Phonological Language Attitudes: Exploring the Discriminatory Paradigm of Predetermined Perceptions and a Plan for Intervention

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ABSTRACT

This research explores published articles, books, personal communication, and data from my study to examine the deleterious effects of college students' phonological language attitudes (PLAs)—PLAs that arguably affect the overall success of undergraduates' ability to achieve successful intercultural communication essential for future academic and/or career objectives in a globalized environment (whether it be a professional or an educational setting). I identify PLAs as the listener's assessment of a speaker's English usage as deficient based on the speaker's accent (i.e., nonnative English pronunciations), which, thus affects the listener's ability to comprehend the speaker's speech. Through data collection and analysis, my research endeavors to identify a basis for PLA intervention (i.e., confirming or refuting the existence of NES college students' PLAs), and to develop a plan for PLA intervention during First Year Experience/Orientation courses for incoming freshmen. Such an intervention may prove advantageous for nonnative English-speaking (NNES) instructors as well as native English-speaking (NES) and NNES college students. By no means do I suggest that *all* NES college students employ PLAs; however, I suggest that enhancing undergraduates' understanding of second language acquisition (SLA) and the existence of PLAs may prove beneficial for discourse involving NES and NNES peers and instructors. This understanding may further benefit undergraduates' professional ambitions, providing a globalized lens that would enable them to engage in discourse concerning PLAs as well as to develop the communicative skills they require to assist in eliminating the communicative burden.

Keywords: language attitudes, intelligibility, accent, nonnative English speakers, comprehensibility

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Language Acquisition 2

Origins of Pronunciation: Sound Discrimination and the Discrimination of Sounds 3

Pronunciation and Social Identity 5

Phonological Language Attitudes: A Globalized Lens 8

Teaching English Language Teachers 9

The Native Speaker Fallacy 13

NNESTs and NESTs Teaching: Qualifying the “Qualifications” of English Language Teachers 16

“Broken English” Mentality and the Communicative Burden 18

Phonological Language Attitudes: A Localized Lens 25

NES College Students’ PLAs in Courses Instructed by NNES Instructors 25

The Detrimental Nature of PLAs for NES College Students and NNES Instructors 26

Misconceptions of “Fair” Grades 28

Ratings/Evaluations of NNES Instructors 29

Classroom Climate: Expectations of Nativeness 30

Ingroup/Outgroup Status of NNES Instructors 35

Limited Preparedness for Intercultural Communication 36

Hallucinating Accents that Inhibit Intelligibility 38

Benefits of Exposure *and* Intervention 43

PLAs and World Englishes 44

PLA Intervention 47

Method 47

Results 50

Discussion 57

Statement One Comments 57

Statement Five Comments 59

(1) Never been in a NNES-instructed course 59

(2) Wanted to drop a NNES-instructed course, but did not drop the course 59

Statement Six Comments 60

(1) Degree of the accent 60

(2) Course content and NNES instructor’s accent 61

Statement Seven 62

Conclusion 65
Limitations 66
Future Research 66
References 68
Appendix 77

Introduction

> *I got into real estate and I couldn't get anybody to hire me [...] One company finally told me, 'Don't you know why nobody wants to hire you?' I said, 'No.' They said, 'Because you have an accent.' I said, 'What?' [They said,] 'Well, nobody can understand you.' I said, 'My goodness, I can't believe that.' I was so surprised that no one was willing to give me a chance. After all, I survived Auschwitz. You mean to tell me that I cannot sell real estate.*
>
> –Eva Mozes Kor (*Forgiving Doctor Mengele*, 2006)

As an undergraduate enlightened and intrigued by my studies in linguistics and World Englishes, I was driving home from work and felt utter shame and disgust at the sight before me—a window sticker proudly displayed, "Welcome to AMERICA/Now Speak ENGLISH." At that moment, I remembered an inspiring documentary, *Forgiving Dr. Mengele* (2006). I recalled listening to an extremely brave, intelligent, and compassionate woman who had lost her parents and two elder sisters to the atrocities of Auschwitz, and suffered through agonizing experiments at the malevolent hands of Dr. Mengele with her twin sister, Miriam. She endured the horrific, deplorable hell of inhumanity, but she survived. Mrs. Mozes Kor learned English and moved to America with her husband (a concentration camp survivor), became a citizen of the United States, bore two children, and earned a real estate license. However, employers constantly rejected her because of her nonnative English pronunciations (i.e., her "accent"). For me, the window sticker read, "Welcome to America, now speak English like a native or get out." I felt absolute repulsion for the disheartening reality that the window sticker

represented—Mrs. Mozes Kor could survive the Holocaust, but she could not escape the discrimination of language attitudes.

Language Acquisition

The Failure Mentality: Pronunciation as a Measure of Success in SLA

In an interview discussing second language acquisition, Hana (pseudonym), a Japanese-English speaker, declared that Japanese "is not just a language, it's my culture […] It's important to keep identity" (personal communication, September 10, 2013). Hana also shared experiences with NESs, stating that some NESs tell her 'I like your Japanese accent' to which Hana responds, "What is my Japanese accent…I *am* Japanese" (personal communication, September 10, 2003). When discussing English pronunciations, Hana stated, "I try to speak in better accent as much as possible. If you speak English, better to speak with correct pronunciation" (personal communication, September 10, 2013). Hana addressed her need to acquire English as resulting from the role of English as a global language, she stated, "One language, one common language is necessary—politically, English is chosen" (personal communication, September 10, 2013).

In a later interview, Hana revealed that she attends speech therapy courses twice a week, in hopes of "improving" her pronunciation of [r]s and [l]s (personal communication, March 10, 2015). Hana endeavors to speak English "correctly" (i.e., "native-like" pronunciations). Hana started learning English at the age of twelve, which consisted of learning English in school, and after school at a private English communication school. Her family invested in her language learning (for six years), convinced that the NES teachers at the private school would assist in developing Hana's

ability to produce "native-like" English pronunciations. Hana feels that her pronunciation as a second language user of English signifies an "incorrect" usage of the language, because her pronunciation differs from a native English speaker's pronunciation. With extensive education in the learning of English and the experience of continual interactions with native speakers, why would Hana (i.e., NNESs) struggle to gain "native-like" pronunciations of English?

Origins of Pronunciation: Sound Discrimination and the Discrimination of Sounds

Arguably, language represents humanity's most powerful tool: Language acts as a medium for human beings through facilitating the ability to express and communicate thoughts with one another (whether written, verbal, or sign) at a local and/or global level, and it represents the language user's cultural identity. Globally, there are "6,909 distinct languages," and only "869 phonemes" [sounds] that exist in all of the languages (Retrieved from www.linguisticsociety.org; Feldman, 2005). According to Feldman (2005), "English speakers use just 52 phonemes to produce words, other languages use from as few as 15 to as many as 141" (p. 265). In addition, Feldman (2005) explains that all (hearing) infants are born with the ability to discern the sounds used in all the world's languages, arguably suggesting that a collaboration of nature (hereditary causes) *and* nurture (environmental causes) facilitate language acquisition. Why do second language learners/users struggle (or find it impossible) to produce "native-like" pronunciations in a second language, if all (hearing) infants are born with the ability to discern *every* sound that exists in *every* language?

Resulting from an amalgamation of Skinner's (1957) *learning-theory approach* (behaviorism) and Chomsky's (1968) *innatism* (or Universal Grammar), the *interactionist*

perspective of linguistics posits that nature *and* nurture account for the capacity to acquire and exercise linguistic abilities. Whereas Skinner suggested the effects of an infant's environment produced language learning, Chomsky argued the innate ability of human beings to acquire language through the language-acquisition device (LAD), and recognized universal grammar (UG) as the innate ability of human beings to acquire language. However, acquiring a language is dependent upon the language learner's age. Brown, Attardo, and Vigliotti (2014) address the relationship between language learners' age and phonological discernment, clarifying that "Children are born with the ability to discriminate and produce sounds not in their native language [but they] *lose the ability to discriminate and produce sounds not in their own language by the age of 10 to 12 months*" (p. 217 emphasis added).

In terms of production, Lenneberg's (1967) critical period hypothesis (CPH), defined as the "automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear [after puberty], and foreign languages have to be taught and learned through a conscious and labored effort" (including the phonological aspect of language) (Gass, Behney, & Plonsky, 2013, p. 435). According to Feldman, "To a Japanese speaker, whose native language does not have an *r* phoneme, English words such as *roar* present some difficulty" (2005, p. 265). Additionally, Gass, Behney, and Plonsky (2013), explain that "If a learner has an NL [native language] that has no phonemic contrast between two sounds (e.g., [l] and [r]) and is learning a language where that contrast is obligatory, she or he will have difficulty" (p. 181). Similarly, NESs' struggle (or inability) to produce the alveolar trill (or rolling r) found in Spanish results from a lack of necessity for the required phonological feature (i.e., position and movement of tongue)

during the critical period of UG. Clearly, the ability to discriminate sounds is an essential, innocuous form of attaining language; however, employing preconceived notions to discriminate against speakers based on their differing pronunciations exemplifies a disheartening paradox—infants share the ability to create sounds indiscriminately, whereas children and adults often use sounds (pronunciations) to judge NNES speakers' ability to use English.

Pronunciation and Social Identity

Hana (the previously mentioned Japanese-English user) exemplifies the struggle NNESs experience in their attempts to retain identity through the process of acquiring (and using) a second language. Hana continues to believe her English-speaking requires modification to achieve "correctness," and, though she has been speaking English for more than thirty years, and has lived in America for more than fifteen years, she continues to practice modifying her speech (in hopes of "successfully" using the language) (personal communication, March 10, 2015). Acknowledging Hana's linguistic situation indicates the effects of PLAs on NNESs, and exposes the negative repercussions of ideals (e.g., native speaker model) of English usage from the perspective of NES listeners' PLAs.

Matsuda (1991) defines the importance of linguistic identity, explaining, "[T]races of your life and identity are woven into your pronunciation, your phrasing, your choice of words. Your self is inseparable from your accent" (p. 1329). The psychological pressures NNESs experience while acquiring English (in conjunction with the societal expectations of NESs' PLAs) project the unjustifiable burden of inescapable

failure onto the English language learner/user. For example, Dominican American writer Junot Díaz explains:

> [A]s an immigrant, the sense of a perfect English would never exist anywhere, but in your mind you have to dominate it, in your mind you have to master it, and your mind kind of torments you with every mistake you've made, preparing yourself against this ideal that doesn't exist anywhere […] [L]earning English is such a violent experience as a kid. (Diaz, Shook, & Celayo, 2008)

As a NNES, Díaz (2008) acknowledges the fallacy of an *ideal* English, yet, he explains the power that an ideal illusion has as NNESs endeavor to achieve the (arguably) impracticable conditions demarcating "successful" English acquisition. However, the acceptance of an ideal model (i.e., Standard English, native speaker model) remains a prevalent force frequently adhered to in language learning. Beyond the psychological/emotional repercussions (i.e., a NNES's sense of failing to "correctly" acquire English), a NNES's justifiable inability (depending on the learner's age) to achieve "native-like" pronunciations, NNESs often experience economic repercussions.

Norton (1997) elaborated on the relationship between language and identity, describing second language acquisition as the language learner's *investment* "to signal the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (p. 411). The term investment suggests the economic implications of English language learning (and usage), which also highlights the financial repercussions NNESs likely experience because of PLAs. Additionally, Lippi-Green recognized that "a realistic chance of success in American society is frequently based on mastery of Standard English" (2012, p. 84). Arguably,

NNESs endure a “forced-willingness” in acquiring English, because the economic promise of the language requires linguistic submission to Standard English through the native speaker model.

Phonological Language Attitudes: A Globalized Lens

Identifying the phonological language attitudes (PLA) that nonnative English-speaking (NNES) persons experience merits an examination of English as a lingua franca; however, it is worth noting that similar arguments could also explore NESs' PLAs toward native-speaker dialects (e.g., Appalachian English, African American Vernacular English, etc.). Though linguists agree, "Nobody owns English," a belief in the ownership of English (by native English-speaking [NES] persons) remains a prevailing force in perpetuating NESs' PLAs. Ironically, the United States of America (U.S.) and the United Kingdom (U.K.) do not identify English as an "official" language at a national level, although the U.K. employs the de facto method of incorporating English, while some states within the U.S. have enacted laws deeming English an official language at their respective state levels. Though the U.S. and the U.K. do not lawfully recognize English as an "official language," many other countries, in fact, do identify English as an official language (e.g., Japan, Namibia, etc.), perhaps because of a correlation between English and economic opportunities. Considering the global use of English, Y. Kachru and Smith (2009) reflect on Ferguson's (1982) predictions for the future of English: "English is less and less regarded as a European language, and its development is less and less determined by the usage of its native speakers" (Ferguson as cited in Y. Kachru & Smith). Irrefutably, Ferguson's (1985) prediction has yet to realize its potential, provided the focus of this thesis (in 2015) examines the narrow (and grossly biased) fusion of the native-speaker model *and* Standard English prescriptivism as classifying the "correct" and/or expected use of English for second language learners of English.

