



Vietnamese EFL/ESL Learners' Attitudes towards British English versus American English Accents

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Abstract

This paper explored the attitudes of Vietnamese learners of English as a second/ foreign language (ESL/EFL) towards American English (AmE) accent versus British English (BrE) accent. Responses to a survey were collected from 70 ESL/EFL learners in Vietnam who were asked to rate Five-point-Likert-scale statements to explore their beliefs and attitudes about the two accents. The statements in the survey were classified into three dimensions Cognitive, Affective, and Conative. Results showed that Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners believed that BrE accent was an accent of higher social statuses while AmE accent was of more solidarity in terms of cognitive dimension. Regarding the affective dimension, those Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners had much more positive sentiments for AmE accent than BrE. Similarly, in the conative dimension, a higher percentage of those ESL/EFL learners preferring AmE accent as the target model accent for them to follow and practice when speaking English than BrE. Overall, despite the fact that the BrE variety is somehow biased than AmE by the language policy in Vietnam, AmE accent seems to be more preferred by Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners.

Keywords: AmE accent, BrE accent, language attitudes, motivation, EFL/ESL

1. Introduction

Language carries social values, and based on the speaker's language, one can identify the speaker's social background information at some extent. People usually make judgements on a "speaker's appearance, personality, social status and character, among other things" based on the "speaker's accent, speech patterns, vocabulary, and intonation" (Melander, 2003, p. 2). "The study of language attitudes seeks to document these judgements, explain the cognitive and affective processes that underlie them, and understand their communicative and other social consequences" (Dragojevic, 2017, p. 2). Recently, language attitudes have attracted attention from researchers in the fields of sociolinguistics and second and foreign language teaching. Students' language attitudes are one of the factors motivating second or foreign language learners to learn the target language and vice versa. Todor and Degi (2016) stated, if students have positive attitudes towards the target language and the speakers of that language, the attitudes "can lead to increased motivation, which then results in better learning achievement" (p. 123). In another study, Getie (2020) also students' positive attitude to the native speakers of the target language had a positive impact of their attitude of learning the language.

English is the most popular foreign language in Vietnam. It is a compulsory subject to students within public schools of all levels of education in Vietnam, except kindergarten. Recently, standard British English (BrE) with its set of pronunciations called Received Pronunciation (RP) and standard American English (AmE) with the General American (GA) pronunciation, are the most popular varieties learnt

among others. There have been a number of studies about the students' attitudes towards other English varieties other than British and American English, such as World Englishes (see Tran and More, 2015). However, there has been little on the attitudes towards these two English variables among second or foreign language learners. This research aims to investigate this issue with the hope to contribute more understanding about this linguistic issue in Vietnam and help English as a second language (ESL)/ English as a foreign language (EFL) learners and teachers enhance their learning and teaching of English.

2. Literature review

Since early 1960s, language attitudes have been paid more attention by sociolinguists and linguists to explore how language functions as "a carrier of social meaning" (Carrie, 2016, p. 2). The term *language attitudes* refer to the feelings or opinions about an individual based on their language. Obiols (2002) defines attitude as a "mental disposition towards something", and Rayan et al. (1982, p. 7) defines language attitudes as "any affective, cognitive or behavioural index of evaluative reactions toward different language varieties or speakers" (cited in Melander, 2003, p. 2). On the other hand, Dragojevic (2017) defines language attitudes as "evaluative reactions to different language varieties" (pp. 1-2). They reflect "two sequential cognitive processes: social categorization and stereotyping." The term language variety in his definition can be understood as "any form of language", such as a particular accent, dialect, language, or any other linguistic form one wishes to consider as a specific entity for some purpose" (pp. 1-2). According (Dragojevic, 2017), language attitudes are categorized into "two evaluative dimensions status (e.g., intelligent, educated) and solidarity (e.g., friendly, pleasant)" (p. 1). Moreover, "people automatically and often unconsciously" make judgements about other people regarding "their supposed intelligence and friendliness and, in some cases, even their guilt and criminality" by simply listening to their speech (pp. 1-2).

As per Dragojevic's (2017) definition, language attitudes consist of three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. They reflect one's beliefs, feelings, and behavioral predispositions, respectively, about the varieties. Therefore, "[t]he working definition of 'language attitude' here, then, is one's evaluation of and disposition towards a speech variety and its speakers, consisting of thoughts, feelings and behavioural tendencies" (Carrie, 2016, p. 4). An individual's attitude toward a language or a language variety "may consist of any one or more of these components, each of which may vary in its salience at any given moment" (Carrie, 2016, pp. 2-3).

English as a lingua franca is mostly widely spoken around the world, and there are different varieties of English emerging and being used worldwide as a result of language contact between speakers of different languages and cultures (Zhang 2019). Sociolinguists are interested in attitudes of first language speakers as well as second-language speakers of English towards other speech varieties towards. Of the varieties, "Received Pronunciation ... and General American ... have received the most attention, overall" (Carrie, 2016, p. 2). In terms of methodology, the 'matched guise' has been employed by many researchers to find the attitudes towards different accents. The pioneers of this method are Lambert (1960) and his colleagues (see Hiraga, 2005; Melander, 2003). In their research, they examined reactions of English and French speaking Canadians in Montreal towards English and French, which were spoken by four bilinguals. The fact that only one person spoke both the languages was unknown to the judges. Recently, this method has served as a model and been employed by a large number of researchers. Nonetheless, "criticism of the matched-guise technique which constituted the basic technique of those experiments grew more serious because of its unnaturalness and, consequently, language attitude studies based on this technique became increasingly less important" (Hiraga, 2005, p. 289).

