

**An Investigation of the Attitudes of Local Hong Kong Non-Native Speaking
English Teachers towards Spoken English as a Lingua Franca**

LEUNG, King wai

EdD

THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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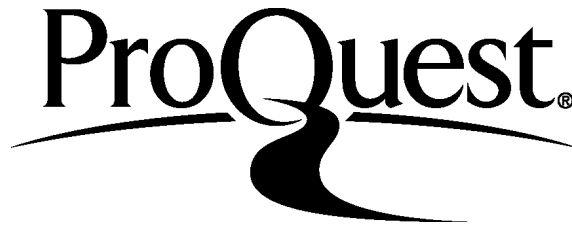
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ABSTRACT

An Investigation of the Attitudes of Local Hong Kong Non-Native Speaking English Teachers towards Spoken English as a Lingua Franca

by LEUNG, King wai

for the degree of Doctor of Education

The Hong Kong Institute of Education

in September 2015

Abstract

The current study aimed at investigating the attitudes of local Hong Kong non-native speaking English teachers (NNETs) towards spoken English as a lingua franca. The results were expected to inform the evaluation of the appropriateness of the native English speakers' norm to be set as the current English teaching model. The current study drew on folk linguistics and utilized a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Factors impacting on attitudes like power, intelligibility, social conventions and context were examined with reference to the Hierarchy of Identity (HoI) model (Omoniyi, 2006). 43 local NNETs took part in the questionnaire study and 11 of them also participated in the semi-structured interview session. The key findings of this research were:

- there was a deep seated bias among the local NNETs preferring British English in terms of correctness, standardness, pleasantness and acceptability



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for international communication;

- the attitudes of the local NNETs towards different accents of English appeared to be changing dynamically with the change in the participants' identity options. The impact of factors like power, intelligibility, social conventions and context on the participants' attitudes also seemed to be varied with different identity options; and
- most of the participants agreed that any variety of English can serve well in international communication.

In the context of Hong Kong, which has always been a city of international trade and finance, it can be expected that the government and general public will continue to strengthen the workforce's capability to communicate internationally in English. A further stress for the importance of international communication will counterbalance the deep seated bias among local NNETs preferring British English and other native accents. Future research would include a longitudinal study looking at the impact of the longer term change in the local NNETs' identity options and preferences on the local NNETs' attitudes towards ELF and the local Hong Kong accent.



**An Investigation of the Attitudes of Local Hong Kong Non-Native Speaking
English Teachers towards Spoken English as a Lingua Franca**

by

LEUNG, King wai

A Thesis Submitted to

The Hong Kong Institute of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for

the Degree of Doctor of Education

September 2015



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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I, LEUNG King wai, hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis and the material presented in this thesis in my original work except those indicated in the acknowledgement. I further declare that I have followed the Institute's policies and regulations on Academic Honesty, Copy Right and Plagiarism in writing the thesis and no material in this thesis has been published or submitted for a degree in this or other universities.

LEUNG, King wai

August 2015



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| ACE | Asian Corpus of English |
| EETS | Expatriate English Teachers Scheme |
| ELF | English as a Lingua Franca |
| ENL | English as a native language |
| FTP | Fine-Tuned Medium of Instruction Policy |
| GA | General American |
| HoI | Hierarchy of Identity |
| MGT | Matched Guise Technique |
| MOI | Medium of Instruction |
| NETs | Native Speaking English Teachers |
| NNETs | Non Native Speaking English Teachers |
| NNS | Non-Native Speaker |
| NS | Native Speaker |
| LFC | Lingua Franca Core |
| RP | Received Pronunciation |
| VOICE | Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English |



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Topic

The current study aimed at investigating the attitudes of local Hong Kong non-native English teachers (NNETs) towards spoken English as a lingua franca (ELF). The results were expected to inform the evaluation of the appropriateness of the native English speakers' norm to be set as the current English teaching model. The recent rapid globalization facilitates the rapid spread of English internationally. A native speaker of English, in this study, refers to someone whose first language (L1) is English, whereas, a non-native speaker of English is someone who has an L1 other than English. With the rapid growth of non-native speakers (NNS) of English, the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) was introduced to capture the kind of English that is characteristic among NNS. With the rapidly increasing usage of ELF in international communication, researchers started to look at the issue of whether English learners should still be expected to conform to native-speakers norms (Cook, 1999, 2007; Graddol, 1999; Jenkins, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Timmis, 2002). There is concern that native-speakers models, which are arguably unattainable and



irrelevant in the context of Kachru's 'expanding circle' countries, are possibly impeding students to attain the language targets set by governments (Kirkpatrick, 2007). In the context of Hong Kong, the government has adopted the policy of making its citizens trilingual in Cantonese, Putonghua and English and biliterate in Chinese and English, thus, may likewise impede on the students in Hong Kong to attain the targets based on native-speakers models. The current study looked at these underlying attitudes of local Hong Kong NNS English teachers (NNETs) towards ELF, as the international way of using English.

1.2 Significance of the topic

The understanding of the underlying attitudes of the NNETs is the first and useful step to look into the issue of whether English learners should still be expected to conform to native-speakers norms. This study may also initiate the re-empowerment of local NNETs, who may now be suffering a sense of insecurity as Kirkpatrick (2002, p. 221) mentioned when reporting similar situations in the context of ASEAN.

In the Hong Kong context, the delicate issue of Hongkongers vs Chinese also brings interesting insights into the research of language attitudes in the perspective of ELF. After the return of sovereignty of Hong Kong to China, the identity issue of



people in Hong Kong has become complicated. Some people are proud of becoming Chinese, whereas, others started to put forward the idea of Hongkongers in order to distinguish themselves from the Mainland Chinese. With recent incidences of the heavy inflow of “individual visitors” from Mainland China, babies born in Hong Kong to parents from Mainland China who are non-Hong Kong permanent residents, as well as the negative international images of Mainland China on human rights issues, an increasing number of people in Hong Kong are trying to further distinguish themselves from the Mainland Chinese. The issue of local Hongkongers is becoming a hot topic in public affairs, as well as in the politics of Hong Kong. In the most recent survey conducted by the Public Opinion Program of The University of Hong Kong, over 40% (highest among the four options) of respondents opted for the identity as a Hongkonger in the consecutive two half-yearly surveys. This has not been seen since the establishment of the survey in 1997 (HKU POP website, 2015). The interactions between mainland Chinese and Hong Kong people have raised the awareness of the identity of people in Hong Kong as Hongkongers, at least among some Hong Kong people. This can be seen as one of the socio-situational factors impacting on the salience of identity as Hongkongers.

As indicated by Joseph (2004, p. 161), when the people of Hong Kong realize



that they may express their Hong Kong identity through a Hong Kong accent, the image and status of it may undergo positive changes. The more people in Hong Kong identifying themselves as a Hongkonger, the more likely the acceptance of Hong Kong English will become. The relationship of attitudes towards the local accent with identity as explored by the current study may also inform the way respondents express their identity as a Hongkonger.

1.3 Personal motivation and positionality

The researcher was educated almost entirely in Hong Kong. In English language learning, the idea of teaching students by NETs was not common in schools when he was in secondary school in the late 70s to early 80s. Almost all of the English teachers at that time were local. The acquisition of English language by the researcher was through traditional lectures taught by local English teachers with primarily written grammar practices and very limited oral practice. During the first year of university study, the researcher was required to attend an English oral practice and an English writing practice class taught by NETs during the first semester. After graduation from University, the researcher joined the government as a civil servant. The daily operation involved substantial written communication in English. Without help from expert training courses or NETs, the researcher had managed



communication to the satisfaction of his superiors. The overall experience with education and early career had given him the impression that local English teachers had done a very good job in the teaching of English.

The researcher started his own English education business in the early 2000. The business specializes in organizing and providing English courses taught by native English speaking teachers for schools and learning centers. By that time, the Native English Teachers Scheme (NET Scheme) had been made permanent with the general support by schools, parents and students. Whether the teachers, especially local English teachers, support the idea of NETs still needs further investigations. The researcher's personal observation has been mixed with local English teachers showing from strong resentment to strong recommendation. One of the claimed reasons behind the divergence of opinions was that involvement of individual NETs was very different. Some NETs were very participative and eager to take part in school activities and invested a lot of energy and time to immerse into the local school culture, while some NETs were very inactive and passive in the delivery of duties. Despite mixed reactions from the local English teachers, parents generally welcome the scheme and expect much for their children to learn from it. The researcher's English education business involves mainly deploying qualified NETs

into schools and English learning centers to help the teaching of English.

Therefore, the researcher has a firm belief that local English teachers are capable of teaching English to a satisfactory standard on one hand, and that NETs are welcomed as English teachers by parents on the other. As mentioned above, there is actually some kind of resentment among local English teachers toward the NET Scheme. One of the possible reasons behind this, as Boyle (1997b, p. 174) pointed out, is that the government has not been “really turned in to the local teachers’ resentment at the implication of the EETS (Expatriate English Teachers Scheme) that an expatriate native-speaker teacher of English was better than a local teacher.” With the global spread of English accompanied with the recent rapid globalization, the number of non-native competent English speakers has been rapidly increasing and already far outnumbered that of native speakers. It has also been found that English spoken internationally, especially among non-native speakers of English, contains features which are different from native English (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2011). This English, generally known as ELF, has gained importance as the number of users, whilst competent non-native English speakers has been on the rise. It is also one of the reasons for researchers to look into the question of whether the native speakers’ norm should still be set as the standard of English teaching in this background



(Jenkins, 2007). Before answering this question, it is useful to know what the teachers of English, especially local ones thinking is towards native English as well as ELF. The local NNETs' views and the underlying beliefs provided useful information on the formation of the attitudes towards native English and non-native English. The researcher, being one of the stakeholders and also an active participant in English education in Hong Kong was, thus, motivated to do the current study.

1.4 Approach to researching the topic

The researcher has been in the English education business for over 10 years and, thus, has an extensive connection with schools, English teachers and parents. His aim: to survey as many local English teachers as possible to gain an overall impression of the attitudes of teachers. Therefore, this study utilized a questionnaire to collect part of the data. The current study drew on folk linguistics, which is a direct approach with an advantage of being able to “reflect strongly-held positions about language and its repercussions in communities” (Niedzielski & Preston, 2000, p. 323). The questionnaire was adopted from Jenkins' 2007 study with minor adjustments to incorporate the concept of ELF as a variable way of using English, as proposed by Seidlhofer (2011). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected by the questionnaire. Apart from the overall general impression of the attitudes of

local teachers, the researcher also wanted to investigate the reasons behind the formation of expressed attitudes and beliefs towards native English and non-native English of local English teachers. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants in order to gain an “empathic access to the world of the interviewee” (Jenkins, 2007, p. 206). Semi-structured interviews provided qualitative data on covert attitudes towards different accents and allowed in-depth analysis of the possible formation of the underlying beliefs. Identity issues were analyzed with reference to the Hierarchy of Identity (HoI) model (Omoniyi, 2006). Other factors which impacted on the teachers’ attitudes like intelligibility, power, social conventions and context were also examined.

1.5 Challenges in researching the topic

Despite extensive connections with the schools and English teachers, there were 3 major challenges to take up the current study: 1) the resources constraint of the researcher; 2) the resources constraint of the participants; and 3) the perceptions of the participants towards the researcher.

1.5.1 Resources constraint of the researcher. Being a part-time independent student researcher, there was a lack of time and financial resources necessary to carry out a large scale questionnaire study. The huge budget involved, therefore, prevented



doing a mass mail of the questionnaires to schools. The time required to conduct telephone follow-up was also not possible. Therefore, instead of mass mailing, teachers-in-charge were conducted to gain their approval first before sending the questionnaires, which ensured the sustainability of the study. Nevertheless, it also had an impact on the total number of questionnaires collected (43).

1.5.2 Resources constraint of the participants. It is well known that the workload of local English teachers is huge. It was, therefore, a considerable burden for them to take part in this study, even just completing the questionnaire. Some participants also commented that they found the questionnaire difficult to complete as they were not familiar with linguistics. For the same reason, many potential participants refused to participate, which had a direct impact on the return rate (36%) and overall number of questionnaires collected (43). For the semi-structured interview participants, the time constraint was even more substantial, as the average duration of the interview was around an hour. Although most of the participants were so generous as to offer adequate time for the interview, most interviews had an unstated time constraint usually of about 90 minutes. Therefore, all of the interviews were shorter than 90 minutes. Despite these constraints, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in a good atmosphere and elicited very useful data.



1.5.3 Perceptions of the participants towards the researcher as pro-native

speakers' norm. All participants of the semi-structured interviews had some idea of the business of the researcher. At first glance, it was reasonable for the participants to assume that the researcher had a pro-native norm position. There may be some risks of the participants giving pro-native norm comments to “suit” the researcher's (the interviewer) expectations. Understanding this, the researcher stopped mentioning his business even in the warming up stages before and after the interview sessions. He also tried hard not to reveal any personal views towards native English or non-native English. Although it was very hard to assess the impact of this perception on the comments given by the semi-structured interviews participants, the researcher was confident that the participants understood his aim and reminders that their own views were very important to the study. Therefore, the precautions taken by the researcher were considered sufficient to ensure the participants were giving genuine views instead of comments aimed at pleasing him.

1.6 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first is the introduction and purpose; the research questions and significance of the study. The second chapter contains the literature review that starts with a review from research into language



attitudes in general to issues of teacher identity in the perspective of ELF in the context of Hong Kong with reference to the HoI model.

The third chapter on English language teaching in the context of Hong Kong gives a background of the situation in Hong Kong relating to the study. The fourth chapter is methodology and describes the questionnaire study and semi-structured interviews this study adopts. The transcription of the interviews utilize Jenkins (2007) convention to include prosodic features. The coding and analysis of the interview will also be discussed.

The fifth chapter on Phase I – the questionnaire data reports the results of the questionnaire study with demographic data of the participants. The second half of the chapter analyzes the rating data and the ranking data with general conclusions. The sixth chapter on Phase II – the semi-structured interview data reports the results of the semi-structured interviews together with the demographic data of the participants.

The seventh chapter presents the discussions, conclusions and implications and concludes the findings from the questionnaire study and the semi-structured interviews with reference to the research questions. Implications to the teaching of English language are also discussed. The chapter ends with a discussion of limitations of the current study and further research direction. The appendices include the



questionnaire, tables and the pilot test report. The next chapter, Chapter Two, presents the literature review.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

In this study, the attitudes of local Hong Kong non-native English teachers towards spoken English as a lingua franca were investigated. The results were expected to inform the evaluation of the appropriateness of the native English norm as the current English teaching model. Academic research into language attitudes dates back into the early 20th century. Results have indicated that people hold stereotyped attitudes towards speakers with different accents (Jenkins, 2007, p. 66). Subsequent research involving English teachers have revealed, in general, that teachers and students hold overwhelming preferences towards Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA), as compared to other non-native English accents in terms of the accent's correctness, pleasantness and acceptance.

Recent studies involving non-native English teachers' language attitudes have revealed a certain degree of ambiguities and even contradictions. While identity and power issues have long been brought into language attitude research, teachers' identity, as seen from the perspectives of ELF, has only just started to be researched.



More recent studies have demonstrated that the relationship between accent, identity and intelligibility is far from simple. Also, in the Hong Kong context, the delicate issue of Hongkongers vs Mainland Chinese brings interesting insights into the research of language attitudes within the perspective of ELF.

The study drew partly on a dynamic hierarchy of identity (HoI) model (Omoniyi, 2006) with a refined concept of ELF to explore local Hong Kong non-native English teachers' attitudes towards different accents of English by using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The focus of the study was on the exploration of attitudes towards ELF from the perspective of different co-existing identity options and under the impact of factors such as intelligibility, power, social convention and context.

2.2 Background of the study – native speakers' norm vs English as a lingua franca (ELF)

Researchers have estimated that there are over 1 billion English users around the world (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008; Graddol, 1997, 2000). Graddol (2006, p. 96) also predicted that 2 billion new English speakers could be generated by as early as 2016 if “The World English Project”, which refers to the booming English teaching industry globally, succeeds. With the spread of English under recent rapid



globalization, English has attained the status of the language of international communications. With the backdrop of the rapid increase in the number of English learners and users, Prodromou (2001) estimated from statistics provided by Crystal (1997) that about 80% of use of English do not involve native speakers (NS) at all. This number by now will be well over 80%. These changes happening recently have prompted people to ask “what kind of English this is, who it “belongs” to, and how they should react to it (Seidlhofer, 2011, preface).” As early as twenty years ago, Widdowson (1994, p. 388) already pointed out that NS English “is that which is associated with the communicative and communal needs of their community, and these may have little relevance for those learning English as an international language (EIL).” EIL has created fierce debates among researchers. On the one hand, some people perceive anything that does not conform to the NS norm as “errors” and, therefore, EIL is just a deficient form of NS English when it is used without conforming to the NS norm. On the other hand, participants using EIL are typically focused on achieving a communicative goal and guaranteeing mutual intelligibility, and EIL is itself emerging as a new variety of English on its own.

2.3 Key definitions

2.3.1 Native speakers of English vs Non-native speakers of English. A

native speaker (NS) of English, in this study, refers to someone whose first language (L1) is English, whereas, a non-native speaker (NNS) of English is someone who has an L1 other than English. Studies have pointed out that the meaning of “native speakers” is unclear (Cook, 1999; Davies, 1991; McKay, 2002; Rampton, 1990; Seidlhofer, 2011; Sung, 2014). The term “native speaker” is a highly idealized abstraction. It assumes homogeneity among the native speakers, but their speech actually varies in many aspects of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. It also assumes that the speaker has a perfect command of the language, but not all individuals who learn a language from birth are necessarily fluent speakers. On top of the unclear conception of the term “native speakers”, the term “non-native speakers” may even be more problematic as it simply negates it. Despite the apparent clear cut division of English speakers into native and non-native, this division is far from ideal. Researchers have questioned the theoretical foundations of the NSs/NNSs distinction on the grounds that not a given feature is founded to be exclusively possessed by either the NNs or the NNSs (Llurda, 2006). The problem with the terms “native speakers” and “non-native speakers”, according to Seidlhofer (2011), is not merely conceptual. There are also connotations these terms carry over a long period of time. As Matsuda (2003) pointed out, the discussion of the NSs/NNSs division is based



mainly on the overall positive perception of the native speakers versus the negative perception of the non-native speakers.

Despite the unclear conception, the native/non-native division was used in this study because it captures the general understanding of the English teaching industry. In the latter part of the study, the term “native accent” refers to the accent of a native speaker, whereas, “non-native accent” refers to the accent of a non-native speaker. The native/non-native division is also well known to the general public as a whole. The native speakers' norm is understood by virtually all teachers, that it is the general standard or model of English, and is also the standard adhered to by the Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority. It may even be the parents' concern when they apply for admission to schools for their children.

2.3.2 ELF speakers' vs native speakers of English. With the rapid growth of non-native speakers (NNS) of English, the term ‘English as a lingua franca’ (ELF) emerged in the later part of the 1990s to refer to the kind of English used in communication between speakers with different first languages (Seidlhofer, 2005). This conceptualization of ELF allows the inclusion of the NSs of English to reflect actual international communications. ELF is taken in this sense throughout this study.

As compared with NSs of English, ELF speakers' primary focus is on



“communicative effectiveness and economy instead of prestige and social status” (Breiteneder, 2009, p. 263). ELF speakers achieve communicative effectiveness by ensuring mutual intelligibility. Frequently used ways to achieve this aim are self-repetition, other-repetition, synonymy, and rephrasing. To communicate economically, ELF speakers exploit redundancy in English. One example is the use of the zero (without -s) morpheme for present simple verbs in the third person singular. Another example, demonstrating the economy of processing effort, is the interchangeable use of “who” and “which”. Apart from the above effort to make interactions effective and economy, ELF speakers also exploit linguistic resources to suit their specific needs. For example, they “regularize” verbs by “applying a regular morphological convention in unconventional ways to produce *conspirate*, *examine*, *financiate*, and *pronunciate*” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 102, emphasis in original). ELF speakers also frequently depart from native speakers’ idiomatic usages to avoid “unilateral idiomaticity” – a term to convey a sense of lack of concern for other interlocutors for mutual intelligibility. In general, ELF speakers deviate intentionally from the native speakers’ norm in order to achieve communicative effectiveness and economy.

2.3.3 ELF speakers’ vs non-native speakers of English. If NSs of English



are excluded from ELF speakers, the remaining speakers can be considered NNSs of English, according to the definition above. So, how to distinguish ELF speakers from NNSs of English? Sometimes the two are just referring to the same person. When an NNS of English is communicating with a group of NSs of English, it is very likely that he/she will try his/her best to adhere to the NS norm for effective communication, especially when the NSs are coming from Kachru's (1992) "Inner Circle" countries, like the United States and the United Kingdom where English originates. On the contrary, when the same NNS of English is communicating with a group of NNSs of English, he/she may adopt changes so that his/her speech resembles the speech of an ELF speaker to foster effective communication. When this happens, he/she is both an NNS and an ELF speaker, being one or the other depending on the situation. There are other possibilities too. An NNS may insist on adhering to the NS norm and remains an NNS in all circumstances. Similarly, an ELF speaker may keep on violating the NS norm and remains an ELF speaker during all interactions. In other words, excluding the NSs, all ELF speakers are NNSs; and most NNSs are ELF speakers most of the time. There are a number of factors affecting an NNS to speak as an ELF speaker: the interlocutors (Jenkins, 2007), the context (Jenkins, 2007), the NNS's identity and attitudes (Jenkins, 2007; Li, 2009; Sung,



2013, 2014). This study focused on the last two: identity and attitudes.

2.4 Studies of NS norms

With the rapidly increasing usage of ELF in international communications, researchers started to look at the issue of whether English learners should still be expected to conform to native-speakers norms (Cook, 1999, 2007; Graddol, 1999; Jenkins, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Timmis, 2002). There is concern that NSs models are arguably unattainable and irrelevant in the context of Kachru's 'expanding circle' countries, i.e., countries using English as a foreign language. Examples are Japan, Korea, China, and most of the Asian countries. Kirkpatrick (2007) concluded that NSs models are possibly impeding students to attain the language targets set by local governments. In the context of Hong Kong, the government has adopted the policy of making its citizens trilingual in Cantonese, Putonghua and English and biliterate in Chinese and English, thus, creating similar, if not more, difficulties among the students based on native-speakers models. To investigate whether 'native speakers' norm is still relevant, researchers look into English teachers' attitudes because "language teachers as a profession tend to hold the same kinds of prescriptive views of correctness and acceptability as the general population" (Jenkins, 2007, p. 148) and teachers are responsible for the teaching of English to students. Their attitudes are,



thus, influential.

Similar research was conducted in the late 2000s in the United States, Europe and Asia producing ambiguous or even contradictory results. On one hand, the NNSs overtly claimed that they admired the NS accents and strive very hard to try to attain one; and on the other, most of the NNSs expressed an attachment to their mother tongue and nationality (Jenkins, 2007). The studies also revealed implications of deep seated bias among the participants, in terms of misconception of ELF, as well as the teachers' beliefs in the future of English teaching. The present study adopted the conceptualization of ELF as a variety of usage of English, rather than as a physical variety of English, as proposed by Seidlhofer (2011). It looked at these underlying attitudes of local Hong Kong NNS English teachers (NNETs) towards ELF, as the international way of using English. The understanding of the underlying attitudes of the NNETs is the first and important step to look into the issue of the suitability of adhering to native speakers' norm. It also informs the problematization of NNETs in terms of skills and capabilities when measured against a native speaker standard are actually the main reasons behind the deteriorating standard of English in Hong Kong. This study may also initiate the re-empowerment of local NNETs, who may now suffering linguistic insecurity.



2.5 Academic research into language attitudes in general

Academic research into language attitudes can be dated back to the early 20th century, when BBC radio listeners were asked to supply personality profiles of voices from a range of British dialects (Giles & Billings, 2004; Jenkins, 2007). Shortly afterwards, by using the matched guise technique (MGT), research repeatedly indicated that people can express definite and consistent attitudes towards speakers who use particular styles of speaking, i.e., different language varieties. Later research into language attitudes generated several themes that are very useful nowadays in the discussion of attitudes towards ELF: Intelligibility, Power, Social convention, Context, and Identity. A brief report follows on relevant research to explain how they inform the discussion of attitudes towards ELF.

2.5.1 Intelligibility. The classic study of the phenomenon of non-reciprocal intelligibility of Wolff (1959) found that two communities speaking very similar languages, which could be considered dialects of a single language, did not see intelligibility as mutual. The economically poor and politically powerless tribe said that they could understand the speech of the prosperous and politically powerful counterpart, whereas, the reverse was not true. The prosperous and politically powerful tribe claimed to find the counterpart unintelligible. The finding bears



important implications towards ELF as the study established the link between attitude and intelligibility in inter-lingual communication.

More recent studies on intelligibility in relation to native speakers' and/or non-native speakers' perceptions of non-native speakers' accents (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 1997; Field, 2005; Hahn, 2004; Munro & Derwing, 1995; Munro, Derwing & Morton, 2006; Riney, Takagi & Inutsuka, 2005) tended to come to the conclusion that the non-native speakers' accents are lacking in intelligibility (Jenkins, 2007). Jenkins (2007, p. 83) criticized that “the majority fail to consider the role of attitudes in the judgements of intelligibility made by their respondents”. Research in intelligibility, especially in the discussion of mutual intelligibility, thus, contributes to the explanation on attitudes towards ELF.

2.5.2 Power. Ryan and Giles (1982, p. 1) clearly stated that “In every society the differential power of particular social groups is reflected in language variation and in attitudes toward those variations. Typically, the dominant group promotes its patterns of language use as the model required for social advancement; and use of a lower prestige language, dialect, or accent by minority group members reduces their opportunities for success in the society as a whole. Minority group members are often faced with difficult decisions regarding whether to gain social mobility by adopting

the language patterns of the dominant group or to maintain their group identity by retaining their native speech style.” St. Clair (1982, p. 173), in an article of the same book edited by Ryan and Giles (1982), also stated that “These powerless persons found themselves attacked for having different social and/or regional dialects... It was against them that many of the negative attitudes towards language were directed... People want to identify with the power elite. They want to emulate those whom they perceive as being above their station.” The NNSs of English resemble the powerless group and are frequently on the receiving end of the negative attitudes. The effects of power, thus, have provided important insights on the discussion of attitudes towards ELF.

2.5.3 Social convention. Edwards (1982, p. 30) highlighted two points pertinent to the discussion of attitudes towards ELF. First, “language varieties which diverge from Standard English are liable to be viewed, even by speakers of those varieties themselves, less favorably than the Standard. This is especially so when evaluations are being made of traits relating to a speaker's *competence* (emphasis in original)”, and second, “unfavorable linguistic attitudes cannot reasonably be said to reflect any inherent linguistic or aesthetic inferiorities in the varieties concerned. Rather, they represent social judgments, one of taste, preference and convention”



(Edwards, 1982, p. 30).

2.5.4 Context. Jenkins (2007, p. 71) reviewed a number of studies and demonstrated that “language attitudes to be sensitive to the context in which those attitudes are evaluated, and that identity plays an important part.” Tong, Hong and Chiu (1999), which is also cited by Jenkins (2007), described speakers' attitudes adjusted with their changing identities after the handback of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China. Tong et al.'s (1999) study particularly informed the current study in the context of sensitive interplay of the identities of Mainlanders and Hongkongers.

2.5.5 Identity. Giles and Ryan (1982, p. 208) summarized in their concluding chapter that “In other social contexts, however, the language varieties of many subordinate groups are accorded much pride by their own speakers (and sometimes conceded by others) on the more 'human' traits of solidarity, integrity and social attractiveness as well as in persuasive quality. Such is the fundamental importance of speech characteristics for one's sense of group identity that many individuals have negative attitudes about acquiring the dominant group's prestige code and as a result may fail to become proficient in it.” This comment on the relationship between identity and language attitude offered a new perspective on the phenomenon that



many English as a L2 learners, especially adults, fail to acquire native-like English.

The usual explanation of the failure is that the learners have passed the 'critical period' for native accent acquisition. However, according to Giles and Ryan (1982), the usual explanation ignores the potential of the impact of group identity on the acquisition of native accent. This perspective, relating identity and attitude, is particularly salient in the understanding of attitudes towards ELF.

2.6 Subsequent research into language attitudes involving English teachers towards native and non-native English varieties

Teachers' views towards correct and acceptable English tend to agree with the general population as they acquired them during their schooldays (Jenkins, 2007). By studying teachers' attitudes, the view of the general population can also be inferred. In addition, “insights into teachers' attitudes to language spread and change in general, and to ELF accents in particular, may provide information not only about the stigmatization of NNS English accents and possible discrimination against their users, but also about how these can be addressed through education systems” (Jenkins 2007, p. 149). Studies involving NNETs or learners have produced results indicating an overwhelming preference in rating of parameters like correctness, pleasantness, acceptance, etc. towards GA and RP (Chiba, Matsuura, & Yamamoto, 1995; Decke-



Cornill, 2002; Forde, 1995; Friedrich, 2000; Luk, 1998; Starks & Paltridge, 1994; Timmis, 2002; Zacharias, 2005) as compared to other non-native English accents. Despite the overall strong preference towards GA and RP, most of the respondents failed to achieve the standard of native English. On the contrary, some respondents conceived, on one hand, that English is an international language, but on the other hand, believed that English belongs to inner circle speakers (Zacharias, 2005). Some of the respondents also started to show an awareness of the need to understand other non-native varieties of English. Jenkins (2007, p. 105) concluded that the studies above revealed, “some sort of contradiction, ambivalence or a possibly deep-seated bias among the participants”.

2.7 Jenkins’ (2007) study of non-native English teachers

In a study of the attitudes of NNS English Teachers towards ELF accents, Jenkins (2007) analyzed five discussions of ELF between 2001 and 2004 among NNS and NS teachers of English. Three discussions took place at a British university and two at international conferences. Jenkins found that most of the respondents still preferred NS accents. However, evidence of ambivalence exists through overt statements from the respondents, e.g., one of the respondents said “that's what I wanted to hear” when Jenkins commented that his German English accent rather than



RP would be the best model for his learners (Jenkins 2007, p. 135). Some other respondents also showed positive comments about Jenkins' proposal of Lingua Franca Core (LFC). Jenkins suggested and discussed the issue of identity behind the contradiction and bias by showing that the NNS English teachers were revealing their ethnic identity through their L1.

Altogether, 300 NNS English teachers and 26 NS English teachers participated in a related questionnaire study which intended to elicit NNETs' attitude towards ELF accents. The results showed that most respondents ranked English accents according to a hierarchy, with British and American accents at the very top, followed by certain other NS accents; then a few NNS accents that they perceived to be near-native; and finally, those non-native accents. The respondents also rated NS English accents, especially British and American accents “overwhelmingly the best in terms not only of correctness, but also of pleasantness and acceptability in international communication” (Jenkins, 2007, p. 166). The questionnaire also included a map-labeling task in which the respondents were asked to label any geographic locations and describe the English accent in that location. The purpose of the tasks was to find out what the respondents thought about the accents in their own words. Results showed that “beliefs about the correctness and authenticity of two NS

English accents, UK and US, emerge as unshakable”, and that “despite the perceived pleasantness and intelligibility of some NNS English accents, this was never sufficient for an NNS accent to challenge the pole position of UK and US English accents in the ranking and rating tasks” (Jenkins 2007, p. 186). The respondents were also shown to be mostly ignorant of the idea of ELF, if they had not attended any courses on World Englishes or similar ones. The results also implied, “a rather complex dynamic operating across the correctness-pleasantness-acceptability spectrum that suggests a degree of ambivalence” (Jenkins, 2007, p. 187). Although linguistic insecurity, by which NNS teachers are particularly negative towards their own accent was seen, the Chinese respondents were found to be particularly positive towards their own accent.

In a related interview study involving 17 NNETs from 9 different countries, Jenkins (2007, p. 231) explored the NNETs' identity choice and found that the participants had mixed feelings about expressing their L1 identity in their L2 English. A majority of participants clearly desired a native-like English speaker's identity. On the other hand, most also expressed an attachment to their mother tongue through their English accent. The interaction of these two opposite attitudes was offered as an explanation of the observed apparent contradictory statements by participants about

ELF. Jenkins (2007) concluded that identity will continue to play a critical role in the understanding of attitudes towards ELF.