Teaching English Language Teachers

One model of asserting symbolic ownership of English stems from B. Kachru's (1985) *concentric circles of English*. Kachru's circles delineate English usage at a global level by categorizing countries as either *inner circle*, *outer circle*, or *expanding circle* countries, and Kachru defines each circle by affixing *norm-providing*, *norm-developing*, or *norm dependent* to the respective labels. Attaching labels to countries' uses of English reinforces a hierarchical structure of English (i.e., native-speaking countries provide the model [norms] for outer and expanding circle countries to follow), which consequently neglects multilingual countries' English usage (Cook, 1999; Mesthrie, & Bhatt, 2008; Phillipson, 1992; Zhiming, 2003). Phillipson (1992) adopts two of B. Kachru's concentric circles to discern relationships between varieties of English (e.g., Japanese English) to that of SE ("Standard English"); however, Phillipson relabels Kachru's "Inner Circle" (e.g., United Kingdom, United States of America, etc.) as the "Centre," and classifies the "Outer Circle" (e.g., India, Nigeria, etc.) as the "Periphery" (Kachru, 1990, p. 179; Phillipson, 1992, p. 178). The categorizations of English varieties (i.e., Englishes/World Englishes) provide a hierarchy of the professional desirability of English language teachers, with regard to identifying teachers' placement in Kachru's (1985) concentric circles.

Similar to Kachru's (1985) *concentric circles* and Phillipson's (1992) "centre" and "periphery" categorizations of Englishes, Milambiling (2000) acknowledges the groupings of NNESTs (nonnative English-speaking teachers) and NESTs (native English-speaking teachers) through an alternative perspective, which challenges the hegemonic structure of English language teaching (ELT) that focuses on native-speaking

teaching. Citing Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999), Milambiling advocates future goals of an equitable ELT profession through "the adoption of discursive practices and paradigms in TESOL that places NNES professionals at the center rather than at the periphery by discarding the native-nonnative dichotomy as the main construct through which they are conceived" (as cited in Milambiling, 2000, p. 325). That is, there is a debate in the field of TESOL about the biased employment opportunities NNESTs (nonnative English-speaking teachers) experience, and addresses the need to offer equal employment opportunities that overtly reject an adherence to language attitudes.

Studies such as Butler (2007), and Golombek and Jordan (2005) provide understanding that not only professionals and teachers-in-training of TESOL, but also students (past, present, and future) of TESOL require the necessary education to discern that unattainable native speaker pronunciation does not (should not) act as a qualitative measure of their abilities in the English language. Butler's (2007) study consists of Korean students listening to audio of both NES pronunciations and NNES pronunciations (Korean-accent); however, both the NES and NNES examples were from one individual. Butler's findings suggest the Korean students did not choose NES pronunciations over NNES pronunciations with statistical significance, though Butler cites previous studies (e.g., Chiba, Mastuura, & Yamamoto, 1995; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck, & Smit, 1997; Ladegaard, 1998), suggesting the preference of native pronunciations in English learning, indeed, exists.

Though studies often suggest ESL learners' preference for NESTs, some studies reveal that ESL learners may favor NNESTs (e.g., Liang, 2002; Moussu, 2010). Examining ESL learners' attitudes towards NNESTs and NESTs, Moussu (2010) found

that, while ESL learners initially demonstrated reservations about their NNESTs (based on the nativeness of their ESL teacher), the participants' reluctance "almost disappeared with a full semester of exposure to a [NNEST] in the classroom environment" (p. 761). Moussu's (2010) findings yield promising results, particularly in the inequitable employment practices that require nativeness as a prerequisite for employment (e.g., private language institutes).

In a study assessing the negative attitudes of ESL learners towards their NNESTs' language usage (measured by accentedness, perceived comprehensibility, intelligibility, and interpretability), the results provided significant insight into the aspect of accentedness as a determiner for ESL learners' (negative) attitudes towards their NNESTs, as well as findings that support the proposal for more equitable hiring practices (Kim, 2008). Participants of Kim's (2008) study exemplified their language attitudes through a Foreign Accent Attitude Questionnaire. Kim revealed that:

> [M]ore than 80% of 40 ESL students either strongly agreed or agreed with the following four statements:
>
> - ESL teachers should all speak with a native English accent.
> - ESL students come to the US to study English with ESL teachers with a native accent.
> - Pronunciation classes should be taught by ESL teachers with a native accent.
> - ESL teachers with a native accent can teach pronunciation classes better than ESL teachers with a foreign accent. (2008, p. 15)

Arguably, the ESL learners' perception of *accentedness* negatively affected their ratings of *comprehensibility*, which derived from previously acquired phonological language attitudes (PLAs). According to Kim (2008), ESL learners' "comprehensibility may be more in the mind of the listeners than in the mouth of the speaker" (p. 21). Kim (2008) opined that an idealized native speaker model hinders the ability of ESL learners to "hear" beyond their NNESTs' "foreign accent." As a result of the findings, Kim (2008) further reasoned, "it is only fair for program administrators to hire ESL/EFL [English as a foreign language] teachers who are intelligible," (p. 23) provided there is no positive correlation between foreign accent and intelligibility; thus, the accentedness of ESL teachers should not restrict their employability. It is feasible, therefore, to suggest that ESL learners' adherence to a linguistic ideal (i.e., native speaker model) is but one facet of the profound influence that the native speaker model retains in the English language teaching/learning communities.

Consequently, research suggests that both nonnative English speakers and native English speakers' adherence to language attitudes (primarily based on nonnative English speakers' phonological usage of the language) may impede their ability to learn from the NNEST of ESL. In a study examining the intelligibility between native English-speaking listeners and NNESs, Zielinski (2008) proffered that native English-speaking listeners reported reduced intelligibility "because they applied native speech processing strategies to a non-native speech signal" (p. 80). Thus, the NES listeners' expectations for NNES speakers to produce native-like pronunciations thwarted their abilities to contribute as effective listeners. Derwing and Munro (2009) encouraged probable rectification through *familiarity instruction* (i.e., exposure to NNES speakers).

Referencing a study that researched the intelligibility between NNES speakers and NES listeners (Suenobu, Kanzaki, & Yamane, 1992), Derwing and Munro (2005) explained that context played an essential role in intelligibility. According to Derwing and Munro (2005), the participants' "intelligibility scores increased from 42% to 67% when the words were present in their original sentence context as opposed to being presented in isolation" (p. 386). The consideration of context and intelligibility (of "heavily accented" speakers) seemingly implies that listening comprehension must accompany pronunciation teaching to provide ESL learners with the capacity to engage in successful communicative acts as both listeners and speakers of English.

English as a language for global communication must appreciate diversities, rather than encourage a homogenous and imperialistic language (McKay, 2003; Canagarajah, 2006; Anchimbe, 2009). Providing an awareness of World Englishes (e.g., Chicano English, CE, Japanese English, etc.) as not only acceptable, but of equal worth, may assist in creating a more feasible and unbiased model that encourages the equality of employment opportunities for NNESTs and NESTs—both provide experience to advantageously assist second language learners of English. The focus of ELT is to assist language learners in developing a language, and the qualification of a good language teacher cannot be defined by nativeness (i.e., whether they are native or nonnative speakers of English).

The Native Speaker Fallacy

Phillipson (1992) imparts necessary insight into the origins of ELT through the lens of imperialistic colonization (i.e., the British Empire), as well as missionary, political, and economic means. Identifying the establishment of ELT, Phillipson

explicates, "The key conference which decided on priorities for ELT in the newly independent countries was the Commonwealth Conference on the Teaching of English as a Second Language" (p. 183). The purpose of the meeting was to address the need for a greater number of English language teachers, provided native speaking teachers were becoming too scarce to fill the demands for English teachers to keep up with the "spread" of English (i.e., World Englishes).

Representatives at the conference established the *Makerere Report* (1961), which specified five tenets of ELT, with the second tenet asserting that "The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 185). Phillipson maintains that conference representatives justified the second tenet based on beliefs that:

> [T]he ideal teacher is a native speaker, somebody with native speaker proficiency in English who can serve as a model for the pupils. 'At the outset it was the native speaker who was taken for granted as the automatic best teacher, and all other teachers looked up to the native speaker. […] When the *Makerere Report* describes the teaching of the 'sounds of English', there is not the slightest doubt that this refers to the sounds of a native speaker, preferably with an RP [Received Pronunciation]. (1992, p. 193)

Although the conference representatives identified BE (British English) (i.e., RP) as the preferable "accent" of the ideal teacher, "accents" from "acceptable" (i.e., approved) countries were encompassed within the second tenet. Phillipson astutely declares that the native speaker tenet (among the other tenets) results in a fallacy; thus, Phillipson terms the second tenet as the *native speaker fallacy* (1992). Justifiably, Phillipson (1992) recognized the native speaker fallacy in ELT as a serious problem that nonnative English-

speaking teachers (NNESTs) experienced in earlier times, and argued that the antiquated method may persist in ELT. That is, the teaching of English language teachers highlights the inequitable adherence of a superior/inferior relationship between NESTs and NNESTs' employability.

Cook (1999) refutes the requirement of teacher nativeness in ELT. Instead he argues, "the prominence of the native speaker in language teaching has obscured the distinctive nature of the successful L2 user and created an unattainable goal for L2 learners" (p. 185). The unattainable goal L2 learners and users experience profoundly includes (but is not limited to) native pronunciation of English. Cook (1999) approaches the inequalities of ELT (i.e. Phillipson's native speaker fallacy) through consideration of NNESTs' justifiable qualifications to teach L2 (second language) learners, acquired by TESOL education and personal experiences. He suggests a multitude of professionally qualifying attributes NNESTs possess (e.g., multicompetence and thought processes, as well as the NNESTs' experience of learning English) as advantageous to the needs of English learners, while juxtaposing deficiencies of NESTs and native model language learning (Cook, 1999, p. 193). Cook suggests, "[a]bandoning the native speaker totally may be unrealistic because this model is so entrenched in teachers' and students' minds" (1999, p. 197), instead offering implications for pedagogical changes to encourage a L2 learner-friendly environment. That is, textbooks should include images of NNESs interacting with other NNESs and provide "audiolingual materials" that do not reinforce the *native speaker fallacy* (Cook, 1999).

Cook (1999) identifies the comparative fallacy (i.e., directly comparing the language usage of NNESs and NESs) and advises words such as "succeed" and "fail," in

language learning, may prove detrimental to the language learner's development (p. 189). Cook perspicaciously realizes the need of eliminating discriminative models, and instead adheres to Phillipson's (1992) language fallacies (e.g., monolingual fallacy, subtractive fallacy) in ELT (Phillipson, 1992, p. 185). Cook (2016) readdresses the comparative fallacy and asserts that the intention of his previous research (i.e., Cook, 1999) was to address multicompetence in SLA, rather than an adherence to the monolingual (i.e., NES) speaker in SLA. Cook (2016) opines, "The native speaker is still the ghost in the machine" (p. 187). He suggests that though the professional community of SLA acknowledges the "bilingual turn" in SLA, which recognizes multicompetence rather than monolingual models, it still follows the native speaker model. Cook (2016) declares, "It is true that second language acquisition researchers' reliance on the native speaker is now more covert. Yet by and large research still falls back on the L2 user meeting the standard of native speakers" (p. 187). This is an important point because Cook states that the professional SLA community continues to recognize the monolingual model in second language learning.

NNESTs and NESTs Teaching: Qualifying the "Qualifications" of English Language Teachers

Samimy (2008) studies the disparities between NESTs and NNESTs from the perspective of English language teachers-in-training. Samimy posits necessary discourse between NESTs-in-training and NNESTs-in-training, in order to create awareness and understand the qualities each group of teachers-in-training bring to the profession of ELT (2008). In response to Cook (1999), Milambiling (2000) discusses the need to acknowledge presuppositions of language teaching abilities at the NNESTs and NESTs-training level. Milambiling recognizes, "a largely unspoken yet powerful assumption that

[nonnative English speakers] NNSs will inevitably not perform as well academically as or will somehow be inferior to their [native English-speaking] NS peers" (2000, p. 325). Consequently, the education of NNESTs-in training supports discriminatory practices exist prior to professional experience, suggesting it may be beneficial to address such problems in the educational practices as well as the professional field.

