as a complete variety instead of pronunciation only and thus, some of their results would most probably have varied if given a stricter context, there is a need for a study dedicated solely to that particular area of language proficiency. Moreover, as we can see, there is a demand for investigating how the students of English at a Finnish university feel about different accents of English. Here is where the current study comes into the picture.

5. Study of the Attitudes of Finnish University Students of English Philology towards Different Accents of English

5.1. Data and Methods

Previous research in Finland of the attitudes towards different varieties of English has concentrated on the attitudes of language teachers and upper secondary school students. The results are somewhat controversial, and there is a clear demand for a study that attends carefully to the matter of how the group between the two mentioned above fits into the picture. Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine what is the opinion of university students of English about different accents of English, how intelligibility is affected by the level of foreignness or non-nativeness of the accent, as well as what factors seem to underlie the attitudes and how they feel about their own accents. This is done by playing samples of accents to the participants and asking for their opinions with the help of a questionnaire.

The study was conducted at Tampere University, at the department of English Philology. The participants were first year students, currently taking a course on pronunciation. For comparison, also students in their fifth or later year of studies were chosen. The assumption is that these students close to their graduation have had more experience of different accents of English, native and non-native alike. They have perhaps spent some time abroad in an English speaking country or elsewhere where they have had to communicate in English with people with different mother tongues. Perhaps they have a stronger view of what is necessary in order to be understood. The opinions of the older students may differ somewhat from the first year students' because of possibly more exposure in language usage with foreigners gained through years, both in the academic world and their personal lives. It is intriguing to see if the opinions reflect those received in the previous studies with Finnish upper secondary school students and with teachers of the subject, as the first year students have most likely only recently finished their studies in upper secondary school and at

least some of the students in later stage of their studies will work as teachers in the future.

5.1.1. Research Design

The study was conducted at Tampere University, Finland, in a language laboratory with the appropriate equipment. It consisted of listening to recorded samples of speakers of English, all of whom read the same short extract, and afterwards answering a questionnaire. Before beginning the audio part of the research situation, the informants answered the first page of the questionnaire on background information. After this they were given instructions concerning the further execution of the research. They were told of the six reading samples, of answering the appointed questions according to what they had in their mind – any deep analysis was said to be unnecessary – and, before listening to Sample 1, they were given a moment to read through the questions in case of something unclear should arise. The informants were encouraged to interrupt if at any point during the research situation there was a problem. The same instructions could be found in writing at the top of the second page of the questionnaire. Each sample was played once. The time given for answering the questions was five minutes. This was not strictly controlled but rather seen as a guiding time limit; when the five minutes had passed, the subjects were notified but everyone was allowed to finish their answers. Only rarely was the time limit exceeded.

The reading samples were taken from an online speech bank, the *Speech Accent Archive* (SAA), which is a project of George Mason University, Virginia USA (http://accent.gmu.edu). The website is directed at anyone who is interested in comparing and analysing different native and non-native accents of English and can be used freely by teachers, actors and phoneticians to name but a few. After all the testing for the current research was over, the participants were given the information of the speech bank and also the direct links to the six samples used. Recording accents specifically for this study would have been time consuming and by using the Speech Accent Archive, both the acoustic and the phonetic quality of the samples could be better controlled. Since

the decision was taken of not to use the matched-guise technique due to suitable tapes using it not being available and some difficulties in organising the possible recordings, the SAA was seen as the best option. In addition, since all the speakers read the same piece of text, there was no grammatical or lexical variation of perhaps a social dialect and the focus can be directed at the pronunciation features only, as targeted. Moreover, the text was assumed to be neutral for the participants and it has been specifically produced for the purposes of George Mason University's project and contains "practically all of the sounds of English" using common English words:

> Please call Stella. Ask her to bring these things with her from the store: Six spoons of fresh snow peas, five thick slabs of blue cheese, and maybe a snack for her brother Bob. We also need a small plastic snake and a big toy frog for the kids. She can scoop these things into three red bags, and we will go meet her Wednesday at the train station.

(http://accent.gmu.edu/pdfs/elicitation.pdf)

The best features of this particular speech bank are, however, the ready made transcriptions with the exact pronunciation phonetically marked and the background information given on every speaker: for example, their place of birth and possible residence in other countries, languages they speak and how long and with which method they have learnt English if they are not native speakers can be found. Both these features are ultimately meant to be available for each recording, the present lack of which restricted a little the choice of samples for my research.

The questionnaire then is a semi-structured questionnaire and consists of both open and closed ended questions for the informants to answer (see Appendix). Some questions were compiled in order to gather background information of the informants; questions concerning their studies, longer stays abroad, interaction with foreigners and the accents taught to and used by them are included. The rest of the survey is reserved for looking into how the informants perceive the accents that they hear. No evaluation is done by choosing from given attributes as was the case in, for

example, Lepistö's (2004) study. The analysis will include qualitative and quantitative processing of the results. As for determining the nature of the research method, it is mostly deductive with some heuristic characteristics. Heuristic in the sense that the data received from the open questions is categorised and written up descriptively, without any preconditioned categorisation for the answers. Then again, there is a certain idea and expectation of the phenomenon at hand that directed the forming of the questionnaire and the hypothesis, which makes the study deductive. This idea was partly formed on the basis of the previous research discussed above and the pilot study carried out in the spring of 2008, one year prior to conducting the present research. As a result of the pilot, parts of the questionnaire were altered in order to be clearer for the informants. The overall design of the research remained the same, except for reducing the listening of each sample into just one time instead of two in the execution, this way gaining more time and having the opportunity to include six different samples without the test situation becoming exhausting for the participants. Listening to a sample only once was considered sufficient due to the fact that every participant is a student of English philology and thus has the skills and competencies needed to complete the task without problems. This proved to be the right decision also during the conduct of the research (for more observations of the research situation, see section 5.3.).

5.1.2. Samples of Accents

Six accent samples were chosen for the study from the Speech Accent Archive: two native and four non-native speaker accents of English. The first speaker is a 30 year old female from Birmingham, the United Kingdom. She is an English native speaker and has lived in the UK for all her life. In addition to English, she speaks German and Mandarin. Her accent is very clean-cut, distinguishably British, be it not very strong, pleasant but rather neutral. There is not much to say about the distinct features in her speech; it is obvious the speaker is British, but she does not quite speak RP in its most standard form. Unfortunately, none of the native accents available in the speech bank have the

accent features specified in the transcription, which means the analysis of the accent relies solely on my decoding of the transcript and the recording. To conclude, Sample 1 is a fairly stereotypical example of a native British accent of English.

Sample 2 is by a speaker from Germany. She was born in Düsseldorf and naturally her native language is German. The speaker started learning English at the age of 12 in school, and thus, her learning method was academic. Apart from German, she knows French and Dutch and with 48 years of age, has lived 25 years in the USA. The last few facts have a clear effect on the speaker's accent: at first it is not clear whether she is a native German or French speaker, the pronunciation of the /r/ sounds possibly hinting to a French person. Also other changes in consonant and vowel sounds compared to Standard English (StE) are easily spotted: the devoicing of final consonant sounds in words such as 'please' [pʰli:**s**] and 'Bob' [ba**p**] and the change of /ð/ in the word 'the' [**d̪**ə] or [**d**ʌ] are already fairly distinctive. Furthermore, the /θ/ sound becomes [s] in several places and the vowels are sharper and raised compared to StE. Although her accent is quite strongly non-native, the rhythm and pace of speech make it still considerably easy to understand. The fact that the speaker has spent such a long period of time in an English-speaking country suggests there must be traces of native speaker influence in her accent. I believe this influence has made it easier to follow the speaker, even though the individual phonetic sounds are undoubtedly foreign. With more than just one influence, it is a good example of an English as a lingua franca accent heard often these days all around the western world, to say the least.

The speaker in Sample 3 represents China, which is one of the countries where English has a bigger and bigger status every day in communications and in the international market. The speaker is a native Mandarin speaking female, 31 years old and from Beijing. She does not speak any other language besides these two and started her English studies at the age of 12 in an academic setting. This speaker has spent two years in the USA. Compared to the other samples, the present one is the least clear and perhaps the most difficult to understand for other speakers of English, especially

non-natives. There are a few moments of hesitation and self-correction during the reading and her accent shows several features of native language influence. For instance, similar kinds of changes in the final obstruent sounds and with ‘th’ sounds than with the previous speaker, the pronunciation of ‘w’ in words like ‘we’ and ‘with’ as [**v**i] and [**v**iz̪], the near omission of ‘h’ in ‘her’ [**x**ɚ] and the changes in vowel sounds. In addition some vowel insertion can be heard, for example ‘and’ [ænə], and the deletion of obstruents in for instance ‘scoop’ [skɻu:_] and ‘kids’ [ki:_s].

With the fourth Sample we move onto the second native speaker of English. The female speaker comes from Milwaukee, Wisconsin USA. She has lived her entire life, 60 years, in the US and in addition to her mother tongue English, she knows Spanish. The accent is not any of the most famous stereotypes of American accents, no Deep South for instance, but the fact that it is American is clear nonetheless. The differences between this and Sample 1 are quite stereotypical, in other words the /r/ in ‘her’ [hɜɻ], some vowel sounds like ‘store’ [st**o**əɻ], ‘of’ [**ʌ**v] and ‘Bob’ [b**ɑ̃:**b], the diphtongs where the British variant does not have them, for instance in ‘kids’ [ki**ə̆**dz], and the overall broadness and somehow more relaxed rhythm of speech make it distinctively American.

Sample 5 is an example of the so called Outer Circle accents: the speaker is an Indian male, from a city called Nagpur, Maharashtra India. He is a native speaker of Hindi but has started studying English academically at the age of two. Based on this it can be argued that he speaks English as a second language, which is very common in India. Indian English has already been granted a status of its own and is thus recognised as a real variety of English. The speaker has stayed in the USA for 3,5 years. Among the other languages that he speaks are also the Marathi and Punjabi languages. His accent is not the most distinctively Indian, but has, nevertheless, many familiar features of the variety. Things like trilled /r/ in ‘three’ [t̪**r**i] and ‘fresh’ [f**r**eʃ], the ‘th’ sounds that become different variants of /d/, the devoicing of final consonants – something that already

based on these samples of non-native English accents seems to be a common feature in non-native English – the pronunciation of /w/ as /v/, the retroflex sounds, the lack of aspiration all speak for an Indian accent of English.

Last but not least, Sample 6 is a Swedish speaker of English. This speaker is 22 years old and was born in Lulea, Sweden. Up until the moment when his reading was recorded, ten years had passed since he had started learning English in school. The speaker has not spent longer periods of time abroad but does speak German as a foreign language in addition to English. The accent's distinctive features are the non-aspiration in words like 'please' [**p**li:z] and 'call' [**kɔ**l, the latter of which also presents a vowel shortening in [k**ɔ**l], the typically Swedish palatalisation in 'meet' [**m^{j}**i:t], once more the changes in the 'th' sounds from /θ and ð/ into variations of /t and d/ and the final obstruent devoicing. This accent was chosen because of its geographical closeness to the Finnish informants and because it is a clear and yet a foreign accent, something that is revealed for example by the intonation. This is a perfect example of a foreign accent Finns might hear when travelling in Europe or dealing in close business with our neighbouring country. The Swedish accent also reminds the Finnish accent of English to some extent and for this reason, it will be interesting to see what type of reactions it gets.

To conclude, six different accents were chosen to test the way students on university level perceive native and non-native, or perhaps said more to the point, non-standard accents of English. The choice between the total of more than 1100 samples available turned out to be a difficult one. In the end, six samples were quite a maximum for the frame of the present study and these particular examples represent each of Kachru's three circles: English as a native language (Samples 1 & 4), English as a second language in a country where it has a considerable status (Sample 5) and English as a foreign language in multilingual Europe and China (Samples 2, 3 & 6). Factors like the age and the sex of the readers were considered not to affect the outcome; after all, we are in contact with

men and women of all ages every day and this should be reflected in the study as well to make it natural.

5.1.3. Participants

Altogether twenty four students participated in the study. Twelve students had studied English for less than a year, the other twelve were further on in their studies, the number of study years at the university ranging from five to eight. The latter group of twelve students were all major students of English Philology but among the group of first year students, there were three second subject students. This was not seen to affect the overall outcome of the research and hence they were not excluded from the results. Whenever the experience of these three second subject students is seen to affect their answers differently from the rest of the first year students' group, it will be pointed out separately. The first year students were chosen randomly from two separate Oral Skills classes of English Philology at Tampere University. Finding suitable informants for the other, let us call it the older students' group proved a harder task. Finally the results of all the 24 informants were looked through and included in the analysis.

As for the possible variables in the background of the informants, it has to be noted that apart from two first year students, none had stayed abroad for a longer period of time. In the older students' group the numbers were nine for having stayed abroad and three for not having done so. Here the line for "a longer period of time" was roughly one month. This is something that was assumed to affect the attitudes, as there seems to be a difference in the backgrounds of the students and between the two groups. The age of the informants varied between 19 and 30, the average being 23,8 years, which was nevertheless only thought to reinforce the hypothesis of different attitudes between younger and older students. Ten of the subjects stated they will work as a teacher in the future, seven said it was possible and seven knew it is not in their interests. Here, too, the focus was on more older students wanting to work as a teacher, as opposed to the younger ones. It could of

course be that the first year students are still not sure of what they will work with after graduating, something which is perfectly natural considering their stage of studies. However, this proves the importance of students' attitudes; by finding out how university students feel about different accents, it is ultimately possible to change the overly stressing situation in the ELT classroom, as well as try and remedy the ridiculing, unfortunate and irrelevant associations with some English accents in the world.

The rest of the background information obtained in the questionnaire will be given a separate chapter in the results section, where they will be discussed in more detail.

5.2. Results

It was expected that the results would give answers as to what attitudes university students have towards different accents of English, but which, however, cannot really be generalised due to the relatively small number of participants in the study. In general, the questionnaire gave an interesting set of answers, some more detailed than others. The analysis included both quantitative and qualitative processing, starting from making profiles for each respondent and grouping the answers for each sample respectively. In what follows, the results obtained for each of the six samples and the background information are presented separately.