2.8 Studies of language attitudes in the context of Hong Kong

Given Jenkins' (2007) findings that the Chinese NNETs were relatively positive about their own accent, and that there is an emerging trend in the awareness, at least in the theoretical level, of World Englishes and ELF among teachers, the attitude of the NNETs in Hong Kong should provide further insights to the research of the acceptability of ELF in international communication. Tsui and Bunton (2000) analyzed 1,234 computer messages on a servicing teachers network written by local teachers in Hong Kong and found that no discussion of Hong Kong English as a legitimate variety of English had been raised and that the teachers were clearly negative towards the idea of Hong Kong English. Li (2000) arrived at the same conclusion that Hong Kong English represents an interlanguage rather than a new variety of English. The attitude of Hong Kong NNETs was apparently different from that of the Chinese NNETs English teachers in Jenkins' (2007) study above. This contrast sheds light on identity issues in the Hong Kong context. While Bolton (2003) and Joseph (2004) both discussed the falling standard "myth" in the perspective of the emergence of a new "Hong Kong English", Joseph (2004, pp. 160-161) continued to



point out that “the future of English in Hong Kong depends on the future direction of Hong Kong identity” and that “only if and when teachers come to recognise that the 'errors' in Hong Kong students' English (at least the regularly occurring ones) are precisely the points at which a distinct Hong Kong identity is expressed in the language, will a Hong Kong English genuinely begin to emerge, and to be taken as a version of Standard English rather than as a departure from it.” As teacher identity seen from the perspective of ELF has only just started been researched (Pedrazzini & Nava, 2011), very few studies have involved Hong Kong teachers. Luk (2010) explored the same issue of whether L1 influenced accent features are seen as identity revealing accent or pronunciation errors. A group of 16 Hong Kong teacher educators responded to a survey and the results showed that the majority of Hong Kong English influenced segmental features were seen as errors. A subsequent interview with six of the participants revealed “a tendency of the NNS users to conform to standard norms to avoid being stigmatized, or to prove that they are able to articulate the sounds as well as the NSs.” (Luk, 2010, p. 38) It was suggested that the participants' institutional identity as teacher educators was impacting on their attitude. While the two Cantonese speaking local teachers responded to the survey with only the teacher educator role in mind, the NSs participants were consciously aware of their identities



as both a teacher and an ordinary interlocutor. Although Luk's (2010) study revealed teacher educators' attitude on Hong Kong accent from the perspective of identity, it remains unclear with regard to the attitudes of local teachers in Hong Kong towards English as a lingua franca.

One of the few studies investigating accent, identity and ELF in the context of Hong Kong is Sung (2014). The study administered in-depth interview sessions with 28 university students in Hong Kong who are regular users of ELF. The results showed that the relationship between identity and accent is not as straight forward as previous research has suggested. For example, participants who used a local accent were not necessarily eager to express their cultural identity, but just acted pragmatically. Similarly, participants' desire to speak in a native-like accent was motivated by their wish to present a positive identity of an English user. The study suggested that the relationship between accent and identity, in the Hong Kong context, is varied and complex. Sung (2013), after conducting a one-hour workshop on English pronunciation with 15 undergraduate students at a university in Hong Kong, pointed out that although most students preferred to sound like native-speakers, they did not think that a native speaker's accent is necessarily the 'model'. Some students also pointed out that some native speakers do have strong accent. In



sum, the study also showed the complexity of non-native speakers' perceptions of the 'ideal' models and, thus, the relationship between accent and identity.

Li (2009) investigated the relationship between accent, identity and intelligibility in the context of Hong Kong. The study administered questionnaires and focus group interview sessions with 107 university-educated Chinese ELF users. The results showed that most participants preferred to speak English with an NS-based accent. A typical reason given by the participants was to ensure intelligibility and minimize communication problems when interacting with others. On the other hand, the remaining minority group of participants, who were ready to speak with a local accent, did face a dilemma between projecting a Chinese identity and ensuring intelligibility. The study demonstrated the complex relationship between accent, identity and intelligibility and Li called for more research to “include NNS's own views and voices on a range of dedicated and contentious issues in ELF communications” (Li, 2009, pp. 109-110).

The brief review above suggests a rather complicated relationship between accent, identity and intelligibility in the Hong Kong context.

2.9 The study of attitudes of local NNETs towards spoken ELF with reference to HoI

2.9.1 The Hierarchy of Identities model (HoI). Omoniyi (2006) put forward the “hierarchy of identities (HoI)” model which suggested that in interactions, multiple options of identities are available for an individual. Each of these options is allocated a position on a hierarchy based on the degree of salience it claims. The salience of identity options are determined by the interplay of several social factors, as well as the response of participants to these factors. Therefore, an identity can be foregrounded in one moment and be backgrounded in another. This concept of multiple options of identities is particularly useful in analyzing the Hong Kong local NNETs' ELF communication that constitutes identifications. Since Omoniyi (2006) did not explain and demonstrate how the identities are hierarchized, the present study only adopted the idea of multiple options of identities, which were subsequently foregrounded and backgrounded, to look into the inter-relationship of accent and identity. Together, with the insights given by the research into language attitudes in general, which highlighted the impact of intelligibility, power, social convention, context, the attitudes of local NNETs towards spoken ELF were explored with partial reference to the HoI model.

2.9.2 The concept of ELF as a variable way of using English. Following Jenkins (2007) work was described in detail in the previous section and the



suggestion of exploration of NNSs' views and perceptions in later research mentioned above. This study focused on the attitudes of the local Hong Kong NNETs towards “a variety of ways of speaking English”, in order to look more closely at the inter-relationship of accent, identity, intelligibility and other factors in the context of Hong Kong. This study adopted Jenkins' questionnaire design, with a slight but potentially important modification of the conceptualization of ELF. Throughout Jenkins' study, ELF took on the original meaning as English as a Lingua Franca, i.e., English as a contact language used among people who do not share a first language; commonly understood to mean a second language of its speakers. There were some additional specifications: that the contact language not be “primarily a local or contact language *within* national groups but *between* them; and that it is not primarily a language of communication between its NSs and NNSs, but among its NNSs” (Jenkins, 2007, p. 4 emphasis in original). This conceptualization of ELF successfully handles attacks on the concept from both ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) perspectives.

However, Jenkins did not mention the term 'ELF accents' explicitly in the questionnaire, but instead asked the participants to rate and rank different accents of English. The rating and ranking results were then taken as the participants' views



towards English as a Lingua Franca. This claim would be valid if the kinds of non-native English accents as perceived by the participants fitted the concept of ELF. We cannot be sure if the questionnaire participants are rating and ranking a non-native English accent based on its perceived use within national groups (i.e., as a second language), with native speakers (i.e., as a foreign language), or between non-native national groups (i.e., as a lingua franca). In another words, we cannot be sure if the respondent was seeing the target speaker as an NNS or an ELF speaker. It is understandable that it is very difficult to ask the participants explicitly to differentiate ESL, EFL and ELF in a questionnaire setting because ELF, as Jenkins referred to, is a “relatively new manifestation of English”. Nevertheless, the results of Jenkins questionnaire study provided important insights into non-native English teachers' attitudes towards different native and non-native English accents, and potentially towards ELF. The setting of the questionnaire, which asked the participants to consider a wide range of English accents, helped situate the participants in the setting of global communication in English and helped them to be more aware of the fact that there are a wide variety of English accents co-existing in the world. This global setting is generally lacking with all the above mentioned research in Hong Kong. It remains unclear if the participants responded with a perspective from EFL or ELF.



2.10 Seidlhofer and the conceptualization of ELF

To move a step forward from the foundation of Jenkins' work, this study adopted Seidlhofer's (2011) recent proposal of an elaboration of the concept of ELF. Taking into consideration the pragmatic and creative nature of ELF as revealed from recent studies, Seidlhofer (2011) preferred not to view ELF as a new physical variety of English, implying it to be a static and established form of English. Instead, ELF is conceptualized according to its functions achieved in typical interactions, such as maximizing explicitness, and exploiting redundancy. Competent ELF users are seen not as deficient English as a native language (ENL) speakers, but those who can rely on their own ways of speaking to fulfill whatever communicative needs they have. In this sense, ELF is "not a variety of English but a variable way of using it - English that functions as a Lingua Franca' (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 25).

With this slight elaboration of the concept of ELF, the attitude of the NNETs' towards ELF can be explored from a different perspective. Instead of asking the respondents' views on different *accents* of English, this study asked them their views on different *ways in speaking* English. Once conceptualized in this way, the idea of ELF could be more readily explored among the NNETs as the participants could be more ready to infer from the list of different ways of speaking English to the



“international way of speaking English”. The map attached for the participants to make reference to was also aimed to provide a prompt to elicit participants' intuition about the possible international way of speaking English. It may not be easy or intuitive enough for the participants to relate to a possible ‘international accent’, or ‘ELF accent’ by working through the accents related questions. The semi-structured interviews also included questions to prompt participants' thoughts of whether an area wide English, like “Asian English”, “European English” or “African English” existed. This endeavor may somehow respond to, although with just a tiny step, to Luk and Lin’s (2006, p. 13) call to establish a “common regional system” like “an Asian Pacific variety of World English pronunciation” before “The establishment of the common denominator of the World English phonologies”.

On the other hand, just by replacing “English accents” by “ways of speaking English” in the questionnaire, the problem encountered by Jenkins' (2007) study was not eliminated in this study. We were still not sure whether the attitudes expressed by the participants in this study were actually about ELF, but not EFL or ESL. However, in the context of Hong Kong, which is a highly internationalized and densely populated city, it is far more likely for the participants to have personal experience of communications with people using other varieties of English. In reality, it is not



uncommon for Hongkongers to have an opportunity to communicate, in English, with French, German, Indian, Chinese and Japanese accents included in the questionnaire. In other words, the participants in this study were expected to be far more likely to have interacted with other NNSs than the participants of Jenkins' (2007) study. Therefore, it was reasonable to be more confident on claiming access to the participants' attitudes on ELF.

2.11 The conceptual framework

Therefore, by adopting Jenkins' (2007) work, Seidlhofer's (2011) conceptualization of ELF and with reference to Omoniyi's (2006) HoI framework, this study aimed at exploring the following:

1. What are the NNETs' perception of correctness, acceptability, and pleasantness of the variety of ways of speaking English?
2. What are the NNETs' attitudes towards the international way of speaking English and ELF-related issues such as mutual intelligibility among NNSs of English?

The conceptual framework of the present study is illustrated as follows:

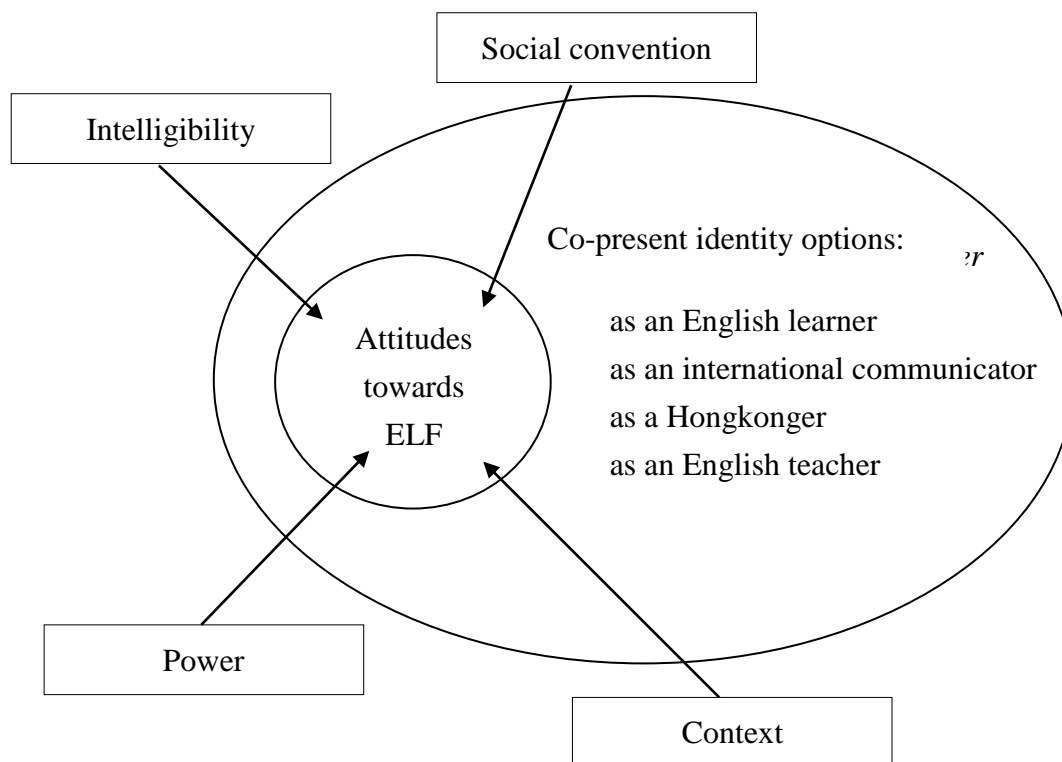


Figure 1: The conceptual framework of the current study

This study drew partly on Omoniyi's (2006) hierarchy of identity (HoI) model, which states that options of identity are always co-present during moments of interaction, and that people hierarchize dynamically identity options according to their salience during interactions. The identity option which has the greatest potential to achieve the specific goal in the moment of interaction was foregrounded, whereas, other co-present identity options fell beneath it. Although Omoniyi (2006) did not explain how hierarchization is achieved, the model provided a very useful framework

to look at the impact of a number of socio-situational factors like social convention, context, as well as interlocutors' responses on the choice of identity options as implicated by the literature. From the perspective of co-existing identity options and under the impact of factors like power, intelligibility, the current study explored the attitudes of the NNETs towards ELF.

Before moving on to the discussion of the research method, the history of English language teaching in Hong Kong is briefly reviewed, with a particular focus on the Native English Speaking Teachers Scheme. A general description of the features of Hong Kong English and a review of the attitudes towards this variety are given.



CHAPTER THREE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE CONTEXT OF HONG KONG

3.1 Introduction and Overview

English had been important when Hong Kong was under the colonial rule of Britain. After the return of sovereignty of Hong Kong to China, English in Hong Kong is still being emphasized because of the course of recent rapid globalization. With the untouched importance of English, even under the impact of the arrival of another official language, Putonghua, schools in Hong Kong have wanted to keep up the English standard of their students, despite continued enforcement of policies from the government favoring Cantonese, the mother tongue of the majority of students. Alongside the pushing of mother tongue instruction in schools, the government also implemented measures aiming to improve the standard of English of the students. One of the policies related to the current study is the Native English Speaking Teachers Scheme (NET Scheme) for schools. A detailed account of the implementation and evaluation of this Scheme, together with a brief discussion on Hong Kong English, also echo with conclusions discussed in the previous chapter.



This chapter starts with a review of the status of English in contemporary Hong Kong. It goes on to give a brief account of the history of English language teaching in Hong Kong. The Native English Speaking Teachers Scheme is dealt with in particular detail. It is followed by a general description of the features of Hong Kong English and a review of the attitudes towards this variety.

3.2 English in contemporary Hong Kong

English, being the de facto international language, is being widely used in Hong Kong, one of the international financial and commercial centers in world. In the business sector, English is particularly important, especially in the service industry where customers from around the world are welcomed and served. In the financial sector, English is equally important as the communication tool in exchanges between executives. Not only those directly involved in the above categories of jobs use a substantial amount of English. Evans (2011) had shown that Hong Kong professionals, in general, spend a significant proportion of their working lives reading and writing English texts and that spoken English plays an important role in formal situations. Evans' (2011) study was important in the sense that it provided some basic groundwork about the nature and extent of English used by Hong Kong bilinguals in the workplace. The research by Evans (2011) enables the claim that English is used



more extensively among educated professionals in the workplace, regardless of their occupations.

In tertiary education in Hong Kong, English is also highly valued, as 7 of the eight Universities adopt the policy of English as the medium of instruction (MOI).

Similarly, the Government also places special emphasis on English, where the entrance examination for middle to upper ranked officials requires the applicants to pass an English language assessment alongside a Chinese language assessment.

The importance of English and its extensive usage in the business sector have been the driving force in past decades as an emphasis on English language teaching in schools. English is introduced as early as kindergartens and primary schools. No matter whether kindergartens, primary schools or secondary schools – all strive their best to implement English, as much as possible, in different contents and through instructions, despite the strong encouragement of the government to adopt the mother tongue, Cantonese, as the MOI.

With the spread of English to nearly every corner in the world through recent rapid globalization, its importance as the international language is also emphasized in Hong Kong. This even has an impact on the leisure lives of Hong Kong people. With the assistance of advanced communication technology such as smart phones,



computers, and software including instant communication apps, people can easily and more frequently get in contact with friends and relatives all over the world, many incidences of which involve the usage of English, either because of necessity or convenience.

In general, English is virtually everywhere in contemporary Hong Kong among educated individuals and is still gaining popularity with the growing spread of English under globalization.

3.3 Brief history of English language teaching in Hong Kong

The first schools in Hong Kong were missionary schools (Boyle, 1997a; Kirkpatrick & Chau, 2008) established in the middle of the nineteenth century. Most of the teachings of the missionary schools were in Chinese. One of the schools, St. Paul's College, also taught English. The teaching of English in schools was encouraged by a Committee on Education in 1853 to prevent misunderstanding between the local Chinese and the European rulers (Boyle, 1997a). In 1862, the first Government run school, Central School, was established improving the ill-equipped and poorly-run village schools with Chinese instruction during that time. Frederic Stewart, Central School's first Principal, emphasized the importance of Chinese and made it one of the three parts in the curriculum, among English and Scripture (Boyle,



1997a). The situation continued for many years as English was not particularly in demand because of the limited size of the expatriate ruler's class and relatively limited communications between the government and local Chinese. With the gradual growth of the colony, the communication need between the government and local Chinese grew as well. Governor Bowen (1883-85) was keen on ensuring schools were able to produce enough people with competency in English and proposed an examination in the language for all appointments to government clerical posts. The impact on schools was immediate. Schools became serious on teaching the English language (Boyle, 1997a). This emphasis on English language continued with Governor William Robinson (1891-98) who criticized the English education of the colony such that the vast majority of Chinese in Hong Kong still remain so little anglicized (Boyle, 1997a). In alignment with the Governor's criticism, Central School switched to use English as the MOI and changed its name to Queen's College.

Realizing the attitude of the government towards English, the demand for English medium of instruction (EMI) schools by parents continued to grow. As the administration of the colony became complex, Governor Lugard (1907-12) pushed ahead, despite opposing opinion towards the establishment of the first university in Hong Kong, to cater for the provision of potential bilingual civil servants. The



University of Hong Kong (HKU) was opened in 1912 with English as the MOI and parental demand for EMI secondary schools grew rapidly. The immediate effect on the secondary schools was the adoption of English as the MOI, since students would clearly have a better chance to get into the University than students from Chinese medium of instruction (CMI) schools.

The situation remained unchanged for many years despite several attempts to put more emphasis on the vernacular language, Cantonese, in the education system.

With the establishment of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), the situation seemed to pave way for a breakthrough in bringing the vernacular to an equally important status with English. However, problems quickly surfaced. The University faced the problem of not enough support in Chinese textbooks and reference materials. There was also not enough bilingual staff. More importantly, the requirement of passing an English paper in the entrance examination also created obstacles for the Chinese medium school students. As a result, the demand for English medium secondary schools kept growing despite the setup of CUHK. Also, the number of CMI schools declined dramatically following the foundation of CUHK (Boyle, 1997a). There was a second reason for the parental demand for EMI



education – the low status of Chinese (Kirkpatrick & Chau, 2008) as it only became a co-official language with English in 1974.

The situation of the dominance of EMI schools remained for many years despite a series of six reports brought out by the Education Commission which strongly recommended CMI for schools. Without the enforcement of the recommendations by the government, the principals of individual secondary schools were still able to decide on the MOI. As a result, in 1990, over 90% of secondary students were in EMI schools (Kirkpatrick & Chau, 2008 quoted in Johnson, 1994). The first Education Commission Report (1984) also recommended the use of expatriate English teachers which was implemented by the Education Department. In 1986, the Education Department initiated the Expatriate English Language Teachers Pilot Scheme which was run by the British Council in 1989. Subsequent refined schemes were implemented in both primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong. A detailed account of the Scheme follows in the next section.

The dominance of EMI secondary schools came to an end when the Government abandoned the laissez-faire policy that had allowed secondary schools to choose the MOI in 1998. The Government limited the number of EMI schools to initially 100 and later relaxed to 114 out of a total of 460 secondary schools. The



policy was maintained until the year 2009, when the Government announced the Fine-Tuned Medium of Instruction (MOI) policy (FTP), which was governed by the following six guiding principles:

1. to safeguard students' learning effectiveness;
2. to uphold mother-tongue teaching and enhance proficiency in Chinese and English;
3. to uphold the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures for schools in using English as the MOI as recommended in the 2005 Review Report;
4. to allow schools to exercise professional judgment under the prescribed criteria and adopt the appropriate MOI arrangements to address students' learning needs with regard to individual school circumstances;
5. to make sure that schools devise a holistic MOI strategy as part of the whole-school language policy and enhance the transparency of information on their MOI arrangements so as to facilitate parents in making informed school choices; and



6. to monitor the learning effectiveness of students under individual schools’

MOI arrangements in accordance with the School Development and

Accountability Framework. (Education Bureau, 2009)

The fourth guiding principle was seen as a compromise to the huge demand from parents requesting a relaxation of the policy to allow more CMI secondary schools to teach subjects in English. The implementation of the FTP was seen as a partial return to the laissez-faire policy and more subjects were expected to be taught in English in former CMI schools, which was not an ideal situation as “research findings indicate that students in Chinese medium schools who take their final school exams in Chinese fare better in all subjects, with the exception of English, than those who have switched to study these subjects in English (Kirkpatrick & Chau, 2008).

In general, despite the return of the sovereignty from Britain to China after 1997, English is still highly valued by parents and schools in Hong Kong.

3.4 History of native-speaking English teaching (NET) schemes in Hong Kong

3.4.1 Background of the NET schemes. In Hong Kong, the introduction of native-speaking English teachers is as old as the history of government-run schools in Hong Kong. The first commercial recruitment of native English speaking teachers (NETs) was in 1862 by Frederick Steward, the first Principal of Central School



(Forrester & Lok, 2008 quoted Bickely, 1998). The recruitment of NETs continued to expand and peaked in 1963 with 260 expatriates being employed to teach all school subjects including English in all school levels (Forrester & Lok, 2008). Thereafter, local English teachers started to dominate the teaching of English to students in Hong Kong. A report released in 1982 by a visiting panel had criticized the situation:

“Despite clever use of 'chinglish' in the Anglo-Chinese schools and the popularity with teachers of courses offered by a number of agencies to improve their grasp of English, most teachers are by no means fluent and consequently their teaching efficiency is handicapped no matter how valiant are their attempts to master English. The situation has deteriorated markedly, we are given to believe, since the effects of the policy on localisation of teaching staff have begun to be visible. We consider the 'localisation of staffing' policy ought to be amended so that children in their first years of schooling might be exposed to native English speakers, engaged as ancillary staff either on a contract basis or accepted as helpers (e.g., the non-working spouses of British expatriates or other suitable English speakers). Such people should be given the benefit of even a brief form of training before moving into the schools to assist regular teachers and to supplement specially prepared audio-visual aids such as video-tape programmes” (Visiting Panel, 1982, III.1.9).



3.4.2 The Pilot Scheme. The criticism by the visiting panel blaming local English teachers was taken up by the subsequent Education Commission Report No. 1 (1984), which recommended employment of local native English speaking teachers to raise the falling standards of English. As a result, the Education Department initiated the Expatriate English Language Teachers Pilot Scheme (the Pilot) in 1986, which was then implemented by the British Council. The pilot scheme ran for two academic years from September 1987 to August 1989 and recruited 81 expatriate English language teachers from Britain to work in 41 schools (Forrester & Lok, 2008).

3.4.3 The evaluation of the Pilot. The Pilot was not a great success. Firstly, the response from schools was poor with only 41 schools participating in 1987. Secondly, 22 of the teachers recruited had quit the scheme and less than half of the schools at that point said they wished to continue with the scheme when it ended its pilot run (Boyle, 1997b). Some of the reasons behind the high turnover rate of the expatriate teachers may be partly attributable to the financial aspect. The housing allowance of HK\$4,000.00 per month at that time was not enough for a married teacher with children. Secondly, the unfavorable change of the exchange rate during the course of scheme also scared off some of the expatriate teachers (Boyle, 1997b).



Other possible causes included: 1) the powerlessness of the expatriate teachers to effect change in the schools as originally expected; 2) language problem in general in the local school setting, with even English teachers speaking Cantonese during English panel meetings; and 3) the lack of involvement in extra-curricular activities of expatriate teachers in school, which was taken for granted from the perspective of the school.

From the viewpoint of local teachers, the local English teachers objected to the scheme even before it had started. Experienced local English teachers no doubt saw the expatriate teachers as a threat or even insult on themselves, as expatriate teachers were hired to teach them how to teach English. Another problem with the cooperation of expatriate teachers and local teachers may have been related to the difference in teaching styles. The generally lively and more interactive style of the expatriate teachers was more likely to create fun and noisy classroom atmospheres and not considered helpful by local teachers, especially when they were preparing students for examinations or other serious school matters.

As Boyle (1997b) pointed out, “the root of the problem was that the Education Department had not really turned in to the local teachers' resentment at the implication of the EETS that an expatriate native-speaker teacher of English was



better than a local teacher.” This commentary bears important weight to all NET schemes in essence. As Boyle (1997b, p. 175) quoted Cheng (1988) remarked, “I believe that a properly trained Chinese teacher with a good command of English can teach the subject just as competently as a native-speaker”, it confirms the importance of many recent research in ELF aiming at questioning the taken for granted assumption of native speakers norm as the standard teaching model of English.

3.4.4 The modified scheme. Despite poor responses, a modified scheme, the Expatriate English Language Teachers Modified Scheme (the Modified scheme), followed in 1989 and ran for a period of 2 years. In view of the difficulties encountered in the pilot, the government had implemented modifications. Instead of recruiting expatriate teachers by British Council, the participating schools were in charge of the recruitment themselves. This improved the situation as expatriate teachers were immediately accountable to principals of the schools. The Modified scheme was an improvement on the original scheme, as the expatriate teachers were given a more realistic idea of their role (Boyle, 2007b).

As a result, 19 schools participated in the first year. In the second year, there were an additional 14 schools that joined the scheme. There were 33 expatriate English language teachers employed during the year 1989-1990 and 23 in the



subsequent year. With the improvement of the Modified scheme over the Pilot, Report No. 4 of the Education Commission (1990) recommended that a permanent scheme should be introduced in 1991 despite the falling number of participating schools and expatriate teachers employed. The Government responded to the report and implemented the Permanent Expatriate English Language Teacher Scheme (the Permanent scheme) during the year 1991 to 1998.

The response from the schools was good with around 100 schools participating in the Permanent scheme. Despite its initial success, old problems re-emerged. In addition, with the return of sovereignty of Hong Kong from Britain to China, the special benefits enjoyed by expatriate teachers over local English teachers were no longer easily accepted (Boyle, 1997b). As a result, only 33 schools out of a total of 360 eligible schools opted to go for expatriate teachers. Despite the poor response at the end of the Permanent scheme, Report No. 6 of the Education Commission recommended:

“that before an adequate number of local teachers are trained, schools should be encouraged to employ on local terms more native English speakers, who are qualified English language teachers, to teach the subject”. (Education Commission, 1996).



As a result, the Native-Speaking English Teacher Scheme (NET Scheme) was introduced into secondary schools in 1998 until the present time. A similar scheme, the Primary Native-Speaking English Teacher Scheme (PNET Scheme) was extended into primary schools.

The acknowledged objectives of the NET Scheme were to:

- enrich the English language learning environment in schools;
- enhance the teaching and learning of English with linguistically and culturally authentic materials and resources; and
- strengthen teaching capacity through school-based professional development and collaboration between NETs and other English Panel Members (EPMs).

(Education Bureau 2015 Website)

As suggested by the previous discussion of the evaluation of the Pilot scheme, the root of the problem of the scheme was the implication of the superior position of the NETs over the local teachers. Although the objectives of the NET Scheme are presented as carefully as possible, not to imply the same superiority of NETs, the usage of the word “linguistically authentic” to describe the materials and resources brought by the NETs still heavily hinted that the NETs' English are real and correct as compared with local teachers.



The formal evaluation reports conducted in 2009 were extensive to include 34 Principals or Assistant Principals, 74 English Panel Chairs, 79 local English teachers and 64 NETs. The following are broad conclusions made:

1. Schools are generally satisfied with the role and function of the NETs in schools. In general the NETs are providing a stimulus to the oral language context in school. This is complementary to an apparent general text based approach to teaching English among local teachers.
 2. NETs have both a curriculum and marketing role within schools in Hong Kong. Their presence in the school is valued by parents as an indication of the serious nature of the English language curriculum in the school system. As such there is some tendency to exploit the presence of a NET in the school to attract students. This is important in a period when the demographic structure of the population is altering and the school-aged cohort is reducing in size.
 3. NETs have generally adopted an educational role more consistent with the anticipated changes to be introduced with the new curriculum.
- Schools therefore are anticipating changes in teaching, curriculum and



assessment with the introduction of the new curriculum, but NETs are anticipating less change in their role.

4. Students are appreciative of the presence of NETs in schools. The opportunity to practise their English and to become accustomed to people from other cultures is valued.
5. The organization of English departments in the secondary schools is thorough, focused on the improvement of examination performances and on the deployment of resources which include staff.
6. The role of the NET within the English Panel in the secondary schools varies according to the Panel Chair's perception and local expectation of the NET. This perception varies from a role that is manifested in oral language practices with students, support and professional development for staff, development of materials and strategies for the classroom, administrative support for the Panel Chair and leadership in English language curriculum – to a NET occupying the role of just an additional English teacher in the school. Both extremes and the roles in between are appreciated in the schools by the Principal, the local teachers and students and parents.



7. Departmental meetings, or Panel meetings as they are described, appear to focus more on administrative matters than on pedagogical or curriculum reform. When attention is focused on improvement of learning, the Panel meeting focuses on test scores and examination results. The purpose of these conversations is generally to improve grades, test scores and both internal and external examination results. The pedagogical and leadership roles of the NET in this milieu are diminished. In some cases, the NET lends support to students and staff in the students' oral language development and practice examinations but this was often regarded as irrelevant to the improvement of test scores. The role of the NET had become a valuable complement to the main business of the English Department, but it was not seen as central to the improvement of examination performance.
8. The introduction of the new curriculum and the changing examination format and focus, accompanied by the projected new form of reporting, will place additional pressures on the Panel Chair, Principal and the local teachers. The perception of the local teachers or members of the Panel could be described as treating the role of the NET as



largely irrelevant to the curriculum while it was dominated by the competitive and norm referenced examination system. The peripheral curriculum was the main area of influence for the NET.

9. Substantial changes are envisaged once the new curriculum is introduced. The shift to a standards referenced framework, criterion referenced interpretation of assessment and reporting in terms of proficiency levels has the potential to radically shift the emphasis in the curriculum from the way it is currently taught in schools. A great deal of thought needs to be given to the implications of the changes that are necessary for the successful implementation of the new curriculum, and related assessment and reporting procedures. The main platform will have changed in the school's role for the Panel Chair and the local English Panel members. This may require a substantial change in the way in which Panels operate and the NET may have a critical role in assisting this change to occur.
10. During visits to classrooms, although minimal in number, no targeted or differentiated instruction was observed. Every lesson observed involved whole class instruction, including small-group work but



where all members of each small group focused on the same task.

Targeted instruction aimed at improving student proficiency appeared to be antithetical to the teaching approach in the Hong Kong English classroom. In a proficiency oriented curriculum, using standards referenced frameworks, criterion referenced interpretation of assessment, and proficiency reporting, this approach to teaching may have to be adjusted. The role of the NET in this process would be of considerable importance, providing that the NET has the necessary set of assessment, interpretation and curriculum skills. (Griffin & Woods, 2009, pp. 5-6).