Considering the multifaceted levels of inequitable ELT practices at a professional level, Samimy (2008) refers to Braine (1999): "NNES professionals have reported experiencing discrimination in their employment, student evaluation of their teaching, and lack of visibility and voice in the profession (p. 124). Negative student attitudes and evaluations provide insight into the discrimination NNESTs experience at a personal and professional level, showing an established preference for native speaking teachers in previous studies (e.g., Amin, 1997; Golombek, & Jordan, 2005; Kubota, & Lin, 2006; Moussu, 2010). Furthermore, the model of a native speaker is a model based on discriminatory measures. In a study of Canadian participants, Amin (1997) asserts "[m]y research and my experience indicate that there is a connection between the attitude of the students—many of them new immigrants—to non-White teachers and their investments in learning English (p. 580). That is, students' preconceived notions of learning English successfully "showed a decided preference for White teachers over non-White teachers" (Amin, 1997, p. 580). Results from Moussu's (2010) study support Amin's (1997) findings, suggesting that "only Caucasian teachers could be native speakers of English, and only native speakers of North American English could know 'real' and 'proper' English" (p. 749). However, Holliday and Aboshiha (2009) examine the complexities of racism in the professional field of TESOL, stating that:

> On the one hand, many so-called 'nonnative speakers' may be considered White and may therefore pass as 'native speakers' (Connor as cited in Kubota et al., 2005) and, on the other hand, racism may no longer be associated with colour, now recognized as an indefinable notion, but with any Other group which is imagined to be deficient. (p. 670)

Thus, "otherness" continues to problematize the discrimination NNESTs experience in the professional field through any dissimilarities from the colonial Anglo-Saxon model, including appearance and pronunciations. McKay (2003) cites Canagarajah (1999) and Liu (1999) declaring "an acceptance of the native speaker fallacy with reference to language teaching also frequently reinforces a narrow definition of expertise in language teaching, one in which a great deal of prestige is given to nativelike pronunciation and intuition" (p. 8). Kubota and Lin (2006) explore two NNESTs, revealing that a less qualified Caucasian colleague received a promotion over a more qualified Chinese candidate based on nativeness.

"Broken English" Mentality and the Communicative Burden

Arguably, PLAs derive from societal expectations of a language that result in prescriptive phonological expectations of ESL users (e.g., Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Holliday, 2011; Lindemann, 2002, 2005; Lindemann & Subtirelu, 2013; Lippi-Green, 2012; Matsuda, 1991; Moyer, 2013). The language attitudes that perpetuate NESs unreasonable expectations of NNESs' ability to replicate "native-like" pronunciations are firmly established beliefs. Lippi-Green (2012) rationalizes that expectations of SE produce an environment that conveys NNESs' "otherness," explaining "at school, in radio news, at the movies, while reading novels, at work, [a NNES] hears that the

language which marks her as Chilean, [or] Muslim, […] unacceptable, incoherent, illogical" (p. 68). For example, Lippi-Green (1997) posited that the characters in animated programs for children paralleled national views of America, exemplified by the 1950s representations of Russian characters in Rocky and Bullwinkle, and the Japanese characters in Popeye during the Second World War (p. 85). Thus, a correlation between the political attitudes of America and the portrayals of characters in film and animated films support an "innocent" adherence to and reinforcement of NNESs' PLAs.

In addition, Matsuda (1991) deliberates over the judicial system's role in discriminatory employment practices and PLAs, exposing the prevalence of PLAs in the judicial system. Matsuda references the discriminatory employment practices purportedly protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, stating:

> Courts recognize that discrimination against accent can function as the equivalent of prohibited national origin discrimination. The fact that communication is an important element of job performance, however, tends to trump this prohibition against discrimination, such that it is impossible to explain when or why plaintiffs will ever win in accent cases. In fact, they almost never do. (p. 1332)

Although Title VII assures equitable employment, it was not until 1988 that "physical, cultural, or linguistic characteristics" gained recognition under Title VII (Lippi-Green, 1994). However, as Matsuda affirms, victims of employment discrimination involving PLAs face insurmountable odds of receiving justice. Additionally, Lippi-Green (2012) asserts that "Rarely do the courts explore the meaning of the word "communication," nor are there any widely accepted and used methodologies to assess the communication demands of a given job in a non-prejudicial way" (p. 152). Citing a case where the judge

dismissed a linguist, Lippi-Green astutely declares, "[J]udges […] are willing to depend on their own expertise in matters of language in a way they would never presume to in matters of genetics or mechanical engineering or psychology" (1994, p. 177). If judges act as experts in discerning the accent of a plaintiff, what are they basing their judgments on? It is feasible to suggest that at least some judges base their rulings on preconceived notions that adhere to their PLAs. Similar to the communicative burden NNESs experience in communication with many (but not all) NESs, the acceptable prevalence of listeners' PLAs as a societal norm encourage the burden of linguistic victimization onto NNESs in the judiciary system.

Lindemann and Subtirelu (2013) surveyed research concerning NES listeners' expectations of communicative success with NNES speakers, compelling them to suggest "rather than being neutral and objective measures of the speech signal, assessments of pronunciation accuracy and intelligibility ultimately rely on human perception and are thus subject to all the biases that underlie that perception" (p. 568). While Lindemann (2003) recognizes that "people typically prefer dialects or languages spoken by historically powerful groups, especially on the grounds of status-related qualities" (p. 348), suggesting the socioeconomic power of English reinforces the proliferation of NESs' PLAs (Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005). In a study assessing native listeners' perceptions of "broken English," Lindemann (2005) deduces that "The patterns of responses based on familiarity, immigration trends, and sociopolitical relationships (*especially as portrayed in the popular media*) suggest what expectations these US undergraduates are likely to have of non-native English speakers from all over the world" (p. 210 emphasis added). Lindemann's (2005) inclusion of the effects media have on

NNESs reinforces Lippi-Green's (1994) assertions that language-trait focused (LTF) discrimination consists of societal proponents identified as the "dominant bloc" (i.e., "the educational system, the news media, the entertainment industry, and corporate America"). Thus, NNESs may not only experience a sense of "failure" at the inability to achieve native-like phonology of English, but also the environment around them consistently emphasizes a delineation of English which parallels "correct" (NESs) and "incorrect" (NESs) usage of English that enforces a status over solidarity mentality.

Accordingly, status and solidarity function as factors in the communicative process. Lippi-Green asserts, "Communication seems to be a simple thing: one person talks and another listens; they change roles. But the social space between two speakers is rarely completely neutral" (2012, p. 71). Through what Lippi-Green (2012) terms "language ideology filters," NES listeners enter communication with NNES speakers equipped with preconceived notions about their expectations for the communicative success (e.g., PLAs) (p. 73). According to Lippi-Green, NESs enter conversations with NNESs having already rigidly decided whether to accept or reject their role of actively participating in the conversation. What is more, Lippi-Green asserts that NESs "demand that a person with an accent carry the majority of the burden in the communicative act" (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 72). Citing Gluszek and Dovidio (2009), Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) argue that NES "listeners who were more likely to think that people can readily eliminate nonnative accents felt more uncomfortable talking with people with nonnative accents and tried to avoid these encounters more" (p. 9). While Lippi-Green declares the "breakdown of communication is due not so much to accent as it is to negative social evaluation of the accent in question, and a rejection of the communicative burden" (2012,

p. 73), further validating the external forces contributing to NESs communicative engagement. Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) declare "If listeners assume that accents interfere with comprehension, they may readily come to believe that they cannot understand accented speakers, even when they do in fact understand accented speech" (p. 11). Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) and Lippi-Green's (2012) assertions clarify that to foster intercultural communicative competency between NNESs and NESs, both the speaker *and* the listener must contribute to the process.

A psychological study investigating the comprehension of spoken language through listening *and* imitation, Adank, Hagoort, and Bekkering's (2010) findings reveal that listening, truly concentrating on the words of a speaker, exponentially improve the listener's comprehension. Though the study consisted of NESs comprehension of other NESs language usage, it provides further validation that the role of the listener must equate to the role of a speaker for communicative success (Adank, Hagoort, & Bekkering, 2010). Lippi Green astutely declares, "[I]t seems likely that preconceptions and fear are strong enough motivators to cause students to construct imaginary accents, and fictional communicative breakdown," a theory supported by previous studies that used the matched-guise technique to identify NES listeners' language attitudes (e.g., Atagi, 2003; Rubin, 1990) (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 92). Lindemann and Subtirelu (2013) suggest that studies concerning accentedness reveal that "individual sounds have been shown to be perceived differently based on who the listener thinks the speaker is" (p. 572). Additionally, Lippi-Green (2012) advises that "There is considerable resistance in this country to teachers with foreign accents, and nowhere is that resistance so loudly voiced as in the university setting" (p. 90), which further supports the immediacy

universities must act with to address the elephant that sits in their NNES-instructed classrooms.

Furthermore, Wang, Arndt, Singh, Biernat, and Liu (2013) suggest that in modernity, Americans tend to censor overt biases due to social expectations of political correctness. As a result of their findings, Wang et al. assert that Americans' language attitudes are prevalent in the decisions some businesses make when hiring persons of nonnative English-speaking uses, or deciding whether to base their businesses in countries other than the U.S. Wang et al. (2013) state:

> [I]t is commonly believed that nonstandard accents (e.g., Indian) will always be received less favorably than standard accents (e.g., standard American). As such, managers have adopted a number of costly measures to reduce accent biases such as adopting speech training programs or moving customer service centers out of countries subjected to negative accent biases. On the basis of such beliefs, managers may be tempted to reject employees with Indian accents, even in circumstances without accent-linked biases. (p. 190)

If businesses are willing to incorporate language attitudes in their hiring practices, and/or using language attitudes to determine where they will locate their businesses, it seems of significant importance to enlighten college students prior to entering the professional field. That is, if a belief in English as the official language encourages/perpetuates persons' language attitudes, then it is worth exposing undergraduates to the effects of language attitudes prior to their positions in a globalized workforce (whether they choose to enter the professional field at a national or international level).

Eckert's (2003) astute explication of the delineation between native and nonnative language users perhaps accounts for the underlying beliefs that support xenophobic, ethnocentric driven fears. Eckert states, "The notion of the authentic speaker is based in the belief that some speakers have been more tainted by the social than others—tainted in the sense that they have wandered beyond their natural habitat" (p. 392). And, citing Pajares (1993), Pattnaik supports the need for PLA intervention to contest culturally driven language attitudes, rationalizing that "People are unable to change beliefs they are unaware they possess, and they are unwilling to change those they are aware of unless they see good reason to do so" (1997, p. 47). Accordingly, creating an awareness of NES users' language attitudes (i.e., PLA intervention) must exist before NES users accept the need to change/adjust prior language attitudes that are not only harmful to their professional ambitions, but also proliferating discriminatory practices in a country that strives for equality.

Phonological Language Attitudes: A Localized Lens

A great deal of research considers the effects of NES college students' language attitudes involving their NNES educators, whether their educators are experienced nonnative English-speaking professors (NNESP), or nonnative English-speaking teaching assistants (NNESTA) (Kang & Rubin, 2012; Kavas & Kavas, 2008; Plakans, 1997; Rao, 1995; Rubin, 1992; Rubin & Smith, 1990; Smith, Strom, & Muthuswamy, 2005; Subtirelu, 2015; Villarreal, 2013). Arguably, NESs' (and NNESs') practice of PLAs deprive them of the opportunity to converse successfully with individuals based on the individual's (i.e., speaker's) native language. Furthermore, a substantial number of NES college students' PLAs inhibit their ability to participate effectively in courses instructed by NNESTAs and NNESPs, difficulties in which students blame on their NNES instructors' accent (Fitch & Morgan, 2003; Meyer & Mao, 2014; Rao, 1995; Wheland, Konet, & Butler, 2003).

NES College Students' PLAs in Courses Instructed by NNES Instructors

To instruct NES undergraduates, NNESTAs are required to provide acceptable TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores and/or enroll in graduate courses that assist to improve their communicative skills (i.e., intelligibility) (e.g., University of Maryland, English pronunciation and oral communication courses; Ohio University, academic speaking and pronunciation courses; Michigan State University, TEAM [Technology Enhanced Accent Modification] program courses). Hence, research proposing that NNESTAs shoulder the communicative burden through one-sided attempts to rectify a two-sided problem (Gorsuch, 2011) omits the necessity of *both* (speaker *and* listener) roles essential to achieve intelligible communication. Addressing

the speaker's (i.e., NNESTA) role and *not* the listener's (i.e., NES college students) role neglects the overall goal of successful dialogue. To my knowledge, only Michigan State University (MSU) implements language attitude intervention as a requirement for first-year college students' orientation to the university through their "Oh No! to Ok" [Rao, 1995] program. According to MSU's Internationalizing Student Life's (ISL) website:

> ISL engages in intercultural training at the university's orientation programs for *new U.S.* and international students, in orientation for international teaching assistants, and in the "Oh, No" to "OK" program ISL developed *to improve attitudes and behavior of undergraduates toward international teaching assistants*. (Retrieved from isp.msu.edu emphasis added)

However, I have been unsuccessful in accessing the specifics of the "Oh, No" to "OK" program through the MSU website. In fact, the search box on the website does not yield any results for the program. Consequently, I have only been successful in obtaining the brief citation above to recognize any acknowledgement of the program at MSU, so I am uncertain as to the paradigm and/or success of the program.