In regard to the attitudes of native speakers of English towards varieties of English, Carrie (2016, p. 4) contends that investigations into this type of attitude show that:

Accents perceived to be closer to the so-called 'standard' tend to be rated more positively for competence (also termed 'status' or 'prestige'). Conversely, so-called 'non-standard' accents tend to be rated more positively for social attractiveness (also termed 'solidarity'). Speakers of standard

accents have been perceived to be more intelligent, more confident, higher achievers and to have jobs with higher status, whilst speakers of non-standard accents have been thought to be more honest, reliable, trustworthy, likeable, friendly and to have a greater sense of humour.

Moreover, while it has been long believed by American people that the British accent sound more intelligent, polite, and kinder than American accent. In contrast, as cited in Hiraga (2005, p. 289), Giles's (1970) research found that "British people rate British regional varieties spoken in industrial conurbations such as Birmingham and Manchester much lower than American English in terms both of 'pleasantness' and 'prestige.'" In addition, Lambert's et al. (1960) study with the matched-guise technique showed that English was rated as being in higher standard than French. These findings show that attitudes towards a language or variety vary depending on situations and people's backgrounds.

Regarding ESL speakers' attitudes towards English and its varieties, there have also been research about ESL learners' attitudes towards the two trending varieties of English, BrE and AmE. Cheng's (2013) survey, using questionnaires, on 21 young educated Hong Kong people about their attitudes towards BrE and AmE through three dimensions: affective, linguistic and pragmatic shows that "there may have been a change of young educated Hong Kong people's attitudes" towards these two varieties, from BrE to AmE (p. 1). In another investigation into the attitudes of 71 university students in Spain towards these speech varieties, Carrie (2016) utilized the verbal guise technique, questionnaire, and interview to measure cognitive, affective and conative responses. The results show that Spanish students regarded RP of higher status and prestige, and GR of greater solidarity and stronger affiliative feelings. The Saundz research team remark that "[a]ttitudes and preferences towards RP and GA vary depending on students' familiarity and contact with either of the variety in question" (2015, p. 8).

In Vietnam, English is a compulsory foreign language in most public schools of all levels. Most of the teaching and learning materials in public schools are chosen or created based on the standard of British English, the United Kingdom's Received Pronunciation. It becomes the convention that when teaching, teachers have to use the transcription of British English to teach. It is logical to expect that ESL/EFL Vietnamese speakers have the more positive attitudes towards RP accent than others.' However, "[b]ecause language attitudes are learned, they are inherently prone to change" (Dragojevic, 2017, p. 14). In the time of global integration and modern technology, students, besides the school-based materials, also have access to other learning materials entertainment form related to AmE. Additionally, more and more students go to America to study recently. It is supposed that Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners have changes their attitudes towards these two popular English varieties in Vietnamese currently. Studies of language attitudes towards the two varieties have certain benefits in improving the teaching and learning of English in Vietnam in terms of learning motivation, teaching the accent of preference, and teaching and learning pronunciation. In a recent research, Phan (2020) studied on 53 university Vietnamese students' attitudes towards the two accents and discovered through a questionnaire with a verbal guise technique. She discovered that the AmE accent was given more reference than the BrE. AmE accent was given "greater recognition and evaluations" and believed to be "associated with prestige, familiarity and social attractiveness" (p. 97). This study aims to study on a broader and larger target study participants regarding their beliefs and attitudes towards the two accents through three dimensions: cognition, affection, and conation to see if how the trend is. This research aimed to seek information about (1) which variety of BrE and AmE accents Vietnamese ESL learners have more positive attitudes towards and (2) which factors have positive correlation with the learners' attitudes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research instrument

As discussed before, the matched-guise technique is not referable because in this case it is unnatural. As Hiraga (2005, p. 291) stated, when using the matched-guise technique, attitudes toward the *reader's*

pronunciation of the passage but not *speaker's* natural speech is measured. Besides, this research is not to seek judgements about a particular BrE or AmE stimuli, but BrE and AmE speakers in general. Moreover, due to the constraint of time and audio resources, the research was carried out based mainly on questionnaires which were delivered to Vietnamese ESL/EFL students either by email or via a survey web link for their attitudes towards the two English varieties. Informants would have a typical BrE speaker and a typical AmE speaker in their mind when filling in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire had two parts. In part I, participants were asked to answer questions regarding their age, sex and language background. Part II of the questionnaire asked informants to rate their beliefs and attitudes about the two accents based on five-point scales. In part II, the statements were classified into three dimensions Cognitive, Affective, and Conative exploring what Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners think of the speakers American English versus British English, how they feel about American accent versus British accent and the speakers of them, and if they speak or attempt to speak like American accent or British accent. The items or statements used in the questionnaire were adopted from Cheng's (2013) and Carrie's (2016) as well as from my own design.