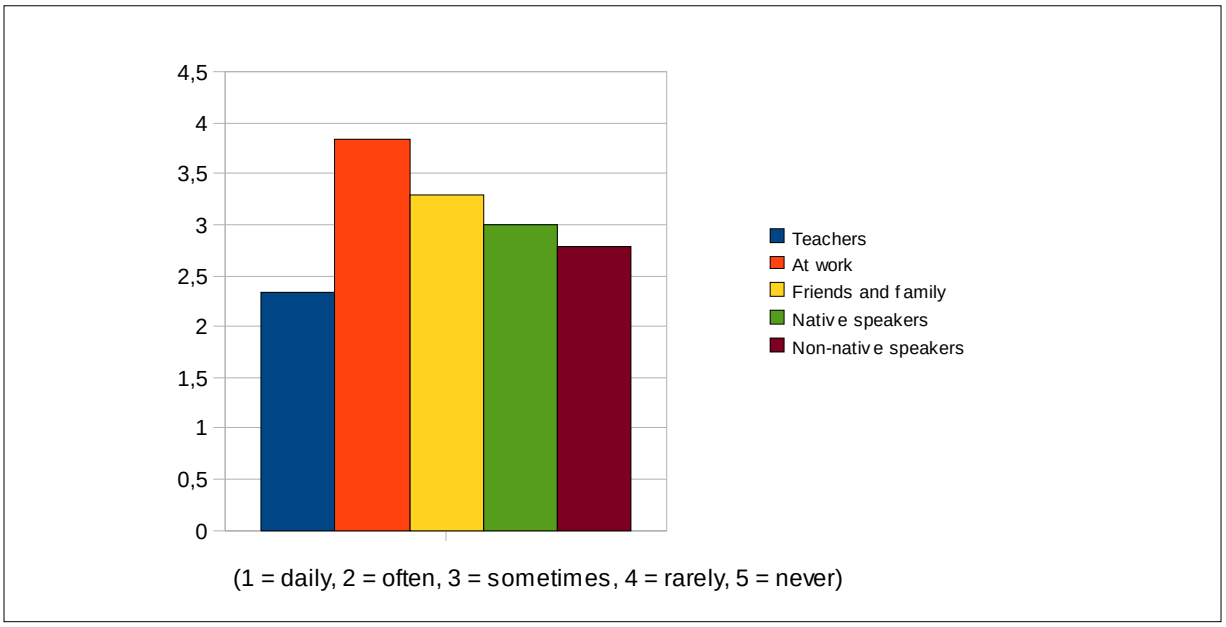
5.2.1. Background Information

All students participating in the study were native Finnish speakers. Question number seven asked about how often they used English with native and non-native speakers and in which contexts (three contexts were predefined: with teachers at the university, in work related contexts and with friends or family members). It was emphasised the participants pay attention to the native/non-native speaker factor separately, as naturally, one's friends or teachers can be either native or non-native

speakers of English, or both. Even though this was noted in the questionnaire, the question was felt to be a little ambiguous. Hopefully the results presented in Graph 1 below in fact reflect the real situation. Here it is important to note that *the lower the score, the more often* English was used.

The most often English was used at the university with teachers (2,33). With friends and family English was used sometimes (3,29) and at work only rarely (3,83). When looked at separately, the numbers for the first year students and the older students differ: the younger students speak more English with their teachers (2,08) than do the older ones (2,58). This can of course be explained by the simple fact that students have more encounters with their first subject teachers during the first couple of years in university than later on in their studies when they are focused on second subjects. Of course, it is possible that English is spoken with teachers of other subjects than English philology, too, but that is what was assumed in the first place. The older students use English with friends and family slightly more often than the first year students (3,08 compared to 3,5). However, the overall tendency stays the same as it is in work related contexts where English is spoken the least often. Here the older students have clearly more opportunities to use the language (3,33) compared to their younger ”colleagues” (4,33). Again, the difference could be explained by simply more older students being in work life. All in all, the older students' group overrides the younger ones in stating to speak English more with both friends and family as well as work related contexts, that is, in situations outside the university.

Graph 1. Q7. How often do you speak English with the following people / in the following contexts?
Background information.

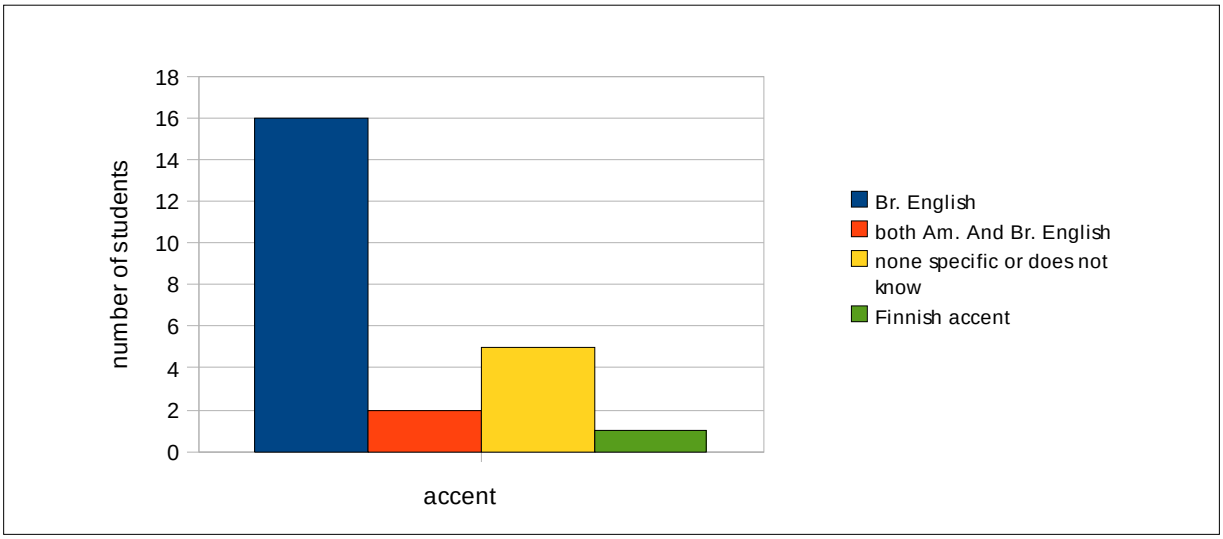


Once we look at the scores for speaking with native and non-native speakers of English, the numbers, also presented in Graph 1 are as follows: a little more English is spoken with non-native speakers (2,79) than with native speakers (3,00). Among the first year students the frequency is exactly the same close to 'sometimes' for both groups (2,83). However, variation is found in the older students' group, who state that they use English with non-native speakers more often (2,75) than with native speakers, with whom they approximate to speak English a little less frequently than 'sometimes' (3,17). Based on these numbers, there is reason to say that a matter of fact difference exists between the two groups' use of English; the younger students claim they use English equally often with both native and non-native speakers, and with the older students, there is a slight difference for the benefit of non-native speakers. But taken all together, English is spoken almost as often with native speakers as it is with non-native speakers.

The next few questions deal with the accents taught to the students both in their elementary and upper secondary school and in university English Philology studies. There was no major difference between the two groups as the overall results clearly favoured the British English variety.

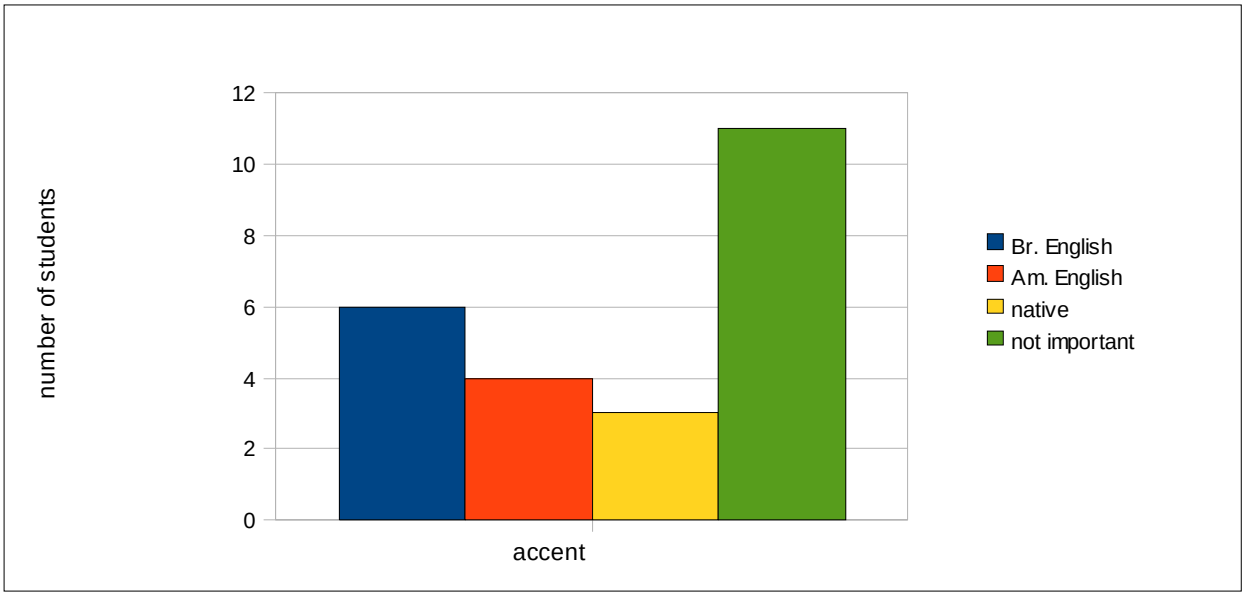
For question eight, 16 of the 24 participants, that is 67%, answered that they were taught British English accent in school. Two said it was both British and American English, five did not know or could not specify any accent, and one quite surprisingly stated they were taught a Finnish accent of English (see Graph 2). The result is not striking because it is British English that has been taught traditionally for English as a foreign language students world wide (for example Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994, 6 and Jenkins 2002). In relation to question eight, some comments are worth highlighting. One of the first year students, who has spent some time abroad, said that in Finland British English was singled out, abroad it did not matter. Another two say pronunciation (or accent) was never really taught but the model for an accent came indirectly from a teacher, for example. One more student answered they were let to develop an accent of their own, something that would also be ideal for the current purposes of English as a lingua franca, given that intelligibility be ensured (for more on developing a learner's personal accent, see for example Brumfit 2001).

Graph 2. Q8. Which accent were you taught in elementary and upper secondary school? Background information.



In university everyone was taught a British English accent, Received Pronunciation or RP to be more specific (Question 9). This is also made clear to the students at an early stage: when I started my pronunciation classes, we were told that if a student does not have a clear, native-like accent of English, they should strive for the British variant. As a consequence, quite many participants, fourteen altogether (58%), reported that their own accent was British English (Question 10). Six students stated their accent was American English, North American or General American, two students said their accent was a clear mixture of both British and American but also Finnish accents and two said they had no specific accent or that they wanted to sound ”neutral”. However, more precise descriptions revealed that almost everyone thought their accent had influence from more than only one model, and stated that it was ”... quite British, although some American ways to pronounce occurs”, ”closer to British than American, but probably a lot of both” or ”mainly AmE. but there are some traces of a British accent”. Only seven participants gave a straightforward answer with only one accent categorisation. Among the interesting comments was also ”Br. RP ... I try to speak clearly without any specific British accent associated with any geographical area in GB [Great Britain]” given by one of the older students. Another participant spoke of the fact that the Finnish influence in her pronunciation tends to come through when she gets excited and speaks fast.

Graph 3. Q11. Is it important for you to speak with a certain accent? Background information.



The last question in the background section of the questionnaire, question number eleven, asked about whether it was important for the participants to speak with a certain accent, and if so, which accent and why. Graph 3 above reveals that it was almost a tie between 'yes' and 'no'; for 12 students it was important to have a certain accent, for 11 it was not important and one student answered both, saying that she wants to speak English ”as fluently as possible, to be understood” but ”as a teacher, it would be good to sound like native” (thus, this answer was counted under 'native'). This way the participant brought up the opinion that English teachers should offer a native model for speaking the foreign language, be it because of clarity of speech or for accent hierarchical reasons. As for the rest of the twelve who answered 'yes', six opted for a British English, four for an American English and two for simply a native accent of English. One answer gave an interesting viewpoint into how the participant saw RP: the student wanted to sound ”as RP as possible *without any certain accents* [my italics]”. To put it differently, she thought that RP is a neutral option, so standard that it does not reveal anything from a person. This changes one's perceptions because until now I used to consider RP a very sophisticated *accent*. When looked at separately, the two groups of

students demonstrated a slight difference in their answers: among the younger students five said they saw it important to speak with an accent of their choice and seven saw it not important. On the other hand, seven older students stated it had an importance for them, four said no and one, already presented above, answered both ways. Here one explanation could be that the students at a later stage in their studies have already developed a stronger identity in using English and thus see the way they speak it as more important. Still, the difference is only a minor one with as small a group of participants as in the current study and should not be given too much emphasis without further investigation.

The reasons behind each participant's choice were various. Some did not give any answer, but most explained quite nicely why they spoke or wanted to speak a certain accent. A few argued it was the accent they were used to since school and because of this it sounded good to them, others stated they would not want to or could not speak any other way and rather their accent was the one that came naturally. One respondent even said it would be faking if she tried to speak with some other accent because, ”although it has become more ”neutral””, hers is an accent stuck to her already when she was a child staying in USA. Yet other students wanted to sound as native as possible and not to sound fake or foreign and that is why they had chosen a native (British) accent. More reasons for choosing a certain accent to speak were simply because one was better liked than another. One student explained that she also thinks the American culture is more interesting than British and it is for this reason she likes their accent more, besides it being easier. A very interesting explanation includes arguments for British English such as it being more respected and more professional sounding. The same person also suggests that ”people who haven't studied English at this [university] level tend to have the American accent”. There might be some truth in this opinion since the British accent is perhaps considered more sophisticated. Then again, another student who informed American accent as her choice says it is precisely because of the popular media and its influence that she speaks the accent. Hence, it seems to be more of a personal choice than one of

educatedness in the case of these Finnish university students.

