Exploring Indonesian Learners' Attitudes and Beliefs toward English Accents: A Case Study in an Indonesian University

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Abstract

This study reported the attitudes of 67 Indonesian English language learners toward British, American, and their own English accents and explored the underlying reasons motivating these attitudes. The participants' English proficiency ranged from intermediate to advanced proficiency and confirmed either or both direct and indirect exposures to intercultural communication with speakers of English of other nationalities. The participants were required to listen to three audio samples, Received Pronunciation (RP), General American (GA), and Indonesian accented English (IAE), and to rate the accents on 'standard', 'intelligent', 'polite', and 'pleasant' traits. To seek the significant overall mean scores and the meaningful scores across the groups, ANOVA and post-hoc Tukey test were used. The results of the interview, additionally, were analyzed using content analysis techniques to find meaningful categories to clarify such emerging perceptions. The results show an overall positive attitude toward all three accents with the Indonesian accent perceived significantly more positively compared to the other two on the 'intelligent', 'polite', and 'pleasant' traits. The more positive evaluation of their own accent was driven by the realization that mutual intelligibility is more important than prestige, and there is a need for cultural value projections, that is, to use their own accent to channel politeness. These results call for the reinforcement of mutual intelligibility as the core of assessment and acceptance of local accents in classrooms. This can be channeled through the active promotion of audio samples demonstrating different varieties of English in the class instead of focusing exclusively on RP and GA; and through teachers' acceptance of students' intelligible local accents.

Keywords: Accents; Attitude; English as a Lingua Franca

1. Introduction

English nowadays is used as a lingua franca that is a means of communication used by speakers who do not share first languages (Jenkins, 2009). Crystal (2003) confirmed that one in every four people around the globe speaks English, and within this number, there are far more non-native English speakers (NNeS) than native speakers (NS). Due to the widespread of speakers with different lingua-cultural backgrounds, new varieties of English emerge and are spoken across the globe. Central to this phenomenon is the debate on the acceptance of the new Englishes. Different works aiming to see the awareness and evaluation of different variants of English, thus, have proliferated. These studies bear pivotal significance because language attitude is said to have impacts on ELT (Fang, 2017), motivation and acquisition (Rezaei et al., 2018), and language-related policy-making (Zhang & Hu, 2008). More importantly, the issues of attitudes toward linguistic aspects of English have an impact on language policy, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment (Widodo & Fang, 2019). On the other hand, attitude toward language is subject to changes due to socio, political, and economic shifts (Ahn, 2014). Thus, the studies of attitudes toward varieties of English are important as they disclose the dynamic relationship between English, its users, and globalization.

Among the myriad of studies about attitudes toward variants of English, the evaluation toward accents seems to be the most salient one. Different accents of English are evaluated differently. In the context of ELT, the positive evaluation is dominantly addressed to native speakers' variations (Moradkhani & Asakereh, 2018), and retention toward varieties other than these two varieties is still prevalent in classroom practices (Kirkpatrick, 2006; Sadeghpour &Sharifian, 2019). In a similar vein, several studies show that learners coming from the expanding circle countries still see the NS's accents as a norm to conform (Sa'd, 2018). Regarding the perception toward learners' own accents, however, some research indicates that there is a shift ranging from an ambivalent attitude (Ishikawa, 2017) to recognition that NS's accent is not the norm in international communication (Kung, 2018).

With the plethora of studies examining attitudes toward English accents, little has been known about Indonesian learners' points of view. The need for English in Indonesia has become more pervasive as it is the official language of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); its use is no longer between Indonesian speakers and native speakers in the EFL context, rather it is being used to communicate with other non-native speakers from ASEAN (Kirkpatrick, 2014). Notwithstanding this sociolinguistic reality, the education policy concerning English still reflects exonormativism (Kirkpatrick, 2006). Anwar (2019) reflected that Indonesians still view English by using its narrow utilitarian value, which leads to drilling, skilling, and reliance on standardized language testing in national examinations and national university entrance examinations. She further clarified that although Indonesia has a polyglot nature due to its rich number of languages and cultures, the idea of global Englishes is still not welcomed. Additionally, it is not only that native speakers' accents are deemed more ideal. There is also a tendency to rate non-native speakers' local accents negatively. Chan (2015), for example, recorded negative views held by Cantonese university learners toward their local English accent. In a similar vein, Sa'd (2018) found that Iranian EFL learners 'refuse to display their identities through L1 accents'.

This finding needs to be revisited and reexamined as another finding (Lee et al., 2018) found that Indonesian pre-service teachers had a higher degree of ownership of their own accent compared to Korean teachers. The research found that this finding was driven by the multicultural and multilingual backgrounds that the teachers possessed as Indonesians. Driven by these different conceptions of the view of Indonesians toward Englishes, this study focused on exploring the attitudinal aspect of different English accents found in the Indonesian context. This study intends to describe the current position of Indonesian English users in relation to their perceptions toward English accents, namely, the Received Pronunciation (RP), General American (GA), and Indonesian accented English (IAE). The attitudinal study focuses on the perceptions of the quality of the language (language-related qualities) and the speakers of the accents (person-related qualities).