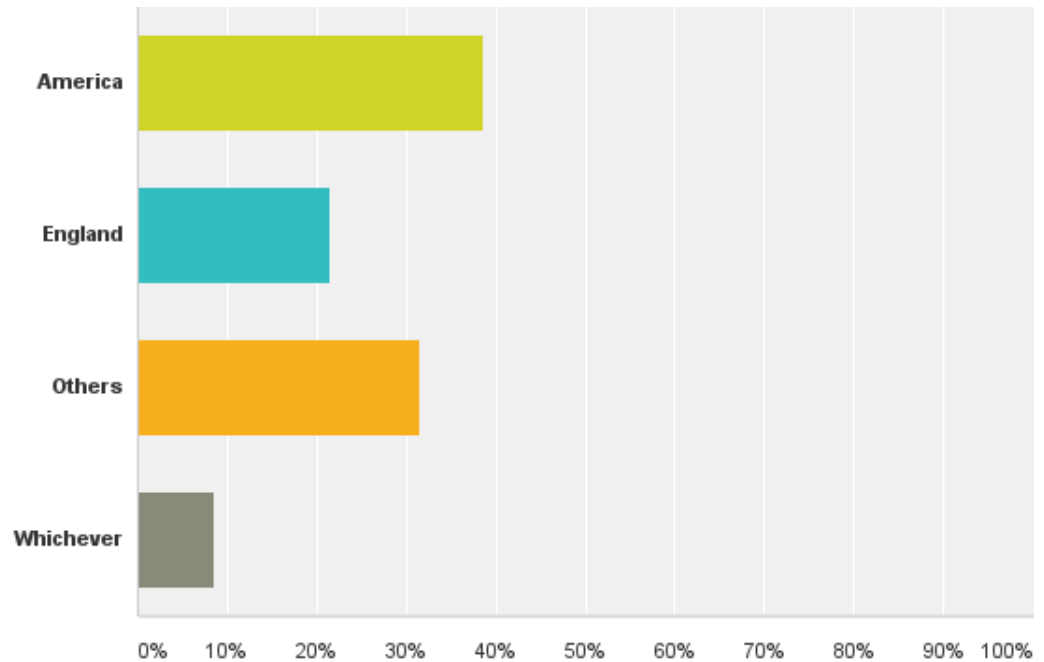
3.2. Participants

There were 70 ESL/EFL learners throughout Vietnam participated in the questions with 13 males and 57 females. The minimum age was 17 and the maximum was 40, with an average age of 23. Most of the informants were undergraduate students who accounted for 71%. The second largest group were graduate students with 18.6%, and the rest were high school students (7.1%) and postgraduate students (2.9%).

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Participants' characteristics

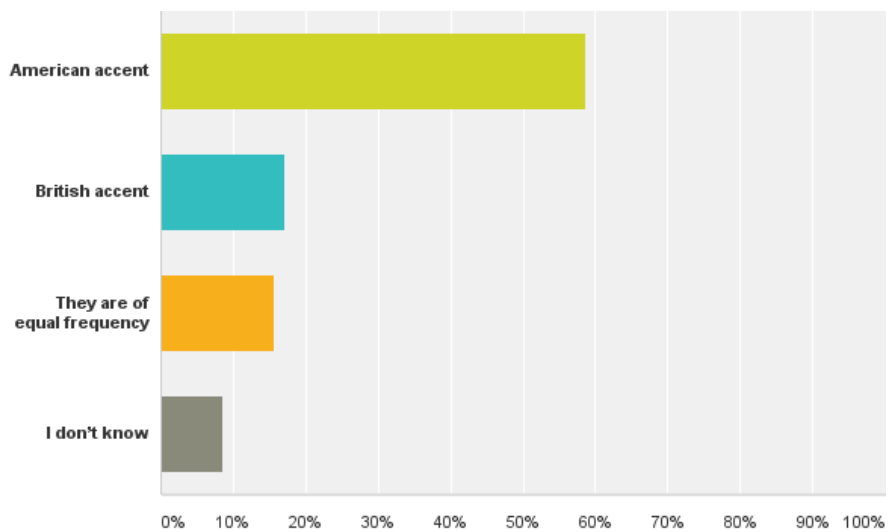
Of the 70 participants, 11 have ever studied abroad in English speaking countries, with 2 studying in America, and 2 in the United Kingdom. Most of them (67.14%) studied English to serve their career purpose, 24.29% of them studied English for their overseas study, and the rest studied English because it is either a compulsory subject or just for fun. The majority of them (38.57%) desired to study in America, and smaller percentage of 21.43% wanted to do it in England, and the rest of them intended to study in countries other than the two countries America and England as can be seen from the chart below.



Graph 1: Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners' intended places of overseas study

Regarding how they had learnt speaking and pronunciation, the biggest proportion of them learnt from more than one sources listed: from school, English centers, and media means. The percentage of those who learnt from only one of the sources ranged from about 12% to 27%.

Graph 2 below gives information about students' responses to the questions about the level of frequent access to AmE accent vs BrE accent. It is interesting to find that although British English is chosen to be taught in most of Vietnamese public schools, approximately 60% of them claimed that American English accent was of their more frequent exposure. Whereas, only 17.14% had more daily access to British English accent. The rest of them either had equal frequent exposure to the two accents or they were not aware of that. These figures can be explained by the fact discussed above that besides learning materials provided by schools, ESL/EFL learners also had access to others from language centers and means of medias.



Graph 2: Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners' frequent access to AmE accent vs BrE accent

More detailed analysis of data also showed that those who choose England to do their overseas study still have more frequent access to American accent than British accent.

4. 2 Attitudes towards American accents versus British accent

4. 2. 1 Cognitive dimension

4. 2. 1. 1 Attitudes towards American accent

As can be seen from the table 1, American accent, overall, received more positive evaluations from Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners. Positive cognitive traits as warm, friendly, self-confident, helpful, kind, and smart were rated with high percentage of agreement (from 52.90% to 80%) and the mean score of evaluations on all positive cognitive traits was 3.52 with an average of 51% of agreement. Most significantly, to most of the correspondents, American accent was warm and friendly with 80% rating. At the same time, negative traits like cold, arrogant, rural and lazy were rated with low percentage of agreement the mean score of evaluation on all negative cognitive traits 3.52 and with an average of 30.70% of agreement. The percentage of neutral thinking about the positive traits was 36.4%, and negative traits 33%.