The Detrimental Nature of PLAs for NES College Students and NNES Instructors

At a midsize university in Ohio (The same university that I collected data from for the study in this thesis.), a NES professor discussed concerns that her NES students continually drop courses, while claiming their inability to understand their NNESPs' accent (personal communication, April 7, 2015). As a result, NES undergraduates' adherence to PLAs highlights their educators' accents rather than recognizing the importance of their role as listeners. As a result, students' actions (in dropping courses based on an instructor's "accent") imply that addressing the communicative burden *and*

PLAs becomes an essential part of the students' academic success. Specifically, NES students (and the NES public in general) may enter conversations with NNESs already convinced that the NNES's speech will not be comprehensible, which affects the way NESs engage in (or avoid) conversations with NNESs. In turn, students may choose not to enroll in courses instructed by NNESPs and NNESTAs—courses that may be a fundamental component of their academic development for future collegiate and/or career objectives.

Villarreal (2013) recognized that the *foreign TA [teaching assistant] problem* (i.e., communicative gap between NES undergraduates and NNESTAs) often explored in research includes established professors. Thus, the foreign problem extends beyond novice NNES TAs and includes NNES professors established in their career, which further supports the theory that NES college students may hinder their collegiate education beyond the introductory courses most NNESTAs instruct. In consequence, it arguably affects the academic success necessary for the efficacy of undergraduates' overall career goals. According to Rubin and Smith (1990), the PLAs of NES college students result in a refusal to remain in courses instructed by NNESTAs; in fact, 42% of Rubin and Smith's research participants dropped, or withdrew from courses instructed by NNESTAs citing "accent-related" concerns as their reason. Rao (1995) identified NES college students' aversion to NNESTAs/NNESPs as the "Oh No! Syndrome," explicating it as a pattern that *many* NES college students display when they realize that their course is instructed by a NNES instructor (e.g., NES undergraduates often vocalize their dissatisfaction with the "nonnativeness" of the instructor's speech with comments such as "The instructor doesn't even speak English"). Rao's (1995) research supported Rubin

and Smith's (1990) findings. Rao states that NES students "exhibit higher levels of anger and anxiety and are more likely to drop a class taught by a foreign TA [teaching assistant]," particularly when NES college students believe that NNESTAs have exemplified students' negative language expectations (i.e., PLAs) of the instructor (p. 57). Citing Villarreal (2013), Subtirelu's (2015) research yielded similar results, explaining that rather than enrolling in courses instructed by NNESPs, college students drop NNESPs' courses or avoid enrolling in courses instructed by NNESPs. More specifically, Villarreal (2013) typified a common predisposition of NES undergraduates, revealing that a "participant browsing professor ratings on RateMyProfessors.com" was "looking for specifically accent-related things, especially for math classes," and many participants "avoid[ed] and/or caution[ed] peers about" enrolling in courses instructed by NNESTAs and NNESPs (p. 19).

Misconceptions of "Fair" Grades

Fitch and Morgan (2003) explain that "Participants typically construct their identities as students as blameless victims who have 'paid good money' for an education (which should result, not incidentally, in good grades)" (p. 309). As a result, NES undergraduates may unjustly rate NNES instructors poorly because they view college as a business transaction (i.e., payment for courses equates to passing grades). Citing previous studies (Jacobs & Friedman, 1988; Norris, 1991), Smith, Strom, and Muthuswamy note that, "undergraduates' [NES college students] grades do not differ systematically based on their teaching assistants' nationality" (2005, p. 5); nevertheless, dominant PLAs held by NES undergraduates encourage them to believe they would have received better grades if the instructor were a native speaker of English. In a study

exploring *perceived inhibitors* (e.g., native/nonnative language status) that affect NES undergraduates' academic performance in mathematics courses, Wheland, Konet, and Butler (2003) found that, contrary to beliefs driven by PLAs, NES students instructed by NNESTAs, "achieved statistically higher grades than did sections conducted by native speakers" (19). Yet, Villarreal's (2013) research revealed that NES college student participants expressed PLAs that specifically targeted the mathematics discipline of NNESPs (2013). What is more, similar findings reveal, "[f]ifty-seven percent of the student[s] felt that their grade in at least one course had been hurt because of the poor communication skills of a [NNESTA]," according to Rubin and Smith (1990, pp. 345-47). Although empirical research does not support that NES college students receive poor grades in courses instructed by NNESTAs (as a result of poor teaching on the NNES instructor's behalf), NES college students' PLAs mislead them to direct blame on their NNES instructors' phonological differences.

Ratings/Evaluations of NNES Instructors

Fitch and Morgan (2003) declare, "[a]t best, the ITA [International Teaching Assistant] is a challenge for the undergraduate; at worst, he or she is a tragedy," noting that relations between NES undergraduates and NNES instructors is problematized by students' language attitudes (p. 297). Meyer and Mao (2014) investigated the *student perceptions of classroom climate* of NES and NNES and considered how their perceptions affect ratings of NNESTAs and NESTAs teaching performance. Comparing the two different ratings for native and nonnative teaching assistants, Meyer and Mao found that NES undergraduates assigned significantly lower ratings to NNESTAs (2014). Additionally, Smith, Strom, and Muthuswamy (2005) explored the aspect of time in NES

college students' ratings of courses taught by NNESTAs through reviewing previous empirical studies. They found that NES college students rated NNESTAs lower than NESTAs over the course of the semester; however, at the conclusion of the semester, they rated NNESTAs "lower than general [teaching assistants] (*not labeled as domestic* [NES] *or international* [NNES]) only at the end of the semester, not at the beginning" (p. 3 emphasis added). More specifically, NES college students readily assigned lower ratings to their NNESTAs during the beginning, middle, and end of the semester, but when the teaching assistants were not identified as "international" (i.e., NNES) teaching assistants, the NES undergraduates waited until the conclusion of the semester to assign lower ratings.

Meyer and Mao (2014) support Smith, Strom, and Muthuswany's results, and citing Smith et al. (2005), Meyer and Mao reveal that "students rate ITAs lower than ATAs [American teaching assistants] on end-of-term evaluations" (Meyer & Mao, 2014, p. 17). In addition, NES undergraduates who were exposed to Smith, Strom, and Muthuswany's (2005) intervention (i.e., *jigsaw classroom* providing intercultural communication) "did not show [the] negative slide in assessments" at the end of the semester; however, undergraduates not exposed to the intervention did rate NNESTAs poorly (p. 3). Smith, Strom, and Muthuswany's results point out that preconceived language attitudes (including PLAs) perhaps account for NES students' immediacy of assigning lower ratings to NNESTAs over NESTAs and non-labeled teaching assistants.

Classroom Climate: Expectations of Nativeness

Villarreal (2013) identifies the possibility that NES college students impede the success of their learning process through self-fulfilling prophecies. For example,

NNESTAs endeavoring to overcome miscommunication with NES undergraduates may believe the intelligibility problems are *solely* their (NNESTAs') fault, consequently believing they have failed at using English to instruct their students, which may negatively affect their ability to communicate with their students (Ates & Eslami, 2012; Pattnaik, 1997). Arguably, NES college students employing self-fulfilling prophecies (i.e., the expectation for their instructor's "failure" to speak with native-like pronunciations) set the precedence for unobtainable success in the classroom as the fault of the instructor's language usage (Ates & Eslami, 2012; Yook, 1999).

Ironically, Fitch and Morgan (2003) insist that a beneficial method for NNES instructors to connect with their NES students is to use "the correct pronunciation of their names [because it] is important to students, [and it is] a strategy [that] should improve goodwill in the classroom" (p. 308). Conversely, to propose that NNESTAs/NNESPs "correctly" pronounce their students' names supports the same native-like phonological expectancies that perpetuate NES college students' use of PLAs as a measure of correct/incorrect English language usage. Additionally, it would be fair to question whether NES undergraduates "correctly pronounce" the names of their NNESTAs/NNESPs, or whether they revert to alternative titles (e.g., Miss E., or Dr. D). Kavas and Kavas (2008) suggest that "foreign accented faculty must try to reduce the potential negative impact of their accent or behaviors on student learning" which include "speaking slowly but loudly" and providing students with extra time "'to translate' the pronounced words or words that are spoken with an unfamiliar accent" (p. 881). Yet, slowed speech and extra time may be part of the stereotype of PLAs, and may prove disadvantageous to the communicative efforts that Kavas and Kavas propose (2008).

In fact, Pattnaik (1997) discussed attempts “to speak slowly emphasizing every word carefully,” yet, because “the students rarely heard foreign accents,” the slowed speech did nothing to improve the students’ understanding (p. 40). Alternatively, Rubin and Smith posit, “North American undergraduates need to be trained to listen to accented English and to distinguish acceptably moderate levels of accent from unacceptably high levels” through “cultural sensitization training” (1990, p. 350). Contrary to Fitch and Morgan’s (2003) recommendation for fostering a positive course climate, Rubin and Smith (1990) recognize the need for a more feasible approach. Provided empirical research supports the overall inability for second language users to acquire native-like pronunciations (depending on the age the user acquired the language) (e.g., Birdsong, 1999; Lennenberg, 1967; Moyer, 1999), encouraging NNES instructors to “correctly” pronounce NES undergraduates’ names supports a rigid adherence to the homogenous usage of a globalized language (i.e., English*es*). According to Kavas and Kavas (2008), obfuscations of the cultural differences between NES undergraduates and NNES instructors’ expectations for classroom climate may account for anxieties experienced by both instructor and student, reasoning that “[i]n many countries including India and Turkey, for example, relations between students and professors are very formal” (p. 7).

Plakans (1997) conducted a study using the QUITA (Questionnaire about International Teaching Assistants) to research the PLAs of NES college students toward their NNESTAs. Plakans asserts, “[t]he two most common complaints about language use were that the pronunciation of the ITA was hard to understand and that the ITA was unable to understand and answer students’ questions satisfactorily” (1997, p. 109). Exemplifying a naivety of PLAs, one participant commented on her enjoyment of

listening to "accents," stating that "[she] think[s] they're pretty cool if they're *not too heavy*" (Plakans, 1997, p. 110 emphasis added), which alludes to a certain level of acceptability NES grant of nonnative accents, *if* the accent entertains rather than distracts the native listener.

Kavas and Kavas (2008) conducted a study consisting of 91 undergraduate questionnaires that identified the students' belief that the "accent" (42.9%) and "pronunciation of the instructor" (48%) negatively affected the undergraduates' learning experiences. The participants (i.e., NES college students) classified the accent of their instructor as "very important" and the pronunciation of their instructor as "extremely important" to their potential success as students enrolled in courses instructed by NNESTAs/NNESPs. Kavas and Kavas (2008) note that NNES Instructors' "accent forces students to pay better attention in order to get the notes and learn the material" (p. 7). Comparably, Fitch and Morgan's (2003) participant narratives focused on their (NES students') frustration with understanding the speech of NNESTAs, while Wetzl (2013) found that undergraduate participants "chose to focus part of their essay on the difficulties they experienced when conversing with someone whose English was different from theirs, as was the case when they interacted with WE [World English] users" (p. 215). Unsurprisingly, Wetzl's (2013) study revealed that of 199 undergraduate participants, only fifty-seven participants had personally interacted with nonnative English speaker(s), further justifying the need to offer NES undergraduates with the opportunity for multicultural interaction *and* an awareness of World Englishes that may dispel NES undergraduates' PLAs.

Rao's (1995) *language expectation model* characterizes the language expectations (i.e., nativelike pronunciations) NES college students expect of NNESTAs, and how the phonological expectations of NES college students affect their assessment of NNESTA abilities as an instructor in relation to initial meetings (i.e., first day of class). Considering the results of the language expectation model, Rao (1995) reveals, "students express stronger negative reactions when a foreign TA confirms rather than violates students' prior language expectations" (p. 57). Rao reasons that inevitably native listeners assess nonnative speakers on their phonetic and grammatical uses of language, but emphasizes that addressing stereotypical views and replacing them with multicultural awareness may assist in the reduction of native listeners' PLAs (1995).

Subtirelu's (2015) findings exemplify the predetermined judgments that students impose on their professors through discriminatory measures (whether intentional or unintentional). For example, Subtirelu revealed students' reactions to professors that did not perform stereotypical attributes, explaining that "[h]aving decided that the instructor in question does not in some way conform to stereotypical presuppositions, many RMP [Ratemyprofessors.com] users attempt to challenge the iconic associations between race, language, and incomprehensibility" (2015, p. 57). Subtirelu posits that the students' comments support previous findings, citing that "Shuck's work on the ideology of nativeness suggests that in some contexts NESs freely construct NNESs using exaggerated stereotypical characteristics including the outright denial of the NNES's English competence" (p.56). Thus, the NES college students predetermined PLAs inhibit their ability to recognize NNES instructors based on an educator/student relationship, and instead focus on a nonnative/native English speaker categorization.

