

*“Almost as annoying as the Yank; better accent,  
though.”*

-Attitudes and Conceptions of Finnish Students  
toward Accents of English

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# 1. Introduction

There is current debate in Finland concerning accents in English language teaching in schools. Some feel that American English should be preferred over the traditional British English in pronunciation because of the current cultural hegemony of the United States and its importance in the daily lives of children and adolescents. Others want to keep British English as the model because it is considered perhaps more authentic, more elegant, or a European variety. Undoubtedly, many want to stick to British English simply because it is the accent they have been taught to use, and it is the accent they have command of. More and more people, however, also feel that as International English or World English is gaining momentum, i.e. credibility as an existing variety, traditional national accents, and striving for native-like competence in pronunciation, have lost their significance. As the people any Finn is most likely to use English with are most often non-native speakers of English themselves, there is no real need of having perfect pronunciation – there is no automatic positive value to it between non-native speakers.

But what do the students themselves think? What would they prefer to learn? How do they feel about the different accents? This study sets out to discover attitudes Finnish secondary school students and future English teachers have toward six different accents of spoken English – two of which are non-native accents. The study also intends to sketch a picture of those accents from the point of view of Finnish students. These goals will be achieved by playing carefully planned samples of the different accents to a group of students, and collecting attitudinal data from them via a questionnaire designed for the purpose. While the accent of a Finnish person speaking

English is expected to draw negative reactions from the respondents, the familiar native accents – American and British English – are presumed to be regarded most positively.

The results may have implications for future teaching practices, as they clearly indicate that the most obvious choices in accent are not necessarily the best or the most desirable ones. In addition, the images painted by the students' responses give a fascinating insight into the minds of modern youth; accents represent cultures, and cultures represent ways of living.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Countless studies concerning attitudes have been conducted. Most of them are outside the field of linguistics, namely in cognitive psychology and social psychology. However, ever since Leonard Bloomfield (1933) introduced his research on language attitudes, there has been great interest in the topic within sociolinguistics as well. In this chapter I will describe in detail how attitudes have been defined, what kind of research has been done in language attitudes, as well as the most common methodology used in those studies.

### **2.1 Attitudes**

Many definitions of attitudes exist, but the vast majority of research is based on definitions that are rather similar to one another. For example, Williams (1974, quoted in Fasold 1987, 147) considers attitudes "as an internal state aroused by stimulation of some type and which may mediate the organism's subsequent response". Thus Williams sees attitudes as reactions to what we experience, which possibly affect our behavior. Along the same lines, but somewhat more straightforward are Eagly & Chaiken (1993, 1), stating that "attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor". They also specify that "evaluating refers to all classes of evaluative responding, whether overt or covert, cognitive, affective, or behavioral" (ibid). In short, attitudes represent an evaluative response toward an object and can be defined as a summary evaluation of an object or thought (Bohner & Wänke 2002, 5).

People face a multitude of stimuli in their everyday lives. However, not everything provokes an attitude in us. The stimulus has to have

an effect of some sort on us before we form an attitude. Attitudes only develop through experience with an object (Palmerino et al. 1984, 179). Eagly & Chaiken (1993, 2) state that "an individual does not have an attitude until he or she responds evaluatively to an entity on an affective, cognitive, or behavioral basis". Bohner & Wänke (2002, 5) remind us that "these three response classes are not necessarily separable from each other and do not necessarily represent three independent actors". Eagly & Chaiken (1993, 2) continue, claiming that evaluative responding, whether overt or covert, can produce a tendency to respond with a particular degree of evaluation when subsequently encountering the attitude object. An attitude object is the source of the stimulus arousing an evaluative response in us. According to Bohner & Wänke (2002, 5), an attitude object "can be anything a person discriminates or holds in mind". Thus we are likely to form an attitude toward anything that catches our attention repeatedly.

Bohner & Wänke (2002, 5-6) report disagreement among scholars as to whether or not evaluations have to be stable and have to be stored in long-term memory to qualify as an attitude. Some characterize attitudes as enduring concepts which are stored in memory and can be retrieved from it (see e.g. Petty et al. 1994). Bohner & Wänke (ibid) tell us that this perspective is termed the "file-drawer model" because it perceives attitudes as mental files which individuals consult for the evaluation of the object in question. Others have proposed the idea of attitudes as temporary constructions which individuals construct at the time an evaluative judgment is needed (see e.g. Tesser, 1978). Bohner & Wänke (ibid) continue that according to this perspective, which is called "attitudes-as-constructions", people do not retrieve any previously stored attitude from their memory but rather generate an evaluative judgment based on the information that comes to mind in the

situation. They further report that both perspectives draw upon supporting evidence: some attitudes, for example political ones, have been shown to be relatively stable over time, whereas numerous studies have also shown that people report different attitudes depending on the context (2002, 5-6).

## ***2.2 Language Attitude Studies***

Attitudes toward varieties or speakers of English, among other languages, have been a concern of sociolinguists and social psychologists since the late 1950s and early 1960s. With the spread of English worldwide, the focus has shifted from attitudes held by native speakers first to the attitudes held by users of English in what Kachru (1988) has called the Outer Circle, and most recently to those in the Expanding Circle, including Continental Europe (Hyrkstedt & Kalaja 1998).

Wardhaugh states that “our receptive linguistic ability is much greater than our productive linguistic ability” (2004, 53), which, in practice, means that we are able to understand many more varieties than we are able to produce. Although native speakers of English are perhaps naturally more perceptive of differences in accents within the English language, McKenzie (2004) points out that evidence suggests even students with a lower level of proficiency in English demonstrate significantly differentiated responses toward varieties of English. Even if non-native speakers are not able to produce different accents very well, this does not mean that they lack the ability to understand them, and more importantly, carry attitudes toward them. Moreover, years of language attitude research show that, solely on the basis of speech samples, judges are capable of characterizing speakers that represent various social

groups, and that the evaluation patterns evolving from these studies are extremely uniform (Ladegaard 1998, 252). It also appears that evaluation patterns conform to the same standards across cultures (ibid).

### **2.2.1 Techniques in language attitudes studies**

Albeit several techniques, including questionnaires and interviews, have been used in language attitude studies, the most common technique is, by far, the Matched Guise Technique (MGT). In fact, the use of MGT is sometimes considered synonymous with the indirect assessment approach (see 2.3.1). MGT was pioneered by Lambert and his colleagues (see Lambert et al. 1960) in the United States. They devised the technique for studying the privately held attitudes of French and English speaking Canadians toward each other and their own language groups. They played their subjects audio recordings where bilingual speakers read aloud the same text in both English and French; the subjects were led to think that all the guises (voices) belonged to different speakers.

MGT is founded on the idea that when a single person creates many different guises, and does so credibly, all other factors affecting the judgment of a speaker, apart from the accent, dialect or language itself, are removed. Considerable care is thus taken on issues of stimulus control, ensuring that prosodic and paralinguistic features of voice such as pitch, speech rate, voice quality and hesitations remain constant (McKenzie 2006, 59). This is one of the key factors in arguing for (and, as I will point out below, against) the use of MGT. When one speaker produces several guises, the only remaining difference in the guises is the variation in, for example, accents, which then presumably allows for inferring most reliable

attitudinal data from the judges. Therefore, the guises used must be carefully composed in order to guarantee that the judges (research subjects) do not realize they are listening to the same speaker over and over again but instead perceive the guises as authentic. As in Lambert and colleagues' study, the guises in MGT are usually heard reading a text from which any potentially provocative or labeling ingredients have been carefully removed, so as to make it as 'neutral' as possible.

Giles and Coupland (1991, 32-47) comment that MGT is rigorous for eliciting latent attitudes. Also on their list of MGT merits is that the importance of language code and choice of style in impression formation has been demonstrated from the findings in MGT studies. Furthermore, matched-guise experiments have been an important factor in establishing a cross-disciplinary interface between sociolinguistic and socio-psychological analyses of language attitudes (*ibid*); in essence, MGT has had a considerable role in the very creation of language attitude research as an independent field of study.

Nevertheless, MGT is not without its problems. Indeed, quite emphatic arguments against it have been presented. Garrett, Coupland, and Williams (2003, 54-61) provide a good overview of those criticisms:

- 1) The salience problem: The routine of providing judges with the repeated message content of a reading passage may exaggerate the language contrasts compared to what would otherwise be the case in normal discourse. MGT may make speech/language more salient than it is outside the experimental environment.
- 2) The perception problem: Judges may not perceive reliably the manipulated variable 'non-standard accent' or may even misperceive it as 'bad grammar'.