Table1. The overall mean scores and percentage of agreement with the 20 statements on AmE accent

Statements	Mean score	Neutral	%	Agree+ Strongly Agree	%
Positive cognitive traits					
American accent sounds warm and friendly.	4.13	9	12.90%	56	80%
American accent sounds humorous.	3.8	19	27.10%	46	65.70%
American accent sounds self-confident	3.77	18	25.70%	45	64.30%
American accent sounds helpful.	3.77	23	32.90%	42	60%
American accent sounds kind.	3.66	25	35.70%	39	55.70%
American accent sounds smart.	3.46	24	34.30%	37	52.90%
Speakers of American accent sound like successful people.	3.43	26	37.10%	33	47.10%
American accent sounds formal and standard.	3.27	23	32.90%	32	46%
American accent sounds trustworthy.	3.49	35	50%	31	44.30%
American accent sounds gentle.	3.4	28	40%	31	44.30%
American accent sounds highly educated.	3.34	28	40%	30	42.90%
American accent sounds wealthy.	3.27	28	40%	28	40%
American accent sounds prestigious.	3.34	38	54.30%	25	35.70%
American accent sounds dependable.	3.19	33	47.10%	25	35.70%
Mean evaluation on positive cognitive traits	3.52	25.5	36.4%	35.7	51%
Non-positive cognitive traits					
American accent sounds casual.	3.39	21	30%	34	48.60%
American accent sounds not serious.	3.29	26	37.10%	28	40%
American accent sounds cold.	2.81	22	31.40%	19	27.10%
American accent sounds arrogant.	2.69	22	31.40%	18	25.70%
American accent sounds rural.	2.76	30	42.90%	15	21.40%

American accent sounds lazy.	2.63	17	24.30%	15	21.40%
Mean evaluation on non-positive cognitive traits	2.93	23	33%	21.5	30.70%

In terms of social status and solidarity, data from table 1 suggest that AmE accent received higher ratings on the solidarity than on social status. To Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners, speakers of AmE sounds warm, friendly, humorous, self-confident, helpful, and kind, with rating ranging from 55.70% to 80% of agreement. Whereas, this accent is not thought to be of very high social statuses by these informants, and the average percentages of agreement range from 2.930% to 52.90%.

4. 2. 1. 2 Attitudes towards British accent

EFL/ESL Vietnamese learners also have more positive attitudes than negative attitudes towards British accent. Mean evaluations on all positive cognitive traits is 3.53 and the average percentage of agreement on the positive traits is 48.30%. Meanwhile, the mean evaluations on all non-positive cognitive traits is 2.88 with the average percentage of agreement of 26.67%. The percentage of people who felt neutral about BrE accent accounts of approximately one third of the informant number. Of all the cognitive traits, the highest percentage of agreement of 68.6% is given to the statement that *British accent sounds formal and standard*. The lowest percentage of agreement of 26.67% is on the statement that *British accent sounds lazy* as seen in the table below.

Table 2. The overall mean scores and percentage of agreement with the 20 statements on BrE accent

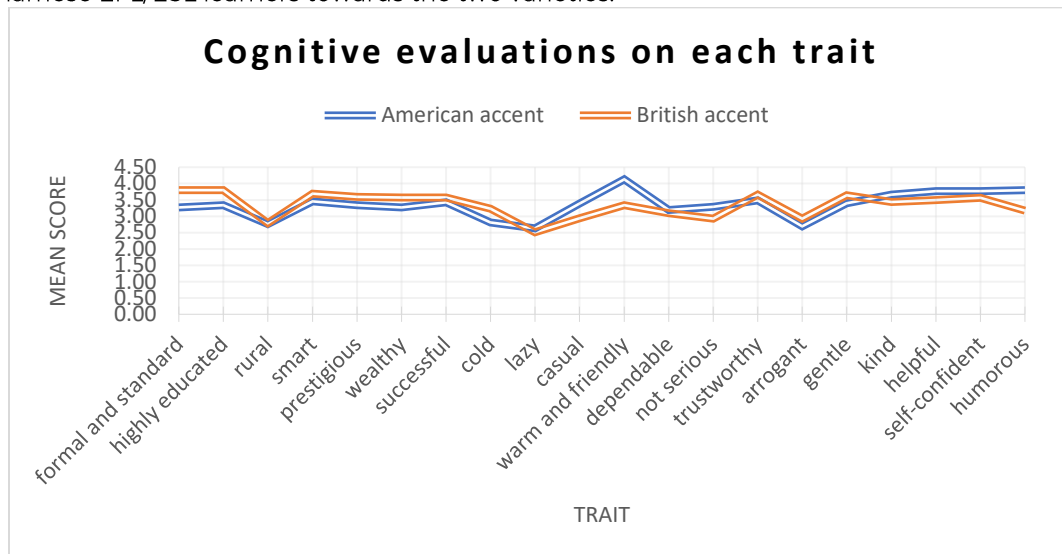
Statements	Mean score	Neutral	%	Agree+ Strongly Agree	%
Positive cognitive traits					
British accent sounds formal and standard.	3.8	15	21.4%	48	68.6%
British accent sounds highly educated.	3.8	19	27.1%	46	65.7%
British accent sounds smart.	3.69	19	27.1%	45	64.3%
British accent sounds gentle.	3.64	20	28.6%	43	61.4%
British accent sounds wealthy.	3.57	20	28.6%	42	60%
British accent sounds prestigious.	3.59	24	34.3%	40	57.1%
British accent sounds trustworthy.	3.66	25	35.7%	40	57.1%
Speakers of British accent sound like successful people.	3.57	22	31.4%	39	55.7%
British accent sounds self-confident	3.56	26	37.1%	36	51.4%
British accent sounds kind.	3.44	31	44.3%	32	45.7%
British accent sounds helpful.	3.5	34	48.6%	30	42.9%
British accent sounds warm and friendly.	3.34	34	48.6%	27	38.6%
British accent sounds humorous.	3.17	26	37.1%	26	37.1%
British accent sounds dependable.	3.09	33	47.1%	21	30%
Mean evaluations on all positive cognitive traits	3.53	24.9	35.50%	36.9	48.30%
Non-positive cognitive traits					
British accent sounds cold.	3.23	21	0.30%	29	41.4%
British accent sounds arrogant.	2.93	24	34.3%	23	32.9%
British accent sounds casual.	2.94	27	38.6%	18	25.7%
British accent sounds not serious.	2.93	26	37.1%	18	25.7%
British accent sounds rural.	2.79	35	50%	13	18.6%
British accent sounds lazy.	2.51	18	25.7%	11	15.7%

Mean evaluations on all non-positive cognitive traits**2.88****25.2****31.00%****18.7****26.67%**

Regarding social status and solidarity, in contrast, British accent is given higher percentage of agreement on high social status and lower percentage on solidarity. Table 2 shows that such positive traits as formal and standard, highly educated, smart, wealthy, prestigious, and successful get high percentage of agreement of from 68.6% (highest) to 55.7% (lowest) while solidarity traits like kind, helpful, warm and friendly, as well as humorous receive very low percentage of agreement (always lower than 50%).