Not surprisingly, no recommendation was made concerning the assumption of linguistic superiority of NETs over local teachers. It is perfectly well and sound when NETs are replaced by “Expert English Users”. Not until the root of the problem, which is the assumption of the linguistic superiority of NETs over local teachers, is dealt with, old problems are likely to re-emerge despite initial success, as what happened during the later stage of the Permanent scheme.

3.5 Features of and attitudes towards Hong Kong English



The discussion concerning whether Hong Kong English is a newly developed nativised English is far from conclusive. Even the question of whether the Hong Kong English exists is debatable (Groves, 2011). However, research starts to accumulate as evidence of features of Hong Kong English, first not to argue whether Hong Kong English can be considered newly developed nativised English. Deterding, Wong and Kirkpatrick (2008) identified several features of Hong Kong English: the conflation of long and short vowels as well as [e] and [ae], the absence of reduced vowels, the use of syllable-based rhythm and the stressing of pronouns, the simplification of final consonant clusters, the vocalisation of dark [ɪ], pronunciation of initial TH by [f], the fronting of [u:], the use of a diphthong for FACE and GOAT, and the conflation of initial [l] and [n], which is particularly unique to Hong Kong. Hung (2000) concluded that: 1. There exists a 'phonology' of Hong Kong English, with systematic features of its own; and 2. The phonemic inventory of Hong Kong English is considerably simpler than that of Old Varieties of Englishes, both in its vowel and consonant systems.

Bolton (2000) identified a long list of Hong Kong words in the Macquarie database which highlights the use of distinctively Hong Kong local vocabularies. Other findings of features of Hong Kong English certainly keep arising and,

therefore, although it is still not conclusive regarding the existence of a unique nativised Hong Kong English, the features of Hong Kong English, whether distinctively unique to Hong Kong or shared with other varieties, are being identified.

Regardless of the above research identifying features of Hong Kong English, attitudes towards the concept of Hong Kong English, particularly among the teachers in Hong Kong, are clearly negative, as discussed in Chapter Two. The teachers in Hong Kong are negative towards the concept of Hong Kong English in the sense that it represents errors rather than a distinctive variety of legitimate English. Researchers' views are divided in this regard (Groves, 2011)

Much related to the current study, Joseph (2004, pp. 160-161) pointed out that “the future of English in Hong Kong depends on the future direction of Hong Kong identity” and that “only if and when teachers come to recognise that the 'errors' in Hong Kong students' English (at least the regularly occurring ones) are precisely the points at which a distinct Hong Kong identity is expressed in the language, will a Hong Kong English genuinely begin to emerge, and to be taken as a version of Standard English rather than as a departure from it”. When this recognition of Hong Kong English as a standard version of English comes, the question of whether it is

relevant or necessary to adhere to the native speakers' norm as the standard in Hong Kong will no longer be needed.

3.6 Conclusion

English language teaching has always been important through the history of colonial Hong Kong and extends to the present time due to its importance. This importance has not faded away despite the arrival of Putonghua. Different measures have been implemented by the government aiming at improving the standard of English of students. The NET Schemes have been one of the most costly and with mixed outcomes. An evaluation of the NET Scheme, in the perspective of ELF and in the context of Hong Kong, where international trade and finance are becoming more global, is probably in the best interests for students in the long run.



CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction and Overview

This study aimed at exploring the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the NNETs' perception of correctness, acceptability, and pleasantness of the variety of ways of speaking English?

RQ2: What are the NNETs' attitudes towards the international way of speaking English and ELF-related issues such as mutual intelligibility among NNSs of English?

In a rapidly globalized world, the number of non-native competent English speakers are growing rapidly and already far outnumber native English speakers. The communication among non-native English speakers is, thus, becoming the mainstream communication in English.

Understanding the attitudes of local NNETs towards English as a lingua franca was the first and most important step in answering the question of whether the native English speakers' norm was still relevant and appropriate to be the standard in teaching English language in the context of Hong Kong.



This study adopted a mixed methods approach including a questionnaire adapted from Jenkins (2007) and semi-structured interview sessions.

This chapter describes the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews used in this study. The questionnaire collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The semi-structured interview employed a list of open-ended questions. The transcription of the interviews was adapted from Jenkins (2007) and included prosodic features. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded for subsequent analyses.

4.2 The Study

4.2.1 The questionnaire study. The questionnaire study aimed at exploring the attitudes of local NNETs towards spoken English as a lingua franca. The current study drew on the direct approach of folk linguistics. One of the advantages of a direct approach compared with indirect approaches such as the matched guise technique (MGT) was that it was almost impossible to arrange the participants, who were local teachers with heavy workloads, to work through the steps in the research setting using MGT. In the classic setting of MGT, respondents are required to listen to a series of recorded speech samples of the same text read aloud and rate on scales the speaker of each sample for qualities such as intelligence, ambition, friendliness, honesty and generosity (Jenkins, 2007). It was difficult to arrange a large number of



respondents to assist with such arrangements. Another justification for folk linguistics was that it looks beyond attitudinal responses elicited in social-psychological language attitudes research (Jenkins, 2007) to “reflect strongly-held positions about language and its repercussions in communities.” (Niedzielski & Preston, 2000, p. 323). Niedzielski and Preston (2000, p. 323) further commented that “We think it is important for language professionals, especially perhaps those involved in the field known broadly as applied linguistics, to know as much as possible about these folk positions.” Although it seems confusing for English teachers to be considered as “folk” when talking about English, Niedzielski and Preston (2000, p. 323) stated clearly that “Everybody is a folk, and the nonspecialist views of topics which touch the lives of all citizens are worth knowing for their bearing on public life in general, on education in particular, and, most specifically, on the regard in which the prejudiced against are held”.

Many of the semi-structured interview participants commented that they lacked knowledge about linguistics. This made them fearful of responding with useless data. These comments clearly allowed the local NNETs to be taken as folks and participate in the study. One of the reasons for the researcher to take on the study was the first and important step of informing the question of whether it is still suitable



and relevant for the native English speakers' norm to be set as the standard for the English teaching model in Hong Kong. The current situation of linguistic insecurity of local NNETs in Hong Kong was perhaps what Niedzielski and Preston (2000, p. 323) might refer to as “prejudiced against” in Hong Kong.

This study also drew on methods of perceptual dialectology, a branch of folk linguistics that aims at exploring people's beliefs about different language varieties. Respondents were asked to categorize and judge varieties by rating them for correctness or pleasantness and subsequently ranking the varieties. As pointed out by Lindemann (2005, p. 189, emphasis original), perceptual dialectology provides “much more information on *why* community members react as they do to different varieties, what aspects of varieties are salient for them and why, and the degree to which beliefs are shared in a community”.

Apart from being a “folk” on linguistics, the local NNETs “as a profession tend to hold the same kinds of prescriptive views of correctness and acceptability as the general population. That is, their view of 'correct' and 'acceptable' English is often the one that they acquired during their own schooldays...” Therefore, “English language teachers are the obvious starting point to find out more about the kinds of attitudes towards and beliefs about English accents that are being conveyed to the



general populations in the education systems of many countries” (Jenkins, 2007, pp. 148-149). Jenkins also pointed out that “Insights into teachers' attitudes to language spread and change in general, and to ELF accents in particular, may provide information not only about the stigmatization of NNS English accents and possible discrimination against their users, but also about how these can be addressed through education system”.

The format of an anonymous questionnaire has the advantage of encouraging respondents to voice their opinions about sensitive attitudes and beliefs. It can also be administered in a relatively large quantity without too much administration. The current questionnaire (Appendix A) was adopted from Jenkins’ (2007) study. It asked the respondents for their attitudes towards 10 named English accents. These involved native accents, nativised accents, and non-native accents, including the local Hong Kong accent. The respondents were asked to rate the named accents for correctness, acceptability for international communication, pleasantness and familiarity. They were also asked to name, rank and describe any accents in the world from best to fifth best.

There were minor adjustments made to the original questionnaire. One was the replacement of “accent” with “way of speaking English” to incorporate the

concept of ELF as a variable way of using English, as proposed by Seidlhofer (2011).

This change was primarily aimed at directing the participants' attention to conceptualizing different accents of English as different ways of using the language and, in the case of the current study, different ways of speaking it. Throughout this thesis, the term “accent” is retained in order to facilitate the readers' ease of reading, but takes on Seidlhofer's newly suggested meaning that denotes different ways of speaking English.

Another adjustment concerned the choices of 10 named accents. The original choices were UK, USA, Australia, India, Brazil, China, Germany, Japan, Spain and Sweden. The first 2 accents are widely accepted as native English accents and more recently, Australia has been viewed as having an accepted native English accent. India was selected because it represented a nativised English accent. The remaining 6 accents were non-native accents spanning three main ELF areas – Europe, East Asia, and Latin America (Jenkins, 2007). In the present study, the Hong Kong accent was added to explore the issue of identity. Spain and Sweden were replaced by France and Korea. In the Hong Kong context, French seems to be a more familiar accent and the Korean accent has started to gain familiarity due to the popularity of Korean pop stars, as well as Ban Kim-moon, the Secretary General of the United Nations. The



Brazilian accent was retained despite its unfamiliarity, as a representative accent from the Latin America region.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected by the questionnaire.

4.2.1.1 Quantitative data. The attitudes of the NNETs towards different accents of English were measured by the rating question (Question 4) using a 6-point Likert scale. There were 4 Likert items for measuring each selected accent, namely the NNETs' perception of the accents: 1) 'correctness' and 2) 'pleasantness', the 2 most salient attitudinal data gatherable by folk linguistic methods (Preston, 2002). In addition, 3) “acceptability” was for international communication and 4) “familiarity”. The acceptability item reflected the NNETs' tendency to accept ELF as legitimate for international communication, apart from native accents. The last item “familiarity” was to test the respondents' willingness to rate accents which were unfamiliar to them and obtain clues on any stereotyping effects. The ranking question (Question 3) was used to reveal whether the respondents were ready to rank accents of English in hierarchy, providing clues of a presence of a standard language ideology.

4.2.1.2 Qualitative data. The aim of Questions 1 and 2 were to reveal the participants' attitudes towards different accents of English. Question 1 was designed to elicit participants' immediate responds towards different accents. Question 2 to

gather participants' attitudes towards other accents not listed in Question 1 and whether the participants could extend the idea of different ways of speaking English to regional usage of English, for example, if they could conceive “Asian English”, “African English” or “European English”.

4.2.2 Qualitative data collected by semi-structured interview sessions. The interviews were conducted parallel to the questionnaire, so as to explore the inner world of the participants, as Jenkins (2007, p. 206 quoted Kvale, 1996): the in-depth interview can gain “empathic access to the world of the interviewee”. When complex issues such as identity are implicated in the discussion, in-depth interviews are the “only way to collect data where it is important to set the perspectives heard within the context of personal history or experience; where delicate or complex issues need to be explored at a detailed level, or where it is important to relate different issues to individual personal circumstances” (Jenkins, 2007 quoted Lewis, 2003, p. 58). As implicated by Jenkins’ work, deep seated bias of the participants toward NS English was expected to be underlined by the questionnaire results. Together with the complex ambivalence arisen possibly from the interplay of language insecurity and personal identity, in-depth semi-structured interviews were used to explore the participants’ overt beliefs and covert attitudes towards different ways of using English



and the rapidly emerging ELF. Participants' inner beliefs and attitudes about particularly non-native ways of speaking English were explored in the interviews using probing questions.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, adopting Jenkins (2007) convention to include prosodic features, as follows (Table 1):

Table 1

Transcription keys adopted from Jenkins (2007)

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| X | incomprehensible word |
| XX | incomprehensible phrase |
| () | transcriber doubt |
| (I'm not sure) | guess at the words in question |
| [] | uncertain phonetic transcription |
| (.) | pause of less than a second |
| (7) | approximate length of pause in seconds |
| ref- | abrupt cut-off (hyphen attached to item preceding cut-off) |
| : | lengthening (repeated to show greater length) |
| CAPS | emphatic or contrastive stress ("I" is underlined) |
| ↗ | rising tone beginning on stressed syllable |
| ↘ | falling tone beginning on stressed syllable |
| overlapping [talk | overlapping talk |
| - | interruption: hyphen attached to beginning of interrupter's |
| turn | |
| full stop. | to indicate termination |
| @ | laughter |
| <SOFT>text</SOFT> | other modes of speaking |
| I | interviewer |
| A,B,C, etc. | interviewee (except I) |
| ... | researcher's gaps |

The tone of voice, expressions, and prosodic features in the natural flow of conversations during the interviews were analyzed in accordance with the discussion contents (Jenkins, 2007). Contradictions and ambiguities anticipated in speeches were carefully spotted and brought forward for discussion.

The interviews were conducted in roughly the same manner by the researcher initiating the following open-ended questions:

List 1

Open-ended Interview Questions

- How do you comment this statement, “Students need to approximate native speakers English as close as possible?”
- Can you comment on the needs of your students regarding their accents?
- Can you comment on the needs of the parents of your students regarding your students' accents?
- Do you like your own English accent? And why?
- Are you concerned if your accent was recognizable to others as being influenced by your Cantonese? And why?
- Which English accent you would most like to have if you were able to choose?
- What was your feeling when you were mistaken for a native speaker of English?
- Can you describe any negative accent related experience or situation of your own or others?
- What is your comment on the notion of “English as an International Language”
- How much you know about the notion of “English as a Lingua Franca”/”Lingua Franca Core”?
- What signals success in your career as an English teacher?

Some of the questions were designed in order to highlight the participants'

ambiguities towards native accents and their own accent, implicated by the literature.



For example, the first three questions were used to highlight the participant's attitudes towards how native accents fulfill the students' need now and in the future; this would highlight the functionality of ELF. The five questions followed were used to highlight if there were any ambiguities shown by the participants regarding the attitudes towards their own accent. The second last two questions were designed to find out the participants views towards English as a lingua franca and their views towards English as an international language. The final question explored the participants' views towards their identity as an English teacher, and their career aspiration, which also impacted on their attitudes towards English as a lingua franca.

The interviews were coded according to the themes discussed (Table 2).

Table 2

Themes emerged during semi-structured interview sessions

| | Discussed with Participant | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Themes discussed | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | J | K | L | |
| English as a communication tool | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | |
| Pro native speakers' norm | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | |
| Examination requirements | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | |
| Specific non-native accents | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | |
| Personal accent-related experience | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | |
| English as an international language | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | |
| Standard English, good English, correct English, etc. | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | |
| Legitimacy, history, original, real and authentic English | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | |
| Students' aspirations | | √ | | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Power, status | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Identity | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | | √ |
| Non-native accent as errors | √ | | √ | | √ | | √ | √ |
| Hierarchy of accents of English | | | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Students' future careers concerns | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | | √ |
| European English | √ | | √ | √ | | | | √ |
| Exposure to different accents | √ | | | | √ | | | √ |
| Common core in English | √ | | | √ | | | | |
| Obvious ambiguities noted | | | | | | | √ | √ |

The interviews were all conducted by the researcher and asked the same list of open-ended questions. Most discussions were based on the above listed themes. One of the main difficulties faced was the time limit of the interviews, especially when conducted between lessons inside a school. Due to the tight schedule of local English teachers, most of the interviews were conducted inside the school and could only last at most for an hour. Although all of the above listed themes were of interest to the researcher, not all could be discussed during the interviews. When there was a time limit, the issues at the top of the list were first asked to ensure detailed discussions could happen. The problem of time constraints happened with participants F and G. Despite the time constraint for face-to-face interviews, all participants agreed to participate in further discussions if required over the phone. There was no subsequent need, however, to conduct further phone interviews. Instead, second interview

sessions were arranged with participants A and D. Another difficulty faced by the researcher was the huge volume of audio records that needed to be transcribed verbatim with prosodic features. After the transcription of the first 2 interviews (L and J), it was decided that only the prosodic features with the participants should be retained, as the omission of prosodic features of the interviewer did not affect the interpretation of the participants' attitudes and beliefs.

The initial coding of the themes discussed yielded the following main themes, which were discussed with over half of the participants:

List 2

Initial themes emerged during semi-structured interview sessions

- English as a communication tool
- Pro native speakers' norm
- Examination requirements
- Specific non-native accents
- Personal accent-related experience
- English as an international language
- Standard English, good English, correct English, etc.
- Legitimacy, history, original, real and authentic English
- Students' aspirations
- Power, status
- Identity
- Non-native accent as errors
- Hierarchy of accents of English
- Students' future careers concerns

With reference to the research questions, the following themes emerged, suggested in Jenkins (2007) and were categorized first under accent attitudes and accent beliefs, as

follows:

1) Accent attitudes:

- Pro native speakers' norm
- Non-native accent as errors
- Specific non-native accents

2) Accent beliefs:

- Standard English, good English, correct English, etc.
- Legitimacy, history, original, real and authentic English
- Students' aspirations
- Students' future careers concerns

As all the participants had spent quite some time on English communication and examination requirements, there was an additional third theme:

3) English as a communication tool vs Examination requirements

As all but one of the participants talked about their personal accent related experience, this was singled out to look for the possible formation of the participants' attitudes and beliefs:

4) Personal accent-related experience

To answer the second research question, the following theme was singled out:



5) English as an international language

A separate section on identity deals with the following items was added:

- Power, status
- Identity

Further grouping of the above emerged themes yielded the following main themes:

- 1) Accent attitudes
 - a) a desire for a native like accent
 - b) attitudes towards Hong Kong accent and other non-native accents
- 2) Accent beliefs
 - a) beliefs about “good” and “bad” accents
 - b) beliefs about suitable accents for students
- 3) Communication and examination
- 4) Perceived effects of accent-related life experiences
- 5) Acceptability of ELF for international communications and as a model for teaching.

Statements from individual participants were cross referenced with each other to establish a general claim for each of the five main themes. The analysis of the prosodic features such as laughter, pauses and repetitions further enhanced the



general claims made especially for the first 2 main themes. The results from the questionnaire study also supported the claims arrived by the analysis of the statements by individual participants.

The researcher is the administrator of a private educational services provider specializing in providing course materials taught by native English speaking teachers for schools and learning centers. At first glance, there was no doubt of a pro native speakers' norm existing in the teaching of English language. This could, therefore, have casted doubt over the objectivity of the semi-structured interviews conducted by the researcher. The researcher of this study was convinced by the arguments put forward by other researchers advocating the relevance of ELF over native Englishes in an increasingly globalized world and in particular, the context of Hong Kong. Therefore, the researcher was constantly exposed to the arguments and influence of both directions. In the actual interviewing sessions, the researcher was able to, thus, monitor discussions and conduct them in a relatively unbiased way to illicit the participants' attitudes and beliefs towards spoken English.

4.2.3 The Participants. A convenience sample of 43 NNETs was recruited through direct contact to the Heads of English Panels, or the Principals of primary schools and secondary schools in Hong Kong to participate in the questionnaire study.



Due to constraints of financial and time resources, only a limited number of participants were recruited.

On the other hand, as suggested by Patton (2002), 12 participants were recruited in a semi-structured interview. In the end, there were 11 local teachers participating. They were selected based on their years of service, experience of co-teaching with NETs, and knowledge of World Englishes to provide extensive variation in their experiences and career inspirations. A pilot test (Appendix G) involving acquaintances NNETs was conducted to explore the suitability of the questionnaire in the Hong Kong context.

4.3 Data triangulation

The quantitative data collected by the questionnaires were triangulated with qualitative data obtained by the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The interviews also provided behavioral data, the actual ELF talk, to be cross referenced with the data collected, especially where identity issues were concerned. The different speech styles of particular interviewees during interview also provided intriguing data for subsequent analysis.



CHAPTER FIVE

PHASE I – THE QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

5.1 Introduction and Overview

The results of the questionnaire study confirmed findings from the literature that the British accent was the most preferred English accent among local NNETs. In particular, the British accent was regarded as the best accent in terms of correctness/standardness, acceptability for international communication, pleasantness and intelligibility. Together, with the American accent and Australian accent, native English accents were perceived, as a group, to be generally correct and standard, whereas, non-native English accents, as a whole, were considered to be not correct or standard, although some individual accents were quite intelligible internationally or pleasant. Therefore, the current study also supported the firm segregation of native accents and non-native accents.

The analysis of the questionnaire data revealed an apparent contradiction or ambiguity of the participants towards the local Hong Kong accent, possibly due to the familiarity and the accent's high intelligibility.

This chapter reports the results of the questionnaire study with demographic



data of the participants. Each of the individual accent's ratings is reported in detail. The accents are named among the best 5 accents in the world are then summarized. The perceptions of the 10 individual accents are categorized into positive, neutral and negative. All newly named accents are also listed in order of popularity. The analysis of the rating data and the ranking data follows right after the results with general conclusions. The Hong Kong accent is singled out for a detailed analysis for the apparent contradiction on its world ranking. Individual accents are discussed in detail concerning perceptions of the participants. The effects of attending courses like World English on participants' perceptions of individual accents are discussed in detail. The final part is a discussion regarding other comments made by the participants. The chapter ends with a general conclusion for the questionnaire study.

5.2 Results and discussions

5.2.1 Response Rate. There were a total of 43 copies of completed questionnaires collected, including 5 from the pilot test. The response rate, approximately 36% (43/120), was lower than expected reflecting partly the heavy workload of local language teachers in Hong Kong, especially local English teachers. Some interviewees also commented that the questionnaires were “difficult” to complete. When asked what they meant by difficult, one commented that she never



thought of questions asked, whereas, another said that the questionnaire seemed to require much time to complete. One potential participant declined to participate saying that she did not work in linguistics, so would be unable to answer the questions.

5.2.2 The demographics of the participants. Among the participants, there were 31 female teachers and 11 male teachers. One participant did not disclose his/her gender. The age distribution is shown in the following table (Table 3):

Table 3

| <i>Age range of the participants</i> | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Age range | Number of participants |
| 20-29 | 6 |
| 30-39 | 15 |
| 40-49 | 10 |
| 50-59 | 10 |
| >60 | 1 |
| undisclosed | 1 |
| Total | 43 |

The majority of the participants were born in Hong Kong; with only 4 born in Mainland China; 1 in India; and 1 undisclosed. All but 1 of the participants' mother tongue was Cantonese, while only one claimed to be Chinese. Slightly more than half of the participants (22) claimed to speak Putonghua as well as English.

5.2.3 Teaching experience of the participants. All of the participants teach in Hong Kong with one taught in Canada for 5 years. The teaching experience of the participants is summarized in the following table (Table 4):

Table 4

Teaching experience of the participants

| Teaching experience (no. of years) | Number of participants |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 0-10 | 18 |
| 11-20 | 11 |
| 21-30 | 12 |
| >30 | 1 |
| undisclosed | 1 |
| Total | 43 |
| With overseas teaching experience | 1 |

5.2.4 Summary of the rating question (Question 4). Question 4 asked the participants to rate individual accents according to 4 criteria:

Q4) Put the way of speaking English of a competent speaker of English from each of the ten countries/places mentioned in question 1 to the following scales for a) correctness b) acceptability for international communication c) pleasantness d) your familiarity with the way of speaking English.

All participants rated at least 3 accents, reflecting that they had no specific difficulty in understanding the phrase 'the way of speaking English', as suggested by the results

of the pilot test. This suggested that it was acceptable and well received by the participants that different accents can be viewed as different ways of speaking English.

5.2.4.1 Simple descriptive statistics for individual accents.

5.2.4.1.1 The way of speaking English of competent speakers from the USA

(Table 5):

Table 5
Ratings for the American accent

| | | Rating (6-point Likert scale) | | | |
|----------|---------------|---|---------|------|---------|
| | | (With “1” denoting very correct and “6” very incorrect, etc.) | | | |
| | | range | average | mode | missing |
| USA | correctness | 1-4 | 2.12 | 2 | 1 |
| | acceptability | 1-4 | 1.90 | 2 | 1 |
| | pleasantness | 1-4 | 2.21 | 2 | 1 |
| | familiarity | 1-4 | 2.14 | 1 | 1 |
| Remarks* | | Nil | | | |

Note. *Remarks written by participants next to the question.

There were just one missing data for the ratings of American accent, showing that the participants were very willing to rate this accent.

5.2.4.1.2 The way of speaking English of competent speakers from Brazil

(Table 6):

Table 6

Ratings for the Brazilian accent

| | | Rating (6-point Likert scale) | | | |
|--------|---------------|---|---------|------|---------|
| | | (With “1” denoting very correct and “6” very incorrect, etc.) | | | |
| | | range | average | mode | missing |
| Brazil | correctness | 2-5 | 3.40 | 3 | 18 |
| | acceptability | 2-5 | 3.32 | 3 | 18 |
| | pleasantness | 2-5 | 3.44 | 3 | 18 |
| | familiarity | 2-6 | 4.5 | 6 | 15 |
| | Remarks* | 'don't know', 'no ideas', 'not spoken to anyone', 'NA'. | | | |

Note. *Remarks written by participants next to the question.

There were a considerable number of participants who did not rate the Brazilian accent, as demonstrated by the low familiarity rating.

5.2.4.1.3 The way of speaking English of competent speakers from France

(Table 7):

Table 7

Ratings for the French accent

| | | Rating (6-point Likert scale) | | | |
|--------|---------------|---|---------|------|---------|
| | | (With “1” denoting very correct and “6” very incorrect, etc.) | | | |
| | | range | average | mode | missing |
| France | correctness | 2-5 | 3.41 | 3 | 11 |
| | acceptability | 2-5 | 3.27 | 3 | 10 |
| | pleasantness | 1-5 | 3.3 | 3 | 10 |

| | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|------|---|---|
| familiarity | 2-6 | 3.76 | 3 | 9 |
| Remarks* | 'don't know', 'no idea'. | | | |

Note. *Remarks written by participants next to the question.

There were quite a number of participants who did not rate the accent, echoing the low familiarity rating. A few respondents also commented 'don't know' and 'no idea'.

5.2.4.1.4 The way of speaking English of competent speakers from the UK (Table 8):

Table 8

Ratings for the British accent

| | | Rating (6-point Likert scale) | | | |
|----------|---------------|---|---------|------|---------|
| | | (With "1" denoting very correct and "6" very incorrect, etc.) | | | |
| | | range | average | mode | missing |
| UK | correctness | 1-2 | 1.35 | 1 | 0 |
| | acceptability | 1-3 | 1.30 | 1 | 0 |
| | pleasantness | 1-3 | 1.40 | 1 | 0 |
| | familiarity | 1-2 | 1.37 | 1 | 0 |
| Remarks* | | Nil | | | |

Note. *Remarks written by participants next to the question.

The ratings for the British accent were superior across all items. The most frequent rating was the top rating (1), reflecting the superiority of the accent over others.

5.2.4.1.5 The way of speaking English of competent speakers from Germany (Table 9):

Table 9

Ratings for the German accent

| | | Rating (6-point Likert scale) | | | |
|---------|---------------|---|---------|------|---------|
| | | (With “1” denoting very correct and “6” very incorrect, etc.) | | | |
| | | range | average | mode | missing |
| Germany | correctness | 1-4 | 2.68 | 3 | 12 |
| | acceptability | 1-4 | 2.58 | 3 | 12 |
| | pleasantness | 2-4 | 3 | 3 | 12 |
| | familiarity | 2-6 | 3.13 | 3 | 12 |
| | Remarks* | 'don't know', 'no ideas', 'not know anyone', 'NA'. | | | |

Note. *Remarks written by participants next to the question.

There were quite a number of missing data, a situation very similar with the French accent.

5.2.4.1.6 The way of speaking English of competent speakers from Hong Kong

(Table 10):

Table 10

Ratings for the Hong Kong accent

| | | Rating (6-point Likert scale) | | | |
|-----------|---------------|---|---------|------|---------|
| | | (With “1” denoting very correct and “6” very incorrect, etc.) | | | |
| | | range | average | mode | missing |
| Hong Kong | correctness | 2-5 | 3.07 | 3 | 0 |
| | acceptability | 1-5 | 2.60 | 2 | 0 |
| | pleasantness | 1-5 | 3.00 | 3 | 0 |
| | familiarity | 1-4 | 2.07 | 1 | 0 |
| | Remarks* | Nil | | | |

Note. *Remarks written by participants next to the question.



As expected, all participants were willing to rate the local Hong Kong accent. The ratings were mixed.

5.2.4.1.7 *The way of speaking English of competent speakers from India*

(Table 11):

Table 11
Ratings for the Indian accent

| | | Rating (6-point Likert scale) | | | |
|----------|---------------|---|---------|------|---------|
| | | (With “1” denoting very correct and “6” very incorrect, etc.) | | | |
| | | range | average | mode | missing |
| India | correctness | 1-6 | 2.87 | 3 | 4 |
| | acceptability | 2-5 | 2.97 | 2 | 4 |
| | pleasantness | 1-6 | 3.42 | 3 | 5 |
| | familiarity | 1-6 | 3.49 | 4 | 4 |
| Remarks* | | Nil | | | |

Note. *Remarks written by participants next to the question.

The familiarity rating for the Indian accent roughly equaled that of the French accent.

There were only a few participants who refused to rate the accent.

5.2.4.1.8 *The way of speaking English of competent speakers from China*

(Table 12):

Table 12

Ratings for the Chinese accent

| | | Rating (6-point Likert scale) | | | |
|----------|---------------|---|---------|------|---------|
| | | (With "1" denoting very correct and "6" very incorrect, etc.) | | | |
| | | range | average | mode | missing |
| China | correctness | 1-6 | 3.37 | 3 | 2 |
| | acceptability | 1-5 | 3.41 | 4 | 2 |
| | pleasantness | 2-6 | 3.59 | 3 | 2 |
| | familiarity | 1-6 | 3.45 | 4 | 1 |
| Remarks* | | Nil | | | |

Note. *Remarks written by participants next to the question.

The same situation was found with the Indian accent with an approximately equal familiarity rating. There was only 1 missing data for the Chinese accent.

5.2.4.1.9 The way of speaking English of competent speakers from Japan

(Table 13):

Table 13

Ratings for the Japanese accent

| | | Rating (6-point Likert scale) | | | |
|----------|---------------|---|---------|------|---------|
| | | (With "1" denoting very correct and "6" very incorrect, etc.) | | | |
| | | range | average | mode | missing |
| Japan | correctness | 2-6 | 4.00 | 4 | 2 |
| | acceptability | 2-6 | 3.98 | 4 | 2 |
| | pleasantness | 2-6 | 4.15 | 4 | 2 |
| | familiarity | 2-6 | 4.37 | 5 | 2 |
| Remarks* | | 'not know anyone' | | | |

Note. *Remarks written by participants next to the question.



The situation was very similar with the Chinese and Indian accents. With very low familiarity rating, there were just two missing data.

5.2.4.1.10 *The way of speaking English of competent speakers from Australia*

(Table 14):

Table 14

Ratings for the Australian accent

| | | Rating (6-point Likert scale) | | | |
|-----------|---------------|---|---------|------|---------|
| | | (With “1” denoting very correct and “6” very incorrect, etc.) | | | |
| | | range | average | mode | missing |
| Australia | correctness | 1-5 | 2.00 | 2 | 2 |
| | acceptability | 1-5 | 2.02 | 2 | 2 |
| | pleasantness | 1-5 | 2.27 | 2 | 2 |
| | familiarity | 1-5 | 2.22 | 2 | 2 |
| Remarks* | | Nil | | | |

Note. *Remarks written by participants next to the question.

The rating for the Australian accent was comparable to that of the American accent.

5.2.4.2 *Ranking of 4 rated items for individual accents.*

5.2.4.2.1 *Ranking of rating of correctness with ascending order of average*

rating (Table 15):

Table 15

Rating of Correctness with ascending order of Average rating

| Country/Place | Rating | | | |
|---------------|---------|------|-------|--------------|
| | Average | Mode | Range | Missing data |
| UK | 1.35 | 1 | 1-2 | 0 |
| Australia | 2.00 | 2 | 1-5 | 2 |
| USA | 2.12 | 2 | 1-4 | 1 |
| Germany | 2.68 | 3 | 1-4 | 12 |
| India | 2.87 | 3 | 1-6 | 4 |
| Hong Kong | 3.07 | 3 | 2-5 | 0 |
| China | 3.37 | 3 | 1-6 | 2 |
| Brazil | 3.40 | 3 | 2-5 | 18 |
| France | 3.41 | 3 | 2-5 | 11 |
| Japan | 4.00 | 4 | 2-6 | 2 |

The rating of perceived correctness for different accents reflected a superiority of the British accent. The average rating for British accent was 1.35, and the most frequent rating 1, which revealed that the British accent was perceived to be very correct.

