

VIETNAMESE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIFFERENT ENGLISH ACCENTS AND THEIR OWN ENGLISH ACCENT

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ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Received:	03/9/2025	Globalization leads to people around the world having more chances to encounter divergent English varieties with distinct accents in their daily life. A great number of research studies have dug into the ways English speakers react to the English varieties which they are exposed to. Also, whether Vietnamese students, who study English as a foreign language, hold any prejudice against different English accents is questionable. Therefore, this quantitative research aims to investigate Vietnamese students' attitudes towards five popular English accents, together with their own English accents. The research was conducted with sixty-three participants who were students majoring in English language at a university. The results demonstrate that the participants indeed hold strong prejudice against some particular English accents, and their attitudes towards their own accents are not positive. These findings help sociolinguists have a broad overview about what Vietnamese students think about different English accents in the world, and what should be done to change these negative attitudes.
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THÁI ĐỘ CỦA SINH VIÊN VIỆT NAM ĐỐI VỚI CÁC GIỌNG TIẾNG ANH KHÁC NHAU VÀ VỚI GIỌNG TIẾNG ANH CỦA CHÍNH MÌNH

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	03/9/2025	Việc toàn cầu hóa hiện nay giúp mọi người trên toàn thế giới có nhiều cơ hội hơn để tiếp xúc với các dạng tiếng Anh khác nhau với nhiều giọng khác biệt trong đời sống hàng ngày. Rất nhiều bài nghiên cứu đã đào sâu vào vấn đề người học tiếng Anh phản ứng như thế nào với các dạng tiếng Anh khác nhau mà họ đã có dịp tiếp xúc. Một vấn đề khác cũng được đặt ra rằng liệu sinh viên Việt Nam đang học tiếng Anh như một ngôn ngữ nước ngoài có bất kỳ định kiến nào đến các dạng tiếng Anh khác nhau trên thế giới hay không. Do đó, bài nghiên cứu định lượng này đặt mục tiêu khảo sát thái độ của sinh viên Việt Nam đối với năm giọng tiếng Anh phổ biến trên thế giới và thái độ của sinh viên đối với giọng tiếng Anh của chính mình. Nghiên cứu được tiến hành với 63 sinh viên chuyên ngành ngôn ngữ Anh tại một trường đại học. Kết quả của nghiên cứu đã chứng minh rằng sinh viên có định kiến lớn đối với một vài giọng tiếng Anh, và thái độ của họ đối với giọng tiếng Anh của chính mình không tích cực. Những kết quả này giúp các nhà ngôn ngữ xã hội học có cái nhìn bao quát về suy nghĩ của sinh viên Việt Nam học tiếng Anh như một ngôn ngữ nước ngoài đối với các giọng tiếng Anh khác nhau trên thế giới, và hoạch định các hoạt động trong tương lai để thay đổi những định kiến này.
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1. Introduction

In every part of the world, there are hundreds of millions of people using English in their daily life [1]. While some other regions in South East Asia use English as a second language, Vietnam is a country where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). According to Pham [2], although English is an obligatory subject at school from a young age, Vietnamese students are not fluent in using English to communicate due to exam-oriented teaching, which focuses mostly on grammar and vocabulary while ignoring the productive skills. Similar to other EFL countries around the world, British Received Pronunciation (RP) accents and General American (GA) accents are the most popular among Vietnamese students. Nevertheless, thanks to globalization, Vietnamese people have more opportunities to be exposed to other English accents during their tertiary education time or in their working environment. It is possible that Vietnamese students hold varied attitudes towards different English accents they have a chance to encounter, but there is few research studies on this topic conducted so far.