4. 2. 1. 3 Overall cognitive attitudes towards the two accents

For overall comparison of the cognitive evaluations on the two accents, it can be seen, from discussion above, that the American accent and British accent receive different cognitive evaluations regarding the two dimensions: social status and solidarity. The following graph gives more details about the difference in Vietnamese EFL/ESL learners towards the two varieties.



Graph 3: Mean evaluations on cognitive traits of both American accent and British accent

Compared with AmE accent, British accent is believed to be more of higher social status and lower solidarity. Specifically, to Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners, British accent is more formal, standard, highly educated, prestigious, wealthy, successful, and smarter than American accent. It is also considered to be colder than American accent. On the other hand, American accent is thought to be more friendly, humorous, helpful, dependable, kinder, and warmer to listeners than British English. However, the general cognitive attitudes of Vietnamese EFL/ESL learners toward AmE accent and BrE accent follow the same pattern, and both of the two accents receive more positive attitudes than negative ones.

4. 2. 2 Affective dimension

4. 2. 2. 1 Attitudes towards American accent

Vietnamese ESL/FL learners' affective attitudes towards AmE is more positive than the cognitive attitudes. Table 3 shows that a great majority of Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners (75.7%) agreed that they like American accent, and a slightly lower percentage (70%) agreed that speakers of this accent are

likeable to them. Of the 70 informants, 37 people (comprising 52.90%) they agreed that they prefer listening to American accent to British accent.

At the same time, just a small percentage of the participants found it irritating and boring when listening to AmE accent. Overall, the mean score of evaluations on positive effective sentiments is 3.76 and the mean percentage of agreement is 62.88%. Just a small percentage of them showed negative effective attitudes to AmE accent, with a mean score of evaluations on non-positive effective sentiments of 2.32 and a mean percentage of agreement of 13.60%.

Table 3. The overall mean scores and percentage of agreement with the 6 statements on AmE accent

Statements	Mean score	Neutral	%	Agree+ Strongly Agree	%
Positive effective sentiments					
I like American accent.	3.96	12	17%	53	75.70%
Speakers of American accent are likeable.	3.87	18	25.70%	49	70%
American accent is inspiring.	3.57	26	37.10%	37	52.90%
I prefer listening to American accent to British.	3.63	25	35.70%	37	52.90%
Mean evaluations on positive effective sentiments	3.76	20.25	29%	44	62.88%
Non-positive effective sentiments					
I feel irritated when listening to an American accent.	2.53	24	34.30%	13	18.60%
American accent is boring.	2.11	11	15.70%	6	8.60%
Mean evaluations on non-positive effective sentiments	2.32	17.5	25.00%	9.5	13.60%

4. 2. 2. 2 Attitudes towards British accent

In contrast to the case of American accent, British accent receives less positive affective attitudes than positive cognitive attitudes' affective attitudes from Vietnamese ESL/FL learners. As can be seen from table 4, the mean score of evaluation on positive affective sentiments is 3.44 compared to 3.53, and the mean percentage of agreement to statements on positive affective sentiments is lower than that of the cognitive evaluations, just 46.80% compared to 48.30%. Specifically, except for item number 1 in table 4 with a rather high percentage of agreement 68.60%, other items on positive affective sentiments receive percentage of agreement lower than 50%: from 35.7% to 42.9%. However, although these participants did not have high positive attitudes towards BrE, they still do not have much negative attitudes to this variety. The mean score of evaluations on non-positive effective sentiments is 2.48, and the mean percentage of agreement is 12.85%.

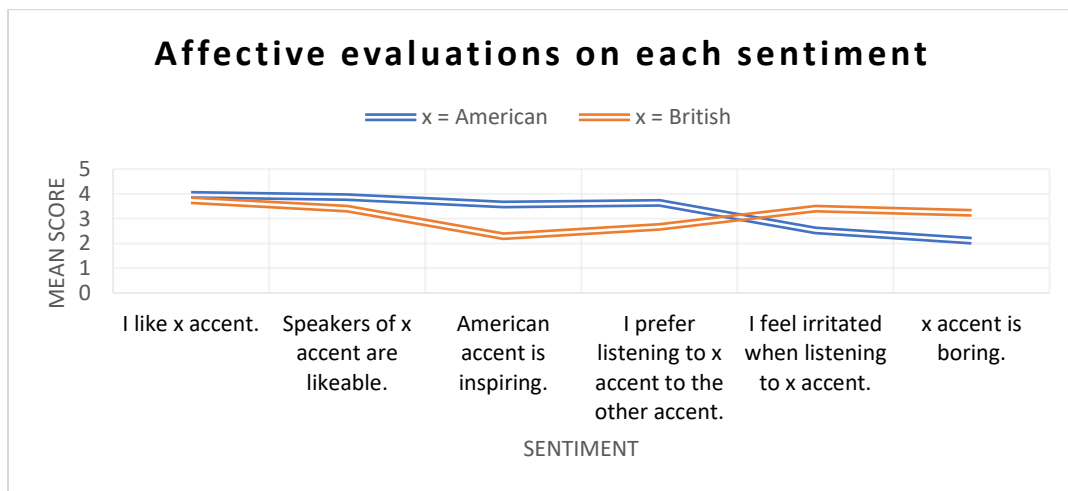
Table 4: The overall mean scores and percentage of agreement with the 6 statements on BrE accent