Ingroup/Outgroup Status of NNES Instructors

Considering that students often discuss (face-to-face) their experiences with NNES professors to prospective students (e.g., students sharing with other students, or even NES professors, that they cannot understand their NNESPs' accent), RMP enables NES college students to extend their defamatory comments far beyond the physical boundaries of a particular college campus. Instead, though they may reach prospective students of the particular NNES professor, they also support PLAs through a more generalized measure. For example, a college student scrolling through a list of professors may view comments such as "has an accent" and/or "hard to understand" about a professor with a "non-European" surname and carry over those same sentiments to their own professors who may be NNESPs.

Subtirelu (2015) conducted a study utilizing RateMyProfessor.com (RMP) to research students' comments focusing on NNES mathematics professors with Korean and Chinese surnames on their "clarity and helpfulness." For example, Subtirelu's study included RMP users who challenged their NNESPs' ability to use English: "AWFUL! AWFUL! DO NOT TAKE THIS PROF!! HE BARELY SPEAKS ENGLISH…" or "Did not understand a single word he said all quarter" (2015, p. 52). Whereas NES college students using the site frequently commented on the *teaching abilities* of their professors with "European" surnames such as "best teacher" or "worst teacher," they focused on the *language usage* (and not the teaching abilities) of their NNESPs such as "hard to understand" for professors with Chinese or Korean surnames.

Kindred and Mohammed (2006) researched college students' intentions when using the online approach (RMP) to assess instructors' performance, and found that

"students rely more on the written over the non-written portion of the evaluations" (para. 36). One participant stated "I do it so people won't take that professor, but I think it's more my revenge in a way. It's my way of getting back at them" (Kindred & Mohammed, 2006, para. 44), which supports Subtirelu's findings of NES users' explicit usage of PLAs. Kindred and Mohammed's (2006) study revealed that RMP users are suspicious of comments "thought to be likely to reflect extreme views, including venting and revenge" (para. 58). But, the study does not support that accent is included in such objective thoughts. In fact, Kindred and Mohammed (2006) assert that "[w]hile issues such as personality and appearance did enter into the postings, these were secondary motivators compared to more salient issues such as competence, knowledge, *clarity*, and helpfulness" (para. 58 emphasis added).

Fitch and Morgan's (2003) study of participant narratives revealed that students generalized *all* nonnative English speakers into one group no matter country of origin, ethnicity, gender, etc., therefore, classifying *all* NNES Instructors as the "Other" or foreign in students' minds. Yook (1999) employs the *intercultural sensitizer/cultural assimilator* approach (i.e., simulating multicultural interactions to assist participants in developing cultural sensitivity) to challenge and/or eradicate previously held biases of NES college students (pp. 72-73). Additionally, college students judging the language usage of their professor/instructor based on "non-European" surnames expect their NNESP/NNESTA to "fail" at teaching (i.e., communicating effectively).

Limited Preparedness for Intercultural Communication

According to Kassin, Fein, & Markus (2014), "[p]art of the power of stereotypes is they can bias our perceptions and responses even if we don't personally agree with

them […] Sometimes just being aware of stereotypes in one's culture is enough to cause these effects" (p. 185). Are the students' predetermined expectations of their inability to understand their instructor/professor impairing their ability to hear their instructor/professor? Would exposure to NNESs enable them to possess the confidence to hear? For example, parents of toddlers seemingly discern the jumbled and "mispronounced" words and phrases of their children with little difficulty; yet, others may hear the toddler and look at the parents in bewilderment, wondering at the parents' ability to understand the toddlers' speech at all. That is *not* to suggest that NNESs are comparable to NES toddlers, but rather to hypothesize that exposure to World Englishes may prove advantageous for the NESL's ability to hear. Research supporting exposure theory (i.e., *contact hypothesis*) insists that NES listeners benefit from contact with nonnative English dialects (Derwing, Rossiter, and Munro, 2002; Kang, Rubin, & Lindemann, 2014; Pattnaik, 1997).

Because many studies focus on the need to "improve" the intelligibility of NNES persons (whether college students, teaching assistants, or professors), Villarreal (2013) applied an undergraduate-training program that addressed the *communicative gap*, which consists of a more equitable responsibility for participants (speakers and listeners) who experience *accent misunderstanding*. As such, Villarreal opined that NES college students must share in their role of the communicative gap, rather than shifting the entirety of the blame (i.e., misunderstanding) to the role of the speaker (i.e., NNESTAs or NNESPs). Rubin and Smith (1990) proposed the need to educate NES college students through the means of "'university community' training programs" nearly twenty-five years ago; however, the problem not only persists, but technology (e.g., RMP) has

assisted NES college students in spreading PLAs beyond the compartmentalization of their particular student body on a specific campus. It is plausible to theorize that students scrolling through a website that rates professors with comments focusing on "accents" may act as a catalyst for users of the site (i.e., NES undergraduates) to redirect the PLA-related comments toward NNESPs on their own campus.

Kavas and Kavas (2008) declare that relations between NES college students and NNES instructors are an ideal opportunity to encourage the "develop[ment] [of] skills in cultural awareness, respect, and tolerance and bridge-building" communicative competencies that will cultivate a decrease in ethnocentric attitudes (p. 11), which are supported by Yook's (1999) findings that college students may be expressing *ethnocentric* beliefs that foster their PLAs. Indeed, a NES undergraduate expressed an awareness that "[t]here isn't much chance that you are going to go out into the business world and everyone you run into is an American [.…] [and] in a lot of cases we are being too inflexible [.…] Americans are just so *egocentric* we don't want to allow other people to be what they are" (Plakans, 1997, p. 113 emphasis added). Meyer and Mao (2014) declare the necessity for NES undergraduates to receive instruction on intercultural training, arguing "[w]ithout intercultural training, […] [students] may simply react based upon cultural preconceptions, and miss an important lesson in intercultural communication and appreciation of cultural differences" (pp. 17-18), and, furthermore, potentially inhibit their preparedness for a career in a globalized economy.

Hallucinating Accents that Inhibit Intelligibility

Studies that utilize Lambert et al.'s (1960) *matched guise technique* provide insight into what Lippi-Green (2012) identifies as the *communicative burden* (Atagi,

2003; Brown, 1992; Purnell, Idsardi, & Baugh, 1999; Rubin, 1992; Rubin & Smith, 1990). The matched guise technique enables researchers to identify listeners' covert language attitudes, because listeners participating in a matched guise test hear the same speaker(s) speaking different dialects of an identical script, and must rate (e.g., on a Likert scale) the status (e.g., education, intelligence, success, wealth) and solidarity (e.g., friendliness, goodness, kindness, trustworthiness) of the speaker(s). Lippi-Green (2012) posits the attitude of the listener (e.g., native-speaking listener) places the burden of communication (i.e., intelligibility) inequitably on the role of the speaker (e.g., nonnative-speaking speaker), thus proposing that cases of incomprehensibility may result from PLAs rather than misunderstanding due to the "accent" of the speaker.

Accordingly, Kang and Rubin (2009) utilize the matched guise technique and discuss *reverse linguistic stereotyping* (RLS), which identifies the preconceived notions listeners (i.e., NES college students) assign to speakers' language proficiency (NNESTAs and NNESPs) based on the social identity (e.g., nationality, ethnicity, etc.) of the speaker. Kang and Rubin argue that:

> RLS is an ongoing act of social discrimination in which individuals' language use is misjudged and misunderstood by virtue of listeners' stereotypes of speakers' social identities. The findings of this study imply that listeners who tend to engage in RLS also tend to find NNSs' [nonnative speakers] speech more difficult to understand, more heavily accented, and they also tend to derogate such speakers' teaching performance. (2009, 453)

Further, citing Rubin (2002), Kang and Rubin (2012) state "U.S. students' listening comprehension scores have been shown to decay by about 20% when they *believe* they

are listening to an NNESTA, even when the voice they are hearing is actually produced by a native speaker" (p. 158 emphasis original). Kang and Rubin's (2012) findings further support the argument that only addressing the nonnative phonology of NNES instructors' speech (e.g., pronunciation/oral communication course) will not facilitate in rectifying the communicative gap between NES undergraduates and NNESTAs.

Rubin and Smith (1990) explore the covert language attitudes of college students toward their NNESTAs language usage through a combination of visual and audio cues. Further, the audio model exemplified "degrees of accentedness," for example, "Oriental[*sic*]/Caucasian moderate accent" and "Oriental[*sic*]/Caucasian high accent," to which students were unable to discern between—for NES participants, any *belief* in a speaker's accent (no matter the degree) merited NES participants' judgment of NNES persons' language failure. Rubin and Smith (1990) found that the participants (NES college students) were unable to discern between the degrees of accents, though a belief in speakers' accents affected the participants' assessments/ratings of the audio models (i.e., NNESTAs). Rubin and Smith state that:

> [T]he degree to which subjects *believed* the speech samples were accented (as opposed to the level of actual accent) was a good predictor of how they rated the [NNESTAs] teaching ability. The higher the level of *perceived* accentedness, the lower the teaching ratings. The pattern of results here is similar to other language and attitude research in which subjects failed to correctly identify the cultural identities of speakers, yet proceeded to ascribe stereotypical qualities based on those language-triggered but incorrect identifications. (p. 349)

The matched guise technique together with images of “Asian/Oriental[*sic*]” models and “European/Caucasian” models that native English-speaking listeners (NESL) (i.e., NES college students) were shown while rating the status and solidarity of the speaker(s) support the theory that NES undergraduates’ PLAs may impede upon their ability to participate as an active listener in discourse with NNES persons. Fought (2006) proposes that Rubin’s (1992) NES participants hallucinated a foreign accent based on the speaker’s “alleged ethnicity,” and alarmingly notes that “students who saw the picture of the Asian woman actually scored lower on a comprehension test about the lecture, good evidence that language prejudices can be quite harmful to those who hold them” (p. 189). Arguably, if NESs hear accents based on a photograph of the supposed speaker, it is plausible to suggest the NESLs’ hearing may be affected by societally established discriminatory stereotypes.

Rubin’s (1992) study attempted to replicate Rubin and Smith’s (1990) study but removed “accent” as a factor. Interestingly, Rubin found that “[t]hose students who are willing to subject themselves to [NNESTA]-instructed classes apparently learn more than just course content; they also learn how to listen more effectively” (1999, p. 521). Fought (2006) and Hughes (2006) discuss Atagi’s (2003) study that employed the matched guise technique to follow up Rubin’s (1992) study. Unfortunately, Atagi’s study was not readily available (as it was a paper presentation); however, the study yielded pertinent information that supports both Rubin and Smith’s (1990) and Rubin’s (1992) studies that address communicative concerns between NNESTAs and NES college students. Atagi (2003) used monolingual NES participants (both speaker and listener), but presented/identified the speakers as either French, Canadian, Korean, or Mexican,

and found that only “two out of twenty” (per Fought) or “three out of the twenty” (per Hughes) of the participants did not *hear* an accent (Fought, 2006, p. 33; Hughes, 2006, p. 189). Therefore, eighteen (or seventeen) participants *heard* an accent based on the nationality of the monolingual NES speaker. Fought posits that “it seems that the more ‘ethnically different’ a speaker is perceived to be by the hearer, the more likely the hearer is to perceive an accent where none is present” (2006, p. 189).

Similarly, Purnell, Idsardi, and Baugh (1999) conducted a study to assess the discrimination nonnative/nonstandard English speakers experience based on phonetic features. Baugh, a tridialectal speaker of AAVE (African American Vernacular English), ChE (Chicano English), and SAE (Standard American English) telephoned proprietors as a possible tenant, and “the results show a clear pattern of potential discrimination associated with the three dialects by geographic area” (Purnell, Idsardi, & Baugh, 1999, p. 14). Baugh’s research reveals that the listener judges the speaker based on their pronunciation of English. That is, if a possible tenant calls using a ChE dialect, the landlord is more likely to say the apartment has already been rented (even if it has not been rented). Purnell, Idsardi, and Baugh’s (1999) findings reinforce the PLAs NESs exemplify in university settings, and reveals the discrimination propelled by language attitudes beyond the campus environment (i.e., workplace, stores, etc.).