- 3) The accent-authenticity problem: As many of the prosodic and paralinguistic features are minimized in the guises, some other characteristics that normally co-vary with accent varieties may also be eliminated. This raises the question of the authenticity of the varieties.
- 4) The mimicking authenticity problem: When one speaker has to produce a great number of accents, it is unlikely that those accents are truly accurate. Inaccurate speech samples are likely to undermine the reliability of the study.
- 5) The community authenticity problem: The labels used to describe accents are sometimes too vague to be meaningful. Umbrella terms such as 'British English' can be misleading, as they can contain many perpetually different accents. It is also important to know the point (the place) of data collection, as attitudes are likely to vary from one accent community to another.
- 6) The style-authenticity problem: Reading aloud is a marked verbal style, and likely to introduce several distinctive prosodic and sequential phonological features – a more formal style of language from spontaneous style. Also, it is uncertain whether the use of such decontextualized language to elicit attitudes yields results that can be extended to natural language.
- 7) The neutrality problem: The notion of a 'factually neutral' text is a controversial one. Given the ways in which readers and listeners interact with and interpret texts on the basis of pre-existing social schemata, it is doubtful that any text can be regarded as 'factually neutral'.

Garrett et al. (2003, 61) do remind us that the abovementioned disadvantages are not untypical of any particular methodological paradigm, and that one should continue to strive to offset limitations by innovating around the central theme. Indeed, elaborating the idea of MGT has led to the emergence of VGT, Verbal Guise Technique.

VGT is a term for techniques that very much resemble MGT but do not quite fit under it because of their deviation from the standard MGT procedure. There are two main differences between MGT and VGT, and they can appear in the procedure either one at a time or simultaneously (as is the case in the present study, see Chapter 4).

Firstly, VGT can make use of several speakers. Sometimes this is a necessity, as speakers who can produce several credible speech accents are not always available, especially in studies assessing attitudes to foreign languages or their varieties. Logically, the more accents or languages the study wants to make use of, the more difficult it is to find someone to produce the guises. Furthermore, as Garrett et al. (2003, 54) report, "different speakers are also used in order to defend research against the charge of artificiality" (see the accent-authenticity problem, above).

Secondly, VGT can make use of spontaneous speech in preference to reading aloud a text (see the style-authenticity problem and the neutrality problem, above). This is commonly realized through controlling the topic or content of the speech of the speakers. Researchers might set a topic (e.g. teddy bears) from which no deviation is allowed, or limit the speakers to a certain speech act, such as giving directions according to a map specially designed for the purpose. Another argument for spontaneous speech is that the repetition of the same piece of text may lead to boredom and lack of interest in the judges.

## **2.2.2 Previous Studies on Non-native Speaker Attitudes**

El-Dash and Busnardo (2001, 60) state that “the most common attitude profile is for speakers to rate their own mother tongue higher than a foreign one on measures of both status and solidarity, but many variations are possible, depending on the perceived importance of the two languages”. However, their study (El-Dash & Busnardo 2001) on Brazilian middle- and lower class teenagers, using MGT combined with direct approach (see 2.3.1) questionnaires, showed that approximately half of the judges favored English-speaking guises to Portuguese-speaking ones in relation to status. Even more surprising was the fact that the same division was evident in the solidarity traits as well. El-Dash and Busnardo speculate that this could be explained with the strong presence of English-speaking popular media culture: the solidarity in this case could indicate identification with an imaginary community built out of media exposure. They report that such adolescent retreats from the national language and traditional values due to the impact of ‘modernizing’ English-language popular culture has been observed in other contexts as well.

Bradac and Giles (1991) predicted that in the Scandinavian context, where students are subject to overwhelming media exposure to American English, learners would perceive Standard American more favorably than Received Pronunciation and be more motivated to learn it as well. Ladegaard (2006), stating that little research has been conducted to verify their claim, set out to test this prediction in his study where Danish upper secondary school students and undergraduates participated in a VGT experiment using the following guises: American, Australian, Received Pronunciation, Scottish and Cockney. The perceived attractiveness of American and British culture were also measured. The results showed that while

the power of American culture was evident in the students' lives, the participants still demonstrated a preference for RP on important dimensions, and had no desire to adopt an American accent.

Finnish students' attitudes to accents of English have also been measured. Hartikainen (2000) conducted a study on Finnish upper secondary school students using VGT, with the guises of Received Pronunciation, General American (Mid-Western), General Canadian, Scottish Standard English, Standard Northern Irish English and General Australian English. Among Hartikainen's research subjects, Received Pronunciation and Standard Australian were rated most favorably whereas the Scottish and Northern Irish English were rated least favorably. What is interesting, though, is that the results indicated no correlation between familiarity and attitude, as the General American speaker was rated negatively. Based on the results of the study, Hartikainen concluded that the most important factors for the informants to hold positive attitudes toward different varieties of English were the encouragement from parents to learn English, and direct contact with native English speakers.

As is evident in the above summarized and in so many other studies, attitudes toward varieties of English are not an issue merely among native speakers of English. Non-native speakers also carry attitudes toward different accents, and do so in a constant way. As the number of non-native speakers in English has long ago surpassed that of native speakers, and International English being the world's most widely used language, a true lingua franca, the study of attitudes in the non-native speaker sector is both important and current.

## **2.3 Language Attitudes**

Attitudes are generally considered the same thing in psychology and linguistics. Language attitudes, as Fasold (1987, 148) comments, only differ in the sense that they are attitudes about languages and nothing else. While some studies on language attitudes are restricted to language itself, in most studies the term "language attitudes" is broadened to include attitudes toward the speakers of a language or variety. Thus attitudes toward particular varieties are taken to be attitudes toward speakers of those varieties (Ryan et al. 1982, 2). It is relatively easy to consider attitudes toward languages, and toward speakers of those languages as their representatives, belonging to the group of enduring concepts stored in the memory as described by the "file-drawer-model", thus being of a relatively stable kind. Furthermore, as studies show that people are susceptible to both letting circumstances affect their opinions and presenting generally acceptable attitudes as their own (see e.g. Day 1982, 128-9), one cannot be sure whether the attitudes elicited from subject responses are of long-term or on-the-spot nature.

Bohner & Wänke point out that people approach and like others whose attitudes are similar to their own but avoid and dislike people who hold different attitudes. They claim we also tend to categorize people according to their attitudes and infer other attitudes they may hold; in turn, by expressing our own attitudes we reaffirm our own identity (2002, 13-14). Furthermore, attitudes also determine how we process information regarding the object of attitude: people often search for and select information that confirms their beliefs and attitudes rather than information that may disconfirm them, and also interpret information in line with their attitudes. At the individual level attitudes influence perception, thinking, other attitudes and behavior, whereas at the societal level negative

outgroup attitude or prejudice can cause discriminatory behavior (Bohner & Wänke 2002, 13-14). Such tendencies cause language attitudes to be relevant and in need of consideration in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context as well.

Fishman (1971, 1) describes language as being

not merely a carrier of content, whether latent or manifest. Language itself is content, a referent for loyalties and animosities, an indicator of social statuses and personal relationships, a marker of situations and topics as well as of the societal goals and the large-scale value-laden arenas of interaction that typify every speech community.

Therefore, languages are most likely to be targets of attitudes, including strong ones. That is why it is easy to reason, as Edwards (1982, 20) does, that evaluations of language varieties – dialects and accents – do not reflect either linguistic or aesthetic quality per se, but rather are expressions of social convention and preference which, in turn, reflect an awareness of the status and prestige afforded to the speakers of these varieties.