There were no missing data reflecting the participants were very willing to rate.

The ratings of the Australian and American accents were next with averages of 2.00 and 2.12 respectively. The number of missing data were both small (2 for the Australian accent and 1 for the American accent) showing that participants were also willing to rate the two. In general, the native accents of English, namely British, American and Australian were perceived to be at the correct end of the scale, with

British in clear superior position.

The ratings of the German accent (2.68), Indian accent (2.87), Hong Kong accent (3.07), Chinese accent (3.37), Brazilian accent (3.40) and French accent (3.41) were clustered into the medium to lower end of the scale, with Japanese accent (4.00) found to be the least preferred accent in terms of correctness. There were a considerable number of missing data for the German, Brazilian and French accents, making the comparison of averages among the non-native accents inconclusive. However, the results clearly demonstrated the division of native and non-native accents in terms of correctness. For the participants, apart from the supreme position of British accent, all native accents were perceived to be correct, whereas, all non-native accents were perceived to be incorrect.

5.2.4.2.2 Ranking of rating of acceptability for international communication with ascending order of average rating (Table 16):

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Table 16

Rating of acceptability for international communication with ascending order of average rating

| Country/Place | Rating | | | |
|---------------|---------|------|-------|--------------|
| | Average | Mode | Range | Missing data |
| UK | 1.30 | 1 | 1-3 | 0 |
| USA | 1.90 | 2 | 1-4 | 1 |
| Australia | 2.02 | 2 | 1-5 | 2 |
| Germany | 2.58 | 3 | 1-4 | 12 |
| Hong Kong | 2.60 | 2 | 1-5 | 0 |
| India | 2.97 | 2 | 2-5 | 4 |
| France | 3.27 | 3 | 2-5 | 10 |
| Brazil | 3.32 | 3 | 2-5 | 18 |
| China | 3.41 | 4 | 1-5 | 2 |
| Japan | 3.98 | 4 | 2-6 | 2 |

The rating of perceived acceptability for international communication for different accents also reflected a unique superiority of the British accent. The average rating for the British accent was 1.30, maintaining a considerable difference from that of the American and Australian accents. The most frequent rating was 1 and there were also no missing data. The ratings for the American and Australian accents were 1.90 and 2.02 respectively, representing that the two accents were more or less equally acceptable for international communication. There were also very few missing data (2 for the Australian accent and 1 for the American accent), showing that the participants

were willing to rate. In general, the native accents of English, namely the British, the American and the Australian, were perceived to be highly acceptable for international communication, with the British accent clearly being considered to be most acceptable by the participants. Similarly, the ratings for the German accent (2.58), Hong Kong accent (2.60), Indian accent (2.97), French accent (3.27), Brazilian accent (3.32) and Chinese accent (3.41) were clustered in the medium to lower end of the scale, with again, the Japanese accent (3.98) being considered to be the least acceptable for international communication. In addition, because of the considerable number of missing data for the German, French and Brazilian accents, it is more difficult to compare among the non-native accents. However, the results also showed a clear division of native and non-native accents in terms of the acceptability for international communication. The participants considered the British accent to be the most acceptable for international communication and that native accents in general were acceptable for international communication, whereas, non-native accents were generally comparable and not acceptable in international communication.

5.2.4.2.3 Ranking of rating of pleasantness with ascending order of average rating (Table 17):

Table 17

Rating of pleasantness with ascending order of average rating

| Country/Place | Rating | | | |
|---------------|---------|------|-------|--------------|
| | Average | Mode | Range | Missing data |
| UK | 1.40 | 1 | 1-3 | 0 |
| USA | 2.21 | 2 | 1-4 | 1 |
| Australia | 2.27 | 2 | 1-5 | 2 |
| Germany | 3.00 | 3 | 2-4 | 12 |
| Hong Kong | 3.00 | 3 | 1-5 | 0 |
| France | 3.30 | 3 | 1-5 | 10 |
| India | 3.42 | 3 | 1-6 | 5 |
| Brazil | 3.44 | 3 | 2-5 | 18 |
| China | 3.59 | 3 | 2-6 | 2 |
| Japan | 4.37 | 5 | 2-6 | 2 |

A very similar pattern to the previous two ratings was obtained for the rating of pleasantness, this time with clearer cluster for non-native accents.

The pole position of British accent was still clearly observable with the rating of British accent (1.40) to be far from that of the remaining accents. The most frequent rating for British accent was still 1, showing the participants' perception of the British accent's distinctive pleasantness. The ratings for the American and Australian accents were 2.21 and 2.27 respectively, which were also considerably different from the remaining accents. Again, as shown from the few missing data (1 for the American accent and 2 for Australian accent), the participants were very



willing to rate the native accents in terms of pleasantness. In general, the participants considered the native accents, namely the British, American and Australian, to be quite pleasant. Again, the ratings for the German accent (3.00), Hong Kong accent (3.00), French accent (3.30), Indian accent (3.42), Brazilian accent (3.44) and Chinese accent (3.59) were clustered more clearly in the medium to lower end of the scale, with Japanese accent (4.37) still occupying the distinctively unpleasant end of the scale. Similarly, due to the considerable missing data for the German accent (12), French accent (10) and Brazilian accent (18), it was difficult to compare among these non-native accents. However, in general, the pattern was also very clear of a division between native and non-native accents in terms of pleasantness. The participants generally perceived that the British accent was the most pleasant, and that native accents were pleasant to hear, whereas, non-native accents were generally comparably unpleasant to hear, with the Japanese accent perceived to be the least pleasant to hear.

5.2.4.2.4 Ranking of rating of familiarity with ascending order of average rating (Table 18):

Table 18

Rating of familiarity with ascending order of average rating

| Country/Place | Rating | | | |
|---------------|---------|------|-------|--------------|
| | Average | Mode | Range | Missing data |
| UK | 1.37 | 1 | 1-2 | 0 |
| USA | 2.14 | 1 | 1-4 | 1 |
| Hong Kong | 2.07 | 1 | 1-4 | 0 |
| Australia | 2.22 | 2 | 1-5 | 2 |
| Germany | 3.13 | 3 | 2-6 | 12 |
| China | 3.45 | 4 | 1-6 | 1 |
| India | 3.49 | 4 | 1-6 | 4 |
| France | 3.76 | 3 | 2-6 | 9 |
| Japan | 4.37 | 5 | 2-6 | 2 |
| Brazil | 4.50 | 6 | 2-6 | 15 |

The inclusion of the item of familiarity was to test the participants' willingness to rate accents which they were not familiar with. The likely candidates were the German, French and Brazilian accents.

The pattern of the average ratings of familiarity for different accents was quite similar to the above 3 ratings. There were 2 accents that behaved substantially different from the previous 3 ratings: the Hong Kong and Brazilian accents. The Hong Kong accent was rated similarly among the native accents at the familiar end of the scale. Among the native accents, the British accent still occupied the unchallenged pole position at the familiar end with an average rating of 1.37. This was followed by

the American accent (2.14), Hong Kong (2.07) and Australian accent (2.22). As an international trade and financial center, Hong Kong hosts a considerable number of foreigners. Therefore, it is completely possible that the participants were familiar with the British accent, especially when it is generally considered to be the model for teaching in Hong Kong. For the Hong Kong accent, it was very reasonable for the participants to rate it highly in terms of familiarity. However, further analysis is required to explain the apparent unfamiliar rating compared with the British accent. This will be discussed separately in later sections. For the Brazilian accent, it replaced Japan's lower pole position to be rated the most unfamiliar accent. The number of missing data for Brazilian accent also declined substantially from 18 for the previous ratings to 15. More participants were willing to rate the Brazilian accent for familiarity. The most frequent rating was 6, agreeing with the largest number of missing data.

Despite the high rating of familiarity (4.50), which reflected that the participants were generally unfamiliar with the Brazilian accent, 25 out of 43 participants rated the accent in terms of correctness, acceptability for international communication and pleasantness. Similarly, the average ratings for other non-native accents such as the German accent (3.13), Chinese accent (3.45), Indian accent (3.49),

French accent (3.76) and Japanese accent (4.37) were also at the unfamiliar end while still being rated for the other three items. In the demonstrative case of the Brazilian accent, and similarly with other non-native accents, the fact that the average ratings of all the three items were at the lower end of the scale (3.40 for correctness; 3.32 for acceptability for international communication; 3.44 for pleasantness) reflected that the 'standard language ideology' could be seen among the participants. The 'standard language ideology' refers to “the belief that imposed language uniformity is good for society and that the standard variety is the only legitimate one” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 42). In the current situation, the standard language would be British English.

5.2.4.3 Conclusion for the ratings of individual accents. The results of the ratings of individual accents confirmed findings from the literature that the British accent was the most preferred English accent among non-native English speakers. Similarly, the current study also supported the firm segregation of NSs and NNSs of English by accents.

5.2.5 Summary of the ranking question (Question 3). Question 3 asked the participants to rank individual accents anywhere in the world in the order of 1 (the best in the world) to 5 (the fifth best in the world). The ranking question aimed at finding out which accents the participants perceived to be good.

Q3) Now list below the five ways of speaking English that you think are the best (with the best way of speaking English in the world as no. 1, the second best as no. 2 and so on). Choose from all the countries in the world, not only the countries mentioned earlier. You can even choose an area like a continent, or even bigger area, instead of a country.

There were altogether 35 participants who ranked accents of different countries, places or regions in this question. Participants provided different responses for, most likely, the same accent. The answers were grouped into 18 accents (Appendix B).

5.2.5.1 Summary of the rankings of frequency of individual accents ranked the top (1) (Table 19):

Table 19

Frequency of accents ranked first

| Accent | Frequency |
|----------------|-----------|
| British | 28 |
| American | 4 |
| Canadian | 1 |
| European | 1 |
| North American | 1 |
| Total | 35 |

There was an overwhelming preference for the British accent to be ranked the best accent in the world. Taking away the British accent, the American accent was ranked

most by the participants (Appendix C). By taking away the British and American accents, the native accents were preferred quite equally by the participants (Appendix D). The Australian accent was the most preferred accent after the British and American accents (Appendix E). The preference for the 5th ranked accent was not obvious (Appendix F).

The results clearly showed that once again, the British accent was considered the best accent in the world with 28 votes among the 35 voting. The American accent, again, came next to the British accent with 4 votes. The American accent also had 18 votes voting for the 2nd best accent in the world out of the total of 33 votes. Altogether, the British accent obtained a total of 33 ranking votes and the American accent obtained a total of 29. Following the lead of the British and American accents were those native accents. The Australian accent obtained 6 votes for the 2nd best, 7 votes for the 3rd best, 12 votes for the 4th best and 1 vote for the 5th best, making a total of 26 ranking votes. Similarly, the Canadian accent obtained a total of 13 ranking votes; the New Zealand accent also obtained a total of 7 ranking votes. The 5 native accents altogether claimed 108 out of the 143 votes, making it a very clear trend that the participants considered native accents to be among the best accents, further confirming the results from the rating question, Question 4.

The Hong Kong accent was unexpectedly ranked within the 5 best accents in the world; a total of 9 times. This was even more popular than one of the native accents, the New Zealand accent. The average ratings of Hong Kong for correctness, pleasantness and acceptability for international communication were at just about the same level with that of the German accent, Indian accent and French accent. However, the ranking results of Hong Kong outperformed the German accent (4), Indian accent (2) and French accent (1). When examining the 9 questionnaires, the Hong Kong accent was included in the best 5 ranking. The following result was also obtained (Table 20):

Table 20

Summary of participants' ratings who ranked Hong Kong among the best 5 accents in the world

| Participant ID | Correctness | Acceptability | pleasantness | familiarity | ranking |
|----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|---------|
| 11 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 5th |
| 18 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2nd |
| 22 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5th |
| 31 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3rd |
| 36 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5th |
| 37 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3rd |
| 38 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5th |
| 40 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4th |
| 43 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5th |
| Average | 3.11 | 2.56 | 3 | 1.89 | |

| | | | | |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|
| Sample average | 3.07 | 2.60 | 3.00 | 2.07 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|

The average ratings of all 4 items among the 9 participants were very similar to those of the whole sample for the Hong Kong accent, showing that the 9 participants were not particularly positive towards it. However, they ranked the Hong Kong accent within the best 5 accents in the world. In particular, participants 18, 31, 37 and 38 ranked Hong Kong even higher than Australian accent, one of the native accents (Table 21):

Table 21
Summary of participants' ratings who ranked Hong Kong higher than Australian accent

| ID | correctness | | acceptability | | pleasantness | | familiarity | | ranking | |
|----|-------------|-----|---------------|-----|--------------|-----|-------------|-----|-----------|-----|
| | Hong Kong | Aus | Hong Kong | Aus | Hong Kong | Aus | Hong Kong | Aus | Hong Kong | Aus |
| 18 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2nd | X |
| 31 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3rd | 4th |
| 37 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3rd | 4th |
| 38 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5th | X |

Note. Aus = Australia., X denotes not ranked on the top five accents in the world.

For all 4 participants, all ratings of correctness, acceptability and pleasantness for the Hong Kong accent were 'worse than' or at best 'equal' to that of the Australian accent. Nevertheless, they all ranked the Hong Kong accent on top of the Australian

accent. One possible explanation could be that the 4 participants, with the exception of participant 18, as the whole sample, were slightly more familiar with the Hong Kong accent than Australian accent, as shown by the rating of familiarity. Another more subtle but relevant explanation perhaps could be related to the issue of communication.

Participant 31 remarked at the end of the questionnaire,

“English is spoken in a place for various reasons which shape the way it is spoken. For communication purpose, if the local variety does the job, no one can or should pass criticism. However, only the variety closest to 'standard' can be understood by most speakers of English in the world”.

Similarly, participant 11 also commented at the end of the questionnaire,

“It doesn't matter whether it's native way of speaking or not, as long as the listeners understand as language is about communication”.

Participant 18 also described the Hong Kong accent as 'efficient', which was related to communication as well. Despite the fact that participant rated a '3' for familiarity, Hong Kong was the first written down for Question 2, which asked for a list of familiar accents.

This seemingly contradictory result resonates with Jenkins' (2007) research

which found that Chinese were especially positive with their own accent and that there were ambiguities among non-native English teachers towards their own accents. The issues of the Hong Kong accent communication will be considered in more detail in a later section.

Another point worth noticing was that three 'area' accents appeared in the ranking: the North American (3 votes); SE Asian (South East Asian, 2 votes); and Asian (1 vote). In this study, emphasis was put on reminding the participants to consider not only accents within a country or a place like Hong Kong, but on a larger area. This prompt proved to be acceptable to at least some of the participants. They were able to conceive regional 'ways of speaking English' (accents) which could reasonably further extended to 'International way of speaking English'. In fact, at least a few of the semi-structured interview participants said they could conceive an international way of speaking English. This idea will be discussed in more detail in the interview section.

5.2.5.2 Conclusion for the rankings of individual accents. The results of the rankings of individual accents further confirmed findings from the rating question that the British accent was considered to be the best English accent among non-native English teachers. It also further supported the firm segregation of NSs and NNSs of



English by accents in terms of good English.

The Hong Kong accent, despite the medium to low average ratings in correctness, pleasantness and acceptability for international communication, was considered by at least some of the local NNETs to be among the good varieties of English spoken in the world.

5.2.6 Summary of perception of accents (Question 1). Question 1) asked the participants to write down a word or phrase that represented the 10 accents:

Q1) Write in the spaces below a word or phrase that represents for you the way the people in the following 10 countries/places speak English. You can refer to any aspect of the way people speak English, such as its speed, its quality of tone (e.g., 'harsh', 'melodious'), its pitch, its rhythm (e.g., 'like a machine gun'), its precision, its strength, how easy it is to understand etc. etc. There is no correct answer. Please say what you think – I am interested in your views.

All but one of the participants responded to this question further confirming that the participants had no particular difficulties in conceiving different accents of English as different ways of speaking the language.

The words and phrases written down by the participants represented their perceptions of different accents of English. The words and phrases were then grouped



into 3 categories: 1) positive perceptions; 2) neutral perceptions; and 3) negative perceptions according to four perspectives: 1) correctness/standardness; 2) pleasantness; 3) intelligibility; and 4) familiarity. Words or phrases carrying clear positive meanings like good, fluent, formal, standard, official, accurate, clear, easy to understand, pleasant, etc. were grouped under the category 'Positive'. On the other hand, descriptions carrying clear negative meanings like not good, bad, unclear, wrong, not easy to understand, etc. were brought under the category 'Negative'. All other descriptions such as those related to styles in pronunciation, prosody, etc. were classified as 'Neutral'. The results are summarized into tables, with one cell representing perceptions from one participant and grouped into two categories: 1) native accents and 2) non-native accents.

5.2.6.1 Summary of perceptions for individual accents.

5.2.6.1.1 The native accents.

5.2.6.1.1.1 American accent. There were 39 participants who wrote down descriptions for the American accent with 4 leaving this blank. There were many descriptions related to pace, style and rhythm of the accent like fast, causal, strong 'r' sound, flat, speedy, etc. All were classified as neutral descriptions. Quite a number of descriptions were clearly positive like 'pleasant when hearing it', 'lively, friendly',

'melodious', etc. relating to the perceived pleasantness of the accent. There were also positive descriptions in terms of intelligibility like 'clear', 'easy to understand', 'easy to follow', etc. There were no negative descriptions. In general, the participants' perception of the American accent, apart from the neutral descriptions, was quite positive, in terms of pleasantness and intelligibility (Table 22).

Table 22

Summary of perceptions of the American accent

| Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness | |
| standard English | Not care much about grammar | |
| | Strong 'r' sound | |
| 2) Pleasantness | Fast, tongue-rolling | |
| pleasant | Strong r-controlled sound | |
| Pleasant when hearing it | Strong r sound | |
| Lively, friendly | Fast, 'r'-sound | |
| pleasant | rhotic | |
| melodious | | |
| Pleasant | 2) Pleasantness | |
| | Free style, causal | |
| 3) Intelligibility | masculine | |
| Fluent | causal | |
| easy to follow | flat | |
| clear | Straight forward | |
| Easy to understand | Fast, causal, some-rude | |
| | causal | |

4) Familiarity

fast, causal

Familiar

Exaggerated with rich
intonation

leisure

Hollywood

3) Intelligibility

Quite fast

fast

fast

Fast, plain

fast

Quick

speedy

fast

fast

fast

fast

4) Familiarity

Easy to understand, a lot
slangs

Note. There were 4 blank responses.

5.2.6.1.1.2 *British accent*. There were 39 participants who wrote down descriptions for the British accent with 4 leaving this blank. Most descriptions were positive. In terms of correctness/standardness, participants wrote down descriptions, for example, 'formal', 'official', 'very accurate', 'refined, standard, clear, melodious'



etc. In terms of pleasantness, there were descriptions like 'elegant', 'pleasant', 'clear and beautiful', 'music to the ear', 'standard, classy', 'melodious, pleasant, authentic', etc. Some participants wrote down positive descriptions in terms of intelligibility such as 'easy to understand', 'clear, easy to follow', 'clear', 'fluent', etc. There were a few neutral descriptions in terms of correctness/standardness, including 'strong accent', 'distinguished pronunciation of vowels', etc. One participant wrote down 'Queen's English' without further elaboration. Although it was subsequently very clear that for the semi-structured interview participants, 'Queen's English' referred to the 'standard' English which they were striving very hard to obtain and teach their students, 'Queen's English' here was taken as a neutral description for the British accent in the perspective of correctness/standardness. There were also 2 descriptions for pleasantness: 'pretentious' and 'snobbish'. For intelligibility, there were additionally 2 neutral descriptions: 'a bit fast' and 'moderate pace, medium speed'. There were no negative descriptions. In general, the participants' perception of the British accent was very positive in terms of correctness/standardness, pleasantness and intelligibility, apart from some neutral descriptions (Table 23).

Table 23

Summary of perceptions of the British accent

| Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness | |
| formal | Queen's English | |
| official | Strong accent | |
| Well intonated, well pronounced | Distinguished pronunciation of vowels | |
| Very accurate | subtle | |
| Refined, standard, clear, melodious | Oxford English | |
| formal | Lower tone, a bit conservative | |
| More formal | | |
| accurate | 2) Pleasantness | |
| Elegant, formal | pretentious | |
| Standard, classy | snobbish | |
| standard | | |
| standard | 3) Intelligibility | |
| formal | A bit fast | |
| | Moderate pace Medium speed | |
| 2) Pleasantness | | |
| Pleasant | | |
| Clear and beautiful | | |
| nice | | |
| Beautiful, easy to follow | | |
| Music to the ear | | |
| Melodious, pleasant, authentic | | |
| Nice tone | | |
| rhythmic | | |

melodious

Melodious and clear

elegant

Pleasant

3) Intelligibility

Easy to understand, clear

Easy to understand

Clear, easy to follow

clear

clear

fluent

Note. There were 4 blank responses.

5.2.6.1.1.3 *Australian accent*. There were 35 participants who wrote down descriptions for the Australian accent and 8 left this blank. About half of the descriptions were neutral. More than half of the neutral descriptions were related to the accents' correctness/standardness, for example, 'strong accent', 'strong "a" sound', 'strange accent', etc. Other positive descriptions were concerned with the accent's pleasantness including 'masculine, country folk', 'flat tone', 'chewy', etc. There were a few clearly positive descriptions related to each perspective except familiarity. For correctness/standardness, 'formal', 'authentic, easy to understand', 'good', 'friendly', etc. For pleasantness, 'melodious' and 'nice' were used. For intelligibility, 'fluent', 'clear', 'well comprehensible', etc. were mentioned. Unlike the American and British



accents, there were as many negative descriptions as positive ones. Most were related to the accent's intelligibility such as 'difficult to understand', 'not easy to understand', 'not very clear', 'not easy to follow', etc. Some were related to correctness/standardness like 'too heavy nasal sound', etc. It was not easy to generalize a representative perception of the Australian accent.

In general, the participants' perceptions of the British and American accents were clearly positive. Although there were a considerable number of negative comments made towards the Australian accent, there were descriptions for the Australian accent only given to native accents, for example, 'standard', 'authentic', 'formal', 'official', 'accurate', etc., which were descriptions for standardness and correctness. Therefore, in general, the participants considered native accents as standards of spoken English with the British accent clearly assigned to the supreme position; followed by the American accent and Australian accent.

Table 24
Summary of perceptions of the Australian accent

| Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness |
| formal | Strong accent | Too heavy nasal sound |
| Authentic, easy to understand | Pronounce 'ei' sound as 'ai' | Different articulation of vowel |
| Good, friendly | Strong accent | |

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| | Strong accent | 3) Intelligibility |
| 2) Pleasantness | A lot of 'ai' sounds | Difficult to listen |
| melodious | Strong accent | Difficult to understand |
| melodious | Strong 'a' sound | Not easy to follow |
| nice | Similar to UK | Not easy to understand |
| | Different vocabulary | Not very clear |
| 3) Intelligibility | Vowels different from British | Accent could be difficult to understand |
| fluent | Accent | Most men's accent difficult to understand |
| Well comprehensible | Strange accent | |
| clear | | |
| | 2) Pleasantness | |
| | Masculine, country folk | |
| | audible | |
| | Flat tone | |
| | chewy | |
| | Sounds nasal and friendly | |
| | Basic, straight forward | |

Note. There were 8 blank responses.

5.2.6.1.2 *The non-native accents.*

5.2.6.1.2.1 *Brazilian accent.* Only 15 participants wrote down descriptions for the Brazilian accent, as reflected from the earlier rating of familiarity (4.5) with 28 leaving this blank. About half of the descriptions were negative, in terms of intelligibility, for example, 'hard to understand', 'difficult to understand', 'not easy to understand', etc. The remaining descriptions were mainly neutral in terms of

pleasantness such as 'rush', 'hot', 'passionate', etc. Some participants also wrote down neutral descriptions in terms of correctness/standardness, for example, 'accented', etc. There were no clear positive descriptions except one item of 'sound happy'. In general, the participants were rather negative towards the Brazilian accent in terms of intelligibility, despite a very unfamiliar rating (Table 25).

Table 25
Summary of perceptions of the Brazilian accent

| Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2) Pleasantness | 1) Correctness/Standardness | 3) Intelligibility |
| Sound happy | Strong Portuguese accent | Hard to understand |
| rush | accented | Difficult |
| | | Not easy to understand |
| | 2) Pleasantness | Difficult to understand |
| | hot | Difficult to understand |
| | syllabic | Not as well as their mother tongue |
| | passionate | |

Note. There were 28 blank responses.

5.2.6.1.2.2 *French accent*. There were 26 participants who wrote down descriptions for the French accent and 17 left this blank. More than half of the comments were neutral and most related to the accent's correctness/standardness like 'accented', 'slow, strong vowel pronunciation', 'strong accent, not striving for accuracy', 'strong French accent', '“r” sound stressed', etc. Some of the neutral

descriptions were related to pleasantness like 'reluctant', 'gentle', 'sexy', etc. There were only two different positive descriptions in terms of pleasantness: 'melodious' and 'poetic'. All negative descriptions were related to the accent's intelligibility: 'difficult to understand', 'unclear', etc. Similarly, like the case of Brazilian accent, the participants were quite negative towards the French accent in terms of intelligibility (Table 26).

Table 26
Summary of perceptions of the French accent

| Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|-----------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 2) Pleasantness | 1) Correctness/Standardness | 3) Intelligibility |
| melodious | Strange accent | Difficult to understand |
| melodious | accented | Difficult to understand |
| melodious | Strange accent | unclear |
| poetic | With French accent | A bit difficult to understand |
| melodious | accented | Difficult to understand |
| | 'r' sound stressed | |
| | Nasal accent | |
| | Slow, strong vowel pronunciation | |
| | Strong accent, not striving for accuracy | |
| | Strong French accent | |
| | Strong French accent | |
| | | |
| | 2) Pleasantness | |

reluctant

reluctant

sexy

disaster

gentle

Note. There were 17 blank responses.

5.2.6.1.2.3 *German accent*. More than half of the participants (23) wrote down descriptions for the German accent. There were 20 left blank. There was a roughly equal spread of comments among the three categories. For the neutral ones, descriptions in terms of correctness/standardness included "‘strong ‘k’ sound", 'roll the tongue a lot', etc. The participants also wrote down neutral descriptions related to pleasantness such as 'mechanical', 'loud with power', etc. There was also one neutral description in terms of the accent's intelligibility: 'quite fast'. One participant wrote down 'near-native' to describe the German accent. Since there was no further elaboration of the description, this is taken as a neutral comment. For positive ones, there were 'good English, easy to follow', 'good', 'fine', etc. related to the accent's correctness/standardness. There were also positive descriptions in terms of intelligibility, for example, 'easy to follow', 'fluent connected speech', 'able to communicate', 'well pronounced, well comprehensible', etc. There were negative descriptions in terms of intelligibility like 'difficult to understand', 'difficult to follow',



'struggle to convey meaning', etc. Others related to pleasantness were 'harsh', 'too blunt', etc. There was also one negative description related to correctness/standardness: 'can't distinguish v & w'. The perceptions of the participants were rather mixed for the German accent at first glance (Table 27). However, the intelligibility of the accent seemed to be critical in shaping the perception of the participants, apart from those neutral descriptions.

Table 27
Summary of perceptions of the German accent

| Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness |
| Good English, easy to follow | Roll the tongue a lot | Can't distinguish v & w |
| good | near-native | |
| fine | Strong 'k' sound | 2) Pleasantness |
| | | Too blunt |
| 3) Intelligibility | 2) Pleasantness | harsh |
| Fluent connected speech | Not easy | Rather harsh |
| fluent | mechanical | |
| Able to communicate | Firm and flat | 3) Intelligibility |
| Well pronounced, well comprehensible | Loud with power | Difficult to understand |
| Easy to follow | | Difficult to follow |
| | 3) Intelligibility | Struggle to convey meaning |
| | Quite fast | |

Note. There were 20 blank responses.

5.2.6.1.2.4 *Indian accent*. There were 32 participants who wrote down descriptions for the Indian accent with 11 leaving this blank. About half of the descriptions were neutral, with most related to the accent's correctness/standardness, including 'accented', 'strong accent', 'strong Indian accent', 'strange accent', etc. Two neutral descriptions were related to pleasantness: 'a bit like machine' and 'gentle'. There were also some neutral descriptions in terms of intelligibility like: 'fast', 'slow', etc. Most of the negative descriptions were related to the accent's intelligibility such as 'unclear expression', 'difficult to understand', 'not easy to follow', etc. There was one negative description about correctness/standardness: 'poor grammar' and also 2 descriptions concerning the accent's pleasantness: 'harsh' and 'dun want to hear them'. There were a few positive descriptions in terms of correctness/standardness like 'good', 'good English', etc. There were some positive descriptions in terms of pleasantness, for example, 'melodious', etc. and a few positive descriptions related to intelligibility like 'fluent', 'quite easy to understand', 'well comprehensible', etc. As with the German accent, although at first glance, perceptions of the participants were rather mixed, however, it seems that the intelligibility of accent was often cited as a problem among participants. Quite a few participants in the semi-structured interviews also initiated discussion of the Indian accent related to the problem of

intelligibility. Sometimes it was also considered to be a newly nativised accent, which may partly account for the few positive descriptions in terms of correctness/standardness (Table 28).

Table 28
Summary of perceptions of the Indian accent

| Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness |
| good | accented | Poor grammar |
| Good English | Strong accent | |
| good | Strong local accent | 2) Pleasantness |
| | Indian accent | harsh |
| 2) Pleasantness | Strange accent | Dun want to hear them |
| melodious | Full of retroflex sounds | |
| melodious | Strong accent | 3) Intelligibility |
| | Strange accent | Unclear expression |
| 3) Intelligibility | Twist tongue too much | Difficult to understand |
| Fluent | Strange accent | |
| Quite easy to understand | Strong accent | Difficult to understand |
| Well comprehensible | Strong Indian accent | Difficult to understand |
| | Very strong accent | Quite Difficult to understand |
| | Strange intonation, funny | Not easy to follow |
| | Stress syllables which are not stressed in British English | Not clear, difficult to understand |
| | Strange accent | difficult to understand |
| | stilted | |
| | Strange pronunciation | |

2) Pleasantness

A bit like machine

gentle

3) Intelligibility

fast

slow

slow

Note. There were 11 blank responses.

5.2.6.1.2.5 *Chinese accent*. There were 34 participants writing down descriptions for the Chinese accent with 9 leaving this blank. About half of the descriptions were neutral, with most related to correctness/standardness, for example, 'improving', 'Chinese accent', 'affected by Putonghua', 'heavy accent', word stress is obvious', etc. A few were related to pleasantness including 'archaic', 'emphatic', 'high pitch', etc. There was also one neutral description about intelligibility: 'slow, like Putonghua'. There were 2 positive descriptions related to correctness/standardness: 'some speak English well' and 'good English'. There was also one positive description about intelligibility: 'quite easy to understand'. Most of the negative descriptions concerned correctness/standardness such as 'wrong grammar', 'inaccurate pronunciation, hesitations', 'not precise', 'not very good', 'not accurate', etc. There were also two negative descriptions related to pleasantness: 'rude' and

'uncomfortable'. Finally, there were also two negative descriptions related to intelligibility: 'not easy to understand' and 'difficult to understand'. As with the Indian and German accents, the Chinese accent received mixed perceptions from the participants (Table 29). However, it seems that the participants were more concerned with the problems of correctness and standardness of the accent.