Looking into the situation of countries in Asia, there have been various research studies on this issue such as Li [3] and Mei [4]. The findings of these studies have shown that Asian speakers of English held positive attitudes towards native accents. To be specific, American English was described with positive adjectives such as “clearer, more professional, more decisive” [3], or “popular, widely used, more international, rich in sound and pleasant to ears” [4]. British English was described as a more “authentic” accent which “sounds elegant” and is “soft in sound” [4]. On the other hand, some other English varieties, which are not native, were mentioned with negative attitudes and considered as a “less prestigious” accent which were hard to understand [3]. Another study of Fraser conducted in 2006 [5] investigated Japanese high school students’ attitudes towards different English accents. The findings showed that the participants appreciated American English accent more than other English accents, including British English, Scottish English, Japanese English, Taiwanese English, Zimbabwean English, and Australian English. It is interesting that the participants of this research considered British English accent as an intelligible one, but they had relatively negative attitude towards it and were not willing to develop it. Dharma and Rudianto [6] conducted a research study on Indonesian EFL students’ attitudes towards various English accents and their own accents with 100 participants. They came to the conclusion that American English accent and British English accent received more positive attitudes than other non-native accents. They also found out that most participants tended to accept their non-native accent and hold positive attitudes towards it. Similar findings are also found in research studies conducted by Pradana [7], and Sahrai and Tantiranat [8]. Considering Vietnamese context, there were few previous research on EFL learners’ attitudes towards different English accents. One rare quantitative research on the similar topic was conducted by Phan in 2020 [9]. She investigated 53 students at a university in Southern Vietnam to find out their attitudes towards GA accent and RP accent. The results showed that GA accent was ranked higher than RP accent in every aspect investigated in the survey. The possible reason for this tendency mentioned in the research was the familiarity and the students’ exposure to the accent at schools.

Due to the lack of research studies on the issue mentioned above in Vietnamese contexts, this research was conducted to examine not only Vietnamese EFL students’ attitudes about other English accents but also their perceptions about their own. The findings would provide insights into how their accent preferences might influence their language learning, their effectiveness and confidence in communicating in English. The study is guided by two research questions: (1) What are Vietnamese EFL students’ attitudes towards different English accents? and (2) What are their perceptions about their own English accent?

2. Methodology

2.1. Pedagogical setting and participants

Sixty-three Vietnamese EFL students participated in this research. All of them were fourth-year English majors at a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Among the participants, there

are 11 students who have been studying English for less than 5 years, 10 students for 5 to 8 years, and 42 students for more than 8 years. As their major at university is English, they have had various opportunities to be exposed to different English varieties around the world, which makes them the suitable participants for the research.

2.2. Design of the study

This quantitative research employed a five-point Likert scale questionnaire designed with Google forms. To answer the two research questions, the questionnaire was divided into two sections.

The first section was aimed to collect the participants' opinions about five different English accents, including American English accent (New York), British English accent (Wales), Indian English accent, Hong Kong English accent, and Philippine English accent. These five accents were chosen due to the fact that they are typical ones in different regions around the world. Moreover, they are distinct from one another, which might trigger the participants to have clear opinions about each of them. Five audio files of the accents were taken from the website International Dialects of English Archive (IDEA) [10]. The questionnaire required the participants to listen to each audio file, and to decide what they thought about the voice they were listening to. To minimize potential prejudice or bias, they were not informed of the specific accents in advance.

There were 10 items for the participants to choose. These are designed and classified based on the ABC Model of attitudes introduced by Eagly and Chaiken [11], which described three main components of attitudes. The first component is the participants' cognitive attitudes (whether they thought the person with a specific accent was intelligent, educated, confident, clear, fluent, professional, cool, friendly). The second component is their affective attitudes (whether they liked the accent or not). The third one is their behavioral attitudes (whether they wanted to practice the accent or not). The adjectives used to examine the cognitive attitudes were chosen based on the pilot test of Phan's research in 2020 [9] and Dharma and Rudianto's research in 2013 [6] on similar topics.

The second section of the questionnaire focused on participants' perceptions of their own English accents. It comprised four items: "My accent is understandable", "My accent is cool", "I'm confident of speaking English with my own accent", and "I'm satisfied with my own accent." The participants were required to honestly answer the questions based on their own thoughts.

2.3. Data collection and analysis

63 participants were sent the Google form link for them to complete the questionnaire on their personal devices. All items in the questionnaire were obligatorily required to answer before submitting to the researcher. The answers later were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27. The five scales from strongly disagree to strongly agree were coded into numbers from 1 to 5.

The analyzed data are then presented in tables with figures of mean and standard deviation (SD).