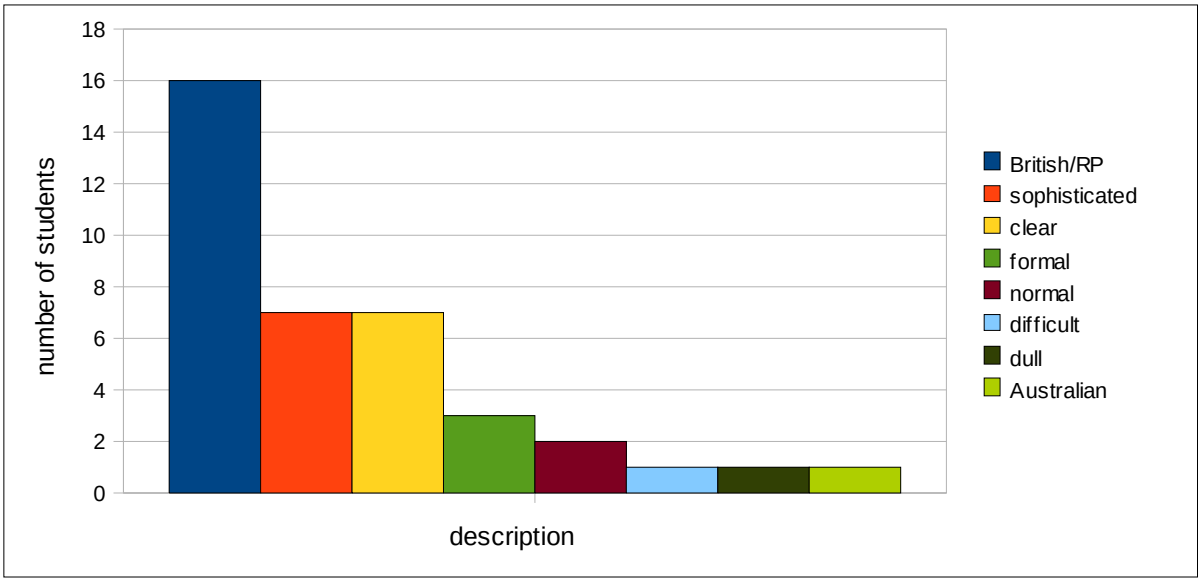
This section has outlined the frame for the results section of the study. It is with the profiles of the informants with which we now move on to have a look at the evaluations of the six different accents of English chosen for the study.

5.2.2. Sample1: British English Speaker

The first speaker spoke a fairly stereotypical British English accent (for a closer description, see section 5.1.2.). In the first question of the second part of the questionnaire that included six identical pages of questions for each accent sample respectively, the participants were asked what they thought of the accent. The idea was to find out in a non-structured way how well they recognised the accent and what kinds of attributes were associated with each accent. Geographical recognition was not directly required though, and some students only commented on more general features.[3] As can be seen in Graph 4, the attributes 'British' or 'RP' were mentioned altogether 16 times in the answers. Adjectives such as sophisticated, educated, posh or upper-class were all grouped under 'sophisticated' and were mentioned seven times, as were the comments of the accent's clarity or ease in listening to. The accent was also thought to be formal (3 comments), normal (2 comments) and, surprising as it is, Australian (1 comment). Other comments included 'a bit hard to understand', 'neutral and dull', and also 'not sure if the pronunciation was learned in school or native'. Thus, in general the students recognised Sample 1 to be normal, native British English and considered the accent sophisticated and clear, although also somewhat formal, one that did not evoke any strong feelings. A few answers deviated from those of the rest of the group but that makes the analysis only more interesting.

[3] To note simply for interest, only two of the participants who guessed the speakers' nationalities got them all correct.

Graph 4. Q1. How did the speaker's accent sound to you?
Sample 1.



The second question was “Can you name the factors that caused you to form your opinion?” (in Q1.). The factors named had mostly to do with clarity, fluency and correctness of speech, familiarity of the accent, either through what has been taught or the media, and the accent being standard. One student said that the fact that she likes the British accent was a factor. The same student who answered neutral and dull in the previous question said the speaker did not really convince him and that the accent lacked personality. Someone else said the accent was unclear. The rest of the factors influencing the opinions were phonetic: the 't' and the 'r' sounds were mentioned, just as were the vowels and the intonation. Here there were no differences between the two groups of students in how the accent was evaluated or described; both groups gave similar answers.

Question three was plain and simple – it asked whether the participants had liked the accent they had just heard or not. 58%, that is 14 students, liked it, five (21%) did not and another five (21%) were left somewhere in between or gave a neutral answer. There was not much difference between the first year and the older students; eight first year students and six older students liked the accent, three and two students from each group did not and one student from the younger

students' group as opposed to four in the older students' group did not take a stand on the matter. When asked why, the participants resorted much to the same arguments as in question number two: reasons for liking the accent were clarity of speech and the fact that it was easy to understand, familiar, beautiful, pleasant and smooth; for not liking it the list included factors such as too much formality and there not being anything special about it or it being artificial - "like a foreigner speaking as taught in schoolbooks or something"- and it being posh and hard to understand. Nevertheless, for example the last argument was only expressed once and so the overall evaluation was definitely more on the positive side.

The following two questions, numbers four and five, were purely quantitative in nature. They both used a five point scale in giving options for the answers. For both the questions, a mean was calculated: on the scale of one to five, one equaling 'no problems' and five 'very difficult', the mean score in Q4. "How easy or difficult was it for you to understand the speaker's accent?" was 1,13 for our British variant. Only three participants rated it at 2 as regards difficulty. In question number five, "How foreign was the speaker's accent?", the result was a strong 1,17, this time with four participants giving the accent two points and the rest one point. The scores were almost unanimous, since there was hardly any difference between the individuals and the two groups of students. If looked at carefully, however, one could see the first year students considering the accent slightly easier than the older students (1,08 vs. 1,17) and exactly the opposite taking place in Q5., where the younger students scored 1,25 and the older 1,08. The overall numbers support the written evaluations of the accent being clear and easy to understand, as well as a native accent of English.

The mean scores for questions four and five of each six accent samples can be seen in Graph 5, which presents the numbers of all 24 participants counted together. Tables 1 and 2 present the same information in numbers and also give the averages of the first year students and the older students separately. As becomes clear, there were no drastic differences between the first year and the older students in this respect. More discussion on the results is found in section 5.3.

Graph 5. Q4. How easy or difficult was it for you to understand the speaker's accent?
Q5. How foreign was the speaker's accent?
Circle the best option. (All 24 participants included.)

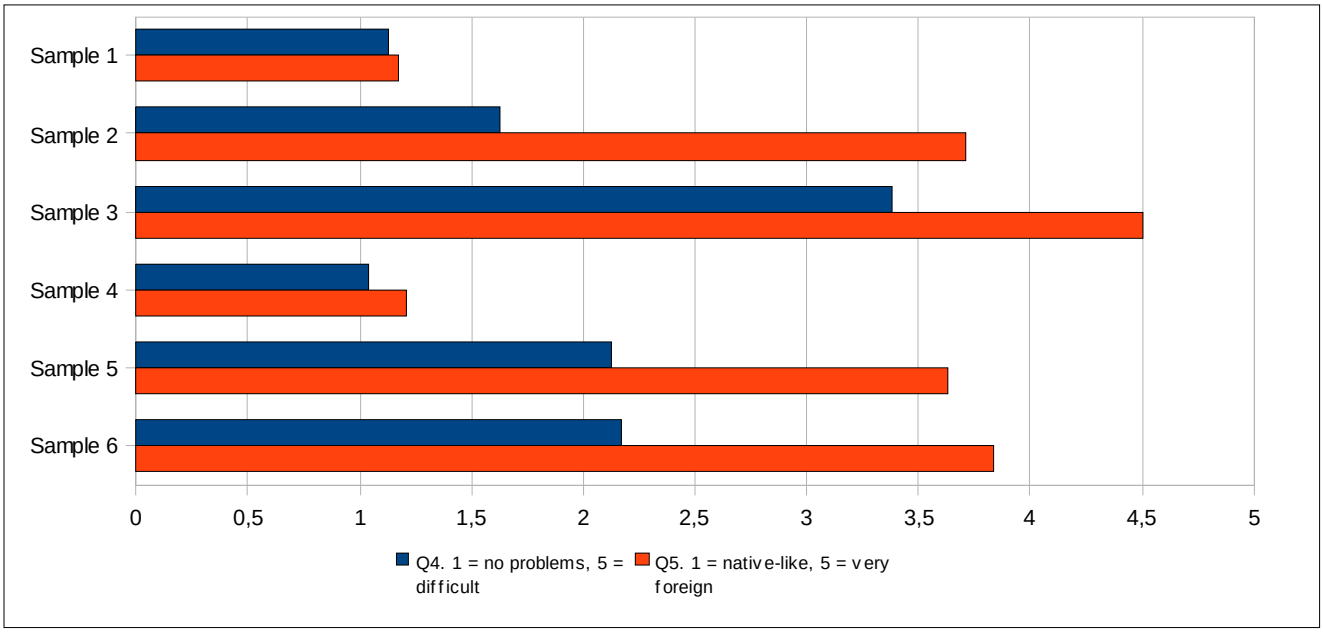


Table 1. Q4. How easy or difficult was it for you to understand the speaker's accent?
Circle the best option.

	first year students	older students	on average
Sample 1	1,08	1,17	1,13
Sample 2	1,83	1,42	1,63
Sample 3	3,58	3,17	3,38
Sample 4	1,08	1,00	1,04
Sample 5	2,33	1,92	2,13
Sample 6	2,5	1,83	2,17

1 = no problems,
5 = difficult

Table 2. Q5. How foreign was the speaker's accent?
Circle the best option.

	first year students	older students	on average
Sample 1	1,25	1,08	1,17
Sample 2	3,75	3,67	3,71
Sample 3	4,58	4,42	4,50
Sample 4	1,42	1,00	1,21
Sample 5	4,00	3,25	3,63
Sample 6	4,00	3,67	3,84

1 = native-like,
5 = very foreign

In the second to last question, I asked whether the participants considered the accent a good and valid accent of English. The formulation of this question was difficult and therefore carefully thought through as answers revealing the attitudes towards what is accepted as an accent of English were wanted. In spite of a few answers, 'valid' turned out to be a good word choice and it is assumed that the majority of the participants understood the question accordingly – valid as in acceptable and owning its right in the linguistic world, but not necessarily native or correct in the traditional normative sense. For Sample 1 the result in question six was a one hundred per cent 'yes'. When asked for explanation, the following answers were obtained among others: proper pronunciation, no mistakes, clear, understandable, nothing odd about it, natural, “many definitely British native features”, “It was roughly what a BBC broadcaster sounds like and if that's not valid nothing is!”, ”almost sounded like the accent they wanted us to adopt here at the university”, and finally, ”It was English. All accents are valid. It was good because it was understandable. A native accent.”. That gives us one version of what is required to be accepted as a good accent of English.

Question number seven gave an open space for any additional comments. None worthy of reporting came up for Sample 1.

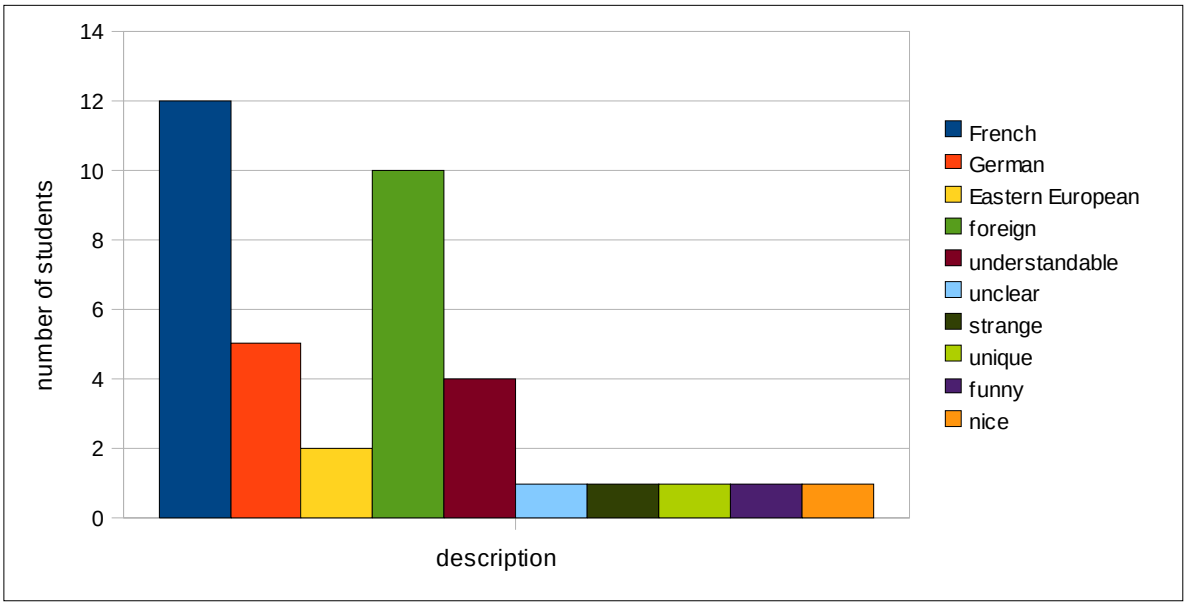
5.2.3. Sample2: German Speaker

The second sample was by a German speaker. As was already said above (see section 5.1.2.), this is a very good example of an accent that has been influenced from several sources; it is clear the speaker's native language comes through but, which native language, is not such an easy question anymore. There are also features that have been softened by a longer stay in an English speaking country. This interesting accent is not the easiest to pinpoint on a map but certainly not the most difficult to understand either.