Table 29

Summary of perceptions of the Chinese accent

| Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness |
| Some speak English well | improving | Wrong grammar |
| Good English | Pronunciation too focused on individual sounds | Inaccurate pronunciation, hesitations |
| | Chinese accent | Poor grammar |
| 3) Intelligibility | Chinese accent | Not precise |
| Quite easy to understand | Affected by Putonghua | Not very good |
| | Very Chinese | Bad imitation of American accent |
| | Strong 'r' sound | Not accurate |
| | Mixed with Chinese | |
| | Some consonants are localized | 2) Pleasantness |
| | Heavy accent | rude |
| | improving | uncomfortable |
| | Accent affected by mandarin | |
| | Word stress is obvious | 3) Intelligibility |
| | Affected by Putonghua | Not easy to understand |

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| accented | Difficult to understand |
| | |
| 2) Pleasantness | |
| archaic | |
| emphatic | |
| High pitch | |
| | |
| 3) Intelligibility | |
| Slow, like Putonghua | |

Note. There were 9 blank responses.

5.2.6.1.2.6 *Japanese accent*. There were 41 participants who wrote down descriptions for the Japanese accent and 2 left this blank. About half of the descriptions were neutral, with most related to correctness/standardness like 'accented', '“r” sound dropped', 'odd accent', 'strange pronunciation', 'sudden ending sounds', etc. A few neutral descriptions concerned intelligibility such as 'slow', 'fast', 'stop', etc. There were also a few neutral descriptions related to pleasantness, for example, 'comical', 'lack of intonation', 'funny', etc. The rest of the descriptions were negative. Slightly more than half were related to correctness/standardness such as 'not good', 'not so competent', 'bad', 'not precise', 'weak and incorrect', etc. The rest of the negative descriptions were related to intelligibility including 'not easy to understand', 'incomprehensible', 'difficult to follow', etc. There were no positive descriptions at all.

In general, the participants were quite negative towards the Japanese accent both in

terms of its correctness/standardness and intelligibility (Table 30).

Table 30

Summary of perceptions of the Japanese accent

| Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|----------|--|--|
| | 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness |
| | accented | Not good |
| | 'r' sound dropped | Weak, incorrect |
| | As a foreign language | Not so competent |
| | Pronunciation affected by katakana | Not able to make 'r' sound correctly |
| | Pronunciation is a bit weird | Not many such speakers |
| | Strange pronunciation | bad |
| | Sudden ending sounds | Not precise |
| | Strongly influenced by mother tongue | Turn 'r' sound into 'l' sound |
| | 'r' sound always omitted | Can't pronounce 'r' sound |
| | /θ/ sound is replaced with /s/ | Little English |
| | Cannot distinguish 'r' sound from the 'l' sound | Difficult to understand, pronunciation problems |
| | Change English words into Japanese | Every sound is short |
| | Odd accent | |
| | | 3) Intelligibility |
| | 2) Pleasantness | Not easy to understand |
| | comical | Not easy to understand |
| | Lack of intonation | Difficult to understand, poor pronounced |
| | Funny, High pitch | incomprehensible |
| | funny | Difficult to understand |

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Difficult to listen 'r' sound |
| 3) Intelligibility | Difficult to understand |
| slow | Difficult to follow |
| fast | Difficult to hear |
| slow | Difficult to understand |
| stop | Not easy to understand |

Note. There were 2 blank responses.

5.2.6.1.2.7 *Hong Kong accent*. Most of the participants (37) wrote down descriptions for the Hong Kong accent with 6 of them leaving it blank. Most descriptions were neutral, with more than half related to correctness/standardness like 'stress on every word', 'Chinese accent', 'pronounce “th” as “f”', ignore consonants, flat tone', 'local accent', 'Hong Kong English', 'Chinglish', etc. There were also some neutral descriptions related to pleasantness including 'monotone', 'funny, speak at a deliberate pace', 'flat and dull', 'like a robot', etc. There were also 2 neutral descriptions about intelligibility: 'slower speed' and 'very fast'. Most of the negative descriptions were related to correctness/standardness like 'grammatical errors', 'not accurate', 'problems pronouncing /θ/ sound', etc. There were also two negative descriptions about pleasantness: 'blunt' and 'noisy'. All positive descriptions were related to intelligibility, for example, 'easy to understand', 'efficient', 'easy to follow', etc. Like the Indian, German and Chinese accents, the perceptions of the Hong Kong accent were mixed among the participants. However, one aspect unique to the Hong

Kong accent was no negative descriptions in terms of intelligibility. Conversely, the only category of positive descriptions was intelligibility. Therefore, it can be seen that the Hong Kong accent was very unique among non-native accents and highly intelligible for the participants. Obviously, this was to a certain extent due to its familiarity to the participants. Despite the Hong Kong accent's high intelligibility, no participants described the Hong Kong accent as correct or standard. This confirms the finding of Jenkins (2007, p. 186) that “Despite the perceived pleasantness and intelligibility of some NNS English accents, this was never sufficient for an NNS accent to challenge the pole position of British and US English accents in the ranking and rating tasks.” However, when recalling that there were 9 participants who ranked Hong Kong within the top 5 best accents in the world, the fact that none described the Hong Kong accent as correct or standard clearly reveals the conflicting perceptions of the participants, at least towards the Hong Kong accent.

In general, the participants perceived non-native accents as clearly not accurate, correct, nor standard. Although they may consider some of the accents including the Hong Kong, German and Indian accents as intelligible among non-native speakers; and that some accents like the French and Indian to be somehow pleasant, are certainly not enough to equal themselves to native accents in terms of

correctness or standardness.

Table 31

Summary of perceptions of the Hong Kong accent

| Positive | Neutral | Negative |
|--------------------|---|--|
| 3) Intelligibility | 1) Correctness/Standardness | 1) Correctness/Standardness |
| Easy to understand | Seriously affected by Chinese | deteriorating |
| efficient | Chinglish | Grammatical errors |
| Easy to understand | Much mother tongue influence | Lack of confidence, lazy pronunciation |
| easy to follow | Hong Kong English | Problems pronouncing /θ/ sound |
| | Cantonese endings | Not accurate |
| | Stress on every word | |
| | Chinese accent | 2) Pleasantness |
| | average | blunt |
| | Chinglish | noisy |
| | Like Cantonese | |
| | Pronounce 'th' as 'f', ignore consonants, flat tone | |
| | With Cantonese accent, acceptable | |
| | Local accent | |
| | Hong Kong style | |
| | Chinglish | |
| | Local accent | |
| | | |
| | 2) Pleasantness | |
| | monotone | |
| | Funny, speak at a deliberate | |

pace
Flat intonation
Flat and dull
Flat in tone
Flat tone
choppy
dull
Like a robot

3) Intelligibility
Slower speed
Very fast

Note. There were 6 blank responses.

5.2.6.2 Conclusion for perceptions of individual accents. The analysis of the perceptions of participants towards individual accents clearly showed that the British accent was regarded as the best accent in terms of correctness/standardness, pleasantness and intelligibility. Together, with the American and Australian accents, native English accents were perceived, as a group, to be correct and standard, whereas, non-native English accents, as a whole, were considered to be not correct or standard, although some of the individual accents were considered to be quite intelligible internationally or pleasant.

5.2.7 Summary of perception of other accents named by participants

(Question 2). Question 2) asked the participants to write down a word or phrase that



represented any accents that the participants were familiar with:

Q2i) Name in the spaces below any countries/places in which people's way of speaking English is familiar to you. You can also name an area instead of a single country/place to indicate a variety of way of speaking English.

Q2ii) Then write a word or phrase, next to the name of that country/place, that represents for you the way the people speak English.

Only 4 participants did not respond to this question. There were a total of 23 different countries, places or areas named, as summarized in the following table (Table 32):

Table 32

Frequency of named accent

| Country/Place/Area | Frequency |
|--------------------|-----------|
| UK | 33 |
| USA | 26 |
| Hong Kong | 24 |
| Australia | 15 |
| China | 14 |
| Canada* | 10* |
| Japan | 10 |
| Singapore* | 10* |
| India | 8 |
| Germany | 4 |
| France | 4 |
| Malaysia* | 4* |

| | |
|--------------|----|
| New Zealand* | 3* |
| Philippines* | 3* |
| Taiwan* | 2* |
| Korea* | 2* |
| Thailand* | 2* |
| Sri Lanka* | 1* |
| Mexico* | 1* |
| Greece* | 1* |
| Swiss* | 1* |
| Brazil | 1 |

Note: * not among the 10 countries/places in Question 1.

The perception of the newly named (with *) accents are summarized in Table 33:

Table 33

Summary of perceptions of newly named accents

| Country/Place/Area | Description of perceptions |
|--------------------|--|
| Canada | 3. influenced by both the American and British accents 4. easy to understand 5. sounds friendly, easier to pick up the accent 6. clear pronunciation 7. good tone and intonation 8. similar to USA 9. fluent 10. clearly spoken |
| Singapore | strong local accent fast stress on many words but comprehensible right accent singing, melodious, strong 'r' sound and frequent use of slangs fluent with strong accent Singaporean accent |

Singlish

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Malaysia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong local accent • easy to understand |
| New Zealand | No description made |
| Philippines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fast • fluent |
| Taiwan | No description made |
| Korea | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accented • foreign language |
| Thailand | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soft |
| Sri Lanka | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good pacing |
| Mexico | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nice and friendly |
| Greece | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hard to catch |
| Swiss | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speak accurately |

There were 39 participants responding to this question, further evidence showing that they had no particular difficulties in conceiving different accents of English as different ways of speaking English. There were a total of 23 different countries, places or areas named. The top 10 frequently named accents familiar to the participants included 8 mentioned in Questions 1 and 4. Only the French and Brazilian accents fell out of the top ten most popular accents. Participants were just repeating the descriptions for the 10 accents mentioned in Question 1 when attempting this question. There were 13 countries or areas newly named. The 2 accents being named 10 times, which greatly outnumbered the others were Canadian



and Singaporean.

5.2.7.1 The Canadian Accent. There were 8 descriptions written down for the accent. Over half were positive in terms of intelligibility namely 'easy to understand', 'sounds friendly, easier to pick up the accent', 'clear pronunciation', 'fluent' and 'clearly spoken'. One positive description was related to pleasantness: 'good tone and intonation'. There were also two neutral descriptions about correctness/standardness: 'influenced by both the American and British accents' and 'similar to USA'. As with other native accents, the Canadian accent was considered more intelligible both internationally and as pleasant. There were also no negative descriptions.

5.2.7.2 The Singaporean Accent. There were 8 descriptions written down for this accent. Over half of the descriptions were neutral such as 'strong local accent', 'fast', 'stress on many words but comprehensible', 'Singaporean accent' and 'Singlish'. There were also 3 mildly positive descriptions 'right accent', 'singing, melodious, strong “r” sound and frequent use of slang' and 'fluent with strong accent'. For the Singaporean accent, it was somehow similar to the Indian accent. It was also sometimes considered as a nativised accent. Although it did not receive generally positive perceptions, it was not generally perceived negatively.

5.2.7.3 Conclusion for perceptions of other accents familiar to the



participants. The inclusion of the Canadian accent and Singaporean accent did not change the general perceptions of the participants towards individual English accents. The participants perceived the native accents, as a group, to be correct and standard, whereas, non-native English accents, as a whole, were considered to be not correct nor standard, although some of the individual accents were quite intelligible internationally or pleasant.

5.2.8 The effects of attending courses like World English on participants'

perceptions of individual accents. Jenkins (2007, p. 208) suggested that “the fact of being in UK, learning even a little about ELF and most importantly, directly *experiencing* (emphasis in original) ELF communication, may encourage positive attitudes about and beliefs towards it (referring to non-native accents) rather than the opposite.” Living in an international trade and financial city of Hong Kong, the participants will have had many chances of experiencing ELF communication. Despite this, the participants seemed to have a very deep rooted attachment towards native accents such as British, American and Australian. This question was designed to explore whether the knowledge of ELF through courses like World English had any impact on the participants' attitudes and beliefs towards different English accents.

There were a total of 10 participants reported to have attended similar courses



like World English. The group averages ratings of these 10 participants were compared against the remaining participants, as summarized in the following table

(Table 34):

Table 34

Comparisons of ratings between participants who have attended courses like World English and who have not

| | Native accents | | | | | | | | | | | | Non-Native accents | | | | | | | |
|----|--------------------|------|------|------|-----------|------|------|------|------------|------|------|------|--------------------|------|------|------|----------|------|------|------|
| | American | | | | British | | | | Australian | | | | Brazilian | | | | French | | | |
| | cor | acc | pls | fa | cor | acc | pls | fa | cor | acc | pls | fa | cor | acc | pls | fa | cor | acc | pls | fa |
| A1 | 2.13 | 1.88 | 2.16 | 2.19 | 1.30 | 1.27 | 1.33 | 1.33 | 2.06 | 2.00 | 2.26 | 2.16 | 3.42 | 3.32 | 3.42 | 4.5 | 3.50 | 3.39 | 3.52 | 3.92 |
| A2 | 2.10 | 2.00 | 2.40 | 2.00 | 1.50 | 1.40 | 1.60 | 1.50 | 2.00 | 2.10 | 2.30 | 2.40 | 3.33 | 3.33 | 3.50 | 4.50 | 3.20 | 3.00 | 2.80 | 3.40 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Non-Native accents | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | German | | | | Hong Kong | | | | Indian | | | | Chinese | | | | Japanese | | | |
| | cor | acc | pls | fa | cor | acc | pls | fa | cor | acc | pls | fa | cor | acc | pls | fa | cor | acc | pls | fa |
| A1 | 2.70 | 2.57 | 3.00 | 3.13 | 3.06 | 2.58 | 3.00 | 2.06 | 2.93 | 3.07 | 3.46 | 3.59 | 3.39 | 3.39 | 3.55 | 3.44 | 4.06 | 4.00 | 4.16 | 4.47 |
| A2 | 2.63 | 2.63 | 3.00 | 3.13 | 3.10 | 2.70 | 3.30 | 2.10 | 2.70 | 2.70 | 3.30 | 3.20 | 3.30 | 3.50 | 3.70 | 3.50 | 3.67 | 3.89 | 4.11 | 4.00 |

Note. cor=correctness; acc=acceptability for international communication; pls=pleasantness; fa=familiarity; A1=average excluding the 10 participants; A2=average for the 10 participants

Due to the small sample size, it was not possible to derive a definite conclusion from the comparison of means. However, several intriguing differences of the average ratings could still be noticed.

5.2.8.1 Differences of average ratings for native accents.

5.2.8.1.1 American accent. A2 of acceptability (2.00) was much higher than the corresponding A1 (1.88) and that A2 of pleasantness (2.40) was also much higher than that of A1 (2.16), suggesting the 10 participants, in general, rated the American accent less positively on the two scales.

5.2.8.1.2 British accent. A2 of correctness (1.50) was substantially higher than the corresponding A1 (1.30); A2 of acceptability (1.40) was also much higher than that of A1 (1.27) and that A2 of pleasantness (1.60) was also much higher than that of A1 (1.33), suggesting the 10 participants, in general, rated the British accent less positively.

5.2.8.1.3 Australian accent. A2 of acceptability (2.10) was much higher than the corresponding A1 (2.00), suggesting the 10 participants, in general, rated the Australian accent less positively on acceptability for international communication.

In general, it seemed that the 10 participants who had some knowledge about ELF tended to rate the native accents less positively than those who have not.

5.2.8.2 Differences of average ratings for non-native accents.

5.2.8.2.1 French accent. Quite substantial differences could be observed for the French accent on all three items: 1) correctness (A2(3.20) vs A1(3.50)); 2) acceptability for international communication (A2(3.00) vs A1(3.39)); 3) pleasantness

(A2(2.80) vs A1(3.52)), suggested that the 10 participants, in general, rated the French accent more positively.

5.2.8.2.2 *Indian accent.* Again, quite substantial differences were observed for the Indian accent on all three items: 1) correctness (A2(2.70) vs A1(2.93)); 2) acceptability for international communication (A2(2.70) vs A1(3.07)); 3) pleasantness (A2(3.30 vs A1(3.46)), suggesting the 10 participants, in general, were rating the Indian accent more positively.

5.2.8.2.3 *Japanese accent.* For the Japanese accent, a substantial difference in the average rating of correctness was seen with A2 (3.67) much less than A1 (4.06), suggesting that the 10 participants considered the Japanese accent to be less incorrect.

In general, it seemed that the 10 participants tended to rate the non-native accents more positively at the same time when they rated the native accents less positively. Although the result was definitely not conclusive, it demonstrated that the knowledge of ELF does somehow change the participants' attitude towards native accents, as well as non-native accents, considering them to be more equal. The extra comments of the 10 participants also reflected the more egalitarian view towards individual accents of English. Eight out of the 10 participants wrote down extra comments. Two of them reiterated 'problems' associated with non-native accents:

Participant 1:

“Non-native speakers tend to have accent problems in general as they are strongly influenced by their mother tongue. Besides, they might have a comparatively strange choice of words.”

Participant 28:

“Chinglish – could be funny & creative”

Participant 1 clearly viewed the mother tongue influence as a problem, with reference to the unsaid 'standard' of native accents, probably the British accent. The word “comparatively” also referred to the British model. The word “strange” also clearly demonstrated the native speaker norm attitude of the participants.

However, the remaining eight extra comments voiced out a different view towards individual accents:

Participant 31:

“More than 30 years ago, I've learnt to respect local varieties of English.” (in response to the question asking whether they have attended any courses on World English or similar courses)

“English is spoken in a place for various reasons which shape the way it is spoken. For communication purpose, if the local variety does the job, no one

can or should pass criticism. However, only the variety closest to 'standard'

can be understood by most speakers of English in the world.”

Participant 23:

“Yes. It opens up my views on the way to see what is the standard of English. I

agree that it is hard and impossible for non-native speakers to speak like the

so-called 'native English'. Actually it is hard to tell what is a 'native' language.

As long as people can communicate with each other, different accents are just

fine. Usually our attitude towards a certain accent depends on our perception

on the country/places.

But I really want to explore deeper on the educational implication of the

concept of World English. As a teacher, I bear the responsibility to improve

students' pronunciation. I also value the concept of World English but it seems

quite hard to explain that to students. An(d) when it comes to assessment, a

so-called 'standard' form is always needed. I think it is a challenging task for

teachers to strike a balance between the 'standard' and the communicative

purpose of English in real classroom and exam setting.” (in response to the

question asking whether they have attended any courses on World English or

similar courses)



“I enjoy learning / listening to different accents speak by different people worldwide. It is just interesting to learn from how to communicate with people of different English accents. Personally I don't find it troublesome but a fa(s)cinating thing to do.”

Participant 33:

“It let me know it's difficult to tell what the standard is and I am impressed with the statement, 'National language is a dialect backed up with a gun.’” (in response to the question asking whether they have attended any courses on World English or similar courses)

“It's unnecessary to speak like a native. It's fun to see how English evolves into different varieties.”

Participant 21:

“Yes. I think learning English about communication and this doesn't matter where the speakers come from. It's ok to have English from different countries.” (in response to the question asking whether they have attended any courses on World English or similar courses)

“If speakers can speak English in a meaningful way and understandable, it doesn't matter whether the person is native speaker or non-native speaker.”



All of the above participants stressed the point of communication. All agreed that if communication is secured, accent is relevant. Participant 31 also mentioned respect and criticism to individual accent, which echoed with the following comments made by Participant 13:

“Chinese accent found among Chinese people. But they are always criticized by other English native speakers. It is really a kind of discrimination towards Chinese.”

These two participants clearly viewed the negative attitudes towards individual accents because of their deviance from native accents as discrimination, which signaled unfairness.

Participant 8 also mentioned about variations in English in a positive sense:

“This is an interesting course, as I like sociolinguistics very much. This also enhances my understanding of English. Under this umbrella, there are variations in the language.” (in response to the question asking whether they have attended any courses on World English or similar courses)

Similarly, Participant 34 also remarked positively about varieties of English:

“Yes, it brought me to understand more about the features of different varieties of English and arouse (arouse) my interest to pay more attention to the



language difference made by speakers from various English-speaking countries.” (in response to the question asking whether they have attended any courses on World English or similar courses)

At the same time, Participant 34 also made an intriguing comment:

“I think there is no certainly 'correct' or 'incorrect' use of English. As far as the language form is widely accepted by people of the region, it should be accepted and mark as 'correct'. This applies to other aspects of English, like pronunciation, the choice / use of word. Collocation as well.”

Despite the above clear statement, Participant 34 rated differently in terms of correctness for individual accents, as shown in the following table (Table 35):

Table 35

Rating of correctness of participant 34

| | USA | Brazil | France | UK | Ger | Hong Kong | India | China | Japan | Aus |
|--------|-----|--------|--------|----|-----|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| rating | 2 | X | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 2 |

Note. Ger = Germany; Aus = Australia.

Participant 34 certainly thought that the British accent was more correct than the Japanese accent, and there were different correctness for different accents. This was clearly contradictory findings and further explained from the perspective of the Hierarchy of Identity (HoI) Theory in the next section.

5.2.9 Other comments by participants.

5.2.9.1 *The influence of mother tongue.* There were 8 more participants that made comments. Two were neutral about the influence of mother tongue:

Participant 6:

“The non-native way of speaking English is affected by the mother tongue of the country / place.”

Participant 14:

“Pronunciation often affected by mother tongue.”

The two statements were not surprising as the later interview discussions revealed

that all teachers were aware of the influence of mother tongue. Interestingly,

Participant 6 used the term introduced by the author, 'way of speaking' instead of the

much more familiar 'accent'. This again suggested that the teachers were ready to look

at different accents as different ways of speaking English.

5.2.9.2 *Intelligibility among speakers.* Two participants commented on the intelligibility among speakers.

Participant 30:

“Non native-speakers of English find it difficult to understand colloquial expressions.”



Participant 26:

“Sometimes the Hong Kong accent the Hong Kong people have is too strong that makes the foreigners confused and difficult to understand what they say.”

Although it was not very clear what colloquial expressions Participant 30 refers to, since it was the 'non-native speakers' as a group finding it difficult to understand, it can be inferred that colloquial expressions (or slangs, or idioms) of the native speakers found it difficult to be understood. This echoes recent research findings of ELF studies that it is the 'unilateral idiomaticity' which hinders the mutual understanding among internal communications (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 134). By 'unilateral idiomaticity', a term introduced by Seidlhofer (2002), “the use by one speaker of marked idiomatic expressions attested in ENL (English as a native language) that may well be unknown and unintelligible to the other participants in ELF interactions..., but also semantically non-transparent phrasal verbs, etc.” (Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 134)

Similarly, it was unclear what kind of foreigners Participant 26 was referring to; who were confused by the 'too strong' Hong Kong accent. Again, it can be inferred that Participant 26 was referring to native English speaking foreigners. In fact, Kirkpatrick, Deterding and Wong (2008) found that the English spoken by Hong



Kong university students were highly intelligible by both native and non-native English speakers.

The above two statements seemingly expressed unconscious attitudes and conscious beliefs towards native and non-native accents. These will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

5.2.9.3 The native-speakers norm. Two participants specifically commented on whether non-native English speakers should speak like native English speakers.

Participant 39:

“Non-native speakers do not need to aspire to be like native speakers. It is the fluency and the ability in communications that matter.”

Participant 11:

“It doesn't matter whether it's native way of speaking or not, as long as the listeners understand as language is about communication.”

Both participants were very clear that as long as communication can take place, it doesn't matter whether the speakers have a native-like accent. However, just like the other participants who had written down very similar comments, they still rated native accents comparatively more positively than non-native accents, as demonstrated by earlier findings. Again, the underlying contradiction needs further

discussion in the next section.

5.2.9.4 Tolerance for individual accents. Lastly, there were two long comments made about the tolerance for individual accents:

Participant 16:

“English is widely spoken in many countries of the world. Obviously, the way we speak it is affected by our mother tongue. I'm referring to the intonation and the pronunciation of words. It's simply natural. Acceptability for me largely depends on intelligibility. If it's quite hard for me to understand a certain group of people (eg. Japanese) when they're speaking in English, I'll rate it lower in the scale. However, there're still differences among different (ethnic) groups even within a country, the Scottish being a very good example. All in all, a language is a tool of communication. I think we should be more tolerant (stress added) even if we may not be able to understand other Englishes. People in other countries may also have bad impression on Hong Kong English. It is just a scenario of 'a kettle is calling the pot black'. Nevertheless, it's another story if we are teaching (stress in original) the language.”

Participant 12:



“Language is a tool of communication & so is English. Yet somehow people, including teachers & students, tend to imitate the accent of native English speakers when speaking English and believe that the more you 'sound' like a native, the better your standard of spoken English is. The Assessment Guidelines of the Domain I 'Pronunciation & Delivery' of Hong Kong DSE English Speaking Paper guide teachers & students / parents to distinguish the best from the average. Non-Native way of speaking English includes frequent hesitations, failure to pronounce sound clusters clearly, esp. the final consonant, flat intonation, wrong stress, etc. All these are quite typical in Hong Kong. Another area is the accuracy in the way of speaking English, eg. The choice of the correct words / vocabulary, the pace with the right pause, grammar, etc. From the perspective of 'communication' (emphasis in original), all the above should be 'tolerated' (emphasis in original) as long as the speaker & the listener can understand each other. Of course, most still regard Received Pronunciation, Queen's English as more prestigious.”

Participant 16 concluded that since language is a tool of communication, we should be more tolerant. However, taking the statement at face value, contradictory results as Participant 16 claimed that we should be more tolerant even if we may not be able to



understand other Englishes. How can we communicate when we do not understand?

The sentence would make much more sense if it was interpreted as “... even if we may not be able to *fully* understand other Englishes...” Understanding in this way, the comment of Participant 16 would be more aligned with the more egalitarian view towards individual accents, which would also be compatible with his/her earlier claims of “*It's simply natural.*” when h/she is referring to the mother tongue influenced by English accents.

However, the word “tolerant” reflected Participant 16's unconscious attitude towards non-native accents as substandard. This attitude was seen again when he/she finally concluded the comment as, “*Nevertheless, it's another story if we are teaching (stress in original) the language.*” It was very clear that he/she was claiming that when it comes to teaching, there will be no such tolerance, and the teaching model should be the native accent(s). In addition, his/her usage of the ending idiom also reflected his/her adherence to native English.

Participant 12's comment was very similar to that of Participant 16. He/she also believed that language is a tool of communication. Therefore, from the perspective of communication, all characteristic non-native features should be tolerated. However, he/she included the two critical words “communication” and

“tolerated” in quotations, signaling a complicated or even opposite meaning in the usage of the two words. Participant 12 also participated in the semi-structured interview study and so his/her comment could be taken as a whole in the next section. Participant 12 also talked about examinations, a topic discussed by all semi-structured interview participants. It will be discussed in the next section together with the issue of communication.

5.3 General conclusion for the Questionnaire study

The results of the questionnaire study confirmed findings from the literature that the British accent was the most preferred English accent among local NNETs. In particular, the British accent was regarded the best in terms of correctness/standardness, acceptability for international communication, pleasantness and intelligibility. Together with American and Australian accents, native English accents were perceived, as a group, to be generally correct and standard, whereas, the non-native English accents, as a whole, were considered to be not correct nor standard, although some of the individual accents were quite intelligible internationally or pleasant. Therefore, the current study supports the firm segregation of native and non-native accents.

The Hong Kong accent, despite the medium to low average ratings in



correctness, pleasantness and acceptability for international communication, was considered by at least some of the local NNETs to be among the 'good' varieties of English spoken in the world. There was an apparent contradiction or ambiguity of the participants towards the local Hong Kong accent. One possible explanation was the familiarity of the accent. A closer look of the descriptions given to Hong Kong clearly showed that all positive descriptions about the Hong Kong accent were related to the accent's high intelligibility. If the attitudes of the participants towards the accent were further divided, as discussed in the earlier section as beliefs, referring more to the conscious views towards the accent and attitudes, referring to the more subtle and unconscious views towards accent, the results generated from the rating question (question 4) might be more about conscious beliefs towards the accent, and the ranking question (question 3) more about the subconscious attitudes towards the accent. Therefore, it could be concluded that there is an apparent contradiction between beliefs and attitudes, at least towards the local Hong Kong accent, among the participants. In the following chapter, the beliefs and attitudes of the participants are analyzed through the data collected in the semi-structured interviews.

The analysis of the responses of the 10 participants who have certain knowledge about ELF revealed that it seems to impact on the deep rooted beliefs of

the correctness and standardness of native accents as well as the sub-standardness and incorrectness of the non-native accents. However, the knowledge of ELF seemed not to be impacting on the beliefs towards the local accent. The analysis of the semi-structured interview data provided more insights into the formation of the beliefs held by the participants towards the local accent. Finally, the issue of identity is discussed in the perspective of HoI theory providing an explanation of the apparent contradiction and ambiguities revealed by the questionnaire study. Other factors impacting on the teachers' attitudes like intelligibility, power, social conventions and context are also discussed in the next chapter.



CHAPTER SIX

PHASE II – THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW DATA

6.1 Introduction and Overview

In general, the results of the semi-structured interviews confirmed the findings from the questionnaire study, that the British accent was regarded as the best accent in terms of correctness/standardness, acceptability for international communication, pleasantness and intelligibility. Together, with the American accent, the native English accents were perceived, as a group, to be generally correct and standard. Whereas the non-native English accents, as a whole, were considered to be not correct nor standard.

The examination of accent-related life experiences revealed that there is a deep-rooted belief of segregation of English accents into “good” and “bad” accents which were represented by native accents and non-native accents. On the other hand, from the perspective of HoI model, apart from the conscious identity option of an English teacher, there was another salient, yet more unconscious identity option of an international communicator. When it came to international communication, the



salience of the identity option of an international communicator often impacted on the participants' view towards the local accent and native accents. They became far more open to think that the English used for international communication can be any accent. Most of the participants were actually open to the idea of English as an international language, EIL, or English as a Lingua Franca, ELF.

Apart from identities, there were still other factors impacting on the participants' attitudes towards ELF in a complicated way. They were intelligibility, power, social conventions, and context.

The beginning of this chapter reports the results of the semi-structured interviews together with the demographic data of the participants. The coding of the interviews generated 5 recurring main themes. Each main theme including sub-themes are discussed in detail with reference to the actual statements made by the participants. The statements of the participants are cross referenced to provide support of the general claims for each of the main themes and sub themes. The claims are also backed up by results from the questionnaire study where appropriate. The chapter ends with a general conclusion for the semi-structured interviews.

6.2 Results

6.2.1 The demographics of the participants. All participants were highly



competent English users. Most are long time (over 5 years to over 20 years) friends of the researcher. F, a colleague of E, is the only referred participant. G, H and L were former employees of the researcher at least 5 years ago and no participants had any business relationship with the researcher from the start of the study. C just resigned as a teacher before participating in the study. There were 8 females and 3 males with ages ranging from late 20s to early 50s. The teaching experience of the participants also spread quite evenly from just 1 year to nearly 30 years. Two participants teach in primary schools, 8 in secondary schools, and 1 in a university. B, E and G are now the Head of the English Panel in their school, whereas, J is Vice-Principal of her school.

Table 36

Demographics of semi-structured interview participants

| ID | Rel | Sex | Age | Exp | Inst | Head | Date | Place | T limit | Duration |
|----|-----|-----|-------|-----|------|------|--------------------|--------------|---------|----------|
| A | fd | F | 40-49 | 23 | S | N | Nov13 ¹ | Meeting room | X | 78 mins |
| B | fd | M | 40-49 | 23 | S | Y | Jan14 | Home | X | 27 mins |
| C | fd | M | 50-59 | 4 | S | N | Jan14 | Outdoor Cafe | X | 65 mins |
| D | fd | F | 40-49 | 11 | S | N | Jan14 ² | Church | X | 44 mins |
| E | fd | F | 30-39 | 15 | P | Y | Jan14 | Classroom | X | 81 mins |
| F | ref | M | 30-39 | 8 | P | N | Jan14 | Staff room | 30 mins | 28 mins |
| G | ex | F | 30-39 | 7 | S | N | Feb14 | Meeting room | 40 mins | 38 mins |
| H | ex | F | 20-29 | 4 | S | N | Feb14 | I's Home | X | 39 mins |
| J | fd | F | 50-59 | 29 | S | VP | Mar14 | Church | X | 50 mins |
| K | fd | F | 30-39 | 14 | S | N | Mar14 | Home | X | 35 mins |
| L | ex | F | 20-29 | 1 | U | N | Mar14 | Office | X | 42 mins |

Note. ID = participants' ID; Rel = relationship with the author (fd = friend; ref = referred participant; ex = former employee of the author); Exp = years of teaching experience; Inst = serving institute (P = primary school; S = secondary school; U = university); Head = Head of English Panel (Y = yes; N = no; VP = Vice-Principal); Date = date of interview; Place = place of interview (I = interviewer/author); T limit = time limit for the interview (X = no time limit); Duration = duration of the interview
¹ there were 2 parts of interview, 1st was conducted on Nov 2013, the 2nd on Jan 2014.
² there were 2 parts of interview, 1st was conducted on Jan 2014, the 2nd on Feb 2014.