1. What attitudes did Indonesian university students have regarding the different English accents?
2. What are the university students' beliefs regarding the traits that drive the emergence of such attitudes?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Investigating Attitudes on Different English Accents

Accent refers to 'distinct ways a language is pronounced, whether by native or non-native speakers of English', and when spoken, the accent is interwoven with the social properties of the speakers, i.e. social class and social identity (Levis & Zhou, 2018). The attitudinal studies about English accents, thus, have provided valuable insights into how their speakers are perceived and evaluated. Garrett (2010) confirms that speakers are judged by the way they communicate. Therefore, language attitude may lead to stereotyping, which has impacts on L2 learners' learning behavior and, to an extent, successful attainment of the target language, in this case, English (Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011). The language attitude study seeks to explore attitude from three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Garrett, 2010). The cognitive component is the perception and the knowledge people have about the object under evaluation (Monfared & Khatib, 2018). Ahn (2014) clarified that these thoughts and beliefs are not instilled since birth; rather, they develop within oneself after they are 'learned', 'created', 'influenced', and 'reinforced' by external factors. The affective component (Garrett, 2010) is the feelings, moods, emotions, and sympathetic nervous system activity. Ahn (2014) argues that this component becomes the major component to be investigated in language attitude studies as it is the strongest force to determine one's attitude. He clarifies that the feelings that individuals hold toward variety are the driving motive to respond negatively or positively. The behavioral component (Garrett, 2010) is the actual behavior or behavior intention toward the object. Despite the debate about whether or not our behavior corresponds to this predisposition, Bohner and Wänke (2002) clarify that it, at least, becomes a determining factor of actual behavior.

The studies of language attitude can be done in four ways (McKenzie, 2010), namely, (1) analysis of the societal treatment of language varieties, (2) direct measures, (3) indirect measures, and (4) a mixed methodological approach. The societal treatment approach, or the so-called content analysis approach, is typically qualitative and conducted through observation. The researcher himself makes inferences from participants' behavior or document analysis. A direct approach is more obtrusive in nature as the language attitude measurement relies on the informants accounting for their attitudes through the responses obtained from questionnaires or interviews. In indirect measure, the most used indirect technique to measure language attitude is a matched-guise technique (MGT). The technique involves respondents listening to single speaker speaking different accents and making judgments on different personality traits using a semantic-differential scale. This technique, however, is criticized mainly in the way of presenting the language leading to the development of improved variants of this technique. One well-known variant of the matched guise technique is the verbal guise technique (VGT). Instead of responding to varieties of accents spoken by a single speaker, in the VGT technique, respondents rate the different accents of spontaneous speeches from different speakers. The last method is the mixed method, in which the direct method and indirect method is both employed using a variety of technique to address the complexity of language attitudes.

Language attitude studies have been extensively done to see how NNESs of English evaluate the accents from three concentric circles of English: the inner, outer, and expanding circle, and what impacts are implied from these evaluations. Evans and Imai (2011) suggest that understanding the attitudes of NNESs toward varieties of English helps us to understand their influences on the shape of English as a global language. Research eliciting NNESs attitude to NESs accents, mainly RP and GA, showed that NESs accents were evaluated more positively and deemed as the norm to be followed, a 'standard' variety, and became their preferred accents. Zhang and Hu (2008) conducted a study of 30

Chinese students taking Master's and Doctorate programs to see their evaluation of three varieties of English accents, namely RP, GA, and Australian English, using the aspects of language-related quality, person-related quality, and potential teaching quality. By utilizing VGT questionnaire rated by 6 6-point semantic differential scale and semi-structured interview, the research demonstrated that RP and GA were evaluated positively on the aspect language- language-related quality, while Australian English was evaluated negatively. The study also found that this evaluation was not due to comprehensibility.

Rezaei, Khosravizadeh, and Mottaghi (2018) investigated the attitudes of 140 Iranian English learners toward British English, American English, Persian English, Australian English, and African-American Vernacular English. Using VGT questionnaires, the participants were asked to evaluate the accents using three constructs, namely social attractiveness, social status, and quality of language. The result shared similarities with Zhang and Hu's in which British English and American English responded more positively in all three aspects, with prestige, native-likeness, and clarity becoming their motivations for such responses. Chan (2015) investigated the attitude of 386 local Cantonese-speaking students comprising junior secondary students (n=164), senior secondary students (n=89), and university students (n=133). This investigation was carried out to see their awareness of different accents from three concentric circles (Britain, United States, Australia, Hongkong, India, the Phillippines, and China), how they perceived these accents from status and solidarity, and their preferences in various contexts. The result of the study showed that NESs' accents are perceived more positively than the outer and expanding circle accents within the aspect of status and solidarity, respectively. This implies the driving force of the perceived instrumental value of the NS accents.

A surprising revelation was made through Edwards, Zampini, and Cunninghams' (2018) investigation, which intended to see if there was a shift in the construct of native-speakerism. A total of 45 listeners from IC countries and Asia were asked to listen to and rate speech samples from 33 speakers of English from Asia and 7 speakers from IC countries using a 9-point Lickert scale. This study showed that some participants evaluated Asian speakers highly, although they recognized that the speakers were from Asia and speaking Asian English. The shift that took place in this study was the acceptance that sounding native may also include sounding Asian and sounding local.