Gardner (1982, 132-6) gives this as one of the reasons languages can be considered different from other school subjects, as they implicate a series of social factors which are reflected in language attitudes. Indeed, there has been considerable research demonstrating that attitudinal and motivational variables are related to achievement in a second language, and that this association is independent of language aptitude. Gardner (ibid) states that although some possibly negative results have been reported, the overwhelming evidence indicates that attitudinal variables are related to, and possibly influence, proficiency in second language. One potential reason for the relation of attitudes to achievement in second language acquisition is that they influence how seriously one strives to learn the language (Gardner 1982, 132-6). Not only do attitudes affect learning a language, but learning a language also

affects the attitudes, according to Lambert (1963, 114): "...an individual successfully acquiring a second language gradually adopts various aspects of behaviour which characterize members of another linguistic-cultural group". Even though Lambert's claim is quite strong, we cannot completely ignore such views, as learning a language must affect the way one thinks, however minor that effect may be. This is why considering language attitudes in EFL is not only relevant but of some importance. In planning their teaching, teachers have to be aware of the (existence of) attitudes their pupils carry. What is more, the teachers' own attitudes may also reflect on the achievements of the pupils.

### **2.3.1 Language attitude assessment procedures**

Attitudes are not directly observable, but instead researchers must rely on inference (Henerson et al. 1987, 13). Inference, at least reliable inference, requires data from the subjects whose attitudes are being measured. This is a fundamental issue in language attitude research because people, quite frankly, cannot be trusted to tell the truth when asked about something directly (see eg. Garrett et al. 2003 and Giles & Powesland 1975). Here I will describe the most common assessment procedures in language attitudes research.

Ryan et al. (1984, 136) list three common methodologies in assessing language attitudes: analysis of societal treatment of language varieties, direct assessment, and indirect assessment. According to Ryan et al., the first methodological approach refers to content analyses of the treatment accorded to language varieties within the society, and the primary source of information lies in their public treatment, e.g. official language policies. This kind of social-

psychological study of social representations can provide useful background information for language attitude research (Ryan et al. 1984, 136).

Direct assessment has been widely used through questionnaires on a multitude of aspects of language attitudes: e.g. language evaluation, language preference, desirability and reasons for learning a particular language, evaluation of variety-specific social groups, self-reports on language use, bilingualism, and language policies. The downside of the direct approach, i.e. asking the research subjects directly about their attitudes, is the possibility that it may reflect mainly socially desirable responses (Ryan et al. 1984, 137). Moreover, the attitudes reported in direct assessments are subject to a number of influences, some of which originate from the measurement process itself (Bohner & Wänke 2002, 23). Common techniques of gathering data on language attitudes within the direct approach methodology include questionnaires (including open-ended and forced choice questions) and interviews.

The third methodology is indirect assessment. Ryan et al. (1984, 137) listed it as the most commonly used; even a quick glance over current studies will reveal that this continues to be the case today as well. In language attitude research, indirect assessment usually means the evaluation of speakers on a series of rating scales. Perhaps the most important advantage of this methodology is its ability to reveal spontaneous attitudes (Ryan et al. 1984, 137). The idea is that the research subjects are asked to rate the speakers using predetermined qualities that are planned for allowing the inference of attitudinal values. Thus the mapping of attitudes is indirect, and considered to better reflect the actual attitudes that research subjects carry (see e.g. Giles & Powesland 1975 and Ryan et al. 1982).

## **2.4 Measuring Attitudes: Attitude Rating Scales**

Psychometrics is a tradition of measurement, which has its origins in the methods of mental and psychological testing. The attributes measured usually have no physical stimulus counterpart. Himmelfarb (1993, 29-51) states that on these tests, an individual responds to a series of items, each of which purports to assess the common underlying attribute that the test is designed to measure. This psychometric heritage is also well represented in attitude measurement. Both Likert's (1932) method of summated ratings and Osgood's (1957) semantic differential scales fit within this approach. Likert's method is a general scaling technique that may be applied to any of the three classes of attitudinal responding (see chapter 2.1). In contrast, the semantic differential does not apply across all three classes of indicators but is instead based on ratings of the attitude object on adjective scales that present generalized evaluative beliefs, e.g. good vs. bad; thus it only applies to direct attitude measurement. The underlying measurement model, however, is similar in both techniques (Himmelfarb 1993, 29-51).

### **2.4.1 Reliability and validity of attitude measures**

The reliability of an attitude measuring instrument such as the rating scales mentioned above can be defined as the extent to which it yields consistent results over repeated observations, whatever the test measures. The validity of a measuring instrument, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the instrument measures what it claims to measure. As Himmelfarb (1993, 28) spells it out, "the validity of an attitude measure pertains to whether scores on that scale in fact indicate people's attitudes toward the object".

Himmelfarb (1993, 72) reminds us that response distortions could produce systematic errors in attitude measurement, because people may avoid answering questions (honestly) for various reasons. Several strategies are typically adopted by researchers to avoid response distortion. Among these are the use of filler items, which are used to disguise the researcher's interest from the respondents in order to decrease their efforts to provide answers in accordance with their perception of the researcher's or interviewer's expectations (ibid). Strategies for avoiding response distortion also include assuring the informants of there being no correct or incorrect answers and of the confidentiality and anonymity of the research. Yet, it must be emphasized, all factors of uncertainty can perhaps never be removed in language attitude studies. Garrett (2007) feels this is something that simply has to be accepted if research is to be done at all in this particular field of study. In the end, there is a lot we can do beforehand to add to the credibility of data inferred from informants; but whether the informants act according to their expressed attitudes, is another matter.

#### **2.4.2 The semantic differential**

The semantic differential scales were originally developed by Osgood et al. (1957) for the purpose of measuring meaning. As they point out, the semantic differential is "a very general way of getting at a certain type of information, a highly generalizable technique of measurement" (76). It has since been widely used in the field of attitude assessment and is, in fact, now the most commonly used technique for such research. McKenzie states that the utilisation of semantic differential scales in MGT studies has a further advantage because it allows for the measurement of attitude intensity (2006, 61).

“The semantic differential (SD) measures people's reactions to stimulus words and concepts in terms of ratings on bipolar scales defined with contrasting adjectives at each end” (Heise 1970, 236). An example of this could be the adjective pair wrong – right. “Bipolar adjective scales are a simple, economical means for obtaining data on people's reactions” (ibid). The scales are commonly seven-step scales, although five-step scales are also used. Osgood et al. (1957, 85), comment that extensive experimenting has shown that seven-step scales produce the best results when it comes to the equal use of alternatives by subjects as well as in providing sufficient but not excessive alternatives to choose from. It appears that, as Garrett (2007) put it, “seven just seems to be a number people can deal with”. However, Osgood et al. note that grade-school subjects seem to work better with a five-step scale (1957, 85).

Two versions of numbering the scales are in use: some use the model provided by Osgood and associates in which the scale positions (alternatives) are numbered 1...7, four (4) being the average; whereas many appoint the average the value zero (0) and then number the scale positions (-3...-1) and 1...3 on two sides of the average. The latter model is perhaps more advanced and easier to read, especially in studies that map out attitudes toward a specific entity. Nonetheless, both models yield the same results; only the procedure of calculating them and the form of presentation differ slightly. Furthermore, different conventions exist in presenting the scale and its scale positions to the subjects. By this I mean that some scholars mark the numbers on the scale for the subject to see, whereas others do not, only using lines on which the subjects make their mark. Some also use wordings like *very much/little, quite*, etc. to elucidate the properties of the SD scale.

SD uses any number of scales with different attributes, usually personality traits, for the purpose of inferring attitudes from them. The attributes are not, of course, selected randomly. Neither are they merely selected as individual attributes, but instead to be a part of an evaluative dimension. In the field of language attitude studies there are some established models, which have, however, been altered by scholars to address their specific needs. The most widely accepted model of evaluative dimensions may be that of Zahn and Hopper (1985). Their dimensions were *superiority, social attractiveness, and dynamism*. Studies have since shown that the dimensions of superiority and social attractiveness are commonly inversely proportional (see e.g. Zahn & Hopper 1985, Garrett et al. 2003). Another model is that of Bayard et al. (2001), in which scales were also consolidated into dimensions: *power, status, competence, solidarity*. The purpose of having predetermined dimensions is to allow for a more detailed analysis of the data gathered. By using evaluative dimensions we are able to view the results of a study conducted using SD scales in a perspective that is broader and deeper; more than the sum of individual attributes.