6.2.2 Recurring themes of the interviews. The interviews were conducted in roughly the same manner by the author initiating open-ended questions (List 1).

The participants were encouraged to say anything related to the questions and more questions could be initiated either by the researcher or the participants. The researcher was particularly interested in the potentially contradictory comments or ambiguity in the participants' beliefs and attitudes towards individual accents. The researcher repeated questions in different forms in order to bring the participants' awareness to the contradictions and ambiguities.

The interviews were coded according to the recurring themes that emerged.

The following main themes emerged during the interviews:

1) Accent attitudes

a) a desire for a native like accent

b) attitudes towards Hong Kong accent and other non-native accents

2) Accent beliefs

- a) beliefs about “good” and “bad” accents
- b) beliefs about suitable accents for students
- 3) Examination vs Communication
- 4) Perceived effects of accent-related life experiences
- 5) Acceptability of ELF for international communication and as a model for teaching

The first 2 main themes are directly related to RQ1 and, thus, considerable time was spent on the discussions for almost all interviews. In the context of Hong Kong, examination preparation occupies a major share of the time of the teachers. Therefore, the topic was also discussed with almost all participants. All participants except one talked about personal accent-related life experiences and analysis revealed possible formation of participant’s attitudes and beliefs towards individual accents. The last theme directly related to RQ2 and, thus, considerable time was spent on the discussion with participants.

6.3 Discussions

6.3.1 Main themes. All 11 semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded according to the recurring themes that emerged. The main themes were:

- 1) Accent attitudes

- a) a desire for a native like accent
- b) attitudes towards Hong Kong accent and other non-native accents
- 2) Accent beliefs
 - a) beliefs about “good” and “bad” accents
 - b) beliefs about suitable accents for students
- 3) Communication and examination
- 4) Perceived effects of accent-related life experiences
- 5) Acceptability of ELF for international communication and as a model for teaching

6.3.1.1.1 Accent attitudes – a desire for a native like accent. As revealed by the questionnaire study, all participants desired a native-like accent. In particular, they all strived very hard to attain a British accent. All participants chose to want to have the British accent when asked. Others, although not being asked directly for a choice for their own accent, showed various desires for native accents, and in particular, the British accent. All participants displayed very positive attitudes towards a British accent, confirming the results of the questionnaire study. Participants associated the British accent with correctness and standardness (D, G, H); acceptability for international communication (K); and pleasantness (F). Most of the participants also mentioned other native accents like American, Canadian and Australian in an equally



positive light. Therefore, it is clear that all participants had very positive attitudes towards native accents as a whole.

6.3.1.1.2 Accent attitudes – attitudes towards Hong Kong accent and other non-native accents. On first glance, all participants were showing quite negative attitudes towards a Hong Kong accent:

I ok. How about yourself? Can you comment whether you like your own accent or not.

B No ㄣ.

I No? Why not?

B Because I had been influenced by my mother tongue I cannot speak (.)

< @ @ @ > VERY British in a way / < @ @ @ > yeah.

B was very firm claiming that he disliked his own Hong Kong accent, confirmed by the falling intonation of “No”.

C ... Because um (1) There's some features in every language ok English English Is a language um with features (.) about especially about intonation that the Chinese language lacking ok. Quite often Hong Kong students or some of ar I experience from the ar students from the Chinese or from China I should say , they use their own Chinese language to (.) imitate or mimic the English

pronunciation, making that the Chinese accent or Hong Kong accent,

which is WRONG ㄣ.

C was very definite to say that the Chinese accent or Hong Kong accent was wrong.

The word “wrong” was stressed and confirmed with the falling intonation of the word “wrong”.

I ... How do you comment the Hong Kong accent? Do you think that it is easy to understand or as compared with the Chinese accent?

D I think Hong Kong people is different I think we try to imitate British accent American accent and actually we are we don't have a very strong Hong Kong accent actually I think. Whenever you have a very strong Cantonese accent we (.) are very concerned about it. We try to get rid of it. ... For Hong Kong people I don't think we would like to have some people who label you “oh you have a very strong Hong Kong accent” you would not be very happy. And then that's why we never try to keep our Cantonese accent or or local accent whenever in our English that's why I think we hardly classified one thing as Hong Kong accent in Hong Kong .

D clearly stated that she was very concerned about the Hong Kong accent and would try very hard to get rid of it. She even denied that there was a thing called the Hong

Kong accent, which implied they were just errors.

E ... sometimes I want to find out I want to find somebody who who knows the um who can discriminate the discriminate the accent and I want to ask them e what do you think about my accent because my principal said that when he <@@@> when he listens to /<@@@> um our NET teacher English he said he can't understand what she said but and then he said when I <@@@> when I speak English he can understand me over 90% /<@@@> @@ so that I think that's why I'm thinking am I speaking Hong Kong English? <@@@> and then that's why he can understand what I say/<@@@>.

Although E didn't comment on what she termed "Hong Kong accent", the context of the dialogue suggested that she was concerned if her English was too different from that of her NET, so that her principal could understand her over 90%.

I ... how about Hong Kong English?

G (1) um (2) I don't quite GET what's Hong Kong English. Is it affected by Cantonese?

I Yeah exactly.

G But of course we can't use (1) ar (.) I won't (.) use the CHINGLISH in the lessons because (.) no when I give instructions or (.) when I when I um (.)

when I teach (.) I use (.) proper English. @@

G implied here that Chinglish (Hong Kong English) is improper English.

I but it still ok you say that it is ok to have the Cantonese accent right?

H Yeah if they can't really learn it you know not everyone got the talent in language right? If it is for average it means for the whole class the goal for whole class of course if it is for majority at least they can manage that's ok as long as. But then for some of them who got who can really pronounce or who can really speak good English or whose English ability is better of course I hope that they can acquire (.) a higher level or more advance level so in that in that means that I think Hong Kong accent English (.) is OK level @@ but then the British or American accent is good.

Although H did not say that Hong Kong English was bad, she clearly said that Hong Kong English was just OK. If the students cannot master native English, it is still ok for them to communicate in English.

I Do you think that there there exist a an English called Hong Kong English in Hong Kong?

J <SOFT>Hong Kong English?/<SOFT> Um YES ↗. Maybe yeah maybe there is Hong Kong English ↗ um as I put in my questionnaire but most are @ not



that standard

J was very reserved when talking about Hong Kong English. She certainly was not thinking that Hong Kong English could be the standard.

I Let's talk something about the Hong Kong accent. Do you think that apart from Hong Kong accent there is a thing called Hong Kong English existing in Hong Kong?

K um Hong Kong English? Um (1) I think ar our accent is ar is still influenced by our mother tongue, that's a fact ok. Even we try to work hard or improving our accent through different kinds of ways we still (.) we still cannot get rid of that accent because e Cantonese and Chinese still our mother tongue so that's the fact that we cannot deny and but for Chinese English I think um...

K claimed that she has tried very hard to eliminate her Hong Kong accent. Clearly her attitude towards Hong Kong English was negative.

I How about the non-native one? So to speak (.) um Hong Kong English? How about Hong Kong English?

L Hong Kong English NO ㄟ.@@

I No way?

L No. ㄟ Not preferable. Not not no.



When talking about what kind of accents the students should acquire, L firmly stated that it shouldn't be the Hong Kong accent. Her attitude was further confirmed by the falling intonation of the words “no”. L was clearly negative towards a Hong Kong accent.

Participants also initiated discussions related to other non-native accents like Indian, Japanese and Chinese all in a negative light:

A *I think maybe because the British and American accents are (.) the most common. The most common accents maybe. Then more people will get used to these accents (.) because they they have more chances of listening to such accents because of the movies right or the um the radio channel you know and then (.) then (.) because of (I) yes ar then maybe people can get used to these accents and they can understand these accents better than other accents like the INDIAN one you know which is quite heavily affected by their own Indian language the Hindi or for example the Japanese one you know it well right?*

A placed the Indian accent in a subordinate position under the British and American accents.

D *... for example some of our students come from mainland China we try our very best to help her to get rid of those accents because we we we know that*

by the time they have the DSE then she will be in a very unfavorable situation and that's why I think um articulate um ar approximate um native English speakers English as close as possible is I think um is very important for our students.

D Um: (2) I think for example those who's master (.) ar (.) e (.) for example recently ar not recently a few months ago I watched a movie called 『中國合夥人』 and then one of the actors 黃曉明 and the final scene he made a speech um to memorize the whole book of something like this but his accent is SO STRONG Putonghua accent you already close your ears you think “oh it's disgusting why this guy speak no mat- even though we need by the time we (.) listen to his speech we need to read the subtitle so that we can understand it. Already for being an English teacher I closed my ears already my ears already “oh it's so bad it's disgusting why can this guy speak in this way?” so I think this is (.) some <@@@> problem for myself I think /<@@@> whenever some people cannot pronounce it or or articulate in a good accent I already close my ears I don't want to listen to it. It's a torture to me I think.

For D, the Chinese accent was something that needed to be eliminated. She even



described the Chinese accent of an actor to be disgusting and she had to close her ears.

G and then (3) I think Indian st- Indian accent I think is ok. The indian style English.

I what do you mean by ok?

G (1) um (.) its better than the japanese one. @ @ @

I Better than the Japanese one?

G yes. Or maybe better than the France one, too. As I as I know (.)

G clearly ranked the Japanese and the French accent, which are non-native accents, quite low.

H because they have their own accents (1) the Chinese is (.) they have their own accent and Japanese the Indians (.) the way the- (.) the way they speak is (.) more or less influenced by their own mother language.

I ok. So once a variety of English is influenced by their mother tongue, it can't be set as standard right? Is that what you mean?

H Yeah I think so.

H believed that all non-native accents to be non-standard.

K Um, I haven't come across this kind of these kind of e parents but um from my

perception I don't think um because we've got different kinds of NET teachers e:: sometimes I will hear from the students that um they will favor kind e some teac- some NET teachers e e because of their ACCENT. For example we've got we've got Indian teachers before, they'll find they could not tell me the reason but they will try to say that it's very weird or it's very awkward when we (.) when we hear what the NET teacher saying so e I could figure out e from this kind of things that um they will try to prefer a kind of accent instead of the others.

Although K was referring to her students' comments about the Indian accent, as she didn't further comment, it seemed that she also held the same attitude towards the Indian accent.

L -the list goes to this way ok the list goes to native English, the (.) unidentified English that means like you have the accent but you have you sort of like you don't have the local accent and then it's like sort of in between native accent and local accent and then the local accent goes to the last one.

L clearly ranked all accents according to a hierarchy, just like what G did, confirming Jenkins (2007) findings that participants in her research perceived individual accents in a hierarchy, with native accents on the top and non-native accents at the bottom.



In general, the data of the semi-structured interviews confirmed the results of the questionnaire that the local NNETs viewed the native accents very positively, with the British accent occupying the supreme position in terms of correctness/standardness, acceptability for international communication and pleasantness. On the other hand, the participants had quite negative attitudes towards the non-native accents, confirming that there is a deep rooted segregation of accents into native and non-native accent groups.

Despite the apparent negative attitudes towards the local Hong Kong accent, more careful analysis of the interview data revealed a more complicated picture. A common observation was that if the participant was asked to comment on his/her own accent, all gave an ambiguous response. They approved of their own accent and then somehow said that it was not good enough.

I Your English right? How can you describe your English?

H (1) ok. @@

I ok? In what sense?

H in what sense? Um (.) at least may understand what I mean.

I ok. Can you say it is British English?

H ar not really. You mean the accent or what?



I Yes.

H Not really.

I Not really?

H Yeah. <@@@> hong kong accent /<@@@>

I you can name it hong kong accent?

H Yeah <VERY SOFT> hong kong accent /<VERY SOFT>

In response to the question, H did not hesitate too much in giving positive feedback of “ok” about her own accent, although it was accompanied by a little laughter, signaling a certain degree of embarrassment. When asked if her accent could be labeled as British, she was also ready to disagree and said that it was a Hong Kong accent, accompanied by laughter and admitted again in a very soft tone. She demonstrated an ambiguous attitude towards her own accent within a very short period of time. Similarly, A displayed the same ambiguity when responding to the same question:

I By the way do you like your own accent?

A Um:: (.) my own accent? I think it's <hesitantly>FINE/< hesitantly >

but <a bit embarrassed>NOT VERY GOOD/< a bit embarrassed > I won't say so. Do you like my accent? @@

A, the same as H, was a bit hesitant before admitting that her own accent was fine.

However, she immediately remarked that it was also not very good. At the end, she asked the researcher “Do you like my accent” in quite a confident voice seemingly prompting an affirmative answer. A's response also displayed ambiguities about her own accent. Likewise, K responded:

I I see. So far for the students. How about yourself? Do you like your own accent?

K um I think um I've got lots of room (.) e much room for improvement ↗. But um I think um for my accent I think is acceptable for me to teach the students to ar (.) having ar learning English um as a kind of second language. So but um I'll try to improve it and (.) up to a (.) really native speaker but then I HOPE I can but then because I think um that's the way that we should ar learn English and try to ...

K immediately said that there was a lot of room for her to improve on her accent, but she also said that it was acceptable for her to teach the students. So again, this ambiguity towards one's own accent was seen whenever the participant was asked how they feel about their own accent. There were more subtle forms of approval of one's own accent:

I So how can you describe your own accent?

C I will say in between the British and the American.

I British and American, right?

C yeah

I ok. Far away from the Hong Kong accent?

C I'll say yes.

Before asking C this question, we had been discussing British and American accents as models or standards. By aligning his own accent with British and American, he was actually approving his accent as near standard, which was also “far from the Hong Kong accent”. However, at a later point in the interview, C admitted that he had picked up some of the Hong Kong accents and was not that sure about whether his accent was close enough to the standard English:

C Ar::: (.) Many ways (.) um (.) first of all my (.) I have to make myself (.) to (.) to be as close to the so called standard English first.

I -you think that you are not close enough?

C I don't know. <@@@> I don't know /<@@@> I don't know we don't know because ar the thing is um (.) we spent (.) I for me, I spent most of my life in Hong Kong I pick up some of the (.) so called Hong Kong accent

unconsciously ok. Ar:: I try to do it myself to to be as close as possible to the um so called standard English pronunciation...

So C displayed a change of attitude towards his own accent throughout the interview, creating the ambiguity like the previous cases.

There was also another incidence when the participants displayed an ambiguous attitude towards the native accent as well. When the interview began, the researcher asked F to see if it was necessary for the students to approximate native speakers' English. F clearly stated that he doesn't think they need to approximate that:

I Do you think that they (the students) need to approximate the native speakers' English?

F Um um [in terms of ar I think ar communication is what we are talking about so ar doesn't

[apart from fluency

matter that ar (.) they can speak fluently or ar it's a matter of um the level of communication like ar the understanding of it.

I ok. As far as the students can communicate with others it is ok right? [Is it not necessary for

[I believe



so them to approximate native speakers' English?

F Yes I don't think so I don't think they need to approximate that.

However, when it came to the end of the interview, F seemed to change his mind:

I ok. Even though the speakers (native) in the world is among the minority?

F Ar (.) in another way if (.) every teacher is teaching the students native English everywhere in the world then what you think minority is not minority anymore so I think teaching native English is some MUST as a as a teacher.

Here, F was very certain that, as a teacher, he has to teach native English. Therefore, it looks like F's attitude towards a native accent had changed substantially within 30 minutes.

To look at these ambiguities, it is particularly useful to introduce Omoniyi's (2006) Hierarchy of Identity (HoI) model. The model states that options of identity are always co-present during moments of interaction. We hierarchize dynamically the identity options according to their salience during interactions. A number of socio-situational factors such as social norms, expectations, as well as interlocutors' responses impact on the appropriateness and salience of the cluster of identity options. The identity option, which has the greatest potential to achieve the specific goal we pursue in the moment of interaction will be foregrounded, whereas, the co-

present identity options will fall beneath it.

Since it is not clear how the identities are hierarchized, this study partially adopted the HoI model in explaining the observed ambiguous attitudes displaced by the participants. For each participant, during the course of the interviews, there were quite a number of identity options co-present, e.g., as an English teacher, as an English learner, as an international communicator, as a Hongkonger etc. When being asked about the views towards their own accent, the participants chose from the available co-present identity options, so that the desired outcome could be brought about. In front of an interviewer asking their views towards English, nearly all participants foreground the identity of an English teacher. As an English teacher, all participants presented their English as “nice”, “fine”, or at least “acceptable”, with H being the most explicit to claim that it should be ok since she was hired to a school as an English teacher:

H (2) or I don't really know <@@@> because it is (.) I seldom really RECORD my voice and just listen to MY teaching of English /<@@@> so I think it is OK because I'm hired to a school. @@@ so that means the teacher the principal is ok with it. That means there is some market so I think its ok.

On the other hand, all participants agreed that as an English teacher, they should teach



their students the standard, which is British English. However, all participants also admitted that none of them had acquired a British accent. As English teachers, their accent was not the model. Therefore, many of them explicitly expressed the determination to work harder to try to achieve the goal of acquiring a British accent. At the same time, there exists another identity of an English learner. As non-native speakers of English, all the local NNETs are learners of English at the same time. F is explicit in this respect:

F Ar (.) it's like um (.) a combination of Hong Kong, Canadian and also British cos I've tried my best to ar ar um watch or even like um ar go to look up the dictionary to to ar (.) acQUIRE or LEARN those ar British accent and for that (.) I I found it very difficult to swap from one to another yeah.

Also co-present as one of the identity options was the identity of an international communicator. Hong Kong is a place where there are lots of chances to engage in international communication. As an international communicator, the participants' Hong Kong accent, as suggested by Kirkpatrick, Deterding and Wong (2008), is well capable for the job.

Therefore, all participants demonstrated seemingly contradictory attitudes towards their own accent throughout the course of the interviews, with some



switching identities so fast that the apparent contradiction was seen in the same sentence.

The issue of identity will be discussed in more detail in the penultimate section.

6.3.1.2.1 Accent beliefs – about “good” and “bad” accents. As seen from the previous section, the general attitudes towards individual accents revealed by the interviews agreed with the results of the questionnaire that native accents are seen, in general, as good in terms of correctness/standardness, acceptability for international communication and pleasantness. On the other hand, the participants had quite negative attitudes towards non-native accents, confirming that there is a deep rooted segregation of accents into native and non-native accents.

The discussions in the interviews always went on to seek individual participant's explanation for their expressed attitudes for individual accent, mainly native accents. In general, all participants thought that native accents were “good” because they felt that they are standard, correct, official or authentic. Some participants also had very positive remarks in terms of pleasantness, especially for a British accent. A few participants mentioned the good status associated with native accents. On the other hand, when the participants talked about non-native accents,

most of their comments concerned the accents' incorrectness, non-standardness or problem of intelligibility.

In general, the interviews confirmed the results of the questionnaire that the participants considered the native accents to be “good” because they are correct, standard, authentic and intelligible internationally. However, when asked why native accents are correct, standard or authentic, no participants could offer a persuasive explanation.

Most of the participants just insisted that it was the case or stressed other reasons like pleasantness, which is more subjective, as shown in the earlier section.

One participant admitted that the standard to be rather arbitrary:

I Yes. OK. So um it happens to me that um (.) if you NAME a certain kind of accent to to be the standard, then that will give me an impression that being a standard is very arbitrary.

L What do you mean being a standard oh yes (.) I guess I guess what I guess I know what you mean.

I Yeah. So let's just PICK this as the standard.

L Yes

I Let's just pick Queen's English as the standard, let's just pick the received

pronunciation as the standard.

L Yes.

I Ar do you agree that?

L It's very VAgue actually like the Queen accent actually (.) other than the BBC like reporters not a lot of people are actually speaking in Queen accent or Queen's English. Well for in an education like institute it is very hard like what to teach not to teach so the only thing that we can do is probably choosing the most authoritative one.

Like in the case of the participants' rating of accents which they do not familiar the above findings reflect again that the 'standard language ideology' could be seen among the participants.

6.3.1.2.2 Accent beliefs – about suitable accents for students. Unlike the fact the all participants believed that they should acquire a British accent as English teachers because it is standard, correct and authentic, the participants were somehow divided when it came to the students.

Most of the participants believed that native accent was suitable for the students. Participants who believed this felt that it was beneficial for them. It was considered better for the students to have a native accent when taking examinations

and preparing for work. It was also because the participants thought that society generally looks for “standard” English, which is native English, therefore, the NNETs believed a native accent was suitable for the students.

There were a few participants who believed that a native accent was not necessary for the students:

I ok. But as a teacher, as a teacher in Hong Kong, do you think that your students NEED or required to learn a particular accent?

A No.

I No?

A Definitely not. No.

I ok. Why not?

A Accent is not the most important I'll say. Um I once had an experience of um (.) trainin- training up a student um (.) on a poem and that poem in that poem she she is going to ar have part of it to act (.) as a (.) British Queen (.) that that is important. As a Queen of um (.) ar of um Britain of course you have to have that kind of accent ok to show your different role. But if you are just expressing yourself if your pronunciation is clear enough then I don't think people cannot understand you (.) JUST because of the accent ok but of course

if your accent I mean um um um deeply influence you your expression or your pronunciation and that is a problem. I can't tell which is the most appropriate pronunciation. @@

I ok. As far as the students can communicate with others it is ok right? [Is it not necessary for

[I

believe so them to approximate native speakers' English?

F Yes I don't think so I don't think they need to approximate that.

IWhat kind of accent you think your students need?

K Ar because they try to learn English as a kind of second language, I don't really require them to acquire the (.) the most (.) ar I think ar many people say orthodox ar British English.....

Participants quoted above believed that if students can communicate in English, it was not necessary for them to have a native accent. Note that F, as discussed earlier, first thought that students do not need to approximate a native accent, but later in the interview, he felt that “teaching native English is some MUST as a as a teacher.”

In general, the participants expressed different beliefs when considering which accent was suitable for the students. Although more participants believed that a native

accent was better for the students, they expressed different views during the course of the interviews. Apart from the contradictory comments by F, all participants mentioned at some point in every interview that it was acceptable for the students to use non-native English provided that they could communicate with others. The co-present identity options of being an English teacher and that of being an international communicator were foregrounded at different times in the interviews. The related issue of communication and examination will be discussed in more detail in the perspective of the HoI model in the next theme, communication vs examination.

6.3.1.3 Communication and examination. All but one of the participants mentioned the effect of examinations on the model of teaching. Not all participants thought that the students needed to acquire a British accent because of the examination requirement. For those who thought that it was better for the students to have a British accent, J's response was the most detailed:

I first of all I would like to know what kind of English accent do you think that you students need?

J Well um as I just have some remarks on your questionnaire I think um from students' perspective or when I regard examination reSULTs as the most important thing so (.) I will TRY um you know (.) in the lesson or after school

*um expose them to some standard English as far as we could find from our
 environment for example um we always encourage them to watch BBC
 channels um the Discovery Channels etc the TV programs and um (.)
 sometimes I will advise them to or you know to enhance their listening skills to
 listen to the RTHK hourly news which they could find online and those kind of
 accents I think will be more standard* **Δ** *from my point of view so um it's mainly
 10 because of examination I could say or if (.) language is regarded as a tool
 11 of communication actually um (.) well if they can communicate that will be
 12 fine* **Δ** *but because they are bound by the marking scheme or assessment
 13 guideline so um when I teach when I play the role of a teacher I think I'll
 encourage them TRY their best to sound natural which is a a very important
 um: criterion for (.) assessing spoken English and if you take a look at the
 example of IELTS um when they assess candidates you know there is a
 speaking paper and then they are given a band after having a an interview
 with the examiner. So I think the yardstick or we'll say the criteria when they
 assess the spoken English worldwide will be mainly about natural um the
 less hesitation the better (.) and um (.) the final consonant articulation the
 stress (.) you know (.) those variety that um they they will that's the thing that*

they will take a look at.

I Ok. So what I can get from your explanation is that concerning with examination you would like your students to acquire standard accent as far as possible.

J Yap

I Ok. By standard I take what you mean by standard is the natural English?

J Yeah

I Can you elaborate a bit on how the conception of natural and standard? Can you say something more about this two concepts?

J Um maybe it's a kind of ar (.) you know

I -or can you name a specific accent that you think is standard and natural?

J Standard if they can sound like a British

I -British?

J Yes because maybe because we are (.) um (.) once British colony in Hong Kong and because (.) um the British English we say the Queen's English has a very high status worldwide although maybe Americans don't agree but um as far as I know the origin (.) that will be um you know like the um articulation of the accent the stress will be quite (.) different from Australian like English and

would be quite different particularly different from American English like the vowel the way that they articulate the r sound. All these ar will be I will TRY my best to help them or well as I was a student when I learned I remembered um maybe my teacher gave me similar concept as well so it's ALL depends on how I learned and how I'm going to pass on. Well ar about the term natural, if they can speak fluently ∇ , um without a lot of hesitation and when the you know sometime in ar (.) Hong Kong students' saying when they hesitate will say e e e (like that) so if I will try to tune them let's say how about when you hesitate you have to think about those filler you try to make it like um instead of ee. That sound a bit like Cantonese the um articulation when we hesitate we all hesitate right? um (.) like this (.) so it's entirely like the concept when I listen to them when they have the discussion in the ar oral practice or when they ar present you know nowadays SBA's two modes group interaction and individual presentation so when they present um when they TRY to (.) make it very fluent and smooth that depends a lot of rehearsal (.) at home so I will just try to they have to have some kind of MOdeling (.) when they TRY to reDUCED the influence of the impact of the first language they need some kind of modeling and more practice and they have to know one kind of ar



direction how to improve (.) um because I TEACH so I always refer to the markers' guidelines I have to be practical with them yap.

J was very explicit that she was teaching according to the requirement of the examination or assessment. She knew the marking schemes of all important examinations like DSE, IELTS are based on a British English model, so she said she had to be “practical” at the end. In the discussion, she was very conscious and explicit of her identity as a teacher when she said, “when I teach when I play the role of a teacher...” (line 13) and again at the end, when she stressed on the word “TEACH”. So, the identity option of the English teacher was the most salient and was being foregrounded when she made the detailed comments. Nevertheless, at the very same time, at the beginning, she also commented that, “if (.) language is regarded as a tool of communication actually um (.) well if they can communicate that will be fine” (lines 10-12) This statement reflects J's view as an international communicator, although J seemed not to be consciously aware of this identity option. The fact that this statement was expressed reflects its salience among other identity options like English learner, Hongkonger, although it was not the most salient when J was making the remarks.

B expressed a similar stand concerning examination and communication:



B I think it's (.) I think e if they can communicate it's fine √.

I It is ok right? So you will not push them to approximate the native speakers' English?

B No √ in terms of if it is to cater for the examination requirements. It doesn't matter.

I @@@ So for examination sake they have to do that right? You have to push that?

B Ar (I) I mean if they can communicate of course if they can speak in a British way I think it will be better if they cannot still I I think ar e I'm satisfied already if they can communicate in in English.

B expressed the identity of the English teacher when he said “if they can speak in a British way I think it will be better (to cater for the examination requirements)”, and immediately, he continued with, “if they cannot still I think I'm satisfied if they can communicate in English”, expressing an identity of an international communicator. In B's case, it seemed that both identities were more or less equally important for him.

For those who felt that a British accent was not necessary for their students, communication was emphasized:

I ok. so for you it is ok for them to acquire British English or Hong Kong



English right? It doesn't matter right?

H <@@@> it doesn't matter /<@@@>

I ok. But you just said that British English is the standard.

H Yes. @@@ it doesn't matter @@@

I it doesn't matter because English is for communication only?

H yes. It doesn't matter.

.....

I ok. So if you can speak British English it will be good for you for the examination?

H Yeah I think so for them in in exam.

H was very firm in saying that it doesn't matter what accent her students acquire, despite her remarking on the standardness of British English. She prioritized the identity option of an international communicator despite her knowledge of the advantages a British accent can bring to her students. For H, the identity of international communicator was more salient than that of an English teacher in her situation.

Similarly, A expressed a similar stand:

I ok. But as a teacher, as a teacher in Hong Kong, do you think that your



students NEED or required to learn a particular accent?

A No.

I No?

A Definitely not. No.

I ok. Why not?

*A Accent is not the most important I'll say. Um I once had an experience of um
(.) trainin- training up a student um (.) on a poem and that poem in that poem
she she is going to ar have part of it to act (.) as a (.) British Queen (.) that
that is important. As a Queen of um (.) ar of um Britain of course you have to
have that kind of accent ok to show your different role. But if you are just
expressing yourself if your pronunciation is clear enough then I don't think
people cannot understand you (.) JUST because of the accent ok but of course
if your accent I mean um um um deeply influence you your expression or your
pronunciation and that is a problem. I can't tell which is the most appropriate
pronunciation. @@*

*A Not only about um speaking? (.) um (3) if my student can (.) use English to
express themselves (.) and also if they can (1) get good grades in external
exams. But of course if I just teach e (.) the junior forms then they do not have*



external exams then it would be if they can um (.) um (.) they they are able to to write out things to express themselves, XXX and they will be able to speak, to to convey (.) what's inside themselves.

I ok. Can I summarize as 2 points? The first is: your students have to be successful in the examination, the public examinations. ok. The second is : they have to be expressive [and

A [be able to express but not expressive

I ok. To be able to express themselves in English so that others can understand them

A can understand them, yes and both the written form or the spoken form.

A was more specific than H in that A was expecting her students to be successful in the examination. A seemed to be thinking that if her students were able to express themselves, they could achieve good grades. A was prioritizing the identity option of an international communicator and that of an English teacher. The two identity options seem to be of equal salience.

In general, the two identity options of the English teacher, the international communicator were being prioritized by the participants during the course of interview, with some participants putting more emphasis on the identity of the

English teacher, whereas, for others, the identity of the international communicator was more salient.

6.3.1.4 Perceived effects of accent-related life experiences. Most of the participants provided at least one incident they considered to be related to their accent. Regardless of whether they felt happy about the incident, their attitude towards the firm segregation of native and non-native accents seems to be reinforced. These life experiences among the students and teachers in Hong Kong are both shaping and further enhancing the deeply rooted attitudes towards individual accents.

E ... one day when I was um waiting for my friend and then a lady come to me and ask me ar the direction to a place. I forgot where it is. And then and I ar talk to her in English because she asked me in English and then I just tell her bla bla bla ok and then she suddenly ask me "Are you come from Australia?" or what ar she ask me "Are you an Australian ♡?" ok and I said ar "No" "Ar you speak as Australian I thought you were you come from Australia, you speak Australian accent" "Oh really? Ok I don't know. Thank you, bye bye" So at that time I was quite surprised that um the lady suddenly said said that whether I'm come from Australia or or not.and then um at that time e e there is a moment ok there is a moment that I



feel I feel I feel that WOW <@@@> I can speak native English? Oh me?! Ok

Can't believe it ok/<@@@>. E (.) it helped me to build up a little bit

confidence @ yeah.

... and then you think I'm a just like a native speaker. WOW my English has

improved a lot maybe @ so that is what I think @@.

E was definitely happy about being mistaken as an Australian when she said that “it helped me to build up a little bit confidence”. She also remarked that her “English has improved a lot”. Although the laughter may signal some kind of embarrassment, it may only be related to the feeling of uneasiness when praising her own accent.