A slight shift in NNES perception toward the NNES' accent was recorded by Huang and Hashim (2021) when investigating Chinese university students' perceptions of different English accent varieties (English as L1 and L2 accents)through interviews and students' diaries. Although unanimous favoritism toward NES's accents was found, the study captured how the participants gradually changed their attitude toward NNES varieties in the interviews due to growing language awareness. However, when it came to rating their local accent and the prospect of using it as the medium to reflect their local identity, the rating became consistently negative.

These previous studies have shed some light on how NNES perceive different English accents: the NES, NNES, and their local accents. A fairly consistent positive evaluation has been recorded when NNES rated NES accents. In the case of ratings toward NNES' accents by the NNES themselves, some changes were recorded, and NNES' local accent seems the least aspired accent. These findings are useful references to align the position of Indonesian speakers of English; how they perceive NES accents and how they see their local accents.

2.2. English in the Context of Indonesia

By referring to Kachrus's demographic classification of English users (1982), Indonesia belongs to the expanding circle. One thing which characterizes countries in this circle is the non-colonization dispersal method, and they tend to be driven by instrumental motivation (Ho, 2008). In these countries, the use of English is not initiated from the use of contact language between the colonizer and colonized, rather, it is driven by the inevitable global use of English in a lot of important sectors in the international arena. In Indonesia, English has become the most important foreign language in Indonesia due to some reasons. Lauder (2008) mentions some significant purposes that English serves in Indonesia e.g., as a

means of international communication and as a medium to access and implement new technology. Kirkpatrick (2012) highlights the importance of English in Indonesia as it is the sole official language of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The use of English as the Lingua Franca in ASEAN is even in higher demand since the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, which offered opportunities in the form of a huge market of US$ 2.6 trillion and over 622 million people (ASEAN Economic Community, 2019).

The situations illustrated above bring some implications for the teaching of English in Indonesia. In Indonesia, English is taught in Grade 7 through grade 12 and in the university. Even though the amount of time dedicated to teaching English in secondary and high schools was decreased due to the government's effort to strengthen students' internalization with Bahasa Indonesia as the national language, parents of the urban middle class invested more in additional English classes since they believe that it is the language of power and prestige (Lie, 2017). English is also used as a prerequisite to graduate from universities and to apply for jobs. This nourishes the demands for standardized tests of English such as TOEFL and IELTS. Conclusively, the majority of English language users and stakeholders in Indonesia see English as its utilitarian value.

Previous studies have provided insightful information regarding the attitude NNESs held toward different English accents. However, the kinds of attitudes from Indonesia were rarely captured. The portrait of language attitudes in Indonesia is important to complete the portrait of attitudinal studies in expanding circle countries. Therefore, the present study aimed to investigate the attitudes Indonesian university students have toward the varieties of English accents they encounter in the Indonesian context, namely RP, GA, and Indonesian accented English, and explore the motivations behind these attitudes.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

The present study was informed by the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. To comprehensively address the complexity of attitudinal studies, the employment of various techniques, direct and indirect, especially when dealing with attitude-behavior relationships, is needed (Ladegaard & Sachdev, 2006). Thus, survey and interview techniques were utilized for this study.

3.2 Participants

This study was conducted at a state university in Indonesia, anonymized as JU. It is located in Java Island, the center of the country's global financial and educational development. The university hosts over 30,000 students distributed in 15 faculties and 114 study programs. Every year, the university welcomes international students to receive higher education through degree and exchange programs. The participants of the study were 67 students at the English department in JU who voluntarily participated in this project. The students had at least spent two years of learning in the English department at the university and had intermediate to advanced college-level English. Prior to learning English in the university, the students had learnt English throughout their primary and secondary schools for at least 6 years. Of this number of participants, there were 11 male participants and 56 female participants with an average age of 20. Their encounter with other speakers of English took place when they took a field trip to Bali as the department requirement. Some had the experience of communicating with speakers of English from different countries as they served as buddies for international volunteers in the international non-profit organization AIESEC. Others also confirmed that their communication with speakers of English was through online media.

3.3. Data Collection

There are two parts of the survey used for this research. The first part collected the demographic profiles of the participants which included questions about names, genders, contact numbers, email

addresses, and their English proficiency levels which referred to the scores they got for the English Proficiency Test administered by the university upon their entrance, and the description of their intercultural communication activities. They were informed about the goal of the study. The questionnaire included the statement of their consent clarifying that their questionnaire submission means their agreement upon their participation in the research. The consent form also guarantees that their identities were kept anonymous, and the information given through this questionnaire was only intended for the research only.

The second part of the survey was conducted by verbal guise technique questionnaire to determine the attitude of Indonesian university students toward the three Englishes, namely, RP, GA, and Indonesian accented English, mainly on the aspects of speakers and speech traits. Three non-overlapping language attitude traits, namely (1) social attractiveness (pleasant vs unpleasant), (2) social status (polite vs impolite; intelligent vs unintelligent), and (3) quality of language (standard vs non-standard) and the bipolar adjectives in the attitude using seven semantic differential scales (1=very clear, 2= clear, 3= somewhat clear, 4= not sure 5= somewhat not clear, 6= not clear, 7= very unclear) were borrowed from Ladegaard and Sachdev (2006) and McKenzie (2010) for this study.