Benefits of Exposure *and* Intervention

Kang and Rubin (2009) recommend that "[t]o reach the largest number of undergraduates at a time when they most need the capacity to comprehend NNESTAs and other NNSs [nonnative speakers] in an efficient and unbiased fashion, intergroup contact [e.g., one-on-one contact, solving puzzles] exercises might be incorporated into first-year learning community programs" (p. 163). Smith, Strom, and Muthuswamy recognize the importance of communication between speaker (e.g., NNESTAs) and listener (e.g., NES college students) for the academic success of students. NES college students "may make initial impressions of their instructor's verbal communication skills and these impressions may affect how they perform," according to Smith Strom, and Muthuswamy (2005, p. 4).

Rubin and Smith's (1990) research yielded results that NES students' exposure to NNESTAs enhanced their ability to comprehend NNESs phonological differences (i.e., improve intelligibility). Rubin and Smith declare, "the more often students had sat in classes with NNSTAs [nonnative English speaking teaching assistants] the more satisfied they were with their instruction and the more skilled they became at listening to accented speech" (p. 350). Pattnaik (1997) exemplified one NES college student's triumph in actively participating in the improved intelligibility with her instructor, stating that even though it was initially hard to understand her instructor's accent, "each day seemed to get a little easier to understand her English and I enjoyed coming to class. By the middle of the semester, I wasn't even aware of Ms.—accent anymore" (p. 43).

Similarly, Subtirelu's (2015) study reinforces Rubin and Smith's (1990) findings, revealing that "[a]lthough [he] found ample evidence to suggest that the ideology of

nativeness infiltrates RMP evaluations, an unexpected finding of the study was that objection or opposition to this language ideology [e.g., PLA], however weak, was more frequent" (p. 53). Thus, RMP users also encouraged other NES college students to enroll in courses instructed by NNESPs, commenting, for example, "[s]he does have an accent which you might find hard to understand at first, but you'll get used to it quickly" or "He does have an accent but it's not hard to understand him" (p. 53; p. 54). Subtirelu's (2015) study suggested that RMP users employed the site as a way to aid in eliminating possible concerns of fellow NES college students who may be hesitant to enroll in courses instructed by NNESPs, which supports the theory that NES college students utilized RMP to express biased comments regarding NNESPs' usage of English. It is encouraging to note that NES college students attempt to dissuade others of their PLAs toward NNESTAs and NNESPs, and further supportive of the fact that recognizing the problem may alleviate persons from engaging in PLAs.

PLAs and World Englishes

Empirical research reasons that providing insight into the importance of cultural/linguistic education (i.e., world Englishes) in the overall edification of NES college students remains an essential facet of NES college students' intellectual development in a globalized world (Canagarajah, 2006; Fitch & Morgan, 2003; Kang, Rubin, & Lindemann, 2014; Kubota, 2001; Wetzl, 2013). By introducing NES students to Englishes (rather than English), educators begin the process of removing PLAs as communicative restrictions, and, instead provide NESs with the catalyst to listen. For example, students' exposure to Englishes educates them on the worldwide use of English, but further it may begin to alter preconceived expectations of NNESs as the "Other." Of

great importance to NES college students' future professional endeavors, Rubin (2002) astutely states, "U.S. students who would like to grab a share of the emerging global economy would be wise to become comfortable at least in world Englishes […] the *lingua franca* for communication of international trade and technical information" (p. 129).

Kubota (2001) proposes that because NES college students "increasingly experience face-to-face communication with various WE [World Englishes] speakers on campuses and at work places," it is of significant importance to inculcate the heterogeneous uses/needs of Englishes at all levels *and* disciplines of a diversified university experience (p. 47). Further, Kubota urges introducing such practices at all levels of education (i.e., primary/secondary). Similar to results from studies including NES college students (Rubin & Smith, 1990; Rao, 1995; Villarreal, 2013; Subtirelu, 2015), Kubota (2001) found that high school students would "switch to another class" if a teacher had a "very thick German accent" that the students deemed intolerable (p. 57).

One student example Kubota provided was during a discussion portion of the intervention, when the researcher asked the high school students if they had heard languages (other than English), and participants responded "Spanish," but more importantly, one student responded, "Too much" and followed up with, "They're [i.e., Mexicans] going to take over the world. I'm serious" (p. 56). In addition, Wetzl's participant expressed knowledge of xenophobic fears that challenge the speaker's patriotism and acceptance from a cultural perspective, explaining that 'to them [i.e., the *true* Americans], you're [i.e., nonnative English speakers] different, you're not American'" (p. 221). Clearly, PLAs derive from deep-seated language attitudes that

result as an amalgamation of social/political/cultural beliefs that spread through a multitude of sources (e.g., media, entertainment, friends, family, etc.). To argue the negative repercussions World English users experience because of NES persons' PLAs, it is imperative to provide NES undergraduates with an understanding of English as a *lingua franca* that explains the equitable significance of World Englishes paralleled with "Standard English."

Canagarajah (2006) and Wetzl (2013) opine that composition courses offer the opportunity to educate college students on World Englishes (WE) at a broader range that will assist in developing a multicultural collegiate student. Wetzl asserts that, "[c]omposition courses should prepare students for multicultural communication by increasing their awareness of WEs and developing the skills they need to interact with their WE peers at school, in the workplace, and in their home communities" (p. 204). Canagarajah (2006) recommends that eventually World Englishes should gain the necessary recognition in university writing courses. Further, Kubota (2001) conducted a pilot study that focused on providing awareness to World Englishes at a secondary level. Not surprisingly, the NES high school student participants exemplified the same ethnocentric linguistic beliefs displayed by NES college students.

Kang, Rubin, and Lindemann's (2014) study offers promise to short-term intervention plans that show statistically significant improvement in NES college students' PLAs. Kang, Rubin, and Lindemann found that the "brief intervention supports the view that at least some criticism of nonnative speech is not directly induced by [NNESs'] English language proficiency, but rather is a reflection of intergroup prejudice and anxiety (2014, p. 20). Furthermore, Derwing, Ross, and Munro's (2002) intervention

concludes that NESs gained confidence in their ability to comprehend the speech of NNESs, which provides an optimistic approach to challenging prevailing linguistic ideologies that drive PLAs. Rubin (2002) urges the need to recognize the negative impact of labels (such as nonnative, other, foreign), emphasizing that recognizing NNES persons as NNSMNAEs (non-native speakers of mainstream North American Englishes) acts as "as a consciousness-raising devise [and] reminds us that we tend to judge a speaker's English language skills to be wanting mainly when that speaker's style fails to match our own" (p. 129).

PLA Intervention

Empirical research has found that factors such as the idealistic native speaker model and the communicative burden obfuscate discourse involving NES listeners and NNES speakers (Phillipson, 1992; Lindemann, 2005; Lippi-Green, 2012). That is, NESs often expect native-like pronunciations when conversing with NNESs, and NNESs often experience a sense of failure at their inability to replicate native-like pronunciations. Thus, the intention of this research is to determine whether this study will yield similar results to the previous studies that suggest NES college students employ PLAs in NNES-instructed courses.

Method

The study consists of data (i.e., electronic survey results) collected at a midsize university during the spring 2016 semester. Potential participants were acquired through a mass email sent out to persons affiliated with the university by email accounts, and only persons eighteen years of age or older were eligible to participate. The email consisted of

an informed consent form that identified the survey as a way to explore the English language from students' perspectives, and offered that possible benefits of the study included potentially improving communication between students and instructors. Participants were informed that following the link to the electronic survey indicated their consent to participate in the study.

Overall, 579 participants, ranging from college freshmen to post-graduate levels of education, participated in the study; however, one participant did not identify his/her age as eighteen years of age (or older) and was rejected from the study. Of the 578 remaining participants, not all participants answered every survey question (as they had the option to skip any question on the questionnaire). Participants answered demographic questions, revealing that 183 participants were males and 394 were females. Seventeen participants identified themselves as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish. Participants identified their ethnicities as follows: Caucasian, 492; African American, 37; Other, 31; Asian, 14; and American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3. The participants identified their ages as follows: ages 18-22, 325; ages 23-26, 113; ages 27-30, 31; ages 31-35, 25; ages 36-40, 22; ages 41-45, 18; ages 46-50, 11; and ages 51 and over, 33. Five hundred thirty-three participants identified their native language as English, while 24 participants identified their native language as other than English.

The electronic survey, identified as the "English Language Questionnaire," consisted of twenty-seven questions: demographics, six questions; language, twenty questions; drawing for gift card, one question. The possible answer choices on the questionnaire included Yes/No (one question), 5-point Likert scale (fifteen questions), and 5-point Likert scale with the option to leave a comment (four questions). Of the

twenty language questions, eight were of specific focus for this research, while other questions were used to gather relevant data for future development of this study and/or to attempt to conceal the intentions of this study from the participants. Data was collected electronically through the web-based survey company that was used to design the survey.

The survey questions/statements were designed to establish an understanding of college students' language attitudes that specifically relate to interactions with NNES instructors in classroom settings. To identify whether the concept of a PLA intervention is a viable option that may contribute to improved intelligibility and comprehensibility in conversations between NES students and NNES instructors, which may contribute to students' academic success, it was essential to determine whether the college students expressed language attitudes that correlate with findings of previous studies that found students' language attitudes affected their perceptions of their NNES instructors, and, in turn, negatively affected the students' opinions of the "quality" of the education they received (e.g., Rao, 1995; Rubin, 1990; Subtirelu, 2015; Villarreal, 2013).

Results

The research statements discussed below are not in the original order that they were in for the participants' survey. In addition, the numbers of the statements do not signify importance, but rather a way to identify and discuss each statement for purposes of this thesis.

Statement One: **"***To speak English correctly means not speaking it with an accent."*

	Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Undecided**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Other**
All Participants (559)	192	291	33	29	9	5
Freshmen (106)	37	56	6	5	2	0
Sophomores (72)	20	37	3	9	3	0
Juniors (104)	30	59	9	3	1	2
Seniors (159)	58	82	8	7	1	3
Graduates (92)	36	46	7	2	1	0
Post-Graduates (26)	11	11	0	3	1	0

Of the 559 participants who responded to statement one (S1), 86.40% disagreed (34.34% strongly disagreed, 51.96% disagreed), 6.78% agreed (1.59% strongly agreed, 5.19% agreed), 5.90% were undecided, and 0.89% responded "other." Of the 106 freshmen participants who responded, 87.74% disagreed (34.91% strongly disagreed, 52.83% disagreed), 6.61% agreed (1.89% strongly agreed, 4.72% agreed), and 5.66% were undecided. The results suggest that the freshmen participants responded in a similar manner to participants at higher levels of education. However, Fisher's Exact Test for the association between groups (freshmen vs. all others) and outcomes (raw data for

combined strongly agree/agree vs. strongly disagree/disagree) does not show that the association is statistically significant.

Statement Two: *"If nonnative English speakers wanted to, they could take classes to get rid of their accents."*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Other
All Participants (560)	93	190	152	114	11	N/A
Freshmen (106)	14	32	38	22	0	N/A
Sophomores (72)	6	26	21	15	4	N/A
Juniors (104)	17	32	31	23	1	N/A
Seniors (93)	16	34	22	18	3	N/A
Graduates (159)	31	57	36	32	3	N/A
Post-Graduates (26)	9	9	4	4	0	N/A

Of the 560 participants who responded to statement two (S2), 50.54% disagreed (16.61% strongly disagreed, 33.93% disagreed), 22.32% agreed (1.96% strongly agreed, 20.36% agreed), and 27.14% were undecided. Of the 106 freshmen participants who responded, 43.40% disagreed (13.21% strongly disagreed, 30.19% disagreed), 20.75% agreed, and 35.85% were undecided. The results reveal a slight difference between the way freshmen participants and participants at higher levels of education responded. However, Fisher's Exact Test for the association between groups (freshmen vs. all others) and outcomes (raw data for combined strongly agree/agree vs. strongly disagree/disagree) does not show that the association is statistically significant.

Statement Three: *"It is difficult for me to understand what a nonnative English speaker is saying because of his or her accent."*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Other

All Participants (560)	56	222	140	123	19	N/A
Freshmen (106)	10	31	43	19	3	N/A
Sophomores (72)	6	29	13	19	5	N/A
Juniors (104)	13	36	23	26	6	N/A
Seniors (159)	16	68	38	36	1	N/A
Graduates (93)	7	45	17	20	4	N/A
Post-Graduates (26)	4	13	6	3	0	N/A

Of the 560 participants who responded to statement three (S3), 49.64% disagreed (10.00% strongly disagreed, 39.64% disagreed), 25.35% agreed (3.39% strongly agreed, 21.96% agreed), and 25.00% were undecided. Of the 106 freshmen participants who responded, 38.68% disagreed (9.43% strongly disagreed, 29.25% disagreed), 20.75% agreed (2.83% strongly agreed, 17.92% agreed), and 40.57% were undecided. The results suggest that there is a difference between how the freshmen participants and participants at higher levels of education responded. However, Fisher's Exact Test for the association between groups (freshmen vs. all others) and outcomes (raw data for combined strongly agree/agree vs. strongly disagree/disagree) does not show that the association is statistically significant.