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Cognitive attitudes

Table 1. The mean scores of aspects of cognitive attitudes

	Indian English accent		American English accent		Hong Kong English accent		British English accent		Philippine English accent	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Intelligent	2.79	0.883	3.95	0.728	3.83	0.610	4.10	0.640	3.71	0.633
Educated	2.79	0.936	4.08	0.768	3.98	0.660	4.13	0.729	3.86	0.737
Confident	2.67	1.191	4.27	0.745	3.83	0.773	4.32	0.618	3.89	0.599
Clear	2.21	1.034	4.08	0.809	4.06	0.801	3.92	0.885	3.75	0.861
Fluent	2.17	0.976	4.32	0.714	3.90	0.817	4.38	0.633	3.73	0.700
Professional	2.17	0.959	3.92	0.789	3.57	0.837	4.25	0.621	3.51	0.738
Cool	2.40	1.056	3.68	0.930	3.43	0.911	4.03	0.761	3.27	0.807
Friendly	2.89	1.033	3.83	0.814	3.84	0.766	3.56	0.838	3.60	0.636

Table 1 shows the data about the cognitive attitudes of the participants towards five different English accents, including Indian English, American English, Hong Kong English, British English, and Philippine English.

It is clear that Indian English accent received the least positive cognitive attitudes from the participants in all aspects included in the questionnaire. All aspects of this accent received mean scores below 3.0, and the items “fluent” and “professional” got the lowest scores, which was 2.17. Philippine English accent achieved the second lowest mean scores in terms of “intelligent” (3.71), “educated” (3.86), “confident” (3.89), “clear” (3.75), “fluent” (3.73), “professional” (3.51), and “cool” (3.27). However, the gaps between Indian English accent and Philippine English accent were noticeably large (roughly 1.0), while the gaps between Indian English accent with the others were minimal.

Both American English accent and British English accent had extremely high mean scores for cognitive attitudes, but British English accent got a little higher and dominated the first place for all aspects except “clear” and “friendly”. Surprisingly, British English accent was the second lowest one in terms of “friendly” (mean score 3.56), just above Indian English accent. In terms of “clear”, the participants appreciated American English accent the most (mean score 4.08).

Among the 5 accents examined, Hong Kong English accent received the average mean scores for most of the aspects of cognitive attitudes. Nonetheless, it got the highest mean scores for the item “friendly” (3.84) and the second highest for “clear” after American English accent, which had a slightly lower mean score (3.83).

3.2. Affective attitudes

Table 2 shows the data about whether the participants like Indian English accent, American English accent, Hong Kong English accent, British English accent, and Philippine English accent.

Table 2. *The mean scores of aspects of affective attitudes*

	Indian English accent		American English accent		Hong Kong English accent		British English accent		Philippine English accent	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I like this accent	1.67	0.898	3.95	0.958	3.63	0.747	3.90	0.875	3.19	0.800

American English accent occupied the first place (mean score 3.95), followed by British English accent (3.90), Hong Kong English accent (3.63), Philippine English accent (3.19), and Indian English accent (1.67). Similar to cognitive attitudes, Indian English accent also got the lowest mean score with the extreme gaps with the others. The data proves that the participants like American English accent the most and Indian English the least. British English accent is also much preferred, but it got slightly lower scores compared to American English accent.

3.3. Behavioral attitudes

Table 3 presents the data on participants’ behavioral attitudes towards the Indian, American, Hong Kong, British, and Philippine English accents.

Table 3. *The mean scores of aspects of behavioral attitudes*

	Indian English accent		American English accent		Hong Kong English accent		British English accent		Philippine English accent	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I want to practice this accent	1.43	0.797	3.59	1.186	3.29	0.888	3.84	0.954	2.76	0.979

British English accent held the first place (mean score 3.84), followed by American English accent (3.59), Hong Kong English accent (3.29), Philippine English accent (2.76), and Indian English accent (1.43). Philippine English accent got relatively low mean score for this aspect; in fact, this was the only item in which Philippine English accent got the mean score below 3.0.

3.4. Perceptions about their own English accent

Table 4 shows the results of the participants' perceptions about the own English accent.

Table 4. *The mean scores of perceptions about the participants' own English accent*

	Mean	SD
My accent is understandable.	3.54	0.820
My accent is cool.	2.89	0.845
I'm confident of speaking English with my own accent.	3.25	0.967
I'm satisfied with my own accent.	2.95	1.069

The items "My accent is understandable." and "I'm confident of speaking English with my own accent." had the mean scores above 3.0, while "My accent is cool." and "I'm satisfied with my own accent." got the scores below 3.0.

The participants generally agreed that their English accent was understandable, and they were relatively confident in situations when they used English to communicate with others. However, the data proved that they did not feel satisfied with their own accent, and they did not believe that their accent was "cool" to others.