Students' attitudes were derived from the evaluation of accents using the Verbal Guise Technique (VGT). The audio tracks used for VGT were deliberately selected from The Speech Accent Archive developed by George Mason University, which was retrieved online from https://accent.gmu.edu/. The three speakers were all native speakers of their accents; the Indonesian speaker resided in Jakarta, the RP speaker resided in London, and the GA speaker resided in New York. They were all male, ranging in 25-35 in age, and the three audios had comparable voice qualities. The Indonesian speaker sample was selected because of its medium accentedness. Non-native variations in his accent were verified by the features listed in Lingua Franca Core proposed by Jenkins (2000) and could be traced through some non-standard pronunciation features such as the simplification of the consonant clusters at the end of the words, the replacement of dental fricative /θ/ with /t/, and the replacement of /ʤ/ with /d/ and the minimization of speech connectedness. All speakers read the same 69–word extract entitled *Please Call Stella* with the length of the tracks ranging from 21-25 seconds.

The participants were invited to a room equipped with an audio player and speaker to facilitate the VGT. The participants first filled out the part where the demographic information was required. Then, they listened to three audio tracks with intervals of three minutes in between to evaluate the traits in each accent. Each recording was played twice. The questionnaire was also designed with some questions to collect the demographical profile of the participants, e.g., age, gender, the length of studying English, the reason to study English, and the kinds of contact where they used English

The interview sessions were administered for the purpose of triangulation and exploration of the results obtained from the questionnaire. The format of a semi-structured interview was opted and done because it was believed that it would provide more detailed and interactive data (Weiss, 1994). The questions of the interview were derived from the results of the questionnaire regarding their attitudes. To trigger richer information, the researcher prepared some questions such as about how they viewed the accents in relation to the five categories which were set in the VGT, that is, their views about the standard, intelligence, politeness, clarity, and pleasantness of the accents. Six participants filling out the language attitude questionnaire were willing to go through interview sessions via *WhatsApp* chat. In these sessions, some guiding questions were prepared, asked, and discussed in Indonesian language to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation during the interview. The interview sessions were conducted until the reasons were clarified and no new discoveries were made.

3.4. Data Analysis

The survey results were interpreted using descriptive statistics. The values of the means and standard deviation were used to set the category of students' language attitudes. The means were interpreted to their semantic categories to determine in which traits an accent was valued higher. In addition, mean ratings are also interpreted using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the post-hoc

Tukey test. The ANOVA is run to confirm whether there is a significant difference in perception across the three groups (GA, RP, and IAE). The significant difference in perception in each trait across the groups is confirmed only if the p-value is more than 0.05 (p<0.05). The post-hoc Tukey is used to find whether a significant difference of perception on each trait is found between two groups (d=2, GA and RP, IAE and GA, IAE, and RP).

To explore the belief underlying the attitude toward the accents based on each trait, interview sessions were administered. The interview results were analyzed using the content analysis technique. In this technique of analysis, the transcribed data were carefully transcribed, reread, coded, and categorized into meaningful categories. The reasons behind the evaluation of each trait of the accents were elicited by questioning the question, 'What makes you think that it is more standard/polite/pleasant/intelligent'. Upon receiving the comments recorded, I scrutinized and coded the appearing keywords and categorized them into meaningful categories. These stages were repeatedly done until all information was successfully categorized; for example, by asking under the evaluation of the 'standard' trait of the accents, the results recorded were 'I think American and British accents work better for international communication'; 'I think I understand the native accents better'; 'When I had a conversation with other speakers of English using my accent, I think they can understand me'; 'I think my English can be understood by my own Indonesian fellows, but I am not so sure if natives can understand me'. The bipolar trend of the information concludes the category of the 'ambivalent' nature of the students in viewing the accents they chose. When new categories that did not match the themes appeared, the same process was done repeatedly until the new category was settled.