For question one, the participants gave the following set of answers, also presented in Graph 6 below. Evaluations on the nationality of the speaker stand out as the most striking: the speaker was mistaken to be French in as many as twelve answers, German in only five answers, Eastern European twice and in general foreign or non-native ten times. At this point it is good to note that the same participant can have given several different answers, for example, it is possible they suggested the accent was foreign, maybe German or Eastern European, all in one answer. Other attributes for Sample 2 were understandable (4 comments) and unclear, strange, unique, funny and nice, all mentioned once. One more example of an evaluation was as quoted: ”not a native speaker, quite strong accent but not in a way that would make it impossible or even difficult to understand”. Question two asked for the reasons for the above mentioned evaluations and again both strictly phonetic factors as well as more general observations were found. Most of the comments concerned the ‘r’ sounds of the speaker, which were either labeled non-native, French or German depending on the respondent’s guess of the speaker’s mother tongue. Also the ‘s’, ‘t’ and ‘ϴ’ sounds were spotted to be different, as one student put it, from *normal* speech. Vowels were described lengthened. The rest of the comments concerned the lack of weak forms and that the speech was slow and not very fluent. Intonation was singled out a couple of times but not explained why in more detail. Then again, something about these particular suprasegmental features made it easier for the listener to follow the speech, as one student pointed out. Another student claimed that the flow indicated the

speaker had spent much time in an English speaking country. For one participant the speaker's mother tongue interference was too much and she did not really like the accent. This takes us to have a look at how this German accent was liked overall.

Graph 6. Q1. How did the speaker's accent sound to you? Sample 2.



Compared to the British accent, this was liked less. 33% (eight students) of all 24 students said they liked the German accent, 46% which is eleven students did not like it and 21% or five students said it was alright. A few more first year students liked the accent than did the older students but more older students thought Sample 2 was ok. If one wants to draw any conclusions of this result, it is that the younger students tend to make more clear-cut evaluations than the older students, which can be noticed again later on in the results. Moving on to why the students liked or disliked the accent in Sample 2 reveals that an accent can be personal as long as it does not affect understandability, which seems to be a strong factor for this group of participants. Those who liked the accent said it was because it was easily comprehensible, and that if this was the case, "a foreign accent is quite fine". They also thought it was funny and different but interesting. A couple participants also mentioned that the fact that it was (mistaken as) French made them like it. Quite

the opposite then, those who were not fond of the accent, thought it was too French and foreign, “not in a “cute” way” as one answer read, they did not like French, the 'r' sound was annoying, intonation sloppy and the vowels unpleasant. It was thought to be a little difficult, at least compared to a native accent and even though understandable, somewhat odd. One student said they felt like the accent was to ridicule the French accent of English. Last but not least, one of those who did not really have a strong opinion about the accent said they would have liked it even more had it sounded a little more French. To conclude, it looks like personal preferences, likes and dislikes towards a certain language and culture, in this case French, play a part in whether the speaker's accent in a foreign language is accepted. Of course, the majority got their guess wrong and the accent was not French at all, but German.

Compared to Sample 1, this accent was felt to be a little more difficult to understand but not as much as one could have expected. The mean score for Sample 2 in question number four was 1,63. Overall, the scores ranged from one to three, the highest occurrence was one with twelve occasions. Then again, in question five the accent was rated far more foreign with a score of 3,71 that comes closer to the other end of the five point scale, 5 equaling 'very foreign'. Here the scores altered between three and five, three emerging as the most popular. If the evaluations of the two groups are compared against each other, a slight difference is seen in how well the accent was understood: the first year students rated it as 1,83 and the older students 1,42, which suggests the latter group had less difficulty in comprehension. In assessing the accent's foreign qualities the two groups came very close to each other: the first year students' average was 3,75 and the older students' 3,67. All the scores can be found also in graphic form above (see section 5.2.2.).

The sixth question “Do you consider this a good and valid accent of English?” received almost a tie: 13 students or 54% of the participants considered the accent good and valid whereas 11 students or 46% did not (for a comparison with other accent samples in graphic form, see Graph 11 in section 5.2.5.). As for the two groups separately, five of the younger students' group and eight of

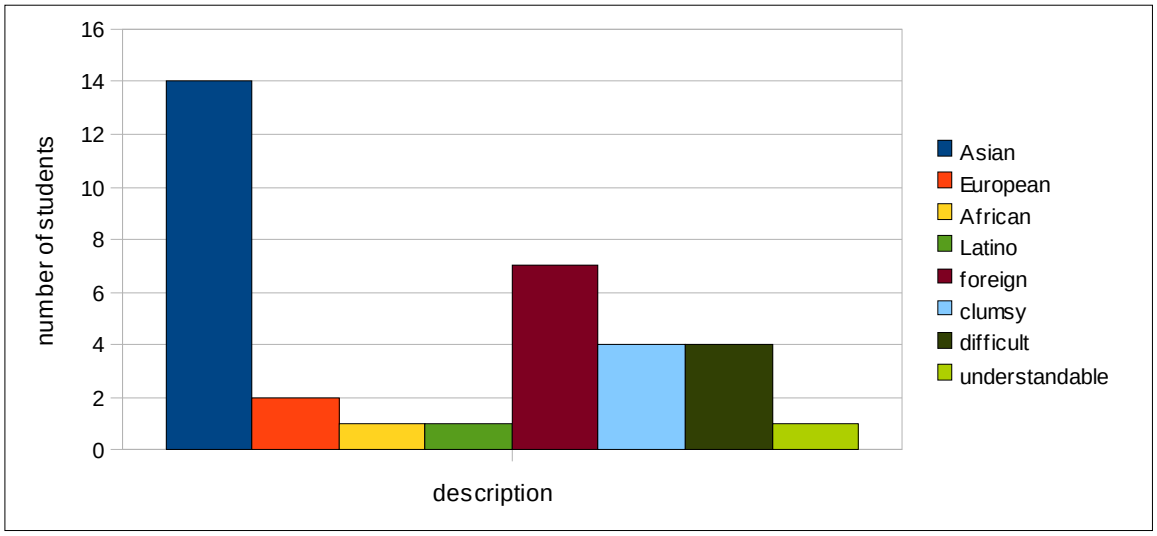
the older conformed, seven younger and four older students were against. In other words, a small majority of the first year students did not accept the accent as a good example of an English accent, the percentages being 42% for and 58% against. On the contrary, among the older students the accent was accepted as valid by two thirds of the group, 66% answered 'yes' and 33% 'no'. This is how the respondents explained their answer: first and foremost, the accent was completely understandable, not perfect but a valid effort, although clearly non-native. It was nevertheless good English, had its own melodious quality and was consistent. One student pointed out that they would not teach this accent but if one of their students spoke it, it would be completely acceptable. These were some of the reasons why Sample 2 was considered a good and valid accent of English. On the opposite side we find arguments like the accent not sounding native or “real” English, not how the native speakers would speak. Also mentioned were the slow pace of speech, the somehow exaggerated use of 'r' sounds, for instance, and the insufficient use and/or awareness of the English phonemes. Here is a quotation to highlight the decision making process: “If we define that a valid English accent is a native one, like AuE, BrE, AmE, etc, then no. Although, this was a good and valid non-native accent.”. This was something a few other students had clearly in mind, too, since some emphasized the non-native factor and their final decision was based on it. One student said they understand that everybody has an accent but that a non-native way of speaking cannot be an official one.

It is with these opinions that we continue to the third accent sample. First still one more comment about Sample 2: one clever participant argued the accent “sounded like central European “Euro English””, which is not very far from the truth.

5.2.4. Sample3: Chinese Speaker

The third accent sample was that of a Chinese speaker, who was the one struggling the most with her reading. Also the mother tongue influence was so strong that the participants were able to recognize her nationality rather well. Graph 7 presents the first impressions the participants got of the accent.

Graph 7. Q1. How did the speaker's accent sound to you? Sample 3.



All in all the accent was marked as either Asian, Chinese, Japanese or Korean fourteen times: ”like an Asian person speaking ESL”. These are all under the heading 'Asian' in the graph. However, two students guessed the speaker was from Europe, one of them mentioned Italy as her bet. Two more guesses were also wrong saying that the speaker was or might be African or of Spanish/Latin American origin. Seven pointed out the accent was very strong and clearly foreign, four participants mentioned it was not fluent or somehow clumsy, another four said it was difficult to understand. As always, there was one exception, too, as one participant reported she found the accent understandable and clear regardless of some obvious problems with the pronunciation. In general,

the evaluations for this accent were somehow a little narrower than for the two previous accents and concentrated mostly on the speaker's origin.

Something that the participants used to explain the accent's Chinese or Asian characteristics they felt was simply the fact that they were familiar with the accent. For example the following comments were made: ”very familiar for me as I've lived in China”, ”sounded like all the Asian students I met in the US, more understandable than them though” and ”For some reason it immediately struck me as a stereotypical Chinese English, but it's difficult to pinpoint the specific factors that made me think of Chinese”. Other than that the verdict was quite harsh for Sample 3. In addition to familiarity, the factors that caused our participants to form their opinion were slow, unnatural, mushy and garbled speech, bad or incorrect pronunciation, intonation that was ”way off”, ”pretty much everything” so it was hard to separate the reasons, swallowing the ending of the words, stops in pronunciation and problems producing understandable English phonemes. Several different sounds were mentioned as problematic or incorrect, for example the 'r', both 'th', 'i', 'h', 'd', 's', 't' sounds, long vowels and very front pronunciation. By now it has become clear that this accent proved much harder to the participants and several characteristics of it were criticised. Therefore, the percentages in question number three do not come as a surprise: 33% of the participants (eight students) liked the accent despite the speaker struggling with some pronunciation, 63% (15 students) did not. One student said they did not exactly dislike the accent but it was not one of their favourites either, so their answer was rated neutral. Those who did like Sample 3 said it was because it was personal and showed the speaker's origin, it was interesting, a bit funny, sympathetic and familiar, but also required more concentration in order to understand all that was said. At this point it is good to note that since Sample 3 was already the third repetition of the same reading, the participants had an idea of what was said and thus the task could have been harder had the reading been different or the order of the samples changed. The last participant who said they liked the accent told it reminded them of Penélope Cruz and that they think the Spanish accent is cute. Of

course, the participant was mistaken in thinking it was a Spanish mother tongue speaker. Nevertheless, the answer brings a smile to one's face.

On the other hand, the students that did not like the Chinese accent, argued it was hard to understand, the pronunciation was not right, the accent sounded ”kind of ugly” and a little childish, too much meaning disappeared, it produced unnecessary pressure on the listener and was not very soothing on the ears. One student said that even though she did not like the accent much because it was so difficult, it made her smile because there was something quite comical to it.

This accent divided the opinions of the first year and the older students. In question three, two thirds of those who did not like the accent were from the first year students' group. In other words, only two first year students liked the accent, compared to six older students in the other group. Ten first year students and five older students disliked the accent, and one older student stayed neutral. The accent turned out to be also a little easier for the older students as they rated it with a mean score of 3,17 in question four as regards how easy or difficult it was to understand. The same question got a score of 3,58 from the first year students. Furthermore, the overall mean score of both groups was 3,38, getting closer to the negative end on the scale. In question five then, the younger and older students were along the same lines when both group's mean scores approximated 4,5, which was also the total mean score for Sample 3. The separate scores were 4,58 for the first year students and 4,42 for the older students. The evaluations for these two quantitative questions ranged from 2 to 5 in question four and 3 to 5 in question five. To conclude, the participants evaluated this accent as quite foreign, but still possible to understand with concentration.

Due to the intelligibility difficulties, the majority did not consider it a good and valid accent of English either. Five students, only 21%, answered that they thought it was valid because they were still able to understand the speaker, but eighteen or 75% were of the opposite opinion and stated it was just too difficult to understand and too far away from what they were taught to be English pronunciation. There were simply too many mistakes and the accent was too strong. When

looked at more closely, again there proved to be a difference in how the students took a stand in this question. Only one first year student did not directly say no to question six, but neither did she give a straightforward affirmative answer. The rest of her group's students thought the accent was neither good nor valid. More variation was found in the older students' group where five students supported the accent and seven were against it. (For a graphic presentation, see Graph 11 in section 5.2.5.)

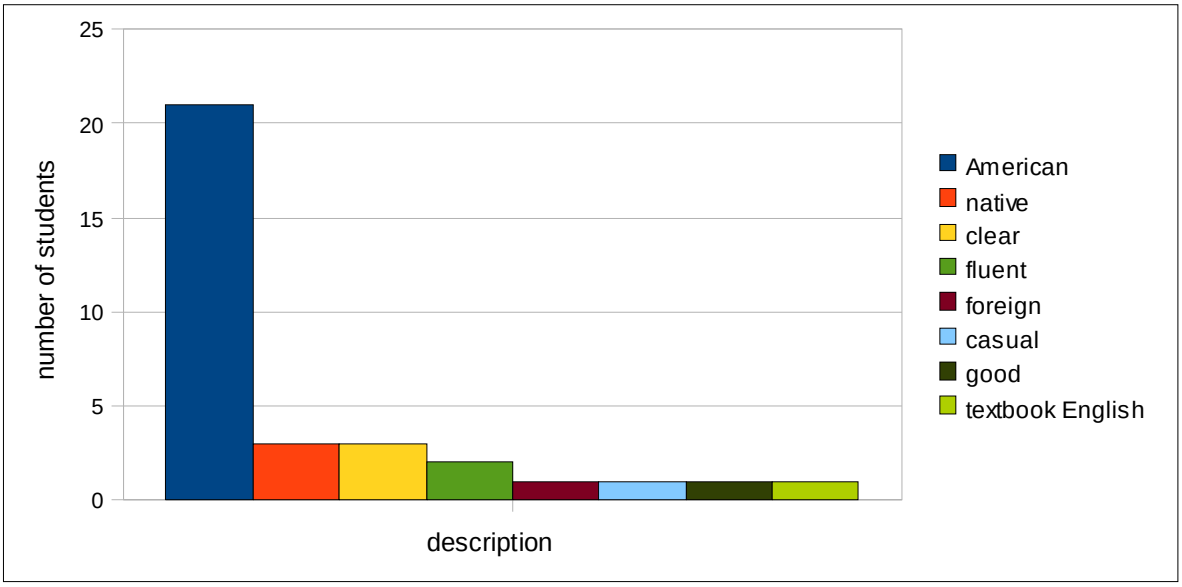
Three comments were given in the very last open question for Sample 3. In one of them, the respondent noted that of course there are native accents as well that can be difficult, so understandability is not the only factor to base one's answer on, they just thought that this was clearly a non-native accent. Another comment revealed that the respondent finds the Asian accents of English often the most difficult or at least the most challenging. Last but not least, a comment comparing Samples 2 and 3: ”The difference between this accent and the previous one is that this speaker sounds like she isn't very good at English whereas the previous one sounds much better at it, like she has maybe lived in an English-speaking country.”. The last comment does well in capturing the difference between the two speakers and their accents.