Statement Four: *"If I know the instructor of a course speaks English with an accent, I avoid registering for his or her class."*

	Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Undecided**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Other**
All Participants (557)	150	228	71	83	25	N/A
Freshmen (106)	25	38	19	18	6	N/A
Sophomores (72)	11	33	10	13	5	N/A

Juniors (104)	29	38	13	17	7	N/A
Seniors (158)	44	71	18	19	6	N/A
Graduates (91)	30	29	8	13	1	N/A
Post-Graduates (26)	11	9	3	3	0	N/A

Of the 557 participants who responded to statement four (S4), 67.86% disagreed (26.93% strongly disagreed, 40.93% disagreed), 19.39% agreed (4.49% strongly agreed, 14.90% agreed), and 12.75% were undecided. Of the 106 freshmen participants who responded, 59.43% disagreed (23.57% strongly disagreed, 35.85% disagreed), 22.64% agreed (5.66% strongly agreed, 16.98% agreed), and 17.92% were undecided. The results reveal a slight difference between the way freshmen participants and participants at higher levels of education responded. However, Fisher's Exact Test for the association between groups (freshmen vs. all others) and outcomes (raw data for combined strongly agree/agree vs. strongly disagree/disagree) does not show that the association is statistically significant.

Statement Five: *"I have dropped one or more courses because of my instructor's accent."*

	Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Undecided**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Other**
All Participants (559)	241	224	23	34	16	21
Freshmen (106)	39	49	8	2	1	7
Sophomores (71)	26	30	3	4	4	4
Juniors (104)	50	36	3	6	5	4
Seniors (159)	71	66	5	11	4	2
Graduates (93)	42	34	4	8	2	3
Post-Graduates (26)	13	9	0	3	0	1

Of the 559 participants who responded to statement five (S5), 83.18% disagreed (43.11% strongly disagreed, 40.07% disagreed), 8.94% agreed (2.86% strongly agreed, 6.08% agreed), 4.11% were undecided, and 3.76% responded “other.” Of the 106 freshmen participants who responded, 83.02% disagreed (36.79% strongly disagreed, 46.23% disagreed), 2.83% agreed (0.94% strongly agreed, 1.89% agreed), 7.55% were undecided, and 9.43% responded “other.” The results suggest that the freshmen participants responded in a similar manner to participants at higher levels of education. Indeed, Fisher’s Exact Test for the association between groups (freshmen vs. all others) and outcomes (raw data for combined strongly agree/agree vs. strongly disagree/disagree) shows that the association is statistically significant (two-tailed P = 0.019).

Statement Six: *“An instructor’s accent would make it difficult for me to do well in his or her classes.”*

	Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Undecided**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Other**
All Participants (555)	89	152	116	118	43	37
Freshmen (105)	5	29	33	24	9	5
Sophomores (72)	10	19	12	15	10	6
Juniors (104)	21	24	19	23	12	5
Seniors (157)	31	43	29	31	10	13
Graduates (92)	19	26	19	21	1	6
Post-Graduates (25)	3	11	4	4	1	2

Of the 555 participants who responded to statement six (S6), 43.43% disagreed (16.04% strongly disagreed, 27.39% disagreed), 35.68% agreed (7.75% strongly agreed, 21.26% agreed), 20.90% were undecided, and 6.67% responded “other.” Of the 105 freshmen participants who responded, 32.38% disagreed (4.76% strongly disagreed,

27.62% disagreed), 31.43% agreed (8.57% strongly agreed, 22.86% agreed), 31.43% were undecided, and 4.76% responded "other." The results suggest that there is a difference between the way freshmen participants and participants at higher levels of education responded, in the sense that freshmen were more likely to be undecided. However, Fisher's Exact Test for the association between groups (freshmen vs. all others) and outcomes (raw data for combined strongly agree/agree vs. strongly disagree/disagree) does not show that the association is statistically significant.

Statement Seven: *"I prefer to enroll in courses that are instructed by native English speakers, because they do not have accents."*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Other
All Participants (560)	102	177	95	141	45	N/A
Freshmen (106)	11	29	23	34	9	N/A
Sophomores (72)	8	19	13	25	7	N/A
Juniors (104)	20	33	10	30	11	N/A
Seniors (159)	35	48	33	30	13	N/A
Graduates (93)	22	38	11	18	4	N/A
Post-Graduates (26)	6	10	5	4	1	N/A

Of the 560 participants who responded to statement seven (S7), 49.82% disagreed (18.21% strongly disagreed, 31.61% disagreed), 33.22% agreed (8.04% strongly agreed, 25.18% agreed), and 16.96% were undecided. Of the 106 freshmen participants who responded, 37.74% disagreed (10.38% strongly agreed, 27.36% agreed), 40.57% agreed (8.49% strongly agreed, 32.08% agreed), and 21.70% were undecided. The results suggest that there is a difference between the way freshmen participants and participants at higher levels of education responded. Indeed, Fisher's Exact Test for the association

between groups (freshmen vs. all others) and outcomes (raw data for combined strongly agree/agree vs. strongly disagree/disagree) shows that the association is statistically significant (two-tailed P = 0.0187).

Statement Eight: *"English* ***is*** *the official language of the United States."*

	Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Undecided**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Other**
All Participants (560)	79	61	26	165	204	25
Freshmen (106)	13	7	5	33	42	6
Sophomores (72)	13	5	4	16	31	3
Juniors (104)	9	16	5	34	34	6
Seniors (159)	27	15	7	47	56	7
Graduates (93)	14	14	3	29	31	2
Post-Graduates (26)	3	4	2	6	10	1

Of the 560 participants to answer statement eight (S8), 25.00% disagreed (14.11% strongly disagree, 10.89% disagreed), 65.89% agreed (36.43% strongly agreed, 29.46% agreed), 4.64% were undecided, and 4.46% responded "other." Of the 106 freshmen who responded, 18.86% disagreed (12.26% strongly disagreed, 6.60% disagreed), 70.75% agreed (31.13% strongly agreed, 39.62% agreed), 4.72% were undecided, and 5.66% responded "other." The results suggest that there is slight a difference between the way freshmen participants and participants at higher levels of education responded. However, Fisher's Exact Test for the association between groups (freshmen vs. all others) and outcomes (raw data for combined strongly agree/agree vs. strongly disagree/disagree) does not show that the association is statistically significant.

Discussion

The fact that 65.90% of the 560 participants agreed that English ***is*** the official language of the U.S. (S8) was an expected result, provided that English is the predominant language used for government, education, etc. in the U.S. However, previous research suggests that a belief in language dominance may encourage persons' language attitudes, whether intentionally or inadvertently (e.g., Lippi-Green, 2012, Phillipson, 1992).

Statement One Comments

Although 86.40% of the 559 participants disagreed with S1, suggesting that participants do not identify English language users with an accent as speaking English incorrectly, participants' comments suggest that the question lacked room for variation in accents that were essential to understanding the dynamics between NES college students and NNES instructors in a classroom setting.

- "I think it means to be understood." (*freshman participant*)
- "You can speak English with an accent, look at the British, they speak better English then [*sic*] Americans do most of the time and they have an accent." (*freshman participant*)
- "I don't think that yo[u] have to be accentless [*sic*], but there have been times where I entirely don't understand someone and I have to ask to keep repeating, and then I feel bad because I keep asking them to repeat and then I just give kind a nod and smile because I still have no clue what is being said. So while I am fine with the average accent, extreme accents I think need to be helped because then it is so hard to understand." (*junior participant*)
- "While accent is socially regarded as a sign of fluency I would hesitate to call it an accurate marker. I see fluency more as competency with grammar and vocabulary in most speaking situations." (*senior participant*)

While the first freshman example identifies the importance of comprehensibility, the second freshman example typifies what Lippi-Green (2012) recognizes as a seemingly hierarchical structure of acceptable accents, which are dependent on the

speaker's country of origin. For example, the student suggests that British-English speakers "speak better English th[a]n Americans most of the time," which poses the question what does "better" mean? And, would the participant be willing to make the same remark if the speaker were a nonnative speaker of English (e.g., a Japanese-English speaker)? Arguably, this particular comment represents an adherence to similar qualifiers that were employed by the conference representatives of the *Makerere Report* (1961), which seemingly supports the idea that antiquated language attitudes exist in modern times (as cited in Phillipson, 1992).

The junior participant, after sharing a personal experience with comprehensibility concerns, classifies acceptable speaker's nonnative accents from the perspective of a NES listener. That is, the participant imparts the opinion that the NNES speaker must alter his/her accent if it is an "extreme" accent, so that the participant does not struggle with comprehensibility: "So while I am fine with the *average* accent, e*xtreme* accents I think need to be helped because then it is so hard to understand" (emphasis added). Further, the participant suggests that rather than addressing concerns with the listener's role in comprehensibility, it is the speaker who must receive assistance to achieve effective communication (i.e., the speaker must take sole responsibility for comprehensibility).

It is safe to assume that the senior participant has some knowledge of language acquisition and/or linguistics through the use of jargon; therefore, the participant's opinion that "grammar and vocabulary" rather than accent, qualifies as an integral part of comprehensibility comes from acquired knowledge regarding the communicative process, which supports the suggestion that knowledge (e.g., SLA process and/or

linguistics) and/or exposure to nonnative accents may assist in improved comprehensibility between speaker and listener.

Statement Five Comments

Through a quantitative analysis, the results for S3, S4, S5, and S6 initially suggest that college students at this particular university may not require the assistance of PLA intervention with statistical significance; however, an analysis of the comments reveal that the percentages might not reflect a true representation of the participants' language attitudes (perhaps due to limitations of the questions, which will be discussed later in this thesis). In addition, the results for S7 seem to contradict the responses to S3, S4, S5, and S6. Therefore, it is necessary to examine patterns in the comments to illustrate the participants' voice in discussing the statements in the questionnaire.

While 83.92% of freshman participants and 78.87% of sophomore participants disagreed with S5 (*I have dropped one or more courses because of my instructor's accent*), participants' comments reveal factors that may not have been represented in the percentages. Patterns in the participants' comments revealed that they had (1) never been in a NNES-instructed course, or (2) they had wanted to drop a NNES-instructed course, but did not.

(1) Never been in a NNES-instructed course

- "I have not had any proffessors [*sic*] with accents yet." (*freshman participant*)
- "I have not taken a course with an Instructor who has had an accent." (*freshman participant*)
- "[I am] only taking online courses for right now." (*sophomore participant*)

(2) Wanted to drop a NNES-instructed course, but did not drop the course

- "I took a history class with a professor who had a very strong accent and it was hard to understand, and I debating [*sic*] strongly

about dropping the class but chose not too [*sic*]" (*freshman participant*)

- "I never dropped a class, but wanted to." (*sophomore participant*)
- "Almost." (*sophomore participant*)

Though students may not drop classes, previous studies suggest that college students may perpetuate language attitudes through frustrations for their inability to drop a course (e.g., they require the class and could not drop it) (e.g., Subtirelu, 2015; Villarreal, 2013).

Statement Six Comments

In response to S6 (*An instructor's accent would make it difficult for me to do well in his or her classes.*), 32.38% of freshmen participants, 32.38% and 40.28% of sophomore participants disagreed with the statement. Because of the number of comments that exemplified a pattern across all levels of education, participants from all levels will be discussed in this section. Again, the comments revealed that the percentages might not reflect the relevant data to exemplify participants' concerns, provided participants were not given the option to address "degrees" of accents. The participants' comments demonstrated a pattern of identifying NNES instructors' accents through the participants' perception of the level of the speaker's accent. Patterns in the participants' comments revealed that the participants' perception of the speaker's accent depended on (1) the degree of the accent (2) familiarity of course content and NNES instructor's accent. In fact, the participants provide insight into a tool they rely on when struggling with comprehensibility (i.e., handouts, etc.), which may prove beneficial in assisting to bridge the communicative gap.