4. Results

The overall results of rating the language and person-related traits across the three accents are presented in Figure 1. In general, it is apparent that all accents are evaluated positively by the students. The trend is shown in the following chart:
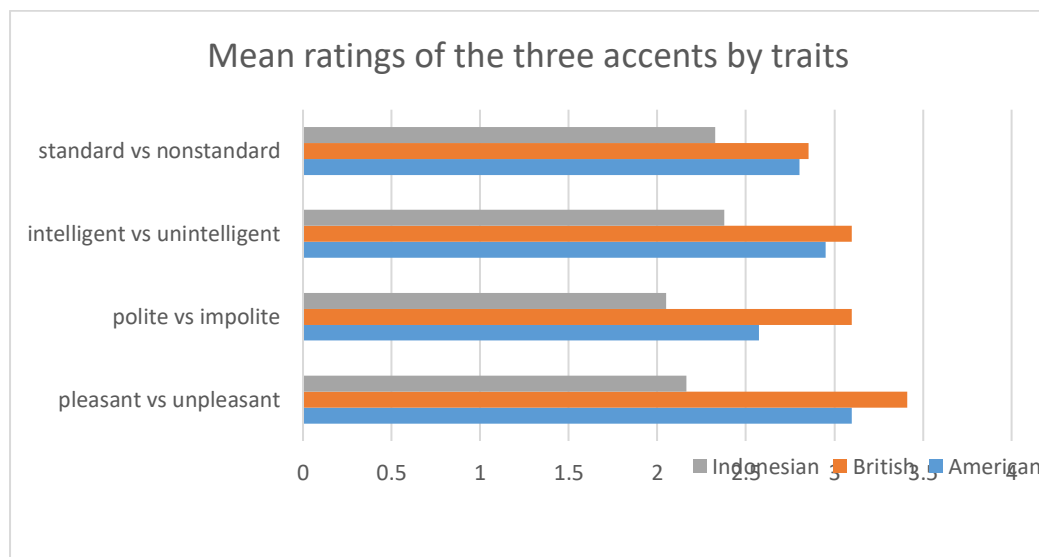

Figure 1. Mean ratings of the three accents by traits

The chart shows that Indonesian accented English has lower mean ratings in all traits which indicates a more positive evaluation compared to RP and GA. RP has lower mean ratings in 'fluency' and 'clarity' traits compared to GA, indicating a more positive evaluation in these traits. GA has lower mean ratings in 'standard', 'intelligence', 'politeness', and 'pleasantness' traits compared to RP, indicating a more positive evaluation of these traits if compared with RP.

The following table shows the mean scores of perceived traits of the three accents

Table 1. Group statistics

	IAE Mean	Std Deviation	RP Mean	Std Deviation	GA Mean	Std Deviation
Standard	2.32	1.09	2.85	1.27	2.80	1.38
Intelligent	2.37	0.85	3.09	1.28	2.95	1.14
Polite	2.04	0.90	3.09	1.30	2.57	1.25
Clear	1.98	1.13	3.13	1.51	3.47	1.62
Pleasant	2.16	0.87	3.40	1.29	3.09	1.52

To interpret and clarify the ratings, the mean values of each trait are compared across the three varieties. This is to get a clear picture of how each group is evaluated if compared with others.

4.1. Standard Trait

The 'standard' trait of accents refers to a variety of language which is used by educated speakers in speech and writing. This also entails the high status for a variety deemed 'standard'. The mean ratings in Table 1 show that the three accents are evaluated positively on this trait, with IAE rated as the highest, followed by GA and RP. The ANOVA analysis, however, does not show a significant difference in positive perception of 'standard' trait across the varieties with $p<0.04$ (the result is significant at $p<.05$, $F=3.23$, n=61). The post-hoc Tukey also shows that there is no significant difference in the positive perception between GA and RP ($p=0.89$, d=2, n=61, insignificant), GA and IAE ($p=0.09$, d=2, n=61, insignificant), RP and IAE ($p=0.05$, d=2, n=61 insignificant).

This result proves that there is no differential perception between the three accents on the 'standard' trait; all accents are evaluated positively, and no accent is significantly rated more positive than others. The result of this research, thus, show that the participants do not see only the native accents as the standard, but also their non-native accent. This result is not really in alignment with other studies reporting the beliefs on standard varieties. Kirkpatrick (2006), for example, has confirmed that education ministries all over the world impose the use of native speakers' Englishes to uphold the standard English as they are perceived as internationally intelligible. With regard to accents, RP and GA have become the implicit standard in teaching and learning English, and other accents, especially non-native ones, are barely known (Levis & Zhou, 2018) or perceived as deviant (Ahn, 2015).

What might be the cause of the shift found in this research? The interview is administered to explore participants' beliefs on standard accent and reports the following results:

P1   *No accent is 'standard' accent. To my belief, all accents are equal. They are just different.*

P2   *Whatever accent we choose to use is not the most important thing here. The most important thing about accents is whether they are understood or not.*

P3   *I do not want to underestimate Indonesian-accented English, but I think native speakers' accents are the standard accents. I think native speakers' accents can be understood by both native speakers and non-native speakers.*

P4   *No accent is a more correct or a more standard accent. All accent is acceptable. It is very natural to have different accents because speakers might come from different cultural backgrounds.*

P5   *I think American and British accents are the standard ones. Those are the ones I was taught within my classes.*

P6   *I think the Indonesian accent is the correct accent. For me, as long as one's accent is understandable, then it is a standard one. I had an experience of speaking with a speaker from Czechoslovakia, and we used our own accents. At that time, she could understand my*

> *English, and the communication went okay. From that, I can tell that the Indonesian accent is an acceptable accent.*

Two contrasting beliefs about standard English are captured in the results of the interview. One belief maintains RP and GA as the patrons of English, and any accents should adjust to the same degree of native-likeness to be considered standard. Two underlying thoughts behind this are that (1) the understandability of native speakers' accents transcends nationalities, and (2) it should be the only legitimate accents since they are the ones taught in formal education settings. Another belief, however, emerges; claiming that their own accent is standard. The thoughts behind this belief are reflected in words like 'understandable', 'different', 'acceptable', and 'equal'. It, then, becomes obvious that the belief in the understandability of an accent becomes a pivotal factor in determining participants' judgment on the standard of an accent. The majority of the interviewees think that speaking using IAE does not disrupt understandability. Thus IAE is another standard accent eligible for international communication. The understandability of non-native speakers' accents has also been proven by Kirkpatrick and Deterding (2008), who found that some non-standard pronunciation features found in ASEAN speakers enhance the intelligibility in the communication between them. The belief of IAE as a standard English accent also sources from the awareness that GA and RP are not the only legitimate accents in the world. This is driven by the realization that speakers have different lingual and multicultural backgrounds; differences are logical consequences of them and should be accepted.