Statements	Mean score	Neutral	%	Agree+ Strongly Agree	%
Positive effective sentiments					
I like British accent.	3.74	20	28.60%	48	68.60%
Speakers of British accent are likeable.	3.4	34	48.60%	30	42.9
British accent is inspiring.	3.4	36	51.40%	28	40%
I prefer listening to British accent to American accent.	3.23	27	38.60%	25	35.70%
Mean evaluations on positive effective sentiments	3.44	29.25	41.80%	32.75	46.80%

Statements	Mean score	Neutral	%	Agree+ Strongly Agree	%
Non-positive effective sentiments					
I feel irritated when listening to a British accent.	2.67	31	44.30%	12	17.10%
British accent is boring.	2.29	19	27.10%	6	8.60%
Mean evaluations on non-positive effective sentiments	2.48	25	35.70%	9	12.85%

4. 2. 2. 3 Overall affective attitudes towards the two accents

To compare the two affective attitudes towards the two accents, graph 4 was designed. To be able to combine the two set of data into one graph, the items of this part were slightly modified in that either the name American or British was replaced by the letter x. This way, the means of two different accents can be displaced on the same scale for easier comparison.

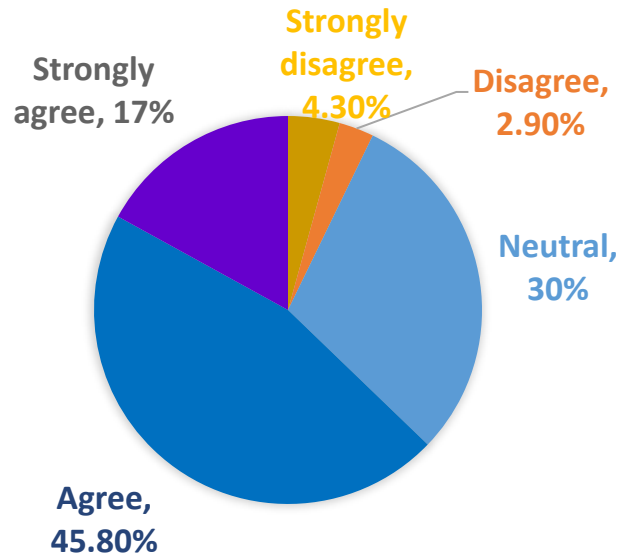


Graph 4: Mean evaluations on affective sentiments of both American accent and British accent

As can be seen from graph 4, there is a rather big gap between the mean score of the effective evaluations towards the two accents. In fact, Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners had more positive affective attitudes towards AmE accent than BrE accent. In response to statements with positive sentiments, Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners always had a higher level of reference towards American accent than British accent. Especially, the gap between the mean scores is even bigger at the responses to the statements about the inspiration they had from the two accents and their reference of them. Data show that ESL/EFL learners preferred listening to AmE accent to listening to BrE accent and found it much more inspiring with American accent. Moreover, American accent also received less negative attitudes than British accent did, which is consistent with the more positive effective evaluations it receives.

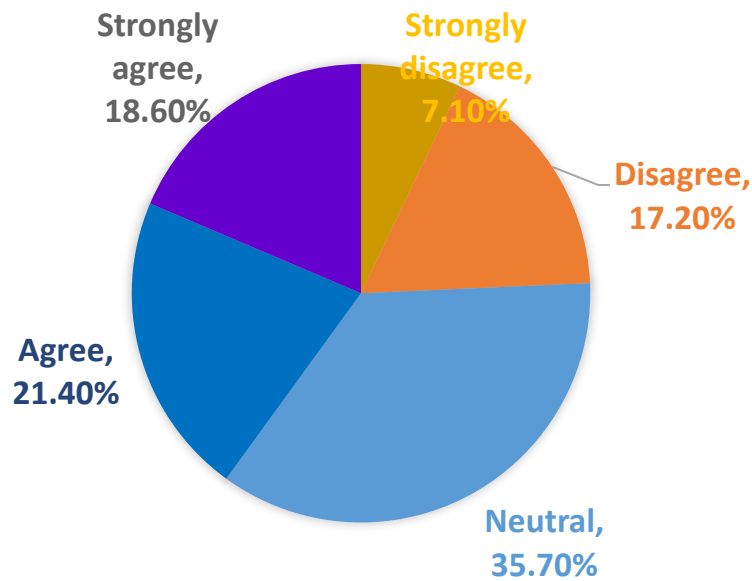
4. 2. 3 Conative dimension

In regard of their behavioral responses to AmE accent and BrE accent, 62.80% of Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners agreed that when they speak English, they speak or attempt to speak like American accent, and only a small percentage of the participants (7.2%) showed their disagreement with this statement as can be seen in graph 5.



Graph 5: Conative responses to American accent

At the same time, graph 6 shows that BrE accent received less positive conative attitudes than AmE accent. Only 40% of the informants agreed with the statement, and 24.30% disagreed with this statement.