5.2.5. Sample4: American English Speaker

Sample 4 was a fairly typical American accent, which the participants found the easiest to understand. It also turned out to be the most familiar accent as 'American' or 'very American' was mentioned altogether 21 times in the answers to the first question: “How did the speaker's accent sound to you?”. Not many other attributes were mentioned, which suggests that the participants were perhaps certain about their evaluation and could not think of much else to say. In addition to American, native (three comments), clear or understandable (also three) and fluent (two comments) were mentioned, as were also “a bit foreign”, casual, good and textbook English, each in only one occasion (see Graph 8 below). Of the last mentioned, textbook English and a bit foreign were by the same student, who obviously did not find the accent similar with the other students. This student

also rated the accent higher as regards difficulty and the level of it being foreign in questions four and five. One respondent guessed the accent to belong to a New Yorker, another thought it was Midwestern and a third that it was from the South, so some accent expertise on part of the participants was also introduced, although only Midwestern was correct. A final comment picked among the answers was: “not as cocky as most American accents sound like”.

Graph 8. Q1. How did the speaker's accent sound to you?
Sample 4.



Of all the factors named in question two for Sample 4, the most frequent was the 'r' sound of the speaker. Quoting one answer: “The 'r':s (that's quite often a tell-tale sign, I have noticed!)”. Also the 't' and the liquid 'l' sounds, as well as 'o', 'a', 'æ' and vowels in general were mentioned. The overall broadness of the accent was commented on a few times as well. A few students said they were familiar with the American accent or that it was close to their own accent and therefore easy for them to recognise. Other factors were said to be the fluency and the intonation: “Pronunciation and intonation very un-British, sounds similar to generic American media.”.

Question three revealed a rather interesting distribution of likes and dislikes for the American

accent. Roughly half of the participants said they liked the accent, that is thirteen students or 54% of the group. Eight participants (33%) did not like it and three (13%) stayed somewhere in between. In comparison to, for example, the British accent of Sample 1, this was slightly less liked by the participants. The percentages for Sample 1 were 58%, 21% and 21%, which shows a clear preference towards the British English accent. If we have a look at the first year students and the students closer to graduation, we find that it is the first year students who enjoyed the American accent: nine students in their group liked the sound of it, three did not. Again (see section 5.2.3.) they also produced a clear yes-or-no result, whereas there is more variation among the older students' group. Only four older students liked the accent, five did not and three gave an “in-between” answer. Interestingly enough, a similar, though not as strong, pattern was found with Sample 1: there, too, more first year students liked the British accent (eight students) than their older colleagues (six students).

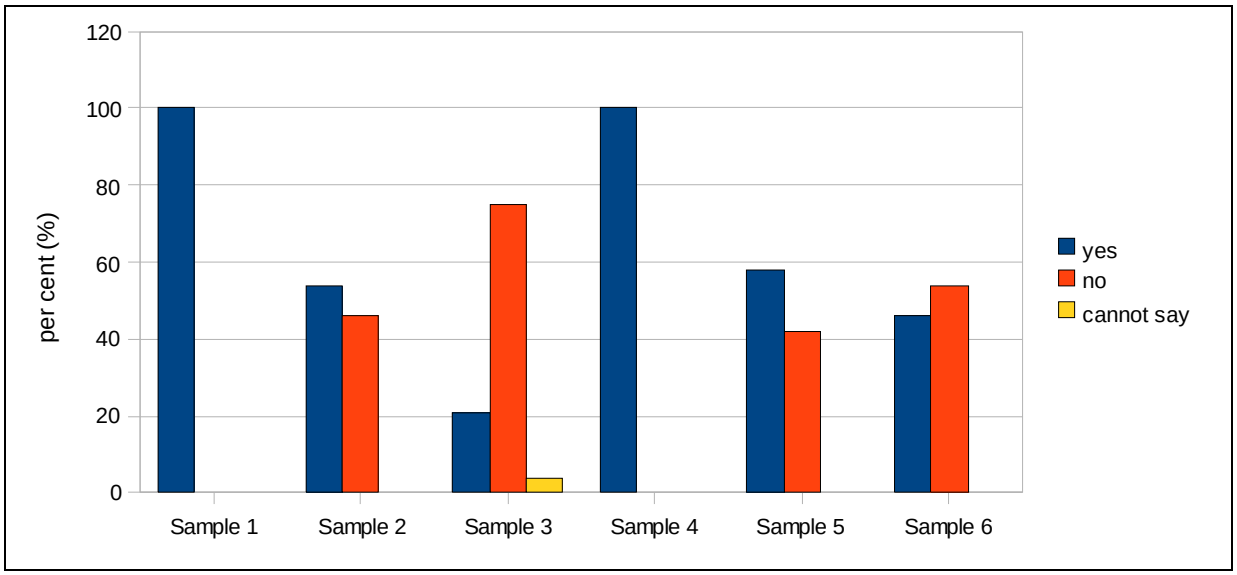
The reasons for liking or disliking the accent in Sample 4 were quite colourful. Some of the frequently mentioned were that it was natural, native-like, and good and there was nothing wrong about it. Also common were comments on the clarity, articulation and it being easy to listen to, for example: “understandable, if not the most beautiful accent”. The third dimension had to do with the familiarity of the accent. For one participant, it was close to how she talks English, for another it was a “normal accent for [the] American media … heard often”. It was also simply liked and preferred by some, although one student points out that it did sound a little unrefined compared to the British English accent. To those on the opposing side, the accent did not sound natural at all, quite the opposite. It was said to be “a bit annoying” or “a bit dumb, don’t know why”, too American to one’s taste, too wide, and to have “an unpleasant nasal sound, and a drag to it”. Again, personal preferences came up when somebody commented that they were fans of neither the accent, nor USA. The respondents who gave a milder answer and said the accent was ok, explained that they were more familiar with the British accent or that this was a little too American for their taste,

but native, which they liked. One participant wrote that the accent reminded her of her host mum in the US and that she finds that she can get a little annoyed by too American sounding accents, but not this one. Another participant was reminded of American tourists, which gave her a slight negative feel of the accent.

Questions on how easy or difficult the accent was and how foreign it sounded were evaluated unanimously with a clean row of ones (1) by the older students group. In other words, they evaluated Sample 4 as 1,00 (no problems) as regards difficulty and 1,00 (native-like) as regards foreign characteristics. The younger first year students evaluated the accent as 1,08 in terms of difficulty and 1,42 for foreign qualities, where it was rated at 2 twice and at level 4 once. The average for both groups together was 1,04 in question four and 1,21 in question five. It is good to note that the differences hardly existed. A difference of 0,08, for example, is due to just one person rating the accent at 2. If we look at the bigger picture, Sample 4 was considered the easiest accent of all to understand and the second closest to ‘native-like’ (cf. Sample 1).

All 24 participants agreed on the American accent to be a good and valid accent of English in question six. Graph 9 presents Sample 4 together with the rest of the accents: along with the British English accent of Sample 1, Sample 4 is considered 100 per cent valid.

Graph 9. Q6. Do you consider the accent a good and valid accent of English? (All 24 participants included.)



The reasons for these considerations were much the same as what has already been mentioned in relation to the earlier questions above: the speaker sounded native and good, also “like the English you hear at school when studying”, it was easy to understand and there were no problems in any area. The speaker was also said to be “rather convincing as a native of an English-speaking country” and a good representative of standard American English. More opinionated answers included “because American English is as valid English as British” and “It is hard to argue with a population of 300 million about their accent. It is native.”. To sum up, Sample 4 was good and valid because it was “a standard American accent, which is probably easy to understand by all – this makes it “good” for communication”.

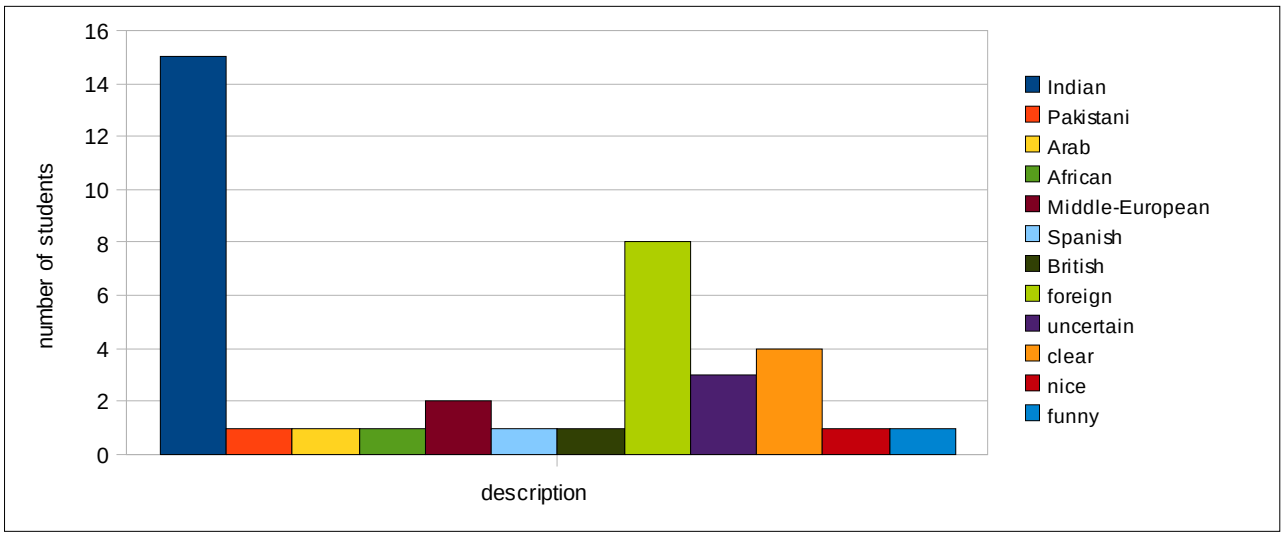
At this stage of the study, one participant made a very interesting remark concerning her personal evaluations. While working through the questionnaire she had found out the following: “I have noticed that I respect accents and consider them valid more easily if a native speaker reads the text.”. This was an unexpected outcome of the study, which was nevertheless received with much excitement and satisfaction – could an indirect and unplanned effect of the study be that the

participants, or at least some of them, begin pondering about and questioning their personal – perhaps unconscious – hierarchy of English accents, and in this respect opening a way to a more accepting space for different non-native accents as well?

5.2.6. Sample5: Indian Speaker

The second to last sample came from an Indian speaker of English. This accent was rated the third most native-like and the third as regards its validity as an accent of English, straight after the two native accents included. These are some of the things that came to the study participants' mind when hearing the accent in the first place. Fifteen of them thought the accent sounded Indian, ranging from “a little Indian” to “very Indian”. There was also a comment about the accent possibly being Indian, but not necessarily native. This is a very precise answer, since the speaker was a second language speaker. There are native Indian English speakers in India, too, but they are still a great minority in the country and most English speakers speak the language fluently as a second language. Also, according to one participant, it could have been a British accent but with some Indian background. Something noteworthy would be that two thirds of the students who said the accent was Indian came from the older students’ group. For some, the accent proved hard to define, and thus, other nationalities and mother tongues were given a guess, too; Pakistani, Arab, African and Spanish were each mentioned once, in addition to Middle-European and German (put under the same description in the graph). The speaker was thought to be foreign or non-native by eight participants. Three argued the speaker’s accent sounded somehow uncertain or clumsy, but four thought it was quite clear and understandable nevertheless. One person mentioned they thought the accent sounded nice and another said it was “a bit funny”. (See Graph 10 below.)

Graph 10. Q1. How did the speaker's accent sound to you?
Sample 5.



As to what made the participants think of these attributes, long explanations were given. Factors the participants listed included some specific phonemes, like the ‘r’, ‘v’ and ‘b’ sounds, the ‘t’ sound becoming a retroflexed ‘d’ in many places, and the general roundness of the pronunciation. Intonation was also singled out and described as poor, awkward and foreign. Someone said “not fluent [speech], very careful and accurate though but not good English”, and yet another student claimed the speech was indeed fluent but had a distinctly Indian accent. Finally, familiarity was pulled out as one determining factor. One participant said they had lived in India, another that they were familiar with the accent thanks to several movies and TV shows with Indian actors starring in them. A third student pointed out they found it difficult to specify what made them think of Indian, but said it must have come from some sort of a stereotype they had in their mind about how Indian people speak English. Here too, most of the first year students’ comments concentrated on why they thought the accent sounded foreign or clumsy, etc., whereas more older students gave reasons for why they thought it was Indian.