4.2 Intelligent Trait

Intelligence is a person-related trait which also termed as competence and is associated with traits as 'status' or 'prestige'. The accents perceived as standard are usually deemed as having more status (Carrie, 2016), thus it is assumed that the use of perceived standard accents implies the people who are speaking it as more intelligent or competent. In this study, the mean ratings for intelligent traits show that all accents are rated positively, with IAE having the lowest mean, followed by GA and RP, respectively. The post-hoc Tukey tests show that there is no significant positive perception difference between GA and RP (p=0.72, d=2, n=61, insignificant), and there are significant positive perception differences between GA and IAE (p=0.01, d=2, n=61) and between RP and IAE (p=0.001, d=2, n=61). These results prove that IAE is significantly rated more positively in the aspect of intelligence compared to GA and RP. This result does not concur with results in many previous researches (Ahn, 2015; McKenzie, 2008) in which GA and RP accents were rated as more competent and have more status or more prestige. The results of the interview clarify the belief responsible for such an attitude:

P1   *He sounded smart for me because his speech was fluent and clear.*
P2   *His speech was clear. There is no need to associate accent with intelligence. Clarity is the most important thing here. I think somehow people are Euro-centrists; that is the reason why they think native speakers' accents sound more intelligible. The fact is that it is not true.*
P3   *I think it is due to his clarity and good intonation during the speech. His every sentence was made clear. He made his points clear, and he sounded smart.*
P4   *I like the pace when he was talking; the tempo just felt right. The falling intonation at the end of every sentence made him sound clearer.*
P5   *When an Indonesian can speak English using a native speaker's accent, I think he is more competent. The native accent is very difficult to master. If he/she can master it, I think it shows his/her intelligence.*
P6   *The speaker spoke clearly. He took pauses in places where needed so I could understand better. When he spoke, he was not rushing. He sounded confident and smart.*

Two opposing points of view on speakers' intelligence traits were captured through the results of the interview. One, but not dominating, view concurs with the previous research's view that people sounding native or native-like are more intelligent (McKenzie, 2008). In this view held by P5, mastery

over native speakers' accents is a key element to define intelligence due to its difficulty to mimic by non-native speakers. This view suggests that native-speakerism ideology has influenced and shaped some Indonesian users. Native speakerism refers to the belief that native speakers are the only relevant and correct models and English teachers (Holliday, 2015). The impact of this belief also extends to attitudes held by society where the dichotomy of native speakers as the competent and non-native speakers as the less competent prevails. P2 labels this belief as Eurocentrism.

A shift to their own accent acceptance is taking place. The study reveals that in the context of Indonesian speakers, mastery over native speakers' accents is not an important characteristic defining speakers' intelligence. The words like 'clear speech, 'calmness', 'good pace', and 'falling intonation' were dominantly used to characterize the more competent speaker. These comments highlight that being clear to the ears of the participants was prominently used to characterize speakers' intelligence; the clearer the speaker, the more intelligent he is perceived. Although being clear may not be responsible for someone's intelligence, to these non-native participants who come from an expanding circle country, clarity becomes the key aspect of promoting a positive perception of intelligence.

4.3 Polite Trait

In any community, showing a proper level of politeness in interaction is always necessary (Ofuka et al., 2000). An accent carries non-verbal cues, mainly its prosody, which helps to signal politeness. Being polite is a person-related trait which is associated with speakers' social attractiveness. McKenzie (2008) found that non-native speakers' accents are usually positively evaluated in social attractiveness traits and less positive in competence traits. The mean ratings of polite trait show that the three accents are evaluated positively, with IAE rated more positively. The post-hoc Tukey shows that there are significant differences in the positive perception between GA and RP (p=0.037, d=2, n=61, significant), GA and IAE (p=0.037, d=2, n=61, significant), RP and IAE (p=0.001, d=2, n=61 significant). This result accentuates that IAE is significantly evaluated more positive than the other two accents. The interview session tried to dig into the participants' thoughts behind this:

P1   *The last speaker keeps maintaining the falling intonation at the end of the sentences. His speech does not sound harsh.*

P2   *I think politeness is maintained through word choices, not through the accent. They all used the word please, so I think they sound polite.*

P3   *I think the last speaker sounds more polite because of the slower pace and the intonation. He just sounds more polite for me. However, I cannot really tell whether it fits the (universal) standard of politeness. What I think is more polite might not be considered polite in other cultures.*