## **2.5 Accents and Attitudes**

The speakers of English are commonly divided into three groups: English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). But these categorizations, as Jenkins (2003, 14) puts it, “have become fuzzy at the edges and...it is increasingly difficult to classify speakers of English as belonging purely to one of the three”. The traditional ENL countries alone host an impressive amount of different dialects and accents, but combined with all ESL and EFL accents, there is now a massive amount of accents of English all around the world, which

are not only growing in number but also spreading everywhere through education, media, popular culture and the Internet. Furthermore, the accents are changing in unpredictable ways as new groups of non-native speakers adapt them and add their own touch to them. Thus English can be said to no longer be the property of any nation or state, but a true lingua franca. Although there is a common linguistic core to all the different accents, the spoken versions of that core are so different from one another that two speakers of dissimilar accents may have serious problems with intelligibility – when speaking the same language. However, there are differences of opinion among scholars as to where exactly the border between a distant accent and a new language lies. It is a complicated matter altogether.

Crystal (2003, 185-189) considers the future of English and predicts that as dialects and accents move further away from each other, people will adapt by extending their ability to speak more than one dialect to meet the new requirements – they would then speak their own dialect or accent at home, or in their home country, and use a new, global standard in international situations. Crystal states that such a “World Standard Spoken English” would very likely be based on American English (ibid). Whether Crystal’s claim becomes reality or not the situation now is different to that of his prophecy. Now, most accents are mutually intelligible, although it depends entirely on the speakers and their abilities. Some accents carry more prestige than others, although that prestige is not in the accent itself but in the mind of the listener.

Accents may differ from one another in several ways, e.g. in stress, rhythm, time, pitch, intonation, the number of vowels and diphthongs and their use, rhotics etc. (see e.g. Bauer 2002 or Trudgill & Hannah 2002). It is, then, no wonder that they provoke

attitudes in us when we encounter them. People tend to have a built-in idea of what the languages they speak should sound like, based on their own speech or on that of someone or something they look up to. Therefore, hearing the same language being spoken in a wholly different way might make us consider one of two things: either there is something wrong with the other accent or, if we for some reason prefer it to our own accent, we might regard our own version somehow lesser. This, of course, depends on the person. Not everyone cares about such matters. Nonetheless, people who have an influence on us in general, can very likely have an influence on our thoughts about language, too. This is especially true in schools, where languages are not only used but taught.

Trudgill (1975, 60-63) explains how linguistic differences between the teacher and the students can lead to resentment of the teacher by their students. Though Trudgill is writing about native speakers, the same must be true about non-native speakers as well, even though the matter might be of lesser importance when speaking a foreign language. Yet, it is worth considering as negative feelings toward the teacher may have a negative effect on the motivation of the student. There is little the teacher can do if the students consider the teacher's accent somehow faulty. But, quite often the teacher may consider the students' accents somehow faulty, and this is something the teacher can work on.

It is not always easy to define the difference between bad pronunciation and pronunciation that is merely different. One should be tolerant, however, and not demand perfect (in the teacher's view) pronunciation or accent, but instead allow for freedom in pronunciation as long as intelligibility is not gravely affected. If the teacher communicates negative attitudes toward the accents of the students, the students will develop strong feelings of linguistic

insecurity, Trudgill (1975, 60-63) claims. He continues that if a child feels his language is inferior he is less likely to be willing to use it (ibid.). Another crucial point that Trudgill (ibid.) makes is that there is a danger that the teacher might unwittingly evaluate students with accents similar to his or her own more favorably than those who make use of a less formal or less accustomed accent. This would be very unfortunate as the function of language teaching should obviously be one of enabling expression, not only imitation.

## ***2.6 Recapitulation***

In this chapter I have dealt with attitudes and the ways and processes of studying them. Attitudes are evaluative responses toward objects, and people form attitudes toward most if not all things they encounter. Attitudes can be of stable nature or change depending on the context, and language attitudes exist among non-native speakers, too. The most common technique in language attitude studies is MGT, where judges are played multiple guises produced by a single speaker. VGT, on the other hand, allows for multiple speakers and, unlike MGT, the use of spontaneous speech, which add to the authenticity of the guises. Previous studies have shown that accent familiarity does not necessarily correlate with attitude, and that people may let circumstances affect their opinions. Also, evaluations of language varieties are expressions of social convention rather than of linguistic quality per se. Attitudes may have an effect on language proficiency, which is one of the main motivations of this study.

As attitudes are not directly observable, three methodologies designed for attitude inference are commonly used. These include analysis of societal treatment of language varieties, which provides

useful background information, and direct and indirect assessment. Direct assessment, i.e. asking respondents directly about their attitudes, has been widely used but has the disadvantage of possibly producing socially desirable answers. Indirect assessment is now most widely used because of its ability to reveal spontaneous and thus presumably more genuine attitudes. This is usually done with the use of attitude rating scales, as is the case in the current study.

The Semantic Differential scales are attitude rating scales that present the respondent with generalized evaluative beliefs, which the respondents are asked to rate. Filler items, anonymity and an air of confidentiality are commonly used to avoid response distortions. However, all factors of uncertainty can perhaps never be removed. The SD is a highly generalizable technique of measurement which also allows for the measurement of attitude intensity. Seven-step scales provide the respondents with a suitable number of choices, whereas the number of scales used is only limited by the needs of the researcher. The scales are usually consolidated into evaluative dimensions that offer their examiner additional information as compared to individual scales.

Attitudes to different accents are of importance in the classroom as they may have an impact on both the atmosphere in the class and on the conscious as well as subconscious behaviour of everyone in the class. Tolerance of differences in accent is key to teachers as it may help the students to feel more comfortable with the language studied, and thus may improve their motivation and proficiency.

### **3. Research Design**

The aim of this study is to find out how Finnish secondary school students and teacher trainees are disposed to accents of spoken English. To achieve the set goal, a number of research questions were formulated. Hypotheses were also made as to what the answers to those questions might be. The respondent groups were chosen to enable comparison of attitudes between different levels of language studies: lower secondary school for pre-intermediate, upper secondary school for intermediate and teacher trainees for advanced level. Elementary school was not included because the level of English of the students was considered too low for purposeful participation in the study. Furthermore, the teacher trainees were included not only to allow for more comparison between groups of different level of language proficiency but also because of the general interest of the researcher for their attitudes – do tomorrow's teachers hold strong attitudes against or for specific accents?

#### ***3.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses***

##### **Research Questions:**

1. What kind of attitudes do Finnish secondary school students and teacher trainees hold toward different accents of spoken English?
2. Are there major differences between the attitudes of the three respondent groups?
3. Are the most familiar accents, namely Received Pronunciation and Standard American English, seen as somehow better or more desirable by the respondents?
4. What kind of attributes do the respondents associate the different accents with?

### **Hypotheses:**

i: The first research question is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to answer beforehand. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that such attitudes exist and that there are differences in the attitudes presented toward different accents.

ii: Among the informants participating in this study, the attitudes presented are expected to be stronger among the younger informants.

iii: Research question three is based on the assumption that the informants will think more highly of the two accents they are most familiar with: Received Pronunciation and Standard American English.

iiii: The answer to the final research question is impossible to predict. However, it is anticipated that the familiar accents are associated with both positive and negative attributes; the Finnish accent is presumed to yield more negative reactions than other accents.

### ***3.2 General Settings***

The study consisted of playing recorded speech of speakers of different varieties of English to Finnish students, and then having the informants fill in a questionnaire concerning the audio they just heard.

Two university training schools were used in gathering the data. They were chosen for several reasons. Firstly, the students in university training schools are used to participating in studies and

therefore need minimal briefing in filling in questionnaires. Secondly, most teachers in these schools are open-minded when it comes to letting outsiders into their classrooms for study purposes. Lastly, as part of the study required having teacher trainees fill in questionnaires, the university training schools are by far the best places for this. All the students participating in the study were from the same school, whereas the teacher trainees were from two different schools. However, all the teacher trainees are from the same university, and undergoing the same training. The data was gathered during March and April 2007. The circumstances of the study will be described in more detail in Chapter 4.

## **4. Materials and Methods**

The study required a lot of fieldwork. I will now proceed to describe the informants, the audio played to them, the questionnaire they answered as well as the reasons for making the decisions that were made concerning all of the above.

### ***4.1 The Audio Material***

Because no material suitable for this study was readily available, the audio played to the informants (see APPENDIX F) was compiled for the purpose by the researcher using VGT. The idea was to get on tape as many different varieties of English as possible to choose from, in the reasonably short time that was available. The best option was seen to be using foreign people residing in Helsinki or in the capital region. An e-mail list for exchange students was used to call for native English speaker volunteers.