D *Um: (2) I think for example those who's master (.) ar (.) e (.) for example recently ar not recently a few months ago I watched a movie called 『中國合夥人』 and then one of the actors 黃曉明 and the final scene he made a speech um to memorize the whole book of something like this but his accent is SO STRONG Putonghua accent you already close your ears you think “oh it's disgusting why this guy speak no mat- even though we need by the time we (.) listen to his speech we need to read the subtitle so that we can understand it. Already for being an English teacher I closed my ears already my ears already “oh it's so bad it's disgusting why can this guy speak in this*

way?" so I think this is (.) some <@@@> problem for myself I think

/<@@@> whenever some people cannot pronounce it or or articulate in a good accent I already close my ears I don't want to listen to it. It's a torture to me I think.

I ok. For that particular scene I would like to draw your attention to that scenery. Do you really couldn't understand 黃曉明's speech or you would like not to understand his speech?

D Actually his ar articulation's not good. And then I can only understand a few words then I I just close my ears and read the subtitles that's enough. This is strong Putonghua accent totally affect his speech in English.

D's response towards the actor's Chinese English demonstrated the phenomenon of 'non-reciprocal intelligibility' described in Wolff's classic study (1959, p. 35). Wolff found that although two communities speaking linguistically very similar language, the community with a higher economic and political status may claim that the speech spoken by the community with lower status is unintelligible. In the case of D, although the economic and political power of the Chinese community were even higher than that of Hong Kong in the present days, it was not the case when D was learning and using English for the past decades.



K um because I think yeah because when I was in university I e went to Britain and London etc. for a number of places with a group of (.) um not really classmates they are in the same college yeah um (.) we we we have we had encountered some kind of negative experience because of our accent of our Chinese accent, etc. so I think um if we can try to acquire near native e accent when we travel to a certain country if for example if we are trying to e travel in a English speaking English e country then we will we will be having a better status of we'll be (.) at least not be discriminated by the others when we are going traveling and and yeah I think that would be a better way for us to travel and enjoy traveling.

K's negative experience, although details were not revealed by K, clearly reinforced K's belief of the necessity of acquiring near native accent. The discrimination of non-native accent no doubt not only prevails in Britain, but it is also common in Hong Kong. Although Kirkpatrick, Deterding and Wong (2008) demonstrated that a Hong Kong accent is highly intelligible internationally, it does not serve the purpose of eliminating this discrimination.

C ok. And quite often your- MY surrounding my my my (.) e in hong Kong society there is a lot of people who pronounce their English in a hong kong way. So I



pick it up. I may be wrong. Thats like just like one day I realize I think 2 years ago I think I was WRONG in pronouncing one very simple word from my childhood. I always pronounce "TO-DAY" "TODAY" you know "TODAY" actually because we listen to the song "TODAY" XXX we "TODAY", playing the guitar and then NO its not "TODAY" its "TDAY" I have to correct myself! But the thing is I don't know how much I (.) I pick up the the the the the the pronunciation in a WRONG way during my childhood and still using it. Um (.) that's the fact.

C was clearly taking about the Hong Kong accent, which was different from a British one, an error instead of a variety of English. And as a teacher, he was also working very hard to "correct" his students. The incident enhances his belief that there are lots of mistakes in the English spoken in Hong Kong and that attitude is passing on to his students.

G ... When I first pronounce my word (.) in ar (.) with my (.) in front of my (.) native teacher she said that "no, you pronounce your name wrongly."

I you mean your surname?

G No. "CATALIE". My name. "Your name", she said "your name is "CATALIE" not "CATALIE", not "cat" not "e" it's "a" it's a sound of "a"

just like “APPLE”, the same. So when I first FOUND that “oh we should pronounce the word correctly, even my name I couldn't pronounce my word CORRECTLY! In front of a native speaker.” so I don't want my students to be like this when they have chance to go out or when they have chance to communicate with native speakers. I don't want them to be laughed at.

Similarly, G was clearly embarrassed when she was “corrected” by her native English speaking teacher. Same as K and C, she immediately corrected herself and also further reinforced her belief that the British accent was “GOD” to her, quoting her remarks.

The life experiences of the participants were surely not the only factor shaping their attitudes and beliefs towards individual English accents. They can be viewed as typical incidences that local teachers and students are encountering every day in Hong Kong or when they travel overseas. Under this situation, we can further examine the acceptability of ELF for international communication and as a model for teaching.

6.3.1.5 Acceptability of ELF for international communication and as a model for teaching. All participants agreed English to be an international language, and the most suitable candidate for international communication. They were somehow divided when it came to what exactly was the English for international



communication. Some participants believed that it was just British English or

American English:

H Because people are learning it even the spelling in dictionary and for the other country that is the one who take English as second language or even third or fourth they still they just take (.) or (.) maybe Oxford or Cambridge on that kind of like dictionary to to use it and the spelling then really create their own system in their own way of like speaking English or they don't have own system or own spelling dictionary something like that. So still although you are saying that many of them many people they are they are non native English speakers and still they are just (.) or (.) taking British or American English as a (.) model even the textbooks they are using it the English. So I think its more international.

Although H was not explicit in saying that British or American English were used for international communication, she did say that the two accents are more international.

In the discussion, she did not mention any other accents. Similarly, G did not initiate any claims that British English was used as an international language; she agreed with the researcher's prompt that international English was British English.

I They use English right? Now we have English as an international language



alright and you say that the best accent is British accent so is it ok when I say international English is British English?

G Yes ㄩ. Yeah because to me British is really the God ok. It is @@@ It's not just because they pronounce the words accurately because they say English BEAUTIFULLY. That's what I admire so much. When I watch the films when I hear what they say, it's so beautiful. @@@

On the other hand, there were also some participants saying that international English was not necessarily British or American English.

I Can you describe a bit of the English as an international language? Is it different from the American English or British English? What do you think about the features or how do you describe the English as an international language? Do you think it is just simply British English?

F (3) um (1) to what I think English is an international language it means to me ar (.) English is a medium for (.) the people (.) to (1) communicate efficiently ar no matter it is for business sake or (.) other things so um (.) it doesn't MATTER (.) whether you are speaking British English or other accent.

I ok. Then do you think that it should be necessarily the native speakers' English?



F *No.*

I *No?*

F *No.*

F was very firm in saying that English as an international language does not necessarily means native speakers' English. J is more specific in this regard:

I *So talking about English as an international language um can you describe a bit that English functioning as an international language? Will that STILL be equals to British English?*

J *No ㄹ.*

I *No? Why not?*

I *Um if English as an international language that involve the acceptance of people belonging to different nationality they speak English as the SECOND language but they communicate it's international language in a sense that many many people can SPEAK that they can communicate um you know no matter how WELL, they CAN communicate like shopping or they book a room book a hotel they can communicate but if you say British English as an international language um I'll say British English has a HIGHER status um but I will have a more ar wider acceptance I think people should have a wider*

acceptance we say English as an international language if you can
communicate if you can speak in English WITH your L2 accent affecting you
that will be fine ∇ because that will be mainly for communication but if you
say British English as an international language it will be from the British
perspective they will think highly yeah our lang our accent [should be
TAUGHT yeah but

[is the best right?

language itself for communication then I don't think only British American
English (.) is also international is because it's English Australian English is
international because it is English so I will divide like that

I Ok. Um when you say that British English will not be equal to international ar
will not be equal to English as an international [language

[maybe I rephrase it it's not

equal to it's not the only it's not the only one

I Can you name others then?

J <SOFT AND HIGH> Well Indian English/<SOFT AND HIGH> anything
anything can be

I -any English?



J In my mind it's very broad ar like an Indian talking in Japanese with their accent funny accent or what they can communicate then English in that context (.) is a bridge is an international language of course my is only MY definition.

J, like F, was quite firm on saying that the English as an international language was not equal to British English. In fact, according to J, it could be any English like Indian English as well as Japanese English and English as an international language acting like a bridge for communication.

A provided a similar view that English as an international language was not equal to any specific accent:

I ok. On the other hand, you've said that English has attained a status of international language right? Do you think that there exist a way of speaking English that is international?

A A way of I'll say I'll say that ar we have different ways of say ok different regions have different ways of speaking English ok but but we have something in common ok a system in common We know similar um (.) things in between that we can understand each other. So I will say that there is something in common, in the middle, the CORE thing ok and then we have

that (.) we ALL have and then we have our own expression in our own way in our own presentation.

I ok. So how can you describe that system of English? It shouldn't be any particular accent right?

A No.

I No right?

A Its not because of accent.

I you cannot tell that it is British English that is international, you can not tell that it is American English which is international.

A No.

I No right?

A No. English itself.

I so how can you describe that system of English? You just call it English right?

A Yes. @

I ok. You just call it English.

A Core English. @@@

A went on to describe English to consist of a common core which allows all English speakers to express in their own way, own presentation.



A's idea of “Core English” resembled strikingly similar to the idea of Lingua Franca Core (LFC) put forward by Jenkins (2000). Simply put, the LFC is a set of features of English which is critical for mutual communication between speakers of different L1s. The “core English” idea of A resonated the call of Luk and Lin (2006, p. 13) to establish a “common regional system” of English pronunciation. It is worth examining whether the NNETs in Hong Kong generally appreciate Luk and Lin’s suggestion.

In general, the participants seemed to be much more open to the idea of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) when considering international communication. Most of the participants did not insist that native English was necessary for international communication. In other words, from the perspective of HoI, the identity option of the international communicator was the most salient when it came to which English was the best for international communication.

On the other hand, when considering the model for teaching, no participants showed particular interest or would consider teaching non-native Englishes, despite their general approval of non-native Englishes for international communication. As revealed from the analysis of the participants' belief towards suitable accent for students, it was obvious that examination is one of the most important considerations

for the teachers. As shown from the detailed account of the marking schemes by J, teaching was very much examination oriented. Knowing that British English is the standard reference for the English examinations, it is reasonable for the teachers to teach British English. In teaching, the identity of being an English teacher no doubt would be salient for the participants. Therefore, most of the teachers interviewed considered that native accents, especially British accents, were better for the students. The salience of the English teacher somehow decreased when discussions shifted to international communication, where the identity of the international communicator becomes more salient. In the next section, other identity issues will be discussed.

6.3.2 Identities.

6.3.2.1 As an English teacher. During the interviews, participants expressed their attitudes and beliefs towards individual accents of English. In the process, the participants expressed a number of identities. The most obvious one, which was also the most conscious, was the identity of an English teacher. For G, “*as a teacher I teach them the best*”, whereas for C, “*as an English language teacher I have to correct them*”. For D, “*being an English teacher I closed my ears already my ears already*” when commenting on the Chinese actor's Chinese English. The expression of the identity of an English teacher called upon a particular set of attitude and belief,



which was partly shaped by the accumulating accent-related life experiences as discussed earlier, towards individual accents.

6.3.2.2 As an international communicator. The identity of an international communicator found its way of expression for each participant at least occasionally during the interviews, although not through conscious expressions. For F, “*Ar it's still English no matter is native or British or ar non native or what so ever um it's only the efficiency of communication*”. Whereas H thought that, “*because language is just about communication. I think XXX got their own ar way of pronouncing the words so I don't really ask my students to pronounce like a native speaker*”. For J, “*if language is regarded as a tool of communication actually um well if they can communicate that will be fine*”. The expression of the identity of an international communicator called upon another particular set of attitude and belief towards individual accents. As discussed in earlier sections, apparently contradicting attitudes were seen towards the participants' own accent.

Apart from the above two identity options, there were two options also salient and expressed during the interviews: 3) as an English learner and 4) as a Hong Konger.

6.3.2.3 As an English learner. Throughout the interviews, some participants



were constantly self-correcting their own speech:

K um I think um I've got lots of room (.) e much room for improvement...

K ... hong kong is still under the govern- e under the rule of e of Britain ...

C because I (1) I knew I know I knew some friend ...

C students from the Chinese or from China I should say

F ... ar adding those Chinese Cantonese particles ...

and some expressed determination to further improve their own English:

J ... deep in our heart we want to improve like I'm not satisfied with my spoken

English I want to improve I want to talk a little more fluently with more

precise vocabulary etc. because I'm an English teacher.

F I've tried my best to ar ar um watch or even like um ar go to look up the

dictionary to to ar (.) acQUIRE or LEARN those ar British accent

Most of them saw a need to further improve their own accent. The identity of an

English learner, if expressed inappropriately, will result in what is called “linguistic

insecurity”. The NET Scheme in Hong Kong, which introduced co-teaching of a NET

and a local NNET, was accused of making the situation worse. In fact, the NET

Scheme may also be a factor making the identity of an English learner to be

expressed more readily and frequently among local NNETs in Hong Kong.



6.3.2.4 As a Hong Konger. Unlike what Jenkins (2007) found that at least some participants, especially Chinese, were positive towards expressing their ethnic identity through L1 accented English, nearly all participants in the current interview study expressed an urge to eliminate their own Hong Kong accent in their English. Their attitude is in alignment with the society of Hong Kong, which still regards British English as the standard. It is also an impression of the researcher that all but one of the participants were doing their best to sound native in the interviews. This means that the identity option of a Hongkonger was not expressed linguistically for nearly all of the participants. The only participant, E, sounded particularly from Hong Kong, with very frequent Cantonese particles added at the sentence ends:

E Um: (2) of course in this way because now the English that I'm using now ok is is unknown is unknown accent right @@@ is unknown accent maybe a mixture of < @@@ > Hong Kong Australian American and British English /< @@@ >

I -it's May's English (pseudonym, originally to be E's name)

E It's May's (pseudonym, originally to be E's name) English @@@ I don't know so um e if if I can acquire ok um um the British English or even the Queen's English ok um maybe is also good because I think eng it is the mother tongue

*ok ar the origin of English is form um england Britain British 呀AH @ @ @
 england or british whatever 咁吓LA HA @ @ ok. It's from the Queen's English
 ok and then ar the other countries because they are the colonies of British ok
 like Australia e e some other places America yeah so that that's why that's why
 they they learn learn their English from from um England or UK QK British
 whatever 咁吓 ok @ @ @*

Two points here are worth noting. First, at the beginning until the middle of the interview, there was no such expression of Cantonese particles at all. However, after the comment made by the interviewer (the researcher), “it's May's (pseudonym, originally to be E's name) English” when the discussion was about what kind of accent is E's English, the Cantonese particles appeared, and continued to be expressed until the end of the interview. This expression of Cantonese particles seemed to be a deliberate response to the interviewer's humorous comment to express peer identification. The interlocutor's responses were, thus, impacting on the salience of the co-present identity options. Here, the identity option of Hongkonger became more salient and directly impacted on the speech of E.

The second point worth noting is that F, the direct subordinate of E, commented near the end of the interview:

interviewer.

Although other participants did not express the identity of a Hongkonger, some of them explicitly expressed the existence of it or their knowledge of it:

J ... if we ar if I was not a Hong Kong Hong Konger and I um came from I don't know where then I may not have that concept ...

A Most of them (.) um (.) I mean the hongkongers ok...

K ...so I have written this word for hong kong and (.) kind of characteristics for hongkongers in speaking English.

The identity of a Hongkonger was well received internationally as the phrases “Hong Kongese (n. and adj.)” and “Hongkonger (n.)” were incorporated into the March 2014 edition of the Online Oxford English Dictionary. The fact that other participants were not expressing the Hong Konger identity, like E, demonstrated that the identity of an English teacher, as well as an international communicator, was far more salient.

The analysis of the identities expressed by the local NNETs from the perspective of the dynamic model of HoI revealed that the two most salient identity options, the English teacher and the international communicator, were impacting on the expressed attitudes towards individual accents of English.

6.3.3 Impact of intelligibility, power, social convention and context on the



attitudes of the NNETs towards ELF. Although identity has been the recent focus when researching the attitudes towards ELF, it is not the only factor impacting on the attitudes of the teachers on ELF. This study has identified at least 4 other factors also impacting on the attitudes of the teachers.

6.3.3.1 Intelligibility. Participant D clearly stated that she could not understand the Putonghua accented English of Huang Xiaoming when he acted in the movie “American Dreams in China”:

*...his accent is SO STRONG Putonghua accent you already close your ears
you think “oh it's disgusting why this guy speak no mat- even though we need
by the time we (.) listen to his speech we need to read the subtitle so that we
can understand it...*

When D was claiming that she did not understand Huang Xiaoming’s English, she was very aware of her identity as an English teacher:

*...Already for being an English teacher I closed my ears already my ears
already “oh it's so bad it's disgusting why can this guy speak in this way?” so
I think this is (.) some <@@@> problem for myself I think /<@@@>
whenever some people cannot pronounce it or or articulate in a good accent I
already close my ears I don't want to listen to it...*

D seemed to admit that it was somehow problematic for her to think that it was “*so bad*” and “*disgusting*” just because someone could not pronounce well, especially with the accompanying laughter. The statement “*I already close my ears I don’t want to listen to it.*” also suggests that D deliberately chose not to understand it by “closing” her ears instead of paying more attention to it. Actually, it was clear that she didn’t want to listen to it. Although she was consciously aware of her identity as an English teacher, she did not make use of her professional knowledge to understand Huang Xiaoming’s Putonghua accented English. When further pressed by the researcher if she really understood nothing Huang Xiaoming had spoken, she admitted that she understood “*a few words*”.

D went on to generalize the lack of intelligibility of Putonghua accented English while accepting French and Portuguese accented English:

... I think we still accept those people from France and Portugal but for the Putonghua accent people I think a little bit discrimination to them maybe that's why I say I think its a little bit snobbish...

The statements of D suggested that the phenomenon of non-reciprocal intelligibility proposed by Wolff (1959) was in force, with Putonghua accented English resembling the language spoken by the economically poor and politically powerless tribe.



Although it has recently been said that China is now economically strong, and is surely politically overwhelming over Hong Kong, the reverse had been true for the generation of D.

On the other hand, participant L illustrated another way intelligibility was impacting on the NNETs' attitudes towards ELF. When discussing in particular Indian accented English, L seemed to be fully aware of the negative attitudes of parents toward it:

...It seems like (.) they have like sort of (.) um (.) they don't pre- they don't prefer that they have their kids will have Indian accent cos they see that (.) as like (.) it's really unclear and it is (.) very (.) confusing (.)...

However, when asked if she had the same negative feeling, L was quite neutral towards Indian accented English and she attributed that to her familiarity and intelligibility of the accent:

I'm ok I don't find it very unclear to me I'm I'm I'm fine cos like um (.) I (.) I'm ok. As a as a student I was taught by the Indian teacher I find it's (.) pretty much (.) ok. His English is clear and when I was studying I was living with an Indian as well. I find it I find it fine because I was talking to him almost EVERYDAY. [And now I have my Indian colleague as well and then becau-

maybe because I have already get used to it I don't find it (.) any problem (.)

anymore and I don't remember I have a problem in the beginning anyway.

While whether intelligibility was the cause of L's attitude towards an Indian accent was rather difficult to tell, the relationship of intelligibility, attitude, and identity is definitely not straight forward, as suggested by Sung (2013, 2014) and Li (2009).

6.3.3.2 Power. In the discussion of the standardness of British English, Participant C pointed out explicitly how power had impacted on the status of a language:

...Even (1) in one day when when you are (.) um politically and economically powerful you can set up your own standard. That's what we call the industry standard...

During a lengthy discussion with C on the impact of power, C had been keen to reiterate his claim to stick to British English, which was “the industry standard”. In the process, C had been fully aware of his identity as an English teacher.

Participant L also gave power as one of the reasons why American and British English were regarded as the standards:

...is probably because historically they are the powerful countries...

...So they are sort of the authority of the English speaking countries, ar British

and fa- America. So that's why (.) that we can see that they as the standard.

Probably (.) if the authority wasn't them weren't them then (.) things may

change but (.) right now it is still the British and the America...

Participant D exhibited a similar point when discussing the standardness of RP:

...I think everything we need a criteria otherwise we can't judge whether it is

good or not...

...This is the reason same the reason as (.) RP because we need a standard

and then everyone (.) when you speak something very different from RP then

that means you are very in a (xxx) inferior to the standard one. This is the

standard why we need RP as a standard...

...Yeah sure, social and economical...

6.3.3.3 Social convention. All participants mentioned the examination

requirements for English Language in Hong Kong. This single societal expectation

exerts substantial impact on English teachers' generally affirmative attitudes towards

Native English like American and British English. Other more subtle social

conventions were also mentioned by participants.

Participant J was convinced that parents regard native English as desirable:

...in society still PARENTS everybody will say OH your English there's room



*for improvement go to some oh employ a NET or how to improve your accent
that is something so [deep-rooted in our mind which may not be correct.
<VERY SOFT>I'll say it. Yeah may not be correct./<VERY SOFT>...*

Notice that J may not be totally convinced by the societal requirement by questioning two times the stance of the parents. More interesting was the inclusion of herself by using “our mind” instead of ‘their mind’. There was ambiguity seen in J’s comments. Several other participants also showed subtle agreement with the societal approval of native English, especially British English.

However, participant K was very explicit in that society was not requiring students to have a British accent in particular:

*I don't really feel that um (.) the society is requiring the students to really
acquire the British accent. I think ar they just require them to have really
grammatically correct grammar and then they can speak (.) ar in a fair way,
without making many mistakes. That's all and instead of really having a very
good accent in a kind of British accent or something.*

Social convention seems to impact on participants’ attitudes in a rather complicated way.

6.3.3.4 Context. Tong et al. (1999) implicated that the interplay of the



identities of Mainlanders and Hongkongers will impact on the teachers' attitudes toward native English and ELF. Although the participants did not comment much on their identities as Chinese and Hongkongers, they commented on the recent rapidly changing role of China in the world. Several participants were explicit in claiming that China is actually becoming stronger, gaining substantial power economically and politically.

The researcher had anticipated an improvement of the overall image of Putonghua accented English as suggested by Jenkins study (2007) due to these improvements. However, in the earlier discussion of the impact of intelligibility, participant D revealed her mostly negative attitude towards Putonghua accented English. One of the possible reasons may be attributable to the phenomenon of non-reciprocal intelligibility. D may still hold an overall impression that Hong Kong is in a better position, at least economically, than China.

For those who acknowledged the rise of China economically and politically, very few had commented about Putonghua accented English. When asked about what the status of Putonghua accented English will be when China is further gaining substantial economic and political power, all of them made bold predictions that Putonghua may overtake the position of English to become the international

language. The participants' lack of interest of the potential of Putonghua accented English challenged the taken for granted assumption that English will continue to be the international lingua franca.

6.4 General conclusion for the Semi-Structured Interviews

In general, the results of the semi-structured interviews confirmed the findings from the questionnaire study:

1. British accent was regarded as the best accent in terms of correctness/standardness, acceptability for international communication, pleasantness and intelligibility. Together with an American accent, native English accents were perceived, as a group, to be generally correct and standard. Whereas non-native English accents, as a whole, were considered to be not correct or not standard.
2. The participants showed contradictory views towards the local Hong Kong accent:
 - They perceived their own accent contradictorily. Sometimes they thought that their own accent was fine, nice or OK, but sometimes it was definitely not OK
 - They perceived their students accent contradictorily. Most

participants felt that their students needed to acquire native accents, but at the same time, it was ok to have a Hong Kong accent if they were still able to communicate with others.

The examination of accent-related life experiences revealed that there was a deep-rooted belief of segregation of English accents into “good” and “bad” accents which were represented by native accents and non-native accents. On the other hand, from the perspective of the HoI model, apart from the conscious identity option of an English teacher, there was another salient, a yet more unconscious identity option of an international communicator. When it came to international communication, the salience of the identity option of an international communicator often impacted on the participants' view towards the local accent and native accents. They became far more open to think that the English used for international communication could be any accent.

This openness for any accent to be used as the English for international communication in a sense contradicts with the findings of the questionnaire study. The rating of acceptability for international communication for non-native accents was relatively medium to low. However, it can be understood that the participants of the questionnaire study were mostly responding with the identity of an English



teacher. For the semi-structured interview participants, the discussions were able to bring the identity option of an international communicator into the foreground. Therefore, the semi-structured interviews actually provided a fuller picture of the participants' views towards English as an international language. Most of the participants were actually open to the idea of English as an international language, EIL, or English as a Lingua Franca, ELF.

Nevertheless, they all refused to give up teaching a British accent when asked. This signals that when it comes to teaching, the identity option of an English teacher is immediately foregrounded with all the deep-rooted beliefs towards native and non-native accents. At the same time, the identity option of an international communicator was backgrounded and there was no room for the teachers to consider non-native accents such as the local Hong Kong accent.

The analysis of the semi-structured interview data also revealed that there were several other factors impacting on the attitudes of the NNETs towards ELF apart from identities. They were intelligibility, power, social conventions, and context. The interrelationship of these factors seems to be complicated, as Sung (2013, 2014) and Li (2009) have suggested.



CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Introduction and Overview

This study aims at exploring the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the NNETs' perceptions of correctness, acceptability, and pleasantness of the variety of ways of speaking English?

RQ2: What are the NNETs' attitudes towards the international way of speaking English and ELF-related issues such as mutual intelligibility among NNSs of English?

The results of the questionnaire study and semi-structured interviews clearly demonstrated that, with reference to RQ1, the local NNETs perceived British English as the best way of speaking English (accent) in the world in terms of correctness, standardness, pleasantness and acceptability for international communication. Together, with other native ways of speaking English such as the American, Australian and Canadian ways, they were perceived as 'good English', as opposed to 'bad English'. The 'Bad English' group consisted of non-native ways of speaking English, for example, Chinese, Japanese, Hong Kong or French.



The notion of the “way of speaking English” triggered comments from the participants like “European English”, “Asian English”, “South Eastern (SE) English” etc. The discussion of these 'English areas' extended to English as an international language in the semi-structured interviews. The discussions suggested that the English used in international communications was not necessarily equal to native English. Most participants agreed that when it comes to international communication, any English accent will serve the purpose well. Therefore, with reference to RQ2, the local NNETs generally accepted that there is a way of speaking English, not necessarily equal to a native way of speaking English, such that international communication is possible.

This chapter concludes the findings from the questionnaire study and the semi-structured interviews with reference to the RQs. The inter-relationship of identities with other factors such as intelligibility, power, social conventions and context will be discussed. The results of the study lead to several implications:

- Enhancement of the identity as an international communicator
- ELF as a teaching model
- The future of Hong Kong English
- The evaluation of the NET Scheme in Hong Kong in the perspective of



ELF

- The re-empowerment of the local NNETs

The chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations of the current study; a summary of its contributions; and further research direction.

7.2 Discussions

7.2.1 What are the NNETs' perception of correctness, acceptability, and pleasantness of the variety of ways of speaking English? (RQ1). The results of the questionnaire study and semi-structured interviews clearly demonstrated that there is a deep-rooted belief among the local NNETs that British English is the best way of speaking English (accent) in the world in terms of correctness, standardness, pleasantness and acceptability for international communication. Together, other native ways of speaking English such as American, Australian and Canadian were perceived as 'good English' in terms of correctness, acceptability and pleasantness, as opposed to another group namely 'bad English'. This group consisted of non-native ways of speaking English, for example, Chinese, Japanese, Hong Kong and French.

Every participant in the study preferred native English, especially British English, to non-native English. Not only did they claim that they preferred native English, but they also liked to speak in native-like accents. Luk (2010) explained

teacher educators' conformation to external norms such as British or American English as a belief that with effort, most of non-native variations could be corrected to achieve better intelligibility and reduce social stigmatization. The teacher educators also demonstrated that they themselves were "successful living examples of such efforts to conform to the exonormative models". Luk (2010, p. 39) concluded that the teachers educators showed a general tendency to practice what Foucault (1988) called "Technologies of the self" which "denote a type of self-control, self-refinement, and self-transformation for a better state of being". In this study, participant G showed a similar attitude:

*Of course not (.) as accurate as (.) <@@@> the British one /<@@@>
(embarrassed) Ar:: just (.) maybe some (.) my strength is (.) individual words. I can pronounce individual words very accurately or I can show them what's the accent of British one. I can show my students. I think because of my (.) good listening skills yeah I can imitate I (an NET) (.) I also like imitating (.) the the accent of "HAMANI", the accent of all the characters in Harry Potter. So that's why (.) when I listen more when I say more then I can I can tell my students I can teach my students.*

G also said that she could pronounce words even better than the NET in her school.



Three other participants F, J and K were also keen to improve their pronunciation or English in general:

F:

I've tried my best to ar ar um watch or even like um ar go to look up the dictionary to to ar (.) acQUIRE or LEARN those ar British accent.

J:

...because I'm restricted as an English teacher I also aim high I think many of us our job is related to using English no matter as an international language or as a daily language that we have to use it in our job or what ar those who love English or who have interest in it deep in our heart we want to improve like I'm not satisfied with my spoken English I want to improve I want to talk a little more fluently with more precise vocabulary etc. because I'm an English teacher.

K:

um I think um I've got lots of room (.) e much room for improvement...

It seems that the above teachers demonstrated a certain tendency of practicing Foucault's (1998) "Technologies of the self" such that they were eager to pursue the exonormative standard of British English.



On the other hand, other participants explained their adherence to native norms such as native English because native accents are standard, authentic, real, beautiful, etc. This showed the deep-rooted bias of the participants. Participant L clearly stated that the idea of standardness is very arbitrary:

I Ok. As we've discussed the idea of standardness seems to be very arbitrary.

L Yes.

One participant, B, instead of striving for a native-like accent, even admitted that it was not possible for him to acquire a native accent:

I don't think I can make it. But if I can I will try my best to to to speak in a British way but but in reality I will I will never I can never succeed.

Here, B's view did not resemble the practice of the "Technologies of the self".

However, B seems to be fully aware of the social benefits of acquiring a native-like accent:

(1) If I can acquire the British accent it (1) it seems that I will look more professional @@

The above quoted two statements of B seemed to reveal that B understands that no

matter how hard he tries, he will never acquire a native accent. This understanding may contribute to B's attitude towards what accent his students should acquire:

No. I just (.) I'm just saying that if they have a chance to to (.) to speak in a British way they they should do it. But in in but if if there is a kind of task to complete I think the most important point is still they can communicate with others disregarding any accent they are using. This is (.) the pragmatic (.) aspect I'm considering.

Although the concept of “Technologies of the self” provided a possible explanation of the NNETs' preference of native accents, some data did not fit so well. A possible alternative explanation may be because of the pragmatic consideration of the teachers.

Statements showing this pragmatic consideration are:

B:

I think ar the pronunciation (.) will (.) somehow e indicating that (.) ar you are from ar (I) a better social background more educated more civilized in a way.

C:

Even (I) in one day when when you are (.) um politically and economically powerful you can set up your own standard. That's what we call the industry

standard. ok. Even the Australian I think I think they they have their own test in language test right.

Participants B and C provided a practical reason for their preference towards native accents. Being pragmatic appeared to partly explain the NNETs' preference towards native accents.

7.2.2 What are the NNETs' attitudes towards the international way of speaking English and ELF-related issues such as mutual intelligibility among NNSs of English? (RQ2). The pragmatic view of B was generally adopted by the other participants. Although the participants were eager to adhere to native norms themselves, they generally claimed that they will not insist their students to speak in a native-like accent. The NNETs seemed to be open for their students to speak in any accent provided that they could communicate effectively in English. When considering international communications, they were also inclined not to restrict the kind of English used in native English such as British or American English. It seems that there were two assumptions lying behind this pragmatic view:

- 1) the native accents may not be attainable by the students; and
- 2) international communications will not be affected by non-native accents

These two assumptions resonated with the results obtained from the questionnaire



study. The notion of a “way of speaking English” introduced was well understood by the participants. They had no difficulty in the meaning of “accent”. The term triggered remarks and phrases from them like “European English”, “Asian English”, and “South Eastern (SE) English”. The discussion of these 'English areas' extended into a discussion of English as an international language in the semi-structured interviews. Participant A described rather clearly that we should have a common system in English:

In the sense that we should have a common system in the sense that for example we under we understand the same set of vocab, we have the same grammar rules so that you understand me well so for example if I say um “I’m interesting” you have a question mark, what do you mean by you are interesting? Ok but (.) because of the grammar rule right? I should (.) in fact I wanted to say “I’m interested” ok then you think it make sense right? OK. And that is the rule that we we both know so that we can communicate. The idea can be conveyed.