P4   *Maybe it is because of the clarity and the right pace. He (his speech) is nice to hear.*

P5   *He speaks at a comfortable pace. I think those are what make me think that he sounds polite.*

P6   *The last speaker had a falling intonation. I am a Javanese, and Javanese people usually use this kind of intonation to signal politeness. I think it is important to be able to sound polite when I speak English.*

When characterizing what makes a speaker sound more polite than others, the participant tends to use language features such as 'speech rate' and 'falling intonation' to define it. These pronunciation features, though always appear to characterize the clarity and understandability of an accent, are, in fact, also used to characterize politeness, as is seen in P1, P3, and P5's statements. Geertz (1969) explores that politeness in Javanese is built on Javanese face work which includes *tata krama* which is good physical and language etiquette. P6 realizes that pronunciation features used in IAE are commonly used in her local language, Javanese, to project politeness. These prosodic features in IAE help her to maintain good language etiquette. This finding accentuates what Canagarajah (2006) and Jenkins (2009)

argue that maintaining a local accent is a choice learners use to express their own identity, in this case, their cultural identity.

4.4. Pleasant Trait

Pleasant trait is related to the aesthetic aspect of a language and is associated with the social attractiveness of a speaker. Jenkins (2009) found that non-native speakers judged NESs' accents more positively than NNESs' accents in social attractiveness traits through characters like beauty, neatness, perfection, and elegance. The mean results of the participants' evaluation in this study show a rather different trend; all accents receive positive evaluations, with Indonesian IAE rated more positively. The post-hoc Tukey tests show that there is no significant positive perception difference between GA and RP (p=0.358, d=2, n=61, insignificant), and there are significant positive perception differences between GA and IAE (p=0.0001, d=2, n=61) and between RP and IAE (p=0.0001, d=2, n=61). This shows that IAE is significantly rated more positively than the other two accents. The participants' comment regarding this trend is provided in the following interview results:

P1   *The last speaker's accent is nice to hear. I feel familiar with it. I can tell he is an Indonesian. I feel more relaxed listening to it.*

P2   *I think a native accent is more pleasant. It is just so cool. I cannot speak like a native just yet, but it is a challenge that I want to nail. However, if I have to speak with other non-native speakers, I think using an Indonesian accent is a way to go. It is more relaxed and fun.*

P3   *The last speaker has a slower, more comfortable rate. It makes me understand easier. I think someone's accent is pleasant when we are able to understand him/her well.*

P4   *It (the last speaker's accent) is nice to hear. It is easy to understand.*

P5   *I think native speakers' accents are more interesting. I really like the British accent that I know from movies. Although native speakers' accents are more difficult for me to understand, those accents are fancy to me, and I want to be able to imitate the accent accurately.*

P6   *The Indonesian accent is more attractive. I like it when people show their Indonesian accent when speaking English. It tells who we are and where we are from.*

Characteristics like 'comfortable pace', 'clear', 'easy to follow', and 'feeling more relaxed upon hearing to it' are found when they were asked what made one of the three accents nice, interesting, or pleasant. This shows that the positive evaluation of IAE pleasantness sources from the participants' feeling at ease when imagining interaction with other English speakers instead of perceived aesthetics of the language. The criteria of the pleasantness of the language correspond to their ability to get the communication going. From the result of the interview, the aesthetic aspects of the language are addressed to the native speakers' accents; the accents were perceived as 'fancy' and 'cool' by P2 and P5. This shows that 'prestige' becomes a strong motivation to promote the positive evaluation toward the native speakers' accents. P2 also insists on targeting the native accent as her goal despite the difficulty in imitating it. The insistence on 'mimicking' the native speakers, although it is such an unrealistic goal for the participants, indicates that some participants are still experiencing native speakers; they still believe that NESs' accents are the only right models at all costs.

5. Discussion

The findings on the accent ratings inform that all three accents were evaluated positively on all traits, with Indonesian accented English being rated significantly more positively in 'intelligent', 'polite', and 'pleasant' traits compared to RP and GA. No significant differentiation, however, was found in the 'standard' trait. These results show a shift of how NNESs' accent is perceived by Indonesian NNESs. This shift was not apparent in some investigations of NNESs' perceptions toward NESs' and NNESs' accents (see Huang and Hashim, 2019; Sa'd, 2018; Tsang, 2019). In Huang and Hashim's investigation (2019), the RP and GA were perceived as far superior to NNESs' and their own accent. In terms of

'standard' traits, the superiority of the RP and GA was reiterated. This perception was heavily influenced by the notion that 'native' means 'standard'; compromising the idea of intelligibility. Tsang (2019) also found the reiteration of RP and GA as the only standard accents when observing Chinese learners' perceptions of their teachers and their own accents. In a similar vein, Sa'd's (2018) found that Iranian students became uncertain when their native-like aspirations are compromised for intelligibility. This notion of 'becoming' or being like an NS might be sourced from the fear of negative evaluation and mockery. The shift that takes place in this study shows a different trend from these previous findings. In this study, though not significantly rated more positively than RP and GA, Indonesian accented English is also deemed as 'standard' by the participants.