As the purpose was to gather information on attitudes toward spoken language, it was decided that the audio material should consist of authentic, spontaneous speech. Even if it is debatable whether material obtained through interviews is strictly authentic and spontaneous, it was the only realistic option for this research; if finding native speakers of English who are capable of producing several accents credibly is difficult in the English speaking world, it is close to impossible in Helsinki, at least with the very limited time and resources that were available for this study. Having the speakers read aloud a text would have produced the greatest similarity within the recordings. However, as this would have had little or nothing to do with actual spoken language, the idea was discarded.

#### **4.1.1 The recording and compiling it**

It was decided that the number of speakers to be used on the recording should be six. Six was considered to be enough for variation and, on the other hand, not too many to bore and thus distract the informants listening to the recording. Having six speakers allows for including familiar and unfamiliar native accents as well as non-native accents. In the final version of the recording all six speakers speak uninterrupted for a period of approximately one minute.

Two of the final six recordings were recorded in private apartments. However, most of the recording took place in a small room at the computer center of the University of Helsinki. The recorder used was a small, portable digital recorder. Unfortunately, no external microphone was available at the time and the use of the built-in microphone of the recorder was necessary. This was unfortunate because it resulted in the weakening of the quality of sound, by allowing more background noise, for example. After recording, the voice clips were edited using Sony Vegas 7.0. Outside help was received for adjusting and levelling the sound of the clips, which improved the sound quality.

#### **4.1.2 The speakers**

Out of the twelve native speakers of English that expressed their willingness for lending their voice for the use of this study, eight arrived to the interview set up for them. Among the eight were the speakers of the following varieties of English: Received pronunciation (RP), Scottish, Malaysian, Australian, New Zealand, East Coast American, Southern United States and Namibian. Out of these varieties three were chosen for the final six: RP, East Coast

American and Scottish. The rest of the speakers were reached through personal contacts. Among them were one native and two non-native speakers of English. The native speaker was from Ghana, and the non-native speakers from Belgium (Flanders) and Finland. Three Finnish speakers were interviewed before finding a suitable one (see 4.1.5 for details on choosing the speakers).

### **4.1.3 Interviewing the speakers**

All the speakers were interviewed in the same way. Everyone was interviewed individually, and the interview typically lasted for approximately fifteen minutes, although some took less than ten minutes while others took more than twenty. A series of six questions was designed for conducting the interviews. The questions were broad, with the purpose of allowing the speakers to talk easily about the subject at hand, with very little or no interruption from the interviewer. Even though a predetermined set of questions worked as a guideline for the interviews, the speakers were not limited in any way in their speech. The questions merely guaranteed that enough speech could be extracted from the speakers, and that they all spoke of the same topic, albeit from a point of view chosen by themselves. Thus the interview, which was conducted in a very casual way, was a semi-structured one (Hirsjärvi 2000), where the themes are introduced by the interviewer, but the interviewees are allowed to affect its course to ensure they get to say exactly what they want to say.

### **4.1.4 The theme of the interviews**

The idea was to have the speakers talk about something common to all people, while the topic could not be anything that would produce

strong feelings or prejudice in the informants who would eventually listen to it. For those reasons the subject could not have anything to do with language, countries or nationalities or anything else that would possibly tell something about the origins of the speaker. The theme then decided upon was friendship, which was seen as universal a theme as possible, bearing in mind that it also had to be something anyone could easily comment on for several minutes upon request. See Appendix A for the questions used in the interviews.

#### **4.1.5 How the speakers were chosen**

Altogether thirteen speakers were interviewed for the audio, but no more than six could be chosen. The Southern English middle class accent was an obvious choice, as it is well representative of the average British English (RP) heard in the audio materials of Finnish schoolbooks. The speaker's accent was General RP (Gimson, 1994). Another obvious choice was a Standard American English (SA) accent, for the same reasons of familiarity as above. Out of the two available, the east coast accent was chosen because it is more familiar to Finns through popular culture and also because the other, southern SA speaker did not produce material suitable for the use of the study; all references by the speakers to matters considered out of context or somehow endangering the validity of the research were omitted from the final recording<sup>1</sup>. Also, some speakers were not able to produce a sequence of relevant speech long enough for the purpose of the study.

Two variants were chosen to bring a touch of exoticism into the recording, at least from a Finnish point of view. These variants were

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<sup>1</sup> These included references to their native countries or to Finland, to their sexual orientation, to their use of intoxicating agents etc.

Ghanaian English (GhaE) and Scottish English (ScoE). The remaining two non-native speaker variants, Finnish English (FinE) and Dutch-speaking Belgian English (BelE) were introduced because it was seen to be relevant to measure the attitudes toward non-native variants as well. The Belgian speaker was chosen on the basis of having excellent English skills but no native-like accent in English. The Finn was chosen with the same criteria, although his English was not quite as fluent. Nevertheless, the FinE speaker spoke grammatically flawless English about 90 per cent of the time. The sequence chosen from the FinE speaker contained no errors or mistakes that affect the understanding of his speech. Lastly, a Finnish speaker was included also because several studies (e.g. Bayard 1990, Giles 1971) have shown that native English speakers of non-standard varieties tend to rate their own accent quite low among other accents of English, especially when it comes to dimensions denoting competence. Therefore it was thought to be of interest to see whether this would be the pattern with non-native speakers as well.

#### **4.1.6 What was on the recording**

The order of the speakers on the recording was decided on with reference to the two familiar variants, RP and SA. They were to neither start nor end the recording, and not to appear straight after one another as to create a block of the most familiar varieties within the taping. Other than that, the order was selected randomly.

The following is the order of the speakers on the recording. Also included is the number of the topic (see Appendix A) on which the speaker is commenting on, and the sex and age of the speakers.

<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>
1. GhaE	1	Male	28
2. RP	1	Male	20
3. FinE	4	Male	27
4. SA	6	Female	21
5. BeE	5	Male	28
6. ScoE	5	Female	26

As reported above, all the sequences were chosen on the basis of having a long enough continuous sample of speech, and including no words or topics that might draw unnecessary attention among the informants.

## **4.2 The Informants**

There were three different groups of informants. They were chosen to provide the possibility of comparison between students in different stages of their language studies and, presumably, of language proficiency. The three groups were 1) 7th grade students from lower secondary school, 2) advanced upper secondary school students, and 3) teacher trainees aspiring to be English teachers. The main focus lies on the secondary school students, whereas the teacher trainees were included both as a reference point and out of general interest, as they are the future teachers of English in Finland.

### **4.2.1 The lower secondary school students**

The students in question have studied English between three and five years before the 7th grade they were on at time of the study, depending on the schools they previously attended and the choices made by their parents. The extent of their previous studies was not inquired upon, as it was considered irrelevant. The book in use in

the school is Key English 7 (Westlake et al. 2003). During the 7th grade students begin to learn more about different English-speaking cultures and language varieties, albeit to a rather limited extent. Finnish teaching materials in use before the 7th grade, however, tend to concentrate on the basics of the language and give less attention to language varieties. This group of informants was chosen because they have sufficient skills to understand most of what is being said on the recording, but have little experience in the different varieties of English. The number of informants in this group was 36, and their ages between 13 and 14.

#### **4.2.2 The upper secondary school students**

The informants from upper secondary school were second-year students, who had at that time studied at least five of the six compulsory English courses. They have significantly more experience in studying the different language varieties of English than the 7th graders, as they have four more years of studies behind them. Secondary school-, and especially upper secondary school teaching materials acknowledge the existence of different language varieties quite widely, although they heavily emphasize the use of British and American English (Autio & Hakala 2006). These informants should be able to understand the speakers without problem, not considering the possible effect of the unfamiliar accents. The number of informants in this group was 31, and their ages between 16 and 18.

#### **4.2.3 The teacher trainees**

All the teacher trainees used as informants are either majoring or minoring in English Philology and thus are, upon completion of their

training, qualified teachers of English on all levels of education in Finland. It was presumed that these informants were very familiar with the different varieties of English and able to recognize most of the accents on the tape. Also, they were assumed to be more aware of what they were being asked about. 20 informants participated in this group, and their ages varied from 23 to 44.