Fourteen students or 58% of the participants liked the Indian accent. Seven students, or 29% did not and three students, that is 13%, said it was alright. This accent was more liked by the group of the older students; nine students out of the fourteen who liked it came from this group and five

from among the first year students. Furthermore, only one older student stated they did not fancy the accent in Sample 5, as opposed to six first year students. Last but not least, two older and one younger student did not opt strongly for either side. The reasons why the older students claimed to like the accent were its fairly good understandability and the accent sounding nice, friendly, exotic and amusing in a pleasant way; “It’s nice. I always smile when I hear an Indian speak English. Can’t explain.”. ‘Friendly’ is a good example of what was said previously in section 3.1: standard accents are often evaluated higher for competence and status, whereas regional or class accents are associated with solidarity. Indian English can be considered to once have been both a regional and a class accent for the British. For the one older student who did not like the accent, the reason was simply the fact that they found it hard to follow and taking effort to keep up with. When it comes to the first year students, the reasons were similar: those in favour of the accent argued it sounded funny, nice, likeable, understandable and “personal but valid”. For those not in favour it was difficult to understand, a little inconsistent, not fluent enough, and the speaker sounded uncomfortable and uncertain with what he was going to say. The only younger student whose answer could not be categorised as either ’yes’ or ‘no’ said the accent was “quite sweet but at times hard to follow”. All in all, Sample 5 was liked the second best right after the British accent of Sample 1. It received the same percentage (58%) of favourable answers as the British accent. For the opposing answers the percentages were 29% for the Indian accent and 21% for the British accent. The last mentioned received 21% of neutral answers, compared to the Indian accent’s 13%. This was a quite surprising result, as one could have expected the two native accents to compete at the top. However, the American accent of Sample 4 received slightly less favourable answers (54%), clearly more ‘no’ answers (33%) and the same amount of neutral answers (13%) as did the Indian accent.

Question four was after the intelligibility of Sample 5, which the participants evaluated at 2,13 on the five point scale. Although already rated rather easy to understand, the accent was even

easier for the older students (1,92) than for the first year students (2,33). Question five resulted in a mean score of 3,63, leaning towards the “very foreign” at end of the evaluation scale. In this question, there was a difference between the two groups, as well. The older students did not think the accent was as foreign (3,25) as the younger students (4,00). The answers of both groups revealed quite a lot of variation, as the numbers given for understandability varied between 1 and 4 by both groups and similarly between 2 and 5 for foreigness.

The same separating tendency continues between the groups in question number six. The majority of the older students considered the accent good and valid, whereas the opposite was true in the first year students’ group. The numbers for supporting the accent as an acceptable example of spoken English were fourteen students (58%) for and ten students (42%) against altogether, ten older students for versus 2 older students against, and finally, four first year students for and eight against. The participants that did not think the accent was acceptable argued it was because it sounded too foreign and not native-like, it was clumsy, slow, not natural nor confident, and that some listeners might have difficulties due to the phonemes used. Then again, a few participants wondered whether this was the right choice, since English is one of the native languages in India and this accent might have been perfectly valid there. The same argument was used by several participants who thought the accent was completely acceptable; indeed, English is a native language in India, “just a different accent”, and this sample sounded “just like they speak English in India”. The message came through, so the accent was understandable, if a little strange to someone, and, according to one respondent, “[the accent] shows promise and can develop with practice into something more understandable”. Also fluency, consistency and the relations of India and Great Britain in history were mentioned.

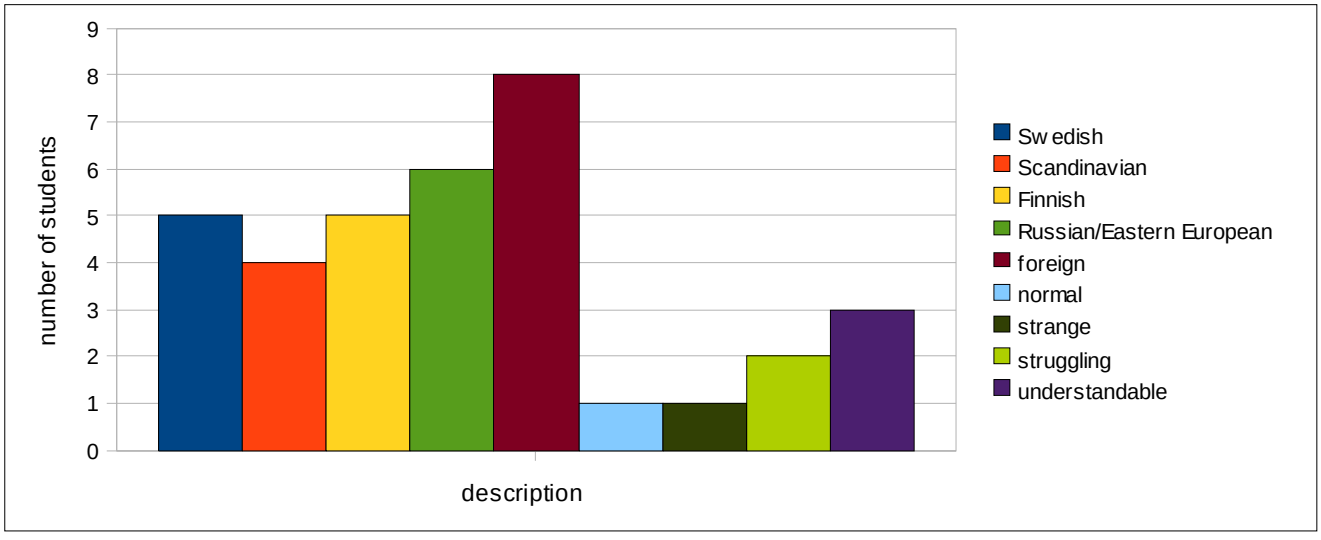
Something more to note as regards Sample 5 was that one student brought up he does not like foreign accents in general and that is also supposedly why he did not like this one either. This sounds like quite a harsh comment to make, although honest of course, but without a more detailed

explanation it is difficult to say more about how he has ended up thinking this way. Interestingly, this very same student had reported that he does not care for a specific accent himself when speaking English (he was a major student in Swedish and said that in that language he demands a native Swedish Swedish accent). Perhaps any *native* accent of English would do for him? In addition to the comment above, a couple more were made about the fluency of the speech and it being a factor in deciding how native-like the speaker was, as well as the lack of any stereotypical pronunciations making this accent a difficult one to evaluate for one participant. Thus, there was some variation in the answers and observations, as always. But to sum up, Sample 5 was the one to cause the most disagreement so far among the two groups studied.

5.2.7. Sample6: Swedish Speaker

The last accent sample came from one of Finland's neighbouring countries, Sweden. It was assumed this would be an easy and "amicable" accent for the Finnish university students involved, but in the end, did not prove to be so. Let us now see what they thought of the accent after hearing it (see also Graph 11 below.).

Graph 11. Q1. How did the speaker's accent sound to you?
Sample 6.



This was the one to receive the highest number of different guesses on the speaker's nationality. Both Swedish and Finnish were suggested five times, Scandinavian or Norwegian four times and Russian, Polish, Slavic or Eastern European six times. Throughout the whole study, there were small differences in how the participants responded to the questions and how their answers were formulated. When asked “How did the speaker's accent sound to you?”, some participants answered something along the lines “like a Finnish person speaking English” or “sounded a foreign accent”. Some, on the other hand, answered “Swedish”. It has to be assumed that both types of answers refer to the same thing, someone speaking with a non-native English accent. On more general terms, the accent was thought to be foreign by eight participants. Then one odd comment described Sample 6 as “quite normal but there was something odd”. It is always difficult to determine 'normal', and in this case, almost impossible to know what the respondent meant. One possibility is that they wanted to say the accent sounded alright on more or less all levels (understandability, fluency, not too foreign, etc.) but still there was something strange that did not quite fit and that they could not explain. Another answer worth highlighting was one in which the respondent said the accent was foreign but there were “some good parts”, too. This makes one wonder whether for some people, a foreign accent automatically equals incorrect or unacceptable. This is, of course, a rather black and white generalisation but nevertheless feasible. Two more students argued the speaker sounded like an inexperienced speaker of English, or was struggling with his speech. But, on the contrary, the accent was still seen to be clear and understandable by three students.

The second question prompted various factors for the also quite various evaluations in question one. Those who thought the accent was either Swedish, Finnish or Scandinavian wrote about the Swedish “sound” of the accent or the speaker, the overall roundness of speech that reminded one of Scandinavian languages, the stiffness of speech, problems with some phonemes, for instance the ‘th’ and ‘ch’ sounds and ‘t’ becoming a ‘d’, the distinctive ‘l’ sound of the speaker, the vowels, especially ‘e’, flat and falling intonation, etc. Those who thought Sample 6 was simply

foreign or strange brought up the ‘r’ sound and the slow and separate rhythm and intonation, including some general problems with pronunciation. To mix things up a little, there was also a comment about the pronunciation being extremely clear although some sounds did not come out right. The last group of participants who evaluated that the accent could be Russian, Slavic or Eastern European, thought so because of the “slight /j/ after /m/ in the word 'meet'” for example, the ‘r’ sounds again, the twists of vowels, a very front ‘i’, intonation and the overall soft pronunciation. There were no great differences between first year students and the older students’ group, other than a couple more participants in the latter group naming a nationality or a mother tongue for the speaker.

In question three this Swedish accent scored near to a tie with the Chinese accent in Sample 3. As a matter of fact, Sample 6 received less ‘yes’ votes (17%) for liking the accent than the Chinese accent did (33%), but less ‘no’ votes as well (54% against 63%). The slice of the neutral votes for the Swedish accent was almost a third of all votes (29%). In other words, only four students liked Sample 6, thirteen did not and seven thought it was 'ok' or neutral. Making a difference to the earlier pattern of the older students having been perhaps more lenient towards the accents, this time more younger students told directly they liked the accent. Three first year students and one older student liked it, as opposed to four older students and nine first year students not liking it. It should be noted though that seven older students marked it as ‘ok’ and, thus, they were not as negative towards the accent in the end. Reasons for not really liking the accent were, according to the participants, that it differed quite a lot from “normal” RP English and did not sound good, that it was unclear and quite rough with lots of sudden stops, it “sounded like someone speaking while being asleep”, it was too Finnish, too slow and difficult to understand. Also mentioned was the fact that someone found the Swedish accent irritating and that the flat and falling intonation sounded unpleasant. For those participants holding the opposite view the fact that the accent required more concentration to understand it was not a major factor and there was nothing that bothered them. The accent was

considered reasonably good, clear and still easy to understand, and “interesting because it’s difficult to define what was weird about it”. One participant who had neutral feelings about the accent said she felt she hears the accent often. Another participant who could not decide whether she liked the accent or not wrote: “I have noticed during this test that my perceptions of accents are very stereotypical. I didn't like that! I seem to value other nationalities better for their accents. Not very nice!”. This is the same participant who earlier made the comment about having noticed she respected accents and considered them valid more easily if a native speaker read the text (see section 5.2.5.). Indeed, at least one of the students was made to reconsider her attitudes towards different accents as a result of participating in the study.

When looking at how easy or difficult the participants found Sample 6, we find that it was rated the second most difficult of all six accents included, right after Sample 5 and before Sample 3. The actual mean score, however, did not prove very high (2,17), which suggests the participants were still able to understand the speech quite easily. Once more the first year students had had more problems (2,5) than their older fellow students (1,83). For the question of how native-like they found the accent, a mean score of 3,84 was calculated. The same difference appeared here, as well, when the first year students’ average score was 4,00 and the same for the older students’ group was 3,67. Overall, Sample 6 was also evaluated the second most foreign sounding with the scores varying between 2 and 5. For question four the variation was similar, the scoring varying between 1 and 4.

Question number six continued revealing differences between the two groups. The total result for Sample 6 was 11 students (46%) in favour and 13 (54%) against this particular Swedish accent being good and valid as an example of accents of English. Separately, though, it seems the first year students are stricter again: three of them were for and as many as nine against accepting the accent. Among the older students, the numbers were eight students for and four students against. Most of the supporting arguments were based on the understandability of the accent, even though one

participant admitted they might have had more problems had not the reading already been very familiar towards finishing the research. Another student thought it was merely due to some pronunciation factors that the accent sounded foreign; they thought the speech was so fluent that the speaker must use it often. Opposing arguments, then, were more various: someone said they had not heard the accent in many movies and for that reason did not think it was a valid example. What is interesting about this comment is that the same participant had commented in question three that he feels he hears the accent often. By this the participant must refer to hearing the accent spoken around him in everyday life, out in the streets for example, but not in "official" contexts. This could refer to how widely spread an accent is in the world – not just Finland or Sweden –, which was touched upon by another student saying that "this is the hardest question… again I have to base my judgment on nativity, understandability and the widespreadness [sic] of the accent.". Other comments included the accent lacking in fluency and proper pronunciation of some words, and the fact that it clearly belonged to a foreign speaker.

5.3. Discussion and Interpretation of the Results

In general, the accents were evaluated well, and good explanations were given in the answers. It was nice to see how the 24 university students participating in the study contributed to the research and used their expert knowledge to elaborate on their answers. The conduct of the research was successful, apart from a few single occasions where a question could have been formulated even better. For example, the evaluation scale for question seven in the background section of the questionnaire would have been clearer if switched the other way around. There was also a slight decrease in concentration towards the end of listening to the samples and filling in the questionnaire. This showed as faster rounds of answering the questions, which can of course be explained with simply the participants being more accustomed to the questionnaire and the system of answering, and as quiet murmurs and, on one test occasion, quiet talk among friends taking part

in the research at the same time. The last mentioned did not happen until both had completed their questionnaire and was not seen to interfere with the other participants' performance, and hence, was not felt to be offensive or disturbing. In the end, the answers for the last accent of Sample 6 turned out to be consistent among the informants, and the slight loosening of concentration in the air as having not damaged the research in any way. Nevertheless, six accent samples were quite a maximum and adding more length to the research time wise would most likely prove too much.