3.5. Discussion

After Kachru introduced the term World Englishes [12], more and more scholars and researchers criticized the monocentric view, such as Crystal [13], Jenkins [14] and Kirkpatrick [15], [16]. While the pluricentric view accepts the English language with its divergent varieties and suggests that English learners should learn different varieties based on their particular context, the monocentric view sees English native accent as the model and the learning goal [14]. Tollefson [17] stated that the monocentric view could lead to serious discrimination due to the fact that some English speakers would feel inferior if their English varieties were undervalued. Moreover, according to Cook [18], it is impossible for non-native English speakers to achieve the native-speaker model. He also stated that the only way for non-native speakers to have the native accent is "being reborn" [18]. Nonetheless, in recent years, there still have been many English learners and speakers hold the monocentric view about the English language.

The findings in this study indicate that the participants held a monocentric view about the English language. They expressed a clear preference for American English accent and British English accent, and strongly agreed that the two accents mentioned were "intelligent", "educated", "confident", "clear", "fluent", "professional", and "cool". In contrast, although Hong Kong English accent and Philippine English accent received quite positive attitudes, the Indian English accent was rated very negatively across all aspects examined. The mean scores of Indian English accent are always the lowest with the extreme gaps from the other accents chosen. These results are consistent with the findings of Li [3], Mei [4], Dharma and Rudianto [6]. Therefore, it is obvious that Vietnamese EFL students have the same view compared to other students from other Asian countries.

To be more specific, the British English accent's mean scores of most aspects are slightly higher than those of American English accent, proving that British English accent is a bit more preferable than American English accent. This finding contrasts with the results of Phan's research in 2020 [9], which also investigated Vietnamese students in the same context, and Fraser's in 2006 [5], which was conducted with Japanese high school students. While both Phan and Fraser's findings showed that General American English accent was ranked higher than British English accent in all aspects, the participants in this research seemed to express their opposite opinion. Phan [9] suggested that the possible reason for American English accent being at a higher rank be the familiarity and the students' exposure to the accent at schools. However, it might not be the case due to the fact that the participants in this research consider that American English accent is clearer and friendlier, but they still evaluate British English accent to be more

intelligent, educated, confident, fluent and professional. Additionally, the participants like American English accent the most, but they prefer having British English accent if they have opportunities to practice. On the contrary, in Fraser's case [5], the Japanese participants did not want to develop British English accent although they also highly appreciated it.

One interesting point of the results is that Hong Kong English accent appears to be the friendliest among the 5 accents chosen for the research. For other aspects, Hong Kong English does not receive strong attitudes (both negative and positive) from the participants, but in terms of "friendly", surprisingly, the participants considered it to be the most amiable. British English accent was not considered to be friendly when compared to American English accent, Philippine English accent, and Hong Kong English accent. Few research on attitudes of Asian people towards Hong Kong English accent are found, so there should be more research focusing on this accent in order to find out more conclusive evidence and the possible reasons for this.

Moving to the answer for the second research question, the participants showed quite negative attitudes towards their own English accent. They believed that their English accent was understandable, but they were not very confident with it when communicating with others. Their own English accent was not considered as "cool", and they did not feel satisfied with it. Compared to the findings of Dharma and Rudianto's research conducted with Indonesian EFL students in 2013 [6], their participants held more positive feelings towards their own English accent. About 61 percent of their participants claimed that they "felt comfortable, confident, and proud of using their accent", 28 percent had no feelings about their accent, and only 10 percent felt "unconfident" and "weird" about it. This proves that Vietnamese EFL students are not pleased with their own English accent, and they are willing to practice other English accents which are, in their opinion, more highly appreciated such as American English or British English accent.

4. Conclusion

To summarize, Vietnamese EFL students still hold the monocentric view towards different English varieties around the world, and they are not confident and satisfied with their own English accent although they admit that their own English accent is acceptable. They place greater value on American and British English accents than on Philippine, Hong Kong, or Indian English accents, with the latter receiving particularly negative evaluations. These findings have contributed to investigating Vietnamese EFL learners' pronunciation and speaking skill. They have also laid the foundation for language educators to acknowledge students' preference of different English accents and take necessary action to change students' negative attitudes towards some particular English accents, including their own. For a broader overview, more research should be conducted to investigate Vietnamese EFL students' attitudes towards the other English accents. Intensive interviews should also be carried out in order to dig deeper into their own feelings and the reasons why they still hold their monocentric view while the pluricentric one is supported by more and more linguists and English educators in the world.

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