### **4.3 The Questionnaire**

The data was gathered using a questionnaire designed for this study. It was designed bearing in mind that it would have to be simple and effective in more than one way: for the informants to fill in and for the researcher to extract the information. The planning of the questionnaire was founded on its ability to produce data relevant to answering the research questions; thus it had to produce evaluative judgments on the predetermined varieties of English as well as allow for the free expression of opinions and comments by the informants. The questionnaire consisted of four pages, and was entirely in Finnish (see Appendix B for an English translation). On the first page were the instructions, as well as a short section where the informants were asked to provide background information, which was restricted to their sex and age. The three following pages consisted of six identical sections to be filled in, one for each speaker.

#### **4.3.1 Tasks in the questionnaire**

The informants were asked to complete two kinds of tasks (see Appendix B). First, there were six SD scales. The scales were seven-step scales that were numbered 1...7. This would allow for quick and efficient processing of the data, as well as easily comparable results

for each variety. The informants were asked to circle the number on the scale best corresponding to their view. A heading stating "I think the speaker is..." was placed above the scales. On the sides of the scales were the attributes, along with the wordings "Not at all..." (1) and "Very..." (7). No other written descriptions of the scale positions were included. After completing the SD scales, another task followed. There were two empty lines, on which the informants were asked to describe the current speaker in their own words. To summarize, six SD scales and an open-ended commenting section were obtained for all six speakers.

#### **4.3.2 The attributes and their consolidation into evaluative dimensions**

To increase the depth of the results to be inferred from the study, three evaluative dimensions were created; the attributes were chosen according to these dimensions. The dimensions used in the present study were adopted from two separate previous studies (Zahn & Hopper 1985, Bayard et al. 2001), combining and modifying them. The dimensions were

1) social attractiveness, 2) status and 3) competence. The first dimension included the attributes *honest* and *pleasant* and is meant to describe the desirability of a variety and its speakers in a social context; it could perhaps be nicknamed the 'befriending factor'. The dimension of 'status', on the other hand, describes other types of social features: authority, perceived class, superiority. Indeed, the term 'status' here replaces what Zahn and Hopper referred to as 'superiority'. This dimension included the attributes *sophisticated* and *credible*. Finally, the dimension of 'competence', which included the remaining attributes *industrious* and *determined*, describes the perceived capability, efficacy and thus means of success of the speakers (outside the social context of dimension one).

As time with the informants was known to be restricted, it was decided that the abovementioned six attributes to judge the speakers with should suffice. All the attributes were positive<sup>2</sup>, so that no inversion of scores would be necessary for their comparability. The attributes were presented in the questionnaire in the following order: honest, pleasant, sophisticated, credible, industrious, determined. The questionnaire made no reference to the evaluative dimensions.

#### ***4.4 Participation in the Study***

The gathering of data took place in two schools, which offered good facilities for the purpose. All informants were provided with equal or highly similar conditions for listening to the audio. The same audio in the same order was played to all informants using the same kind of equipment. The audio was played on a computer through speakers mounted on the front walls of the classrooms. The questionnaire, and thus the whole study, were anonymous, which was also made very clear to the informants. The researcher gathered all data in person and was thus able to oversee or eliminate any circumstances possibly affecting the data gathering.

As mentioned above, the questionnaire included instructions for filling it in, but all informants were also told orally (in Finnish, and in detail) what to do by the researcher. Neither the instructions of the questionnaire nor the spoken directions of the researcher included any mentioning of language varieties, attitudes or even the English language. This was done to minimize any possible preconceptions of the topic and thus of the speakers themselves. Any questions about the study were answered after completing the questionnaire.

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<sup>2</sup> i.e. they were thought positive by the researcher; careful consideration was used in choosing attributes that would not be, at least easily, interpreted as negative.

Before listening to the first speaker an extra track was played to adjust the volume, and to help the informants adjust to the completion of the task. The track included the speech of one of the interviewed speakers (and accents) not selected for the actual recording. After this the audio tracks were played individually, allowing for time to complete the relevant section from the questionnaire. The time given for answering each section varied somewhat according to the group of informants, but all in all the time was kept short. This was because the more time the informants have to think about their opinions, the more likely it is that they may be affected by unconscious beliefs of what they should think of something (Garrett, 2007). A short answering time produces 'snap reactions' which are more likely to be the informants' own, genuine attitudes (ibid). The response time was slightly longer for the first speaker (45-60 seconds) so as to allow the informants to get used to filling in the questionnaire, and it was then reduced to 30-45 seconds per speaker. This included filling in both the semantic differential scales and the open question, in that order. If many people were seen to be writing as the response time drew to a close, a few extra seconds were granted as it was also important to gather as much freely formed material on the attitudes of the informants as possible.

#### ***4.5 Validity and Reliability of the Current Study***

As the gathering of data was carried out by the researcher, all due preparations were made in order to secure the validity of the study. However, as demonstrated above, all variables cannot be controlled in attitude studies using VGT. Yet, by careful planning, the effects of those variables on the results can be minimized.

The main concerns of this study were, as far as validity goes, the resources of time and native speakers willing to participate in producing the guises. The scarceness of this led to the production of an audio tape where the prosodic and paralinguistic factors present in each speaker's guises could not be regulated as precisely as the author of this study would have wanted. Prosodic and paralinguistic phenomena – such as hesitation, tone of voice, intonation, volume, whispering, laughing etc. – are an essential part of natural, spontaneous speech, but can also draw attention away from the accent itself if appearing too abundantly in the speech. However, it can be argued that the existence of such features in the audio also adds to the authenticity of the guises, as different languages and accents may have different prosodic and paralinguistic features (e.g. Crystal 1966, Graddol et al. 1996), and this certainly shows in the English of the Finnish speaker, for example. Although different paralinguistic features may be common to different accents and languages, the amount of those features in speech is an individual's characteristic.

The Scottish speaker's voice quivered on the tape, which might reflect on her scores, especially on the dimension of competence. When interpreting the results in a study such as the current one, one must bear in mind that the listener-judges are rating *individuals* as representatives of a linguistic-cultural group, and that any such group will have members that are completely different from one another. It is, then, the researcher's task to choose a guise that represents the group in the best possible way; however, such choices are always debatable and can never do more than present a point of view. The guises in this study are produced by speakers similar in age and level of education.

Another factor with possible effects on the attitudes presented toward accents is the school context in which the study was carried out. Creber and Giles (1983) found that the social setting of evaluation can affect language attitudes, and that children have differing evaluative sets in formal versus informal situations. This could lead to the research subjects unconsciously preferring the accents familiar from the school context, but the risk was acknowledged, and minimized with e.g. allowing only for a very short answering time (see 4.4). As all the informants participated in the study in the same school context there is no immediate concern that the context itself would somehow have jeopardized the validity of the current study – although it could perhaps be argued that the results of this study are not necessarily valid outside the formal school setting as certain accents of English may be regarded more appropriate than others in that social context.

The reliability of both VGT and SD as techniques has been extensively proved in numerous studies around the world. The reliability of an individual study is a different matter. The construction of the current study and the use of VGT and SD were carefully conducted, and it is the researcher's view that this study is repeatable, with consistent results, in the context of Finnish schooling.

#### ***4.6 Recapitulation***

In this chapter the details of carrying out the current study were presented. An audio tape, which was compiled by the researcher making use of VGT, was played to the informants. The audio material was collected through interviews to ensure the authenticity of the guises. The interviews were semi-structured and their theme

was friendship. Four native speakers and two non-native speakers were included on the tape. The speakers came from Ghana, Southern England (RP), Finland, Eastern United States (SA), Belgium and Scotland; this is the order in which they appeared on the tape played to the informants. The speakers were similar in age and educational background.

There were three groups of informants: lower and upper secondary school students and teacher trainees. Together, there were 87 informants. They filled in a questionnaire compiled by the researcher, which consisted of six identical sections, one for each speaker, with two kinds of tasks, namely six SD scales and an open-ended question. The SD scales represented three evaluative dimensions; *social attractiveness*, *status* and *competence*. The evaluative dimensions were embodied by six attributes: *honest*, *pleasant*, *sophisticated*, *credible*, *industrious* and *determined*, respectively.

Gathering the data was carried out by the researcher in person. The study was anonymous, and the circumstances of the study were highly similar for all respondent groups. The respondents were given both written and oral instructions for completing their part. The time given for answering was kept short to lure out genuine attitudes. Although all attitude variables cannot be controlled when using VGT, the researcher prepared all aspects of the study baring in mind that with careful planning the effect of those variables can be minimized, thus increasing the validity of the current study. The reliability of the methods and techniques used in this study has been proved in numerous previous studies.