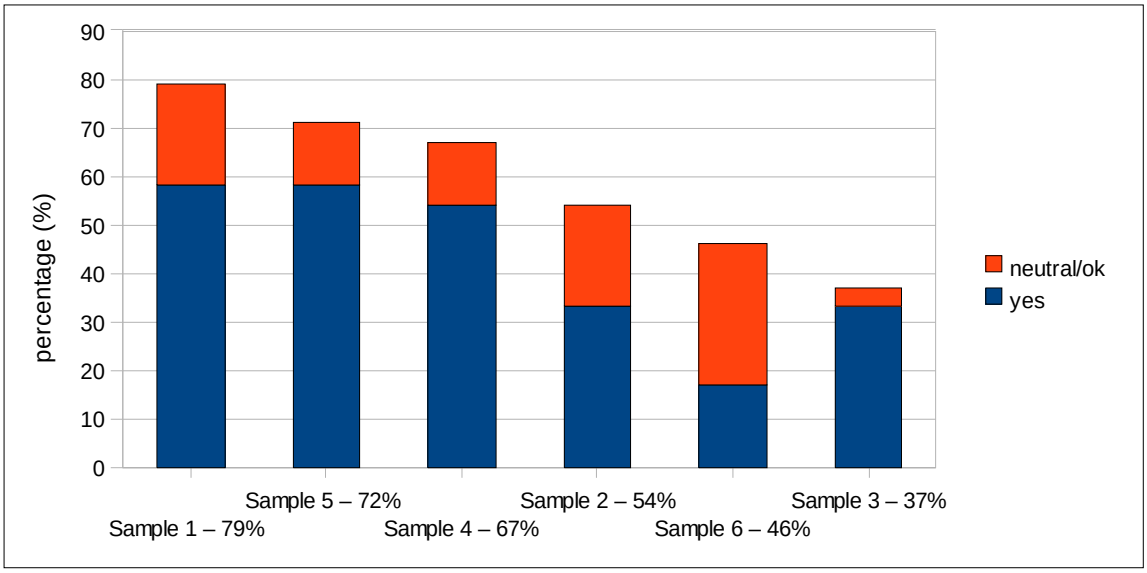
It is good to bear in mind that one's nerves in a formal-seeming research situation, how self-confident one feels about one's own abilities in the matter and how a person feels they should follow the university norms and/or authorities in pronunciation teaching or about a proper accent of English can have influenced how a participant completed the survey. Pihko (1997, 49) found out in her own study on Finnish high school students that the overall normative character of English language teaching can have an effect on learners' critical opinions. However, these are factors which were thought to belong to the participant's profile as a part of personal characteristics and thus not seen problematic at all. On the contrary, it would be of interest for further studies, since the current one does not focus on that perspective.

When compared to previous research in Finland and abroad, the results are compatible to some extent. There are students of English who are clearly more positive in their take on non-native accents. For some, however, the fact that real English is spoken as a native person speaks it, cannot be overcome, even though the accent was quite fine otherwise. Last but not least, accents and nationalities seem to be perceived somewhat stereotypically, especially if there is no concrete connection to them. As a consequence, some are preferred more than others, without any specific conscious reason. All in all, the results are based on the averages drawn from the answers by a reasonable number of participants for a study as the one at hand.

5.3.1. The Overall Ranking of the Accents

The results of the study were a pleasant surprise. They showed what kind of attitudes the university students have towards the accents included in the study and what kind of differences were found between the participants. Of all the six accents, the British variant was the most liked. This finding was in accordance to those of both Lepistö (2004) and Dalton-Puffer et al. (1997). Quite surprisingly, however, The Indian English accent came second, right before the American one. This order stays the same by either counting only the number and percentage of the affirmative answers or both the affirmative and neutral answers together. The rest of the samples require a closer look. The German and the Chinese accents received the same amount (33%) of ‘yes’ votes in “Did you like the speaker’s accent?”. In addition, 21% of the votes given to the German accent were neutral or 'ok', as opposed to the 4% of neutral votes for the Chinese. Because a neutral answer can be considered less opposing than a ‘no’ answer, it was decided the German accent of Sample 2 was in fact better liked than the Chinese accent of Sample 3, which received far more ‘no’ votes, too (63% versus 46% for the German). The only accent that remains to be mentioned is the Swedish accent in Sample 6. This example received the least affirmative votes from the participants (17%), but was considered neutral by a third of them. Because 29% of the answers were in fact neutral, much more than for the Chinese accent, it was placed between the German and the Chinese accents as regards likability. Graph 12 presents the results for question three in the form of a ranking order for the accents based on ‘yes’ and ‘neutral/ok’ answers.

Graph 12. Q3. Did you like the accent?
(All 24 participants included.)



Based on the results, the ideal accent for these university students would be one that is, first and foremost, understandable and clear. This has been found to be a very important factor for language learners in previous research as well (see section 3.2. above). A native accent would most likely be the best candidate, though it was not an absolute prerequisite for all; as long as there are not too many or too drastic mistakes in pronunciation, they are tolerated. The accent should have some personality as well; formal and mechanical speech is not very welcomed. It is difficult to define what is meant by “a nice accent”, but it can be argued to come down to a reasonably pleasant sound and fluency, good intelligibility as regards the message being delivered without difficulties, perhaps some interesting quality, self-confidence on part of the speaker, and personal preferences of certain languages and cultures, native or non-native in English. It is always possible that some stereotypes play a part, too, since these preferences may not always be based on actual encounters with the culture but simple beliefs instead.

From the easiest accent to understand to that which was the most difficult, the accents in order were American, British, German, Indian, Swedish and Chinese. Not even the native accents were evaluated at a clear 1 on the five point scale by every participant in this question, although the

American accent came very close (1,04 on average). It was quite a surprise that the German accent (Sample 2) was found that easy to understand (1,63). Most likely the rhythm of speech and the rather fluent general flow and intonation helped the listener in this respect (Pihko 1997, 18 and 113). However, understandability and how native-like an accent is did not yield exactly the same ranking order for the accents. The accent that was considered the most foreign was the Chinese accent. The second most foreign-sounding to the participants was the Swedish accent, next came the German accent, the Indian accent, the American accent and, finally, the most native-like was the British accent. For example, the difference between the Indian and the Swedish accent, albeit not very big (3,63 versus 3,84), could be explained by the Indian accent being much more represented in the media than Swedish and this way more familiar. One participant pointed out in the section reserved for additional comments for the questionnaire that the foreign accents she is most used to hearing (in her case Swedish, Finnish and German) are also the most easy for her to understand and that they sound ”less” foreign to her. The Indian accent is also widely recognised as an official variety of spoken English, and, like some participants wrote in their answers, been granted a certain status in the linguistic world. Therefore, it can be argued that the way an accent is presented in the general public affects also attitudes. As for the research question of how intelligibility is affected by an accent’s foreign qualities, the results seemed to follow a certain pattern. For instance, the Chinese accent was the most foreign and the most difficult to understand. On the second to last place for both factors was the Swedish accent. Thus far there were no differences. Then the order changed and the German accent was more foreign-sounding than the Indian, although intelligibility wise it was easier than the Indian accent. British English was also considered the most native-like, but was left second regarding intelligibility while the American accent came first. Hence the suggestion of an accent's foreign sound and its understandability not necessarily going hand in hand, though they are always in sight of each other.

Liking an accent and being able to understand it is not necessarily the same thing as

considering it a good and valid example of English. This seemed to work both ways; accents that were liked by the students were judged invalid and vice versa. To what extent can an accent be non-standard, or non-native, in order to be accepted as an accent of English? Here both native accents were considered good and valid by all 24 participants (100%). The next in order was the Indian accent with 58% of the participants voting for it, followed by the German accent with 54% of the participants' votes. The last two in rank were the Swedish accent (46%) and the Chinese accent (21%). The order is exactly the same as for question five above, which measured how foreign (or native-like) an accent was. It seems that the closer to native an accent is considered, the better it is accepted as a good representative of its kind. In fact, it seems that this is the most important factor, since the order for understandability is a little different in that the German accent was considered easier than Indian, but also because the Indian accent was preferred over the American when asked if the participants liked each accent.

5.3.2. Differences in the Participants' Backgrounds

Different backgrounds of the participants had an influence on the results. There were some differences between the first year and the older students as well. One of the assumptions was that, because of their experience, the older students would regard accents in a gentler way and not be so harsh in what is acceptable and what is not. The native accents were evaluated on quite the same terms by both groups but liked more by the first year students. On the contrary, there were more students in the older group who said they liked the non-native accents or gave a neutral, rather than an opposing, answer. The question of whether an accent was good and valid as an accent of English was answered negatively by a majority of the first year students if the accent was not native. This suggests that the older students are not, in fact, that strict when it comes to evaluating an accent; understandability has more importance for them than native qualities when considering if an accent is good. They reported to have a little more interaction with non-native speakers of English, too,

namely in contexts outside their studies. However, as there were also first year students among the more lenient informants, the most significant factor was having spent longer periods of time abroad or having had more contact in general with speakers of English from other countries. These students possessed more flexible attitudes towards foreign accents than did those who did not have the experience. This finding was similar to that of Dalton-Puffer et al. (1997) in their study about Austrian students of English (see chapter 4 above). All in all, the participants were able to recognise and pinpoint various reasons for an accent being acceptable, such as status, intelligibility and fluency, even though they personally preferred other accents.

Based on the results, the older students had better coping skills for understanding a foreign accent. In all but one occasion (The British accent) their mean score for both understandability and how native-like an accent was resulted lower than the mean by the first year students. The difference was not necessarily big with every accent but it existed nonetheless. An interesting finding is also that apart from the older students' evaluations of the native accents, an accent was always rated higher in how foreign it was than how intelligible it was. Perhaps this is due to understandability being easier for the students to evaluate and them being more precocious when it comes to evaluating native characteristics as non-native speakers of English. As for the better coping skills of the older students, this can be seen as a natural consequence of more experience in linguistic studies.

Roughly half of the participants did not consider it important to speak with any certain accent. To emphasize, it was 58% of the first year students and 33% of the older students who said this. Unfortunately no one elaborated why this was *not* important for them. The findings of Lepistö (2004) and Ranta (2004) of their participants not being interested in sounding native in English either or considering it irrelevant and needless to follow a norm underline the conclusion that there are young language learners for whom being able to deliver and receive the message is more important than speaking like a native. Then again, the finding is in contradiction with the younger

students being more supportive of native accents compared to the older students (see above). The first year students are possibly more strongly of the opinion that there is “Real English” and “Strange English” that ought to and can be separated (Pihko 1997, 234-5), even though they do not yet have a strong view of their own way of speaking. They are possibly also more influenced by their recent, or at the time of the study ongoing, pronunciation classes. And of course it is only natural for these (older) students of English Philology wanting to sound as intelligible, fluent and at as ease as possible when speaking English. For some of them this meant sounding native with an accent of their choice (either British or American). After all, they have an interest towards the language and have wanted to study it on university level, and to make it a part of their profession. Maybe the wish to have a certain accent is something that is developed as the students proceed further in their university studies. A reverse example by one participant sheds light on the matter. In describing why it is important for her to speak with a British English accent, she says that before her student exchange year in the UK, she was constantly aiming towards that accent, and during her stay it was acquired, in her own words, at least ”to some extent”. Now she does not pay that much attention to it any more. Once the accent is proven functional enough, it is no longer such a big deal. For the most part, the participants described their own accent as a mixture of several accents and influences, of which one, mostly British or American English, was dominant. This is a positive sign as it tells that the students are well aware of the fact that one’s accent, like language in general, is affected by the people we interact with as well as one’s surroundings.

Whether a participant saw it as important for him or her to speak with a certain accent or not did show in the results, but quite reversely than what was expected. As has already been noted, for five younger and eight older students this was important. Among these participants there were three older and one younger student who accepted all six accents as valid and good, without exceptions. In addition, there were three older students who accepted all but the Chinese accent. Of the first year students who had commented on the importance of a certain accent for themselves, two saw

only the native accents as valid and good. Among the seven younger and four older students who did not prefer any specific accent in their own speech, one of the older students accepted all six accent samples, again regardless of their own preferences or some characteristics against the native norm. This was also the same participant who said that, in her opinion, all accents are valid. In addition, there was one older student more and one first year student who considered five out of the six accents valid. Five students marked only the native accents as good examples of English. The rest of the informants accepted three or four accents, in other words, the two native accents plus one or two others. To summarise, there were more students among the ones who thought it important for them to have the accent of their choice and who considered also the non-native accents valid. This can have a connection with most of these students being either more experienced because of the stage of studies they were at or because of staying abroad and/or using English with other speakers of English with diverse backgrounds. Still, it could have been assumed that the participants who did not give much importance to the way they spoke themselves would have had a more flexible attitude towards other than native accents as well.

One third of the teachers who took part in Ranta's (2004) study, most of whom were young of age, were ready to incorporate English as a lingua franca in their work. This topic was not included in the current study's questionnaire because of a different focus. Nevertheless, the participants were asked if they planned to work as teachers in the future. Those students who admitted they will or might work as language teachers did not significantly stand out in the group, but rather all kinds of answers were given by these possibly future teachers of English. Once more, the most effective underlying factor to cause differences in attitudes was if a participant had had more contact with and experience in different Englishes, either abroad or through more interaction with friends or family members. Seven of the eleven participants who had stayed abroad for a longer period of time presented positive attitudes, gave several points of view for their answers and considered at least five out of the six accent samples included to be good and valid English. Of those who had not

spent that much time abroad three students were in favour of five accents and can thus be seen to possess a positive mindset.

Now it is time to pull the strings together and make the final conclusions of this study.

6. Conclusion

Language changes. There is no way that the English spoken today could be the same kind as the English that was spoken two hundred years ago or the one that will be spoken fifty years from now. It is impossible to foretell what the future of English will be, but there are many signs of a World English variant growing stronger. This would most likely simultaneously require numbers of different spoken variants in use to express their speakers' identities and also a world of multilingual communities. Something that will not probably change that much, though, is our tendency to rate things hierarchically. What is more is that the way we speak quickly arouses strong and often unconscious reactions in the people we communicate with. Every man and woman is entitled to have their favourites, of course, but it would be very important for the world to be aware of this linguistic change taking place and, this way, the different accents becoming accepted and proudly used, as a spice in language rather than poison.