Unlike the previous studies, comprehensibility seems to become the prevalent notion which drives positive evaluation toward IAE. The familiar sounds of the Indonesian speaker sample promote intelligibility for the participants. The intelligibility notion is highly appreciated by the participants; that it becomes equal for 'standard'. Intelligibility, instead of nativeness, as a measure of a proficient English speakers is not a new notion. Some participants in the interview accentuate the importance of comprehensibility for successful English communication, and one participant testifies that her local accent functions as well when communicating with other NNESs. This shows positive perception and acceptance of NNESs varieties might develop from exposure to varieties of English through intercultural communication. This corroborates to what Wang and Jenkins (2016) find that "....linguistic experience in intercultural communication helps to demythologize the exclusive link between nativeness and intelligibility."

The absence of significant differentiation of the positive evaluation toward IAE compared to RP and GA, however, reflects potential uncertainty. The results of the interview show that there is support for 'nativeness' as the requirement for a standard accent. This positive perception goes to the extent that RP and GA accents are deemed intelligible in all types of intercultural communications (interactions with NESs and with other NNESs), though it has been proven that it is not always the case. Witteman, Weber, and McQueen (2011), for example, have proven that not all foreign-accented English halts comprehension, and acoustic similarity and perceived accentedness are not reliable predictors of processing difficulties. That nativeness equals standard might be sourced from the English education policy in Indonesia, that is heavily exonormative (Kirkpatrick, 2014). For a very long time, RP and GA have been used as sole models in secondary education, and their exposure has become very extensive. This is confirmed by one of the participants' answers in the interview; RP and GA were the only ones taught and exposed in class, hence they are the true ones.

The trends of Indonesian university students' perception of the 'intelligent', 'pleasant', and 'polite' traits are fairly similar; they hold a significantly more positive evaluation over RP and GA. Qualities like 'clarity', comprehensibility', and 'good intonation' characterizes the positive evaluation. These perceptions might be sourced from their familiarity toward their own accent. These positive perceptions were in alignment with Dai and Roever's (2019) results. When adult Chinese test takers rated Mandarin English as the most comprehensible compared to Spanish, Vietnamese, and Australian English, it was not really surprising. This was because the test takers were familiar with the segmental and supra-segmental features of their L1 accent. Though some favoritism toward RP and GA were recorded in the 'intelligent' and 'pleasant' trait, most interviewees agree that they benefited from shared L1 features, thus enhancing positive perception.

6. Conclusion and Implication

As English has become a global lingua franca, English no longer solely belongs to native speakers; it is the property of those using it (Widdowson, 1994). With the extensive use of English between non-native speakers in intercultural interactions, the inclusivity of non-native speakers as legitimate speakers should be promoted. To an extent, there is a positive shift toward inclusivity, as reflected in Indonesian

participants' views of different English accents. This study found an overall more positive evaluation toward Indonesian accented English compared to RP and GA in the aspect of 'standard', 'intelligence', 'polite', and 'pleasant'. More participants perceived IAE as standard English in terms that it is a correct and acceptable accent. Many believe that it is correct and acceptable due to the intelligibility of the accent. In the aspects of intelligence and pleasantness, clarity becomes a central aspect characterizing them. More participants are becoming aware that the aesthetics of the language offer less help for them; that it is the clarity helping them to maintain and reciprocate in intercultural interactions. In the aspect of politeness, IAE is rated more positively as the prosodic features in Indonesian accentedness help to create a more polite sound. Although the shift is taking place, supporting views on native speakerism remain prevalent. Some participants are indicated to have language schizophrenia. Language schizophrenia is when people strongly support exonormativism but are endonormative in practice (Kachru, 1983). In this study, some participants insist on keeping NESs' accents as their goals but admit at the same time that these goals are not realistic for them.

It is now obvious that despite the positive shift that is taking place, the disparity in the venture for NNESs' inclusivity as legitimate accents is still there. This is due to the strong exonormativism, which is consistently renounced in ELT in Indonesia. To promote awareness that Indonesian accents are legitimate, and so are its users, there should be a change in the ways students are taught in classrooms. Teachers need to actively use audio sources of varieties of accents in classrooms to make students realize the co-existence of non-native accent varieties for international communication; that is, they are not just in existence but also used. A change for assessment in the classroom should also be encouraged. Teachers should not conflict the local accents students develop with NESs' model. Teachers must be open that the evaluation of student speech should be based on mutual intelligibility instead of native speakers' norms.

7. Limitations

This study encapsulates the overview of Indonesian students' perception toward NNESs' accents and NES's accent (IAE). Nonetheless, the sample size and the focus toward one university only in Indonesia might limit the generalizability of this profile. A more extensive and deeper understanding of Indonesian learners' perceptions could have been represented when participants from wider Indonesian geography could be accommodated. In addition, though accent varieties exposures of Indonesian university students through intercultural communication became an influential factor affecting the positive evaluations toward NNES' accent, specific attention to who they speak with in these intercultural communications and the level of the exposures were not really addressed. Hence, these limitations leave a void for future researchers who are interested in understanding and capturing the profile of Indonesian English users in relation to their perceptions of English accent varieties.

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