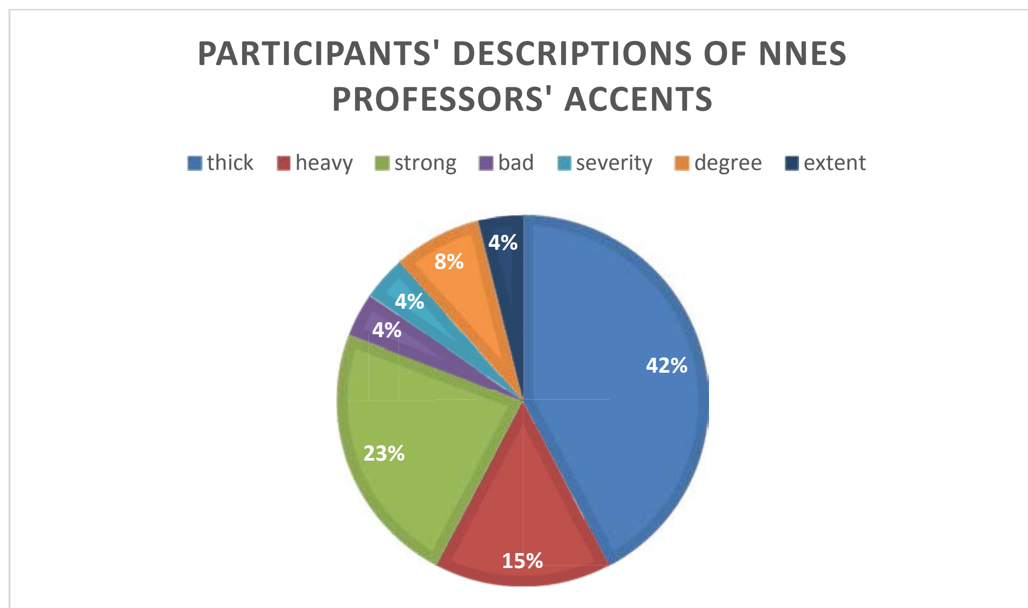
(1) Degree of the accent

- "Depends on how strong the accent is." (*freshman participant*)

- “Depends on how thick/strong the instructor’s accent is.” (*sophomore participant*)
- “Only if the accent makes his/her English *very* hard to understand.” (*junior participant*)
- “I think that it would depend on how heavy of an accent this person had.” (*senior participant*)
- “It depends on the thickness of their accent.” (*graduate participant*)
- “It depends…if I were unable to understand an instructor, this could be a challenge.” (*post-graduate participant*)

(2) Course content and NNES instructor’s accent

- “I suppose it depends on how well they enunciate or if their class has no handouts.” (*freshman participant*)
- “Depends on the extent of their accent and if they could be understood.” (*sophomore participant*)
- “It would depend on how thick the accent was, and how competent the professor was in the subject matter.” (*junior participant*)
- “I think it would depend more heavily on the subject matter and the thickness of the accent.” (*senior participant*)
- “It does not make it difficult to do well in the class as a whole, but it does make for difficulty in understanding lectures as well as direct, verbal communication.” (*graduate participant*)
- “It has in the past, but wouldn’t necessarily always.” (*post-graduate participant*)

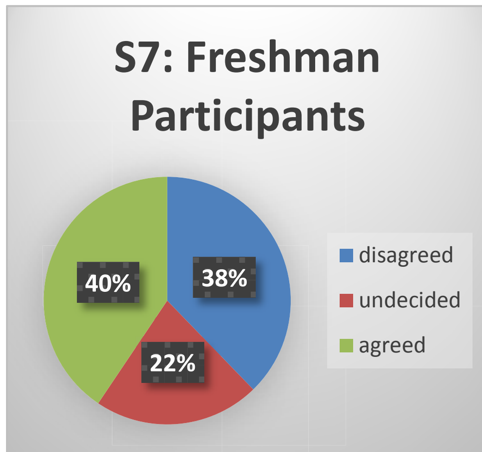


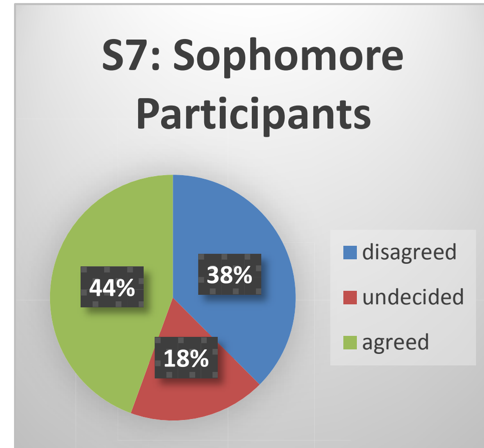
The chart above reveals the most common words participants used to identify NNES professors' accents. Previous studies suggest that NES listeners' preconceptions about a NNES person's accent possess the ability to affect the listener's comprehensibility (e.g., Atagi, 2003; Kang & Rubin, 2009; Kim, 2008). In fact, through the matched-guise technique, studies have supported the theory that NES listeners 'hallucinate' accents, even when speakers are NES speakers (Rubin & Smith, 1990). The participants' comments suggest that the listeners' comprehensibility may be skewed prior to engaging in conversations with NNES instructors, provided many are entering into communications with NNES instructors with a predetermined gauge for the NNES instructor's accent (e.g., heavy, thick, strong). Additionally, a prevalent response in participants' comments included the word "depend/depends," when referring to participants' ability to comprehend the speech of their NNES professors. This seems to support Lippi-Green's (2012) communicative burden theory, in that NES listeners enter conversations with NNES speakers with the expectation that the speaker must bear the burden of comprehensibility to engage in a conversation with NES listener. That is, when participants refer to their ability to comprehend a NNES professor, the NES listener's role as an active listener is not addressed.

Statement Seven

It is worth noting that S7 (*I prefer to enroll in courses that are instructed by native English speakers, because they do not have accents*) was the final statement on the participants' survey. Of the 106 freshman participants, 40.57% agreed (8.49% strongly agreed, 32.08% strongly agreed), and 21.70% were undecided. Of the 72 sophomore

participants, 44.44% agreed (9.72% strongly agreed, 34.72% agreed), and 18.06% were undecided (charts below).





The fact that 40.57% of freshman participants and 44.44% of sophomore participants agreed that they prefer to enroll in courses instructed by native English speakers, because they do not have accents, indicates that there is a significant preference for courses instructed by native English speakers based on instructors' native accents. Additionally, it poses further questions as to why participants may not have answered S3, S4, S5, and S6 in a manner that correlates with the responses on statement seven. S7 was included to identify whether student participants would express a desire for NES-instructed courses, with the only identifiable determiner being a "lack of instructor accent." This suggests that NES undergraduates may enter NNES-instructed courses with concerns that they may not be able to understand the pronunciations of their NNES instructors, and further supports the need to educate undergraduates through the use of PLA intervention, so that they enter NNES-instructed classrooms with the knowledge and confidence necessary to achieve comprehensibility that does not rely on the

communicative burden. That is, the PLA intervention provides undergraduates with a communicative tool to engage in equitable discourse with their NNES professors.

Conclusion

The intention of this thesis was to focus on the PLAs NES college students may use in NNES-instructed classrooms, yet it is not my intention to propose that *all* NES college students display/use discriminatory language attitudes in NNES-instructed courses. Focusing on the communicative interactions between NES college students and their NNES instructors assists in identifying the necessary data to develop and implement effective strategies for applicable approaches to a PLA intervention plan.

Though the percentages for each statement discussed in this thesis do not exemplify statistical significance in support of the need for PLA intervention, I included (what I deemed) a necessary number of comments from participants at varying levels of education to present a greater representation of the participants' voice that did not include a simplistic response (e.g., disagree, agree, etc.). The student participants' comments revealed that students often require instructional approaches that include verbal, visual, and written methods, which is not surprising due to the varying learning styles of students; however, it also implies that students may enter NNES-instructed courses ill-prepared to effectively engage in such courses based on their perception of the "degree" of the instructor's accent (e.g., heavy, strong, thick).

Additionally, the participants' responses suggest that perhaps, rather than solely focusing on incoming freshmen for PLA intervention, it may be more beneficial to adapt the PLA intervention to suit the needs of individual universities. That is, if incoming freshmen will not have the opportunity to enroll in courses instructed by NNES instructors until higher levels of education, it might be better to introduce PLA interventions for first-semester sophomores. That way, the PLA intervention would not

be a distant memory from their first semester at university, which may not prove as effective.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study that require discussion. First, the survey/questionnaire was sent out in a mass email to students affiliated with the university, with no basis as to whether participants would have experiences in courses instructed by NNES instructors (which would provide feedback from students with personal classroom experiences). Second, as with any self-report questionnaire, student participants may have feared responses not deemed politically correct, and may have adjusted their responses. Third, in my attempts to conceal my interest in the study, my questions may have been too ambiguous, especially provided that I did not allow for variation in accent (e.g., strong, thick, heavy, etc.), which was intentional so that I did not use questions to identify NNES professors' pronunciations which may lead/persuade participants' answers. Finally, I did not allow for comment boxes on all questions that could have allowed participants to explain/discuss their answers, which would have enabled greater insight into the participants' reasons and/or thought processes behind their responses. Although I have identified limitations in the study, I acknowledge that there are most likely limitations that I am not aware of at this time.

Future Research

While my study gathered data to support a need for PLA intervention, the intention of future PLA intervention research is to support the hypothesis that providing a diversified awareness of English as a global language in collaboration with exposure to NNES varieties of English will significantly improve students' ability to participate in

equitable discourse with NNES students and instructors. Although numerous scholars have conducted replicable studies at a localized level, universities implementing an established intervention plan that include language attitude interventions remain scarce. Participants rarely (if ever) are made aware of *their* language attitudes (i.e., results from matched/verbal guise tests) and the damaging effects (e.g., social, economic) that language attitudes have on the lives of *both* the speaker and the listener.

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Appendix

Demographic Information

1. *I am 18 years of age or older.*

_____Yes
_____No

2. *I would define my level of education as:*

_____Freshman
_____Sophomore
_____Junior
_____Senior
_____Graduate
_____Post-Graduate

3. *I would define my gender as*:

_____Male
_____Female

4. *I would define myself as:*

_____Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish
_____Not Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish

5. *I would define my ethnicity as*:

_____African American
_____American Indian or Alaska Native
_____Asian
_____Caucasian
_____Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
_____Other

6. *I would define my age as*:

_____18 – 22
_____23 – 26
_____27 – 30

_____31 – 35
_____36 – 40
_____41 – 45
_____46 – 50
_____51 and over

English Language Questionnaire

The following terms will be used in this questionnaire:

Native English Speaker: A person who learned English as their first language.

Nonnative English Speaker: A person who learned English as a second language.

Second Language: A language learned in addition to your first language.

Bilingual: A person who fluently speaks two languages.

Accent: **“**The way in which people pronounce when they speak.”

Please answer the following questions as honestly as you can, keeping in mind that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. If you are unsure about how to answer, please give the best answer that you can.

1. *I am a native speaker of English*.

   _____Yes
   _____No

   *If you answered no, what language are you a native speaker of?*____

2. *English* ***is*** *the official language of the United States of America.*

   _____Strongly disagree
   _____Disagree
   _____Undecided
   _____Agree
   _____Strongly agree
   _____Other (please explain below)

*Comments:*____
____
____
____

3. *To speak English correctly means not speaking it with an accent.*

   _____Strongly disagree
   _____Disagree
   _____Undecided
   _____Agree
   _____Strongly agree
   _____Other (please explain below)

   *Comments:*____
   ____
   ____
   ____

4. *It is difficult for me to understand what a nonnative English speaker is saying because of his or her accent.*

   _____Strongly disagree
   _____Disagree
   _____Undecided
   _____Agree
   _____Strongly agree

5. *If nonnative English speakers wanted to, they could take classes to get rid of their accent.*

   _____Strongly disagree
   _____Disagree
   _____Undecided
   _____Agree
   _____Strongly agree

6. *I believe that English is the* ***easiest*** *language to learn.*

   _____Strongly disagree
   _____Disagree
   _____Undecided

_____Agree
_____Strongly agree

7. *I learned to speak a second language **before** high school.*

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree

8. *I learned to speak a second language **during** high school.*

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree

9. *I learned to speak a second language **after** high school.*

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree

10. *I have never learned to speak a second language.*

_____*Strongly disagree*
_____*Disagree*
_____*Undecided*
_____*Agree*
_____*Strongly agree*

11. *I am bilingual.*

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree

_____Strongly agree

12. *When I learned a second language, my teacher was a native speaker of the language I learned. (For example, if you were learning Spanish, the teacher was a native speaker of Spanish.)*

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree

13. *When I learned a second language, my teacher was* ***not*** *a native speaker of the language I learned. (For example, if you were learning Spanish, the teacher was a native speaker of English).*

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree

14. *I engage in conversations with many nonnative English speakers.*

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree

15. *I am exposed to many nonnative English-speaking students on campus.*

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree

16. *If I know the instructor of a course speaks English with an accent, I avoid registering for his or her class.*

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree

17. I have dropped one or more courses because of my instructor's accent.

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree
_____Other (please explain below)

*Comments:*____
____
____
____

18. An instructor's accent would make it difficult for me to do well in his or her class.

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree
_____Other (please explain below)

*Comments:*____
____
____
____

19. I have done poorly in one or more courses because of the instructor's accent.

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree

20. *I prefer to enroll in courses that are instructed by native English speakers, because they do not have accents.*

_____Strongly disagree
_____Disagree
_____Undecided
_____Agree
_____Strongly agree