This “common system” described by A, together with those cited by the questionnaire study participants, echoed with Luk and Lin (2006)’s call for the establishment of a “common regional system” like “an Asian Pacific variety of World English

pronunciation”. The word “should” used by A in the context of the discussion, seemed not to be equal to “we need a common system”, in the sense that Luk and Lin (2006) had called for. Rather, A was probably saying “we might already have a common system” of English so that we are able to understand each other despite the fact that we speak different accents.

The discussions revealed that English, when used in international communications, was not necessarily seen as equal to native Englishes, for example, British or American. Although the discussions did not focus on the term ELF, most of the participants agreed that when it comes to international communication, any English accent will serve the purpose well. Therefore, with reference to RQ2, the local NNETs generally accepted that there is a way of speaking English, which is not necessarily equal to a native way of speaking English, such that international communication is possible.

7.2.3 Relationship between identities and the impact of intelligibility, power, social conventions and context. From the perspective of HoI, there were a number of salient identity options for local NNETs: as an English teacher; as an international communicator; and as a Hongkonger.

7.2.3.1 The identities as an English teacher, an English learner and an

international communicator. In the current study, all participants were fully aware of their identity as an English teacher. When the discussion focused on the teachers themselves, this identity was expressed even further. When their identity as an English teacher was most salient, it seemed that the impact of all other factors on the teachers' attitudes towards ELF such as intelligibility, power, social conventions and context, could be clearly seen.

The identity as an English learner was expressed quite explicitly in the following statements:

J:

... deep in our heart we want to improve like I'm not satisfied with my spoken English I want to improve I want to talk a little more fluently with more precise vocabulary etc. because I'm an English teacher.

F:

I've tried my best to ar ar um watch or even like um ar go to look up the dictionary to to ar (.) acQUIRE or LEARN those ar British accent

K:

um I think um I've got lots of room (.) e much room for improvement...

The expression of the learner identity was marked clearly by the usage of words like

“improve” and “learn”. For example, when J made her statement, she was particularly aware of her identity as an English teacher as well. It may be said that her identity as an English learner was immediately over-taken by her teacher identity. The following statements also showed a similar overtaking of the identity as an English learner by that of an English teacher:

K ... Hong Kong is still under the govern- e under the rule of e of Britain

C because I (1) I knew I know I knew some friend ...

C students from the Chinese or from China I should say

F ... ar adding those Chinese Cantonese particles ...

Almost every time when the participants made mistakes, they immediately corrected themselves. Their identity as an English learner existed for just a very short period of time when they realized that they had made mistakes. Their identity as an English learner may even not have been noticed by the participants before being taken over by their identity as an English teacher. In this sense, as identity as an English learner was seldom expressed in full, at least during the interviews, it was not clear how factors such as intelligibility and power were related to identity. Another possible view is that identity as an English learner was so basic to the teachers that it is backgrounded normally. Whenever it found its way for expression, their identity as an English

teacher immediately took over.

On the other hand, when discussions brought out their identity as an international communicator, the attitudes of the teachers toward non-native accents significantly changed from generally negative to generally neutral. At the same time, factors like intelligibility, power or others, which had impacted on the teachers' attitudes were not seen as obviously impacting their attitudes towards non-native accents.

7.2.3.2 *The identity as a Hongkonger.* Throughout the interview sessions, due to time constraints and a participant centered approach, there were no direct discussions of their identities as a Hongkonger. However, the discussion with participant E reflected some thoughts about this identity.

Participant E spoke with a near native accent during the first half of his interview just like other participants. However, after some time when the researcher was trying to be a bit informal and made a mild joke, the spoken style of E changed quite obviously to exhibit more characteristics of Hong Kong English including intonation and word choice. One striking change was to include Cantonese particles (㗎㗎㗎) at the end of sentences. This situation continued until the end of the interview. One possible reason for this change was that E's identity as a Hongkonger

was being foregrounded to an extent and exhibited through accent. It was certain that during that period, her attitude towards the local accent was not negative. It seemed, therefore, when identity as a Hongkonger overrides other identities, the impact of other factors' may be subsided.

While some participants in Sung's (2014) study claimed that they chose to use the local accent in ELF communication to identify themselves with their own sociocultural identity, it was also found that some of the other participants preferred a native accent and at the same time, wanted to retain their Hongkonger identity. Sung (2014) proposed that instead of identifying with the native-speaker identity, those who preferred a native accent were trying to project a good Hong Kong local L2 learner identity. In this perspective, participants F, G, J and K, who exhibited the "Technologies of the self" suggested by Luk (2010) may also have been exhibiting their local Hong Kong good L2 learner identity. In this case, the Hongkonger identity, exhibited together with the identity as a good L2 learner, does not have the effect of weakening the impacts of other factors on the attitudes of the participants.

In sum, the factors of intelligibility, power, social conventions and context may have specifically impacted on the attitudes of local NNETs towards ELF differently through different identities and in a rather complicated and dynamic way.



7.3 Methodological contribution

7.3.1 Advantages of the adaption of the questionnaire. This study adapted the questionnaire used in Jenkins (2007) study. The questionnaire provided a powerful tool to measure the respondents' perceptions towards a range of English accents which included native and non-native accents. The questionnaire was also adapted by Kaur in the study of the perceptions of local Malaysian trainee teachers towards “ELF or NNS English accents in relation to NS English accents” (Kaur, 2014, p. 7). Similar to Kaur's adaption changing some of the varieties of accents, the current study also revised the list of countries/places to include familiar choices for the respondents.

Unlike Kaur's (2014) study, the current study introduced the term “way of speaking” to replace the original term “accent”. The researcher had anticipated that by introducing the term “way of speaking English”, responses or comments like “Asian way of speaking English”, “African way of speaking English”, etc. could be elicited. It was also hoped that terms such as “international way of speaking English” could also be elicited, which could be a clear indication of the respondents' conception of the kind of English used in international communications, which captures well the meaning of the term ELF.



Results indicated that as anticipated by the researcher, responses like “Asian”, “South East Asian”, “European”, “North American” were remarked by the respondents when providing answers for the “best five ways of English”. The results showed that this adaption was successful in triggering the respondents’ conception of wide-area English which was, therefore, not bounded by borders. Although terms like “international” way of speaking English were not apparent, it appeared that the respondents were capable of conceptualizing accents as a variety of ways of using English, which may be a more neutral way of describing different varieties of English.

7.3.2 Limitations of the adaption of the questionnaire. The original questionnaire was designed to gather data about ELF, that is, the perception of the participants towards accents when they are used in an ELF context.

There were two problems inherited in the questionnaire:

- 1) The term “ELF” could not be used directly as it would very likely cause confusion to the participants. The participants might simply not have known what the term referred to. Detailed explanation of the term would have taken up precious space and scared off participants; and
- 2) Different accents simply taken as different variations or forms of ELF.

Although Jenkins (2007) did not discuss the second problem, it nevertheless existed.

When a non-native speaker uses his/her English to communicate, there are three possible different situations:

- 1) when it is used as a second language (ESL) and the communication is with a native speaker;
- 2) when it is used as a foreign language (EFL) and the communication is with a native speaker; and
- 3) when it is used as a lingua franca and the communication is with other non-native speakers and/or native speakers.

Therefore, there is always a risk that some participants may refer to their perception of an individual accent when it is being used as an ESL or EFL. In other words, the attitudes measured by the questionnaire may not be purely attitudes towards ELF.

In the context of Hong Kong, since it is a city of international trade and commerce, businessmen and tourists from all over the world gather. Together, with the high density of population in a small land area, it would not be uncommon for the participants of this study to have personal direct interactions with speakers of different accents of English. Therefore, the researcher has high confidence for the data to represent, at least to a great extent, the attitudes of local NNETs towards ELF.



7.3.3 Suggested enhancement of the questionnaire. To further ensure the validity of the questionnaire, a follow-up short question, shown below, could be asked after each question in order to qualify the participants' responses:

Did you talk to anyone speaking English in the above way?

In order not to screen out too much usable data, one more follow-up question could be added:

Have you watched other Hong Kong people talk to anyone speaking English in the above way?

The above measure should be sufficient to enhance the validity of the questionnaire. Nevertheless, more respondents may be needed to obtain enough data for analysis.

Another possible way would be to incorporate a detailed explanation of the term ELF and use the term directly. However, it may not be a suitable solution in the context of Hong Kong because teachers are very busy and reserved to study the questionnaire before giving their responses.

7.4 Conclusions

This study explored the attitudes of local NNETs toward ELF. 43 NNETs participated in the questionnaire study and 11 of them also participated in a semi-structured interview. The results showed that there is a deep-rooted bias among the



local NNETs preferring native accents. However, where international communications are concerned, the local NNETs' attitudes changed significantly and became less negative towards non-native accents. The attitudes of the teachers seemed to change dynamically with the impacts of factors such as intelligibility, power, social conventions and context through different identities.

7.5 Implications

The above, therefore, leads to the following implications:

7.5.1 Enhancement of the identity as an international communicator.

Although the data showed that there is a deep-rooted bias among the local NNETs that British accent is the best accent, the attitudes of the teachers did not stay unchanged. Instead, they changed substantially and quickly as seen from the teachers' views towards suitable and acceptable accents for their students. When considering international communications, the teachers' views also shifted considerably. Analysis suggested that when the identity as an international communicator becomes most salient, factors such as intelligibility, power, social conventions and context exert much less impact on the teachers' attitudes towards ELF. The results showed that the teachers were much more positive, or at least neutral, towards ELF. In the context of Hong Kong, which has always been a city of international trade and finance, it is



quite natural for the government and general public to continue to stress the importance of the workforce's capability to communicate internationally in English. A further push, ideally from the government, for the importance of international communication, will further counterbalance the deep-rooted bias among local NNETs towards native accents.

The analysis of the questionnaire data also suggested that knowledge of World English or similar topics will also help lessen the negative perceptions of teachers towards non-native accents of English. The introduction of courses on World Englishes or similar to teacher training programs may also help eliminate such bias.

7.5.2 ELF as a teaching model. If more evidence is generally available showing that ELF is the “standard”, or is the norm for international communication, identity as an international communicator may be more readily prioritized by local NNETs and, in turn, impact on their attitudes and beliefs towards ELF. The growing research on ELF corpus has provided necessary evidence. In an international city like Hong Kong, the society as a whole will definitely realize that the pattern of international communication in English is shifting away from native accent centeredness, as indicated by accumulated research in ELF. Although the shift is still very slow, it is definitely gathering momentum. Together, with the global shift of



attention politically and economically from the west to the east, it is far more likely that ELF will continue to gain acceptance as a formal or standard language in international communication. With regard to the standard of ELF: it appears too early to make judgement. However, projects of ELF corpus, for example, VOICE (Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English) and ACE (Asian Corpus of English), are providing research data which will help in the description and coding of ELF. With the pragmatism of teachers in Hong Kong, ELF will maybe set as a teaching model in the future when it is standardized and coded. This would be especially beneficial for students who will use English mainly for international communication.

7.5.3 The future of Hong Kong English. If the socio-situational factors in Hong Kong allow or encourage the expression of identity as a Hongkonger in English which Joseph (2004) has commented on, it will also impact on the NNETs' attitudes and beliefs towards the local Hong Kong accent. Although, as suggested by Sung (2014), speaking in a Hong Kong accent is not the only way to express an identity as a Hongkonger, it is a direct and explicit way of expressing identity.

Apart from the recent worldwide acknowledgement of the identity as a Hongkonger, there is another factor impacting on the people in Hong Kong and identity: mainland China. In the most recent survey conducted by the Public Opinion



Program of The University of Hong Kong, over 40% (highest among the four options) of respondents opted for the identity as a Hongkonger in the consecutive two half-yearly surveys. This has not been seen since the establishment of the survey in 1997 (HKU POP website, 2015). The survey asks respondents to choose from four identity options:

- 1) as a Hongkonger
- 2) as a Chinese
- 3) as a Chinese in Hong Kong
- 4) as a Hongkonger in China

The survey does not mention the reasons behind the sustained preference of respondents for identity as a Hongkonger. However, it was suspected that it was the desire of respondents, particularly young people, to differentiate themselves from Mainland Chinese. When the people of Hong Kong consider that English is the medium to express their Hongkonger identity, Hong Kong English will likely be accepted as a standard variety in Hong Kong, just like the status of Singaporean English, Indian English, etc. Although, this may not be happening soon; it is a possible development.

7.5.4 The evaluation of the NET Scheme in Hong Kong in the perspective

of ELF. Under the NET Scheme, at least one NET is deployed to each publicly-funded school in Hong Kong. According to the Education Bureau of the HKSAR Government, the objectives of the Primary NET Scheme are to:

- provide an authentic environment for children to learn English;
- develop children's interest in learning English and establish the foundation for life-long learning;
- help local teachers develop innovative learning and teaching methods, materials, curricula and activities suited to the needs of local children; and
- disseminate good practices in language learning and teaching through region-based teacher development programmes such as experience-sharing seminars/workshops and networking activities.

And the objectives of the Enhanced NET Scheme are to:

- enrich the English language learning environment in schools;
- enhance the learning and teaching of English with linguistically and culturally authentic materials and resources; and
- strengthen teaching capacity through school-based professional development and collaboration between NETs and English Panel Members.



An examination of the eight objectives makes it clear that a NET is irrelevant to achieve the objectives b, c, d, and e. Only objectives a) and f) assume that NETs provide the necessary “authentic” environment and linguistically and culturally “authentic” materials and resources needed. A major evaluation report of the NET Scheme was released in 2001 (Storey, Luk, Gray, Wang-Kho, & Lin, 2001). The results were positive and useful suggestions made to enhance the scheme. However, when ELF and Hong Kong English have attained the status of standards in international and local settings, the NET Scheme may well become irrelevant in Hong Kong. The time when ELF and Hong Kong English can become standard, however, may well not be too soon. An evaluation of the NET Scheme in the perspective of ELF and in the context of Hong Kong where international trade and finance are becoming more global, is probably in the best interests for students in the long run.

7.5.5 The re-empowerment of the local NNETs. Research (Kirkpatrick, 2002) suggested that linguistic insecurity may be experienced by local NNETs. The performance of local NNETs no doubt will be affected. However, following the acceptance of ELF and Hong Kong English as a workable teaching model, local NNETs will be able to discard their linguistic insecurity and claim the status of the best model of English teacher in the context of Hong Kong. As Kirkpatrick (2007, p.



387) concluded:

What is now needed for Hong Kong – and other settings where a bilingual variety can be identified – is a codified description of the local bilingual variety of English at the phonological, lexico-grammatical and discourse pragmatic levels, as exemplified by highly proficient users of English who are mother-tongue speakers of Cantonese. This codified description will provide the linguistic benchmarks for English language teachers and teaching in Hong Kong's government schools. The relevance and importance for English Language teaching in Hong Kong of providing this codified description cannot be overstated. Codification brings with it the notion of acceptance as a standard. This means that learners can be tested and evaluated against codified norms and standards.

A codified description could:

- a) provide Hong Kong with a more appropriate and a more attainable set of linguistic benchmarks for the teaching and learning of English in schools,*
- b) identify linguistic features that interfere with the international intelligibility of the variety and make these features a focus of the ELT curriculum,*
- c) legitimise the variety of English spoken by highly proficient local English*



teachers as being a relevant and appropriate linguistic model for their students,

d) help Hong Kong people establish a sense of identity, self-confidence and pride in their bilingual variety of English.

The re-empowerment of local NNETs will certainly enhance teachers' performance and students' achievement. The caption of “NNETs” could be replaced by the more suitable caption of Multilingual English Teachers (METs).

7.6 Limitations of the study

The major limitation of the current study was the small sample size of the questionnaire study. As discussed in Section 1.5, the fact that the researcher was an independent part-time student researcher limited the financial and time resources available. To a great extent, the constraint of resources affected the recruitment of participants. Another reason for the small sample size was directly related to the heavy workload of the local NNETs. Most of the teachers were unwilling to spare their time for something unrelated to teaching.

Due to the small sample size, the results are not supposed to be generalizable to the population of local NNETs in Hong Kong. The fact that all respondents were local Hong Kong NNETs also limited the degree to which results could be



generalized to NNETs in other places. The cross-sectional design of the current study due to the limitation of time and human resources, also did not allow for examination of the trend of change of NNETs' attitudes towards individual accents, especially from the perspective of the HoI model.

7.7 Contributions of the current study.

There are two main contributions resulted from the current study:

7.7.1 Findings of the study. The study confirmed findings from the literature that British English was the most preferred accent among local NNETs in Hong Kong. Factors such as identity, intelligibility, power, social conventions and context impacted on the NNETs' attitudes towards ELF in a dynamic and complicated way. The attitudes of the teachers in this study were found to be changing dynamically when viewed from the perspective of multiple options of identities. When identity as an international communicator was most salient, the NNETs' views towards non-native accents or ELF were least negative.

7.7.2 The Questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from Jenkins' (2007). The introduction of the term “way of speaking English” to replace the original term “accent” was successful in eliciting responses like “Asian way of speaking English”, “European way of speaking English” etc. The term is a



more neutral than accent and the results indicated that the conception of a variety of ways of speaking English was readily understood and accepted by the respondents. The conception could be moved a step forward to cover the concept of “international way of speaking English”, which would cover the core meaning of the term ELF.

The validity of the questionnaire could also be improved by introducing short follow-up questions so that the attitudes measured are towards ELF, and not ESL or EFL.

7.8 Further research

The following research directions are suggested:

- A longitudinal design to examine the impact of the change in identity options and preferences on local NNETs' attitudes towards ELF and Hong Kong English;
- A more explicit discussion of identity with participants;
- A more detailed discussion with semi-structured interview participants on their views of how to carry out the training of students' skills to promote international communication. Research has shown that ELF communication is characterized by:
 - exploitation of redundancy



- ELF own process of idiomatizing
- mutual accommodation; and
- An direct examination of the local NNETs' perception of ELF.



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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire – Variety of ways of speaking English

Personal information

Male / Female (circle as appropriate)

Age (circle as appropriate) 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

Place of birth _____

Place where you live now/for how long? _____

Mother tongue _____

Other languages you speak

Your total number of years of English teaching

In which place/country/countries

How long have you taught in each place/country?

Email address (if you are happy for me to contact you)

**If you provide your name and/or your email address, these will remain entirely confidential and your anonymity will be protected at all times.*



Map Questions

Please refer to the world map attached at the end when you answer the questions that follow.

- 1) Write in the spaces below a word or phrase that represents for you the way the people in the following 10 countries/places speak English. You can refer to any aspect of the way people speak English, such as its speed, its quality of tone (e.g. ‘harsh’, ‘melodious’), its pitch, its rhythm (e.g. ‘like a machine gun’), its precision, its strength, how easy it is to understand etc. etc. There is no correct answer. Please say what you think – I am interested in your views.

USA: _____

Brazil: _____

France: _____

UK: _____

Germany: _____

HK: _____

India: _____

China: _____

Japan: _____

Australia: _____

- 2) i) Name in the spaces below any countries/places in which people’s way of speaking English is familiar to you. You can also name an area instead of a single country/place to indicate a variety of way of speaking English.

ii) Then write a word or phrase, next to the name of that country/place, that represents for you the way the people speak English.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____



7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Now list below the five ways of speaking English that you think are the best (with the best way of speaking English in the world as no. 1, the second best as no. 2 and so on). Choose from all the countries in the world, not only the countries mentioned earlier. You can even choose an area like a continent, or even bigger area, instead of a country.

Put the way of speaking English of a **competent speaker** of English from each of the ten countries/places mentioned in question 1 to the following scales for a) correctness b) acceptability for international communication c) pleasantness d) your familiarity with the way of speaking English. In each case, put a circle round the number that you have chosen.

The way of speaking English of competent speakers from the USA

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar |

The way of speaking English of competent speakers from Brazil

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar |

The way of speaking English of competent speakers from France



| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar |

The way of speaking English of competent speakers from UK

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar |

The way of speaking English of competent speakers from Germany

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar |

The way of speaking English of competent speakers from HK

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar |

The way of speaking English of competent speakers from India

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar |

The way of speaking English of competent speakers from China

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar |

The way of speaking English of competent speakers from Japan

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar |

The way of speaking English of competent speakers from Australia

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar |

Have you attended any courses on World Englishes or similar courses? What are your views on the course(s) if you have attended any?

Any other comments?

Please use the rest of this page for any comments you would like to make about non-native way of speaking English in general or about specific non-native way of speaking English. You can refer to the way of speaking English of any country/countries/area whether or not they mentioned in this questionnaire, and to any aspect of ways of speaking English. Feel free to say whatever you like – your opinions are very important to me.

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. I am very grateful. You are welcome to email me at _____ if you would like to discuss any



APPENDIX B

Frequency of ranked accents

| Accents | Different responses | Frequency |
|----------------|---|-----------|
| UK | UK, British, RP, Britain, London, England | 33 |
| USA | USA, US, USA-east coast, Americans | 29 |
| Australian | | 26 |
| Canadian | | 13 |
| Hong Kong | | 9 |
| New Zealand | | 7 |
| Singaporean | | 6 |
| Germany | | 4 |
| European | European, Europe | 3 |
| North American | | 3 |
| Indian | | 2 |
| SE Asian | | 2 |
| Asian | | 1 |
| Chinese | | 1 |
| French | | 1 |
| Icelander | | 1 |
| Sri Lankan | | 1 |
| Malaysian | | 1 |
| total | | 143 |



APPENDIX C

Frequency of accents ranked second

| Accent | Frequency |
|----------------|-----------|
| USA | 18 |
| Australian | 6 |
| UK | 4 |
| North American | 1 |
| Canadian | 1 |
| Germany | 1 |
| European | 1 |
| Hong Kong | 1 |
| total | 33 |



APPENDIX D

Frequency of accents ranked third

| Accent | Frequency |
|----------------|-----------|
| Australian | 7 |
| Canadian | 7 |
| USA | 6 |
| Hong Kong | 2 |
| UK | 1 |
| Chinese | 1 |
| New Zealand | 1 |
| European | 1 |
| Malaysian | 1 |
| North American | 1 |
| German | 1 |
| Total | 29 |



APPENDIX E

Frequency of accents ranked fourth

| Accent | Frequency |
|-------------|-----------|
| Australian | 12 |
| Canadian | 4 |
| Singaporean | 2 |
| SE Asian | 2 |
| USA | 1 |
| Hong Kong | 1 |
| French | 1 |
| New Zealand | 1 |
| Total | 24 |



APPENDIX F

Frequency of accents ranked fifth

| Accent | Frequency |
|-------------|-----------|
| New Zealand | 5 |
| Hong Kong | 5 |
| Singaporean | 4 |
| Indian | 2 |
| German | 2 |
| Australian | 1 |
| Icelander | 1 |
| Sri Lankan | 1 |
| Asian | 1 |
| Total | 22 |



APPENDIX G

The Pilot Test Report

I) The Questionnaire study:

A) The participants

The targeted sample (a total of 7 teachers, excluding 2 native English Teachers) is all of the local non-native English Teachers (NNET) of a secondary school. One of the teachers in the school, A, is the author's longtime friend who is also the most experienced (23 years in that school) local NNET in the school. A invited all 7 local NNETs in the school to participate in the study. A total of 5 questionnaires were collected by using a locked plastic box, with a deposit slit, put on A's desk. The response rate is 71%.

B) The results

A finished the questionnaire in my presence so that I could answer her immediate questions arising from the questionnaire. Apart from the following question Q3), no help or explanation is needed from the author:

Q3) Now list below the five ways of speaking English that you think are the best (with the best way of speaking English in the world as no. 1, the second best as no. 2 and so on). Choose from all the countries in the world, not only the countries mentioned earlier. You can even choose an area like a continent, or even bigger area, instead of a country.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



A raised the question of whether the name of the country or the people should be written down. Although the choice will not affect the result, I elaborated on the idea of “ways of speaking English”, and drew her attention to the more common concept of accents of English and then let A to decide on her own choice. The answers A put down are:

1. the UK
2. the USA
3. Australia
4. Canada
5. Germany

All 5 participants, all female, completed all questions asking for general personal information. However, only A wrote down her email address. Apart from the last 2 questions which ask for comments, all participants attempted all questions, except the following:

a) Pilot no. 2 (P2):

P2 left out Q2) completely blank, while giving quite informative answers for Q1) and Q2), as below:

Q1) ans:

Name in the spaces below any countries/places in which people’s way of speaking English is familiar to you. Write a word or phrase that represents for you the way the people speak English. You can also name an area instead of a single country/place to indicate a variety of way of speaking English.

USA: melodious, speedy

Brazil: _____

France: _____

UK: rhythmic

Germany: _____

HK: monotone

India: _____



China: _____

Japan: slow _____

Australia: _____

Q3) ans:

Now list below the five ways of speaking English that you think are the best (with the best way of speaking English in the world as no. 1, the second best as no. 2 and so on). Choose from all the countries in the world, not only the countries mentioned earlier. You can even choose an area like a continent, or even bigger area, instead of a country.

1. UK _____

2. USA _____

3. CANADA _____

4. AUSTRALIA _____

5. NEW ZEALAND _____

* P2 used all capital letters

Judging from the answers P2 gave for Q1) and Q2), she should not have any confusion towards the phrase “ways of speaking English”. Although she did not put down any comment on the last question, she did put down “NO” for the second last question. All these seem to show that P2 was eager to complete the questionnaire. Instead of being confused by the question, a more possible reason for P2 not to attempt Q2) may be that she may not be familiar with the ways of speaking English other than the 10 countries she just attempted.

b) Pilot no. 4 (P4):

P4 did not attempt Q1), but wrote down a remark on the blank space next to the answer area, “I’m not sure”, as shown below:



ing 10 countries/places speak English. You can refer to any aspect of the way people speak, such as its speed, its quality of tone (e.g. 'harsh', 'melodious'), its pitch, its rhythm (e.g. 'machine gun'), its precision, its strength, how easy it is to understand etc. etc. Then give your answer. Please say what you think – I am interested in your views.

USA: _____
 Brazil: _____
 France: _____
 UK: _____
 Germany: _____
 HK: _____
 India: _____
 China: _____
 Japan: _____
 Australia: _____

*I'm not
sure*

The answers P4 gave on Q2) and Q3) showed that she should not be confused with the phrase “ways of speaking English”:

Q2) ans:

1. HK
2. UK

Q3) ans:

1. UK
2. USA
3. Asutralia

Together with the omission of the latter part of the answer for Q2), it is more reasonable to infer that P4 just hesitate or unsure to describe the ways of speaking English. 2 remarks of “don't know” written on Q4), together with the unattempted part of Q4) for Brazil and France, also suggested that P4 was hesitate on giving responses to unfamiliar questions.

countries/places mentioned in question 1 to the following scales for a) correctness b) acceptab for international communication c) pleasantness d) your familiarity with the way of speaking English. In each case, put a circle round the number that you have chosen.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| The way of speaking English of competent speakers from the USA | | | | | | | | | |
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect | |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable | |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant | |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar | |
| The way of speaking English of competent speakers from Brazil | | | | | | | | | |
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect | <i>don't know</i> |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable | |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant | |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar | |
| The way of speaking English of competent speakers from France | | | | | | | | | |
| a | very correct | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very incorrect | <i>don't know</i> |
| b | very acceptable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unacceptable | |
| c | very pleasant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unpleasant | |
| d | very familiar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | very unfamiliar | |



c) Pilot no. 3 (P3):

P3 attempted all questions, including the second last one asking for comments. However, she left out the latter part of the answer for Q2):

Q2) ans:

1. Hong Kong
2. USA
3. UK
4. Germany

As P3 attempted Q1) with considerable details:

Q1) ans:

USA: pleasant
Brazil: _____
France: difficult to understand
UK: melodious
Germany: _____
HK: noisy
India: _____
China: _____
Japan: comical
Australia: _____

Rather than mistaken Q2), she should have overlooked Q2) which also asked for a description of the ways of speaking English.

Lastly, the results of the rating question, Q4), showed no apparent floor or ceiling effects, suggesting that the 6 point scale is appropriate.

C) Suggested amendments:



Although the number of questionnaires collected is rather small, the response rate is satisfactory. The use of a locked box for collection of completed questionnaires should have boosted participants' confidence for anonymity and thus improved the response rate. As A is just an ordinary member in the English Panel of her school, it did not involve obvious power relation in her recruitment of participants. The fact that A is the Head of the Discipline Panel should not be relevant in this regard too. The logistic arrangement of appointing a contact person for participant's recruitment and the collection of questionnaires by a locked box will be followed in the main study as it seems to be suitable and has yielded satisfactory response. One point worth mentioning is that precautions to prevent the collection box from breaking apart should be taken as the box was broken after all questionnaires were collected.

Apart from Q2), all questions were answered without obvious ambiguity. The left out of the latter part of the answers for Q2) by 2 participants P3 and P4 was possibly due to reasons other than the misunderstanding of the question itself. The complete blank of Q2) by P2 is also more likely because of other reasons. Therefore, to avoid participants overlooking the latter part of the question, Q2) is amended as follows:

- Q2) i) Name in the spaces below any countries/places in which people's way of speaking English is familiar to you. You can also name an area instead of a single country/place to indicate a variety of way of speaking English.
- ii) Then write a word or phrase, next to the name of that country/place, that represents for you the way the people speak English.

The splitting of the question into 2 parts aims at alerting participants to include 2 parts of answers.

Finally, the labels of the map attached are too small and so it is amended with bigger labels, as attached.

II) Semi-structured interview:

A) The only participant

A, who participated in the above pilot questionnaire study, also participated in the pilot semi-structured interview. A is an experienced local non-native English teachers with 23 years of teaching experience. A is a long time good friend of the author and author's wife, who was a former teacher of the same school for 19 years.

B) The interview

The interview was carried out inside a meeting room of her school and was audio-taped by the built in “VOICE MEMOS” function of an iphone4S. All of the following open-ended questions were discussed with A during the interview:

What is your comment on this statement, “Students need to approximate native speakers English as close as possible”?

What kind of English accent(s) do you think your students need?

What kind of English accent(s) do you think your students’ parents want for their children?

Do you like your own English accent? Why? Why not?

Are you concerned if your accent was recognizable to others as being influenced by your Cantonese? Why? Why not?

Which English accent you would most like to have if you were able to choose? Why?

What would be your feeling if you were mistaken for a native speaker of English?

Can you describe any negative accent-related experience or situation of your own or others?

What is your comment on the notion of “English as an International Language”?

How much you know about the notion of “English as a Lingua Franca”/”Lingua Franca Core”?

What signals success in your career as an English teacher?

A responded with enthusiasm and the discussion went very well. The whole interview lasted for about 45 minutes and the quality of the audio record is excellent, apart from



very occasional disruptions by students coming in and mild interference from the noise of physical education lessons. The on-campus arrangement for the interview should be followed as far as possible.

The initial impression is that the beliefs of the interviewee revealed conformed to the literature, i.e. RP or GA are the best and the most beautiful. A very interesting point is that, at the end of the discussion, she expressed that there is a core of English (which is not GA nor RP) such that if learners can get hold of, they can communicate internationally without difficulties. This reflects an understanding of the concept of English as a Lingua Franca, which she said she has no idea of. However, when asked explicitly whether she think that there exist Asian way of speaking English, European way of speaking English, or African way of speaking English, she said she did not think so. The ambiguity, which the literature has emphasized, also being reflected in subtle ways during the interview. The issue of identity was also being raised during the interview which the interviewee was very willing to share.

C) Addition of open-ended questions

In order to have a deeper understanding of potential interviewees' "true reflections" of their privately held cognitions and feelings, more probing questions based on on-going discussions will be asked. Those questions are also intended to draw the interviewee's attention to the ambiguities and contradictions behind related beliefs and attitudes.

Further questions which will lead to more contradictions and struggles about language models, and the mismatch between achievement and aspiration will be added, examples as follows:

1. Can you envisage the teaching of English by taking ELF as a model? Why? Why not?
2. Do you think that there is a discrepancy between your achievement of your spoken English and your aspiration?

III) Conclusion - Inclusion of pilot test data in Main Study:



In view of the amendments of the questionnaire do not affect the data collectable, it is decided that the questionnaires collected during the pilot test should also be included in the main study. Similarly, the pilot interview can also be analyzed alongside with the other interview data.