## 5. Results

The results of the SD scales were calculated using Microsoft Excel. The results comprise the means of each individual attribute, the means of each evaluative dimension and an overall 'score', which is the mean of all the ratings given to a guise. All these means were calculated for each accent. All the accents can thus be directly compared, as can the groups of informants, the results for which are listed separately. Below, I will go through the results one informant group at a time. Within an informant group I will present the results of both the SD scales and the open-ended questions one guise at a time. In the score tables (Tables 1, 2 & 3) the highest score for each attribute across all guises is boldfaced; the same is done for the highest score in the evaluative dimensions, as well as for the overall score. Here it is convenient to remind the reader that the neutral average score is 4,0; any mean below that is to be considered marking negative attitudes, and any mean above it marking positive attitudes. Furthermore, the greater the deviation of the mean from the neutral average is, the stronger the attitudes expressed are. The maximum range of response dispersion in this study was 6.0.

The open-ended questions produced quite a few comments on the guises and different associations for the informants (see Appendices C, D & E for full listings). Not everyone participating commented on all guises, yet there was quite enough material to flesh out the numerical ratings. Comments were given informally, as was the purpose. Some of the attributes are perhaps not usually used as such to describe people; nevertheless, the judges were asked to speak their mind, and their answers are best looked at as images stirred up by the guises. Also, some comments have been edited out by the researcher. These include comments on the recording itself

(e.g. "bad quality") and describing the speech act as such (e.g. "there were lots of pauses"). All guises were characterized with positive and negative attributes. I understand, however, that such categorization is subjective, and as it is not the goal of this study to produce such categorizations, it will not be attempted. Instead, an overall look at the given characterizations will follow, from which anyone reading this thesis can form their own opinion.

### ***5.1 Lower Secondary School Students***

The mean for all the answers given by this group was 4.03. It is the group mean closest to the neutral average. It can be concluded that in this group there was no holding back when rating the guises, but instead the respondents gave both negative and positive ratings. This is confirmed by the highest standard deviation of the three respondent groups; 1.45. The average range of response dispersion of the answers made by the listener judges was also highest in this group, 4.39. Therefore, some strong views have been expressed, both positive and negative. The lowest scores in the study were awarded by this group. Both the mode and the median received the value of 4 in this group. The lower secondary school respondent group appreciated BeIE the most, and FinE the least.

**Table 1.** Lower Secondary School

	<b>GhaE</b>	<b>RP</b>	<b>FinE</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>BelE</b>	<b>ScoE</b>
Honest	4.56	4.51	3.70	4.39	<b>5.00</b>	4.27
Pleasant	3.33	3.75	2.86	<b>4.40</b>	<b>4.40</b>	3.89
Sophisticated	3.74	4.39	3.50	3.89	<b>4.53</b>	4.34
Credible	3.97	4.09	3.20	4.38	<b>4.63</b>	4.53
Industrious	3.58	3.72	3.03	<b>4.29</b>	4.15	3.71
Determined	3.77	4.14	3.26	4.26	<b>4.77</b>	4.18
Social						
Attractiveness	3.93	4.13	3.27	4.40	<b>4.69</b>	4.07
Status	3.86	4.24	3.35	4.13	<b>4.58</b>	4.44
Competence	3.68	3.93	3.14	4.28	<b>4.46</b>	3.94
Overall	3.82	4.10	3.25	4.27	<b>4.58</b>	4.15

### **GhaE**

In the SD scales, the Ghanaian speaker finished second last overall, and did so with a slightly negative overall rating. In fact, only on one of the attributes, that of honesty, did it manage a score above the neutral average. It was considered the second most honest accent in the study. On all other traits it was far less successful. Although the attribute of pleasantness received the lowest score within the guise, the evaluative dimension of Social Attractiveness was its best one. The least appreciated dimension for this guise was that of Competence.

Imagine a completely inarticulate, shy and nervous person with bad English and a weird accent. This is how the characterizations of the lower secondary school students portray the Ghanaian speaker. He also sounded foreign, funny and keyed up. Not only that, but he is also very unpleasant and annoying. There were good qualities, too. The speaker is mentioned to be determined and industrious. Furthermore, he is credible and honest, yet tired and bored. He also sounds like a normal African person.

## **RP**

Pleasantness and industriousness were not qualities this group associated with RP – they both received negative ratings. All the other traits were positive, although only slightly so. The highest rated trait was honesty. Status was the best rated dimension within the guise while Competence was the worst, also being the only negatively rated dimension for RP. Received Pronunciation finished fourth overall.

The answers given to the open-ended question on RP describe the speaker as follows: an average townspeople who is fair, wise, honest and pleasant but also stiff, hesitant and unenthusiastic. Furthermore, the speaker is described as inarticulate, insecure and unconvincing. He also sounds mechanical, even robotic! He is a nice speaker with a sophisticated accent but at the same time is not pleasant at all and is possibly Chinese.

## **FinE**

Clearly, speaking English with a Finnish accent is an anathema to lower secondary students. The FinE speaker finished last overall, with the lowest score in the entire study. Indeed, all six traits were given negative ratings in this group. Honesty is what the judges most appreciated in FinE, while pleasantness was the quality detected the least; it received the lowest rating for an attribute in the study, being the only one to score under 3,0. The dimension of Status was the best rated within the guise. The Finnish accent was seen more sophisticated than pleasant, and more credible than industrious.

There were eight references to being Finn or sounding like one in the answers to the open-ended questions. To the lower secondary students this is mostly not an asset. The speaker was defined as not

pleasant, credible or honest and also as insecure, pathetic and inarticulate. He has bad English with bad pronunciation and a weird accent. In fact, the speaker is simple, uncivilized and out of his mind. But good sides were mentioned as well. They were honesty and being interesting and funny.

## **SA**

Standard American was appreciated by this respondent group. It finished second overall, and topped two of the traits across the guises. These were pleasantness (tied with BeIE) and industriousness. Sophistication, on the other hand, was not what the judges thought of when hearing the SA guise. It received a negative score. SA was seen more socially attractive than competent. Status received the lowest score of the dimensions.

The SA guise was described as an annoying, insecure youth who is honest and pleasant but also picky and boring. The speaker is determined and industrious, and a sociable person. But despite being rather articulate she is not very convincing and does not really know what she is talking about. Still, she is a nice person.

## **BeIE**

The non-native Belgian speaker took this audience by storm. It was by far the best rated one, topping five of the six traits across the guises. Industriousness was the only one where BeIE had to settle for second place. The guise also topped all the evaluative dimensions. Within the guise, the best rated dimension was Social Attractiveness, followed by Status and Competence, respectively.

The BeIE speaker definitely knows what he is talking about, and he is honest, confident and determined. Moreover, he is industrious, credible, quick-witted and sophisticated. The guise was also

depicted as being normal, realistic and intelligible. But then again, he is a faltering, monotonous office rat with a boring life.

### **ScoE**

The Scottish speaker finished third overall. Its score was very much alike that of RP. ScoE, too, received two negative ratings; on pleasantness and industriousness. The rest were positive, with the attribute of credibility fetching the highest score within the guise. The weakest dimension of the ScoE speaker was Competence, with Social Attractiveness close by, while the strongest one was Status.

A middle-aged, tired and distressed woman who is nice, pensive and authentic, although bitter and bored as well: meet the Scottish English speaker. This weird, annoying, hesitant and indifferent person is normal and somehow familiar. She is credible and determined while also being bored and not very exciting.

## ***5.2 Upper Secondary School Students***

Informants in this group, as a whole, did not strongly emphasize either positive or negative attitudes but, instead, gave both positive and negative ratings. Thus the mean of all ratings made by the upper secondary school students was 4.13. In this group, the mode was 4, and so was the median. The average range of response dispersion of all judges in the group was 4.35, implying the existence of quite strong views, with a standard deviation of 1.33. The upper secondary students gave negative ratings to a good third of all traits across all guises. As in the former group, FinE received the lowest scores overall, and the BelE guise was rated the highest overall.