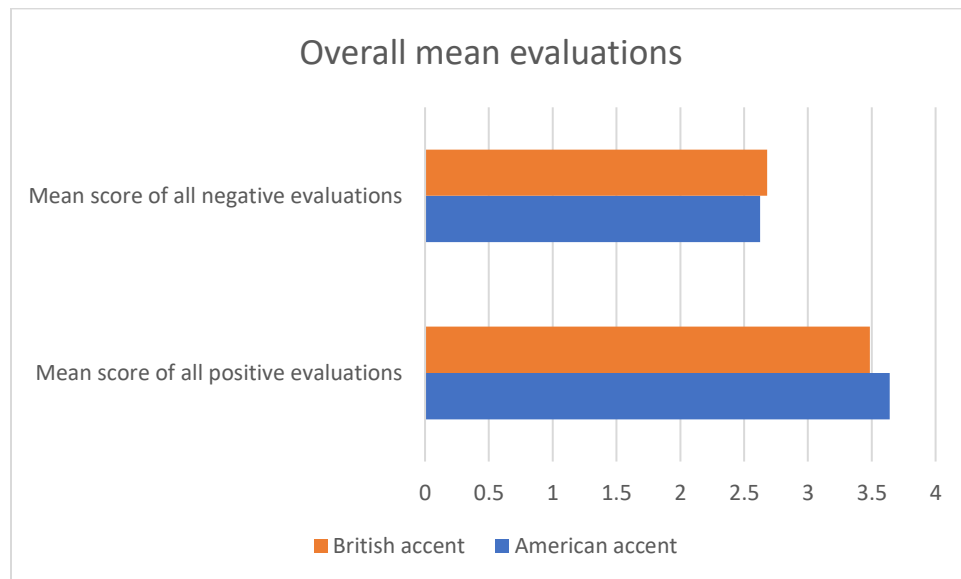
Graph 6: Conative responses to British accent

Overall, Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners had more positive conative attitudes towards AmE accent than BrE accent. This finding is consistent with the two cognitive and affective evaluations' results. It suggests that there is a strong connection between their perception and feeling with their behavior towards the target accent.

4. 2. 4 Overall attitudes

Graph 6 provides the mean score of overall evaluations of Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners have towards AmE accent and BrE accent. In general, Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners have more positive attitudes and less negative attitudes towards American accent than British accent.

The fact that the results of this study showed that Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners showed an overall tendency of preferring AmE accent than BrE is in accordance with Phan's (2020) study results. However, while Phan's (2020) study revealed that the students perceived AmE is more related to prestige, this study, in contrast, found that BrE was believed of more associated with higher social statuses and AmE more of solidarity. These differences once again suggested that attitudes towards a language or a language variety may be influenced by situations and people's backgrounds.



Graph 6: Overall mean score of all evaluations on American accent vs British accent

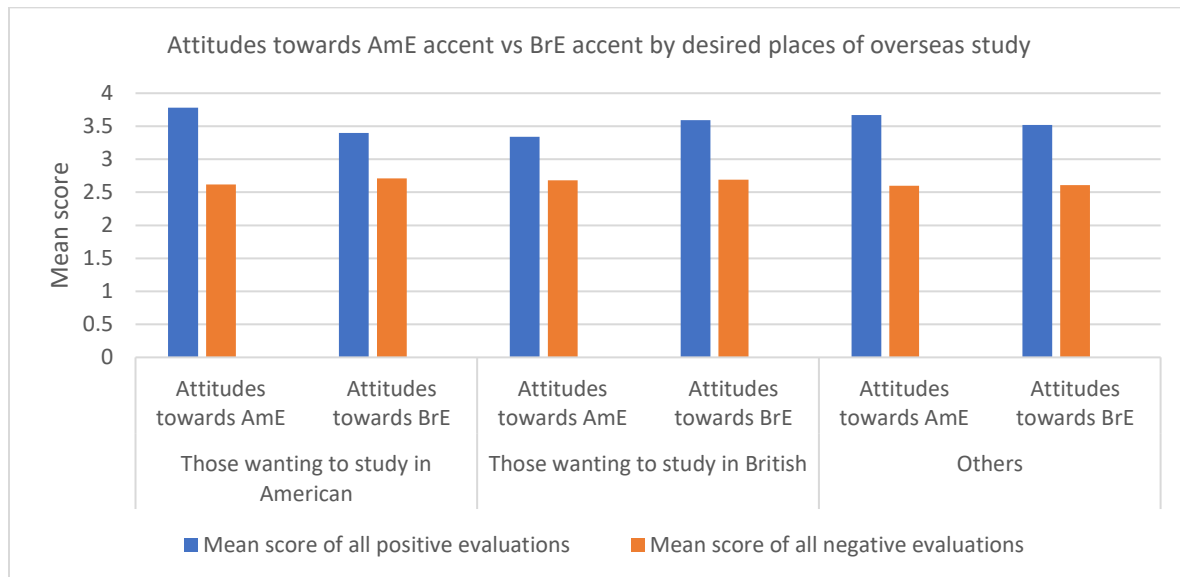
To check if there are positive correlations between such factors as experience of studying overseas, the desired place of overseas study, and the amount of time being exposed to the target accent with the positive attitude towards that target accent, further data analysis was carried out.

In regard of the correlation between the experience of studying abroad with the attitudes, except the two who went to Australia to study, the rest of those who have gone abroad to study, regardless of where they have studied, agreed that they like AmE accent. Regarding whether they speak or attempt to speak American accent, most of them agreed with this statement, and only one participant who have learnt in Canada and two others who have learnt in the UK disagreed with the statement. It is easy to understand this phenomenon because they have lived in another country, and they may speak the accent of that country. However, it is interesting to find that the rest people, regardless of where they have lived and studied, agreed that they speak and attempt to speak the accent of American people.

There is also a positive correlation between amount of time being exposed to the target accent and the attitudes towards it, but there are also some exceptions. On the one hand, data show that the more access to the variety one has, the more positive attitudes one has towards that variety. Those who have more frequent exposure to AmE have more positive to this accent than British accent. For example, of the 41 informants who had more frequent access to AmE, 32 individuals (78.05%) admitted that they liked AmE accent, 7 (17.07%) felt neutral about it, and only 2 (4.88%) had negative attitudes towards it. However, it also shows that 27 of these 41 informants (65.85%) still had positive attitudes towards BrE accent, and

13 (31.71%) felt neutral, and only one (2.44%) felt negatively about BrE. It also noticing that of the 12 people who had more daily access to BrE, 7 people (58.33%) felt positive about AmE and 8 (66.67%) felt positive about BrE, and most of the rest felt neutral about the two accents. Regardless of how much they were exposed to the target accent, their positive attitudes towards the two accents were almost the same. Therefore, it is suggested to consider other social factors related to the target language variety, such as the economic status the country where the language variety is spoken and the popularity of that variety.