By choosing accent samples from an online speech bank, designing a questionnaire and using both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results, this study has attempted to investigate and reveal the attitudes of Finnish university students towards six different, genuine accents that can be seen to represent the kind of Englishes that are spoken in today's global world. The 24 students who participated in the study were quite tolerant towards the accents selected for research. The group of students who were close to graduation demonstrated more flexible attitudes than their younger fellow students. Among the first mentioned group were also the majority of those who emphasised understandability as the main factor in saying that an accent is good and valid English. As always, there were some exceptions, too, and it is argued that having a connection with speakers of English with diverse mother tongue backgrounds, in other words, speakers of English as a lingua franca, is indeed more influential than age as a factor in directing one’s views of what is acceptable spoken English and what is not. The native accents were still understood the best and accepted

unanimously, but not necessarily liked by all. In addition, the non-native accents were found pleasing, understandable and likable by many, if not yet counted as “proper” English together with standard native accents. Thus, it can be said that accepting an accent is also closely tied to context. Among the positive surprises was, for example, the students' opinion of the Indian and the German accents.

The results of this study contribute to the research field of non-native English speaker attitudes. They suggest there are two kinds of dispositions: those that consider only native accents or ones close to them in status valid and those that underline intelligibility in this respect. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that exposure and contact to lingua franca English variants increase both acceptability and intelligibility on part of the listener. Therefore, it is argued that language teaching should take this into consideration and help raise the awareness of different native and non-native accents of English. The instruction should also be able to offer learners the tools necessary for coping in the current, and future, world of English. This applies to both sending and receiving a message. A change in attitudes is slowly taking place, as the results pointed out.

Something that would be of interest around the topic of attitudes towards English accents is how foreign language users identify themselves with their own and the target language culture. This could be measured according to their own foreign accent of English or a desired accent, how much they feel they are a part of that culture and their attitudes towards different variants. Language and identity will continue to go hand in hand, and this should be accepted, whatever form that fulfils the communicative function of language they might take – because “you find out more about the person just from the way they talk”.

References

Allport, Gordon W. 1995. *The Nature of Prejudice*: *unabridged 25th anniversary edition*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Andersson, Lars and Peter Trudgill. 1990. *Bad Language.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Bamgbose, Ayo. 1998. Torn between the norms: Innovation in world Englishes. *World Englishes* 17,1: 1-14.

Brumfit, Christopher (ed.). 1982. *English for International Communication.* Oxford: Pergamon.

Brumfit, Christopher. 2001. *Individual Freedom in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brutt-Griffler, Janina. 2002. *World English: A Study of its Development*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Cargile, A.C. and Howard Giles. 1997. Understanding language attitudes: exploring listener affect and identity. *Language and Communication* 17,3: 195-217.

Chambers, J. K. and Peter Trudgill. 1998. *Dialectology*. Second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chiba, Reiko, Hiroko Matsuura, and Asako Yamamoto. 1995. Japanese attitudes towards English accents. *World Englishes* 14,1: 77-86.

Crystal, David. 2003. *English as a Global Language.* Cambridge University Press. 2nd edition.

Dalton, Christiane and Barbara Seidlhofer. 1994. *Pronunciation.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dalton-Puffer, Christiane, Gunther Kaltenboeck and Ute Smit. 1997. "Learner attitudes and L2 pronunciation in Austria." *World Englishes* 16,1: 115-128.

Day, Richard R. 1982. "Children's attitudes toward language" In *Attitudes towards Language Variation*, (eds.) Ellen Bouchard Ryan and Howard Giles, 116-132. London: Edward Arnold.

Downes, William. 1998. *Language and Society*. Cambridge University Press. 2nd edition.

Edwards, John. 1982. "Language attitudes and their implications among English speakers". In *Attitudes towards Language Variation*, (eds.) Ellen Bouchard Ryan and Howard Giles, 20-34. London: Edward Arnold.

Edwards, John. 1999. "Refining our understanding of language attitudes." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 18,1: 101-110.

Gentry El-Dash, Linda and JoAnne Busnardo. 2001. Brazilian attitudes toward English: dimensions of status and solidarity. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 11,1: 57-83.

Graddol, David. 1997. *The Future of English?*. London: British Council

Higgins, Christina. 2003. ””Ownership” of English in the Outer Circle: An Alternative to the NS-NNS Dichotomy”. *TESOL Quarterly* 37,4: 615-625.

Honey, John. 1989. *Does Accent Matter?: the pygmalion factor*. London: Faber and Faber.

Isokääntä, Sari. 2003. *Pronunciation received : English speakers' attitudes towards Finnish speakers' pronunciation of English*. Licenciate's dissertation, University of Tampere.

Jenkins, Jennifer. 2000. *The Phonology of English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jenkins, Jennifer. 2003 *World Englishes: a resource book for students*. New York: Routledge.

Jenkins, Jennifer. 2007. *English as a Lingua Franca: attitude and identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kachru, Braj B. (ed.). 1982. *The Other Tongue, English across Cultures*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Kachru, Braj B. 1985. "Standards, Codification and Sociolinguistic Realism: the English Language in the Outer Circle." In *English in the World. Teaching and learning the language and literatures*, (eds.) Randolp Quirk and H. G. Widdowson, 11-30. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kachru, Braj B. 1986. *The Alchemy of English. The spread, functions and models of non-native Englishes*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Kachru, Braj B., Yamuna Kachru and Cecil L. Nelson (eds.). 2006. *The Handbook of World Englishes*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Keys, Kevin and Robin Walker. 2002. ”Ten questions on the phonology of English as an international langueg” *ELT Journal* 56,3: 298-302.

Ladegaard, Hans J. and Itesh Sachdev. 2006. 'I Like the Americans… But I Certainly Don't Aim for an American Accent': Language Attitudes, Vitality and Foreign Language Learning in Denmark. *Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development* 27,2: 91-108.

Lambert, W. E., R. Hodgson, R. C. Gardner and S. Fillenbaum. 1960. "Evaluational reactions to spoken languages". *Journal of Abnormal Psychology and Social Psychology* 60,1: 44-51.

Lepistö, Sari. 2004. *Ambitious Americans and educated Britons : a study on upper secondary school students and their preferences and attitudes towards different varieties of the English language*. MA thesis, University of Tampere.

Modiano, Marko. 2006. "Euro-Englishes". In *The Handbook of World Englishes*, (eds.) Braj B.

Kachru, Yamuna Kachru and Cecil L. Nelson, 223-239. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Montgomery, Martin. 1995. *An Introduction to Language and Society*. Second edition. London: Routledge.

Phillipson, Robert. 1997. *Linguistic Imperialism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pihko, Marja-Kaisa. 1994. *Cross-linguistic Intelligibility of Native and Non-native L2 Speech Varieties*. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto.

Pihko, Marja-Kaisa. 1997. *His English Sounded Strange: The Intelligibility of Native and Non-Native English Pronunciation to Finnish Learners of English.* Jyväskylä: Centre for Applied Language Studies.

Ranta, Elina. 2004. *International English - a Future Possibility in the Finnish EFL Classroom?* MA thesis, University of Tampere.

Ryan, Ellen Bouchard and Howard Giles (eds.). 1982. *Attitudes towards Language Variation*. London: Edward Arnold Ltd.

Ryan, Ellen Bouchard, Howard Giles and Richard J. Sebastian. 1982. "An integrative perspective for the study of attitudes toward language variation". In *Attitudes towards Language Variation*, (eds.) Ellen Bouchard Ryan and Howard Giles, 1-20. London: Edward Arnold Ltd.

Seidlhofer, Barbara. 2001. Closing A Conceptual Gap: The Case For A Description Of English As A Lingua Franca. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 11,2: 133-158.

Seidlhofer, Barbara. 2005. English as a lingua franca. *ELT Journal* 59,4: 339-341.

Thomas, George. 1991. *Linguistic Purism*. London: Longman.

Timmis, Ivor. 2002. "Native-Speaker norms and International English: a classroom view." *ELT Journal* 56,3: 240-249.

Tsui, Amy B. M. and David Bunton. 2000. The discourse and attitudes of English language teachers in Hong Kong. *World Englishes* 19,3: 287-303.

Warghaugh, Ronald. 1987. *Languages in Competition*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc.

Wardhaugh, Ronald. 1998. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. 3rd edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Widdowson, H. G. 1994. The Ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly* 28,2: 377-389

Internet Sources:

Domyei, Zoltan and Kata Csizer, Nora Nemeth. 2006. *Motivation, Language Attitudes and Globalisation: A Hungarian Perspective*. [Internet] Publisher: Multilingual Matters Limited. Available from http://site.ebrary.com/lib/tampere/docDetail.action?docID=10120630. [Accessed 31st August 2009]

Jenkins, Jennifer. 2002. "Community, Currency and the Lingua Franca Core" [Internet] Keynote presentation at TESOL Spain annual conference, March 2002. Available from http://www.tesol-spain.org/newsletter/jenkins.pdf. [Accessed 31st of August 2009]

The Speech Accent Archive http://accent.gmu.edu

http://accent.gmu.edu/pdfs/elicitation.pdf (Reading)
http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=detail&speakerid=77 (Sample1)
http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=detail&speakerid=189 (Sample2)
http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=detail&speakerid=260 (Sample3)
http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=detail&speakerid=94 (Sample4)
http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=detail&speakerid=207 (Sample5)
http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=detail&speakerid=354 (Sample6)

[All accessed 31st August 2009]

Appendix: Research Questionnaire

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Please take your time to fill in the background information needed for the research.
If at any point during the study there is something unclear, do not hesitate to ask.

1. Age: _____ years

2. Are you an English philology major student? Yes ☐ No ☐

3. How many years have you studied English philology on university level? _____ years

4. Do you plan to work as a language teacher? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I might

5. Have you lived or stayed longer in another country? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, where? _____

For how long? _____

6. What is your native language?

_____

7. How often do you speak English with the following people / in the following contexts? Note the right hand column separately, i.e. your friends with whom you speak English may be both native and non-native speakers.

Number the alternatives accordingly. (1 = daily, 2 = often, 3 = sometimes, 4 = rarely, 5 = never)

☐ Teachers at the university
☐ Work related contexts
☐ Friends or family members

☐ Native Speakers
☐ Non-native Speakers

8. Which accent were you taught in elementary and upper secondary school?

_____

9. Which accent are/were you taught in university (mainly pronunciation class)?

_____

10. How would you describe your own English accent?

_____
_____
_____

11. Is it important for you to speak with a certain accent? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, please specify both the accent and your reasons why.

_____

_____

_____

Next you will hear six audio samples of accents of English, one at a time. You will hear each sample once, after which you have time to answer the questions below. First read the questions through and ask for clarification if needed.
If you do not hear the audio sample or there are other problems, please raise your hand.

AUDIO SAMPLE 1

1. How did the speaker's accent sound to you?

_____
_____
_____

2. Can you name the factors that caused you to form your opinion?

_____
_____
_____

3. Did you like this accent? Why/Why not?

_____
_____
_____

4. How easy or difficult was it for you to understand the speaker's accent?
Circle the best option.

(No problems) 1 2 3 4 5 (Difficult)

5. How foreign was the speaker's accent?
Circle the best option.

(Native-like) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very foreign)

6. Do you consider this a good and valid accent of English?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why/Why not?

_____
_____

7. Anything else you would like to comment on?

_____
_____
_____

AUDIO SAMPLE 2

1. How did the speaker's accent sound to you?

_____
_____
_____

2. Can you name the factors that caused you to form your opinion?

_____
_____
_____

3. Did you like this accent? Why/Why not?

_____
_____
_____

4. How easy or difficult was it for you to understand the speaker's accent?
Circle the best option.

(No problems) 1 2 3 4 5 (Difficult)

5. How foreign was the speaker's accent?
Circle the best option.

(Native-like) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very foreign)

6. Do you consider this a good and valid accent of English?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why/ Why not?

_____
_____

7.Anything else you would like to comment on?

_____
_____
_____

AUDIO SAMPLE 3

1. How did the speaker's accent sound to you?

_____
_____
_____

2. Can you name the factors that caused you to form your opinion?

_____
_____
_____

3. Did you like this accent? Why/Why not?

_____
_____
_____

4. How easy or difficult was it for you to understand the speaker's accent?
   Circle the best option.

   (No problems) 1 2 3 4 5 (Difficult)

5. How foreign was the speaker's accent?
   Circle the best option.

   (Native-like) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very foreign)

6. Do you consider this a good and valid accent of English?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Why/ Why not?

   _____
   _____

7. Anything else you would like to comment on?

_____
_____
_____

AUDIO SAMPLE 4

1. How did the speaker's accent sound to you?

_____
_____
_____

2. Can you name the factors that caused you to form your opinion?

_____
_____
_____

3. Did you like this accent? Why/Why not?

_____
_____
_____

4. How easy or difficult was it for you to understand the speaker's accent?
   Circle the best option.

   (No problems) 1 2 3 4 5 (Difficult)

5. How foreign was the speaker's accent?
   Circle the best option.

   (Native-like) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very foreign)

6. Do you consider this a good and valid accent of English?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Why/Why not?

   _____
   _____

7. Anything else you would like to comment on?

_____
_____
_____

AUDIO SAMPLE 5

1.How did the speaker's accent sound to you?

_____
_____
_____

2.Can you name the factors that caused you to form your opinion?

_____
_____
_____

3.Did you like this accent? Why/Why not?

_____
_____
_____

4.How easy or difficult was it for you to understand the speaker's accent?
Circle the best option.

(No problems) 1 2 3 4 5 (Difficult)

5.How foreign was the speaker's accent?
Circle the best option.

(Native-like) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very foreign)

6.Do you consider this a good and valid accent of English?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why/ Why not?

_____
_____

7.Anything else you would like to comment on?

_____
_____
_____

AUDIO SAMPLE 6

1.How did the speaker's accent sound to you?

_____
_____
_____

2.Can you name the factors that caused you to form your opinion?

_____
_____
_____

3.Did you like this accent? Why/Why not?

_____
_____
_____

4.How easy or difficult was it for you to understand the speaker's accent?
Circle the best option.

(No problems) 1 2 3 4 5 (Difficult)

5.How foreign was the speaker's accent?
Circle the best option.

(Native-like) 1 2 3 4 5 (Very foreign)

6.Do you consider this a good and valid accent of English?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Why/Why not?

_____
_____

7.Anything else you would like to comment on?

_____
_____
_____

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN MY RESEARCH.