In addition, there is a positive correlation between the motivation to study in the target place and the positive attitudes towards the accent of it. As can be seen from graph 7, those who intended to study in England have more positive attitudes towards BrE accent, and those who intended to study in America have more positive attitudes towards AmE accent. However, it is also worth noticing that it does not mean that they have all negative attitudes towards the accent which is not of their target. Graph 7 shows that the people of the first two groups still had more positive attitudes towards the other accent. This phenomenon can be clearly seen in the third group who did not intend to study in American but still had as many positive attitudes towards AmE accent as the first group. In this case, again, it is suggested that more related social factors should be taken into account to have a more general conclusion about factors deciding attitudes towards a target accent.



Graph 7: Attitudes towards AmE accent vs BrE accent by desired places of overseas study

5. Conclusion and discussion

This paper explored the attitudes of Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners towards AmE accent versus BrE accent via three dimensions: cognition, affection, and conation. In the cognitive dimension, Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners perceived BrE accent as an accent of higher social statuses while AmE accent was considered to be of more solidarity. In the affective dimension, Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners showed much more positive sentiments to AmE accent than the other one. Likewise, via the conative dimension, AmE accent is of more reference when these learners decided on a target accent as their model to speak or practice. Overall, despite the language policy in Vietnam which somehow biases the BrE variety, there is a tendency that AmE accent is more of ESL/EFL learners' reference.

The study also found some positive correlations between the language attitudes with learners' overseas study experience, amount of time being exposed to the target language variety, and the target place of overseas study where the target accent is spoken. Nonetheless, there were also some cases these

correlations are not strong, which requires more research investigating more other related factors for a firmer conclusion.

It is hoped that the findings will help provide more information about this linguistic and TESOL issue in Vietnam and more understanding about ESL/EFL learners' language attitudes, accent references, and motivative factors and hence help improve their learning of the target language.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

British accent vs American accent Survey

This questionnaire is designed for a study entitles *Vietnamese ESL/EFL learners' attitudes towards British accent vs American accent*. You are asked to provide some background information about yourself, except your name, so the information provided is confidential. The collected data are for the research purpose only.

Part I: Background information

(Please tick the appropriate box for your answer or write/type your answer accordingly)

Age: _____ Sex: M ☐ F ☐ Education Level: _____

1. Have you studied overseas? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, where did you study? _____

2. How have you learnt speaking and pronunciation?

☐ from school only ☐ from an English center ☐ from media means

Others (please specify _____)

3. What do you study English for?

☐ for studying abroad ☐ for my career ☐ because it is a compulsory subject ☐ for fun

4. If you learn English to study abroad, which country do you want to go for your study?

☐ America ☐ England ☐ Others
☐ whichever

5. Which accent of the two accents do you have access to more often?

☐ AmE accent ☐ BrE accent ☐ They are of equal frequency ☐ I don't know

Part II: Your attitudes towards American English accent and British English accent

Please choose your degree of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

(1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree)

Cognitive: What do you think of the speakers American English versus British English?

1. American accent sounds formal and standard.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
2. American accent sounds highly educated.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
3. American accent sounds rural.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
4. American accent sounds smart.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
5. American accent sounds prestigious.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

1. British accent sounds formal and standard.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
2. British accent sounds highly educated.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
3. British accent sounds rural.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
4. British accent sounds smart.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
5. British accent sounds prestigious.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

6. American accent sounds wealthy.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
7. Speakers of American accent sound like successful people.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
8. American accent sounds cold.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
9. American accent sounds lazy.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
10. American accent sounds casual.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
11. American accent sounds warm and friendly.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
12. American accent sounds dependable.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
13. American accent sounds not serious.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
14. American accent sounds trustworthy.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
15. American accent sounds arrogant.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
16. American accent sounds gentle.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
17. American accent sounds kind.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
18. American accent sounds helpful.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
19. American accent sounds self-confident.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
20. American accent sounds humorous.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

6. British accent sounds wealthy.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
7. Speakers of British accent sound like successful people.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
8. British accent sounds cold.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
9. British accent sounds lazy.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
10. British accent sounds casual.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
11. British accent sounds warm and friendly.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
12. British accent sounds dependable.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
13. British accent sounds not serious.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
14. British accent sounds trustworthy.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
15. British accent sounds arrogant.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
16. British accent sounds gentle.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
17. British accent sounds kind.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
18. British accent sounds helpful.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
19. British accent sounds self-confident.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
20. British accent sounds humorous.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

Affective: How do you feel about American accent versus British accent and the speakers of them?

1. I like American accent.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
2. Speakers of American accent are likeable.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
3. American accent is boring.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
4. I feel irritated when listening to an American accent.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
5. American accent is inspiring.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
6. I prefer listening to American accent to British accent.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

1. I like British accent.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
2. Speakers of British accent are likeable.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
3. British accent is boring.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
4. I feel irritated when listening to a British accent.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
5. British accent is inspiring.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
6. I prefer listening to British accent to American accent.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤

Conative: Do you speak or attempt to speak like American accent or British accent?

When speaking in English, I make a conscious effort to have a pronunciation similar to American accent.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤	When speaking in English, I make a conscious effort to have a pronunciation similar to British accent.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤
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Biography:

Thanh Nguyen has been an ESL/EFL teachers for more than 20 years. She got her MA in TESOL at Hawaii Pacific University in 2012. She is currently a PhD candidate in English language and linguistics at the University of Missouri_ Columbia. Her research interests include ESL/EFL teaching methodology, Applied linguistics, Sociolinguistics, and African languages. Currently she is engaged in research on the learning and teaching of language and literacy among teachers across Missouri, USA.