**Table 2.** Upper Secondary School

	<b>GhaE</b>	<b>RP</b>	<b>FinE</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>BelE</b>	<b>ScoE</b>
Honest	4.77	4.74	4.42	4.23	<b>4.97</b>	4.68
Pleasant	3.42	4.42	3.39	4.19	<b>4.65</b>	4.39
Sophisticated	3.16	<b>4.97</b>	3.65	4.03	4.81	4.35
Credible	3.94	4.61	3.10	3.77	<b>4.81</b>	4.39
Industrious	3.57	3.81	3.06	4.26	<b>4.48</b>	3.97
Determined	3.80	3.87	3.13	3.94	<b>4.65</b>	4.29
Social						
Attractiveness	4.10	4.58	3.90	4.21	<b>4.81</b>	4.53
Status	3.55	4.79	3.37	3.90	<b>4.81</b>	4.37
Competence	3.68	3.84	3.10	4.10	<b>4.57</b>	4.13
Overall	3.78	4.40	3.46	4.07	<b>4.73</b>	4.34

### GhaE

The overall score of GhaE in this respondent group was on the negative side of the neutral average score, and the guise finished second last. Here the evaluative dimension of Social Attractiveness was rated higher than those of Status and Competence. Indeed, the attribute of sophistication scored lowest across the guises. The GhaE speaker was seen as being quite honest but not very pleasant.

In the open-ended questions the GhaE guise was described as unclear, clumsy, scattershot, unsophisticated and confused. On the other hand, the guise was also described as confident, friendly, easygoing and experienced. Moreover, the speaker was seen as desperate and frustrated. This somewhat exceptional accent received a lot of attention. The speaker was deemed an immigrant who spoke bad English, had difficulties in expressing himself and yearned for public acceptance. Although it appeared that the speaker knew what he was talking about, his speech rhythm was thought weird. Direct and indirect references were made to the speaker's origins being in India; none of the judges mentioned Africa, let alone Ghana.

## **RP**

Received Pronunciation received good marks on both the dimensions of Social Attractiveness and Status; especially so in the latter one. RP topped the attribute of sophistication. Competence, however, received negative ratings. The RP guise was seen as second most agreeable by the respondents of upper secondary school.

As to the characterizations, the RP guise gave rise to the image of an educated British man, either sitting in a pub or lecturing at a university, with an elegant accent that is agreeable, clear and sophisticated although unenthusiastic, cagey and 'la-di-dah'. The images that this guise evoked also included boring, concise and matter-of-fact; but also natural, genuine and neat. What is interesting is that the guise was referred to as being cautious, suspicious and not a nice person.

## **FinE**

The FinE guise did not impress the respondents. It was seen as reasonably honest, but apart from that, there were no positive sides to it. All five other attributes received negative scores. The attributes of credibility, industriousness and determination were given the three lowest scores in the respondent group. All evaluative dimensions finished last across the guises, Competence being the lowest one of them all. Overall, thus, the FinE guise was deemed the least agreeable.

Being a Finnish English speaker is clearly not a merit to upper secondary school students. The FinE guise was characterized with imaginative attributes, many of which had to do with Finland, bad English, bad accent, bad articulation and troubles in understanding the speaker and expressing oneself. The Finn was deemed a taciturn outcast who did not know what he was talking about. However,

along with all the denigration of the speaker's skills came some softer descriptions of character, as well: honest, genuine, normal, sympathetic and nice.

### **SA**

Standard American English did very averagely overall, its overall score being very close to the neutral average. Two attributes, namely credibility and determination, were given narrowly negative marks. The rest were, then, narrowly positive. The dimension of Status was the weakest one within the guise.

The SA speaker was pictured as the all-American girl, who is not only self-confident, determined and pompous, but also annoying, unreliable and insensitive to the listener. Moreover, the speaker is a snotty, selfish suck-up, but certainly a beautiful one at that. The other side of this coin shows a vigorous, warm and very pleasant person, although she has the habit of spreading gossip.

### **BeIE**

The BeIE guise took the title of most agreeable accent hands down. It topped five of the six attributes across the guises, as well as all of the evaluative dimensions. Only in sophistication did the guise have to settle for second place. Within the guise, the dimension of Competence was the least appreciated, whereas the two other dimensions both received the same, highest score across the guises.

The Belgian speaker was deemed an ordinary, possibly American, person, who is maybe a sceptical college student. The most common characterization, though, had to do with credibility: according to the informants, the speaker knew what he was talking about, and spoke in a manner that conveyed the importance of the matter. Although the guise was seen as clear, calm, credible and sophisticated, it was

also described as a nasty accent that is boring in the long run and belongs to a geek. No reference was made to Belgium, Europe or non-native speakers.

### **ScoE**

The ScoE guise finished third overall. It did reasonably well on all attributes, except on that of industriousness. There, the score was negative, even though very slightly. Along with that, the dimension of Competence was the lowest scoring dimension within the guise.

Scotland and Northern England were the choices given as the origin of the ScoE speaker. She was regarded as a nice person who knew what she was talking about, although she was boring and lazy, as well. Other attributes describe the speaker as humble, nifty and experienced, while others deem her insecure, keyed up and shy. Furthermore, the guise was considered melancholic and both humane and machine-like. Indeed, one informant thought the speaker was a 'normal' person who had probably been taken in from the street randomly for the interview.

### **5.3 The Teacher Trainees**

The teacher trainees gave very positive marks to all accents. The mean for all ratings given by the informant group was 4.77. The mode of all answers in this group was 5, as was the median. The average range of response dispersion of all informants was 3.60, while the standard deviation in all ratings made by the group was 1.26. Only one attribute received marks that brought the mean below the neutral average. This was the case of *industrious* with the Finnish speaker; along with that attribute the evaluative dimension

of Competence in the case of FinE also shows negative attitude. Overall, FinE was rated the lowest while BeIE was rated the highest.

**Table 3.** Teacher Trainees.

	<b>GhaE</b>	<b>RP</b>	<b>FinE</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>BeIE</b>	<b>ScoE</b>
Honest	5.15	4.85	5.35	4.95	5.25	<b>5.45</b>
Pleasant	4.35	4.80	4.10	4.90	4.80	<b>5.20</b>
Sophisticated	4.15	<b>5.40</b>	4.50	4.60	5.20	4.80
Credible	4.70	5.00	4.60	4.75	5.05	<b>5.15</b>
Industrious	5.10	4.10	3.70	4.85	<b>5.15</b>	4.35
Determined	<b>5.20</b>	4.30	4.00	4.70	5.10	4.25
Social						
Attractiveness	4.75	4.83	4.73	4.93	5.03	<b>5.33</b>
Status	4.43	<b>5.20</b>	4.55	4.68	5.13	4.98
Competence	<b>5.15</b>	4.20	3.85	4.78	5.13	4.30
Overall	4.78	4.74	4.38	4.79	<b>5.09</b>	4.87

### **GhaE**

On the SD scales the Ghanaian speaker did best on determination, scoring the highest of all guises on this particular attribute. That was the only first place it took, finishing fourth overall. The GhaE guise was also rated as an industrious and honest speaker but not so pleasant or sophisticated. The guise was, however, rated as being quite credible. The dimension of Competence was the strongest one for the GhaE speaker.

In the open-ended questions the GhaE speaker was regarded as annoying and arduous, vague and difficult to understand. However, he was also seen as a speaker that is sure of himself, knows what he is talking about and is both enthusiastic and credible. The guise was considered uneducated but sincere, warm-hearted and humane. The speaker was also deemed to be of ethnic minority and possibly coming from a slum; the assumed origins of the speaker included India, Africa, the Caribbean and Britain.

## **RP**

Where GhaE did well, RP did not, and vice versa. RP scored best in sophistication and the dimension of Status, but scored low on both industriousness and determination. Compared to the other guises, the Social Attractiveness of RP is reasonable, yet just below average. Overall, RP finished second last.

A stiff, well educated upper class Briton who sounds like a sleek, sophisticated person but does not speak from the heart. This is the picture painted by the characterizations given to RP. The guise also seemed too correct, meditative and egocentric while being both calm and vigorous. The speaker was the youngest on the tape, yet his age was guessed between 30 and 40 years old.

## **FinE**

The results of the SD scales are not in favor of the FinE speaker. The guise clearly finished last overall as well as in four of the six attributes. The FinE guise received the lowest score of the respondent group in industriousness, as well as for the evaluative dimension of Competence. Honesty, however, was something the FinE speaker was seen to possess; the guise scored second highest of all on this attribute.

The portrait of the Finnish English speaker is not very flattering, although it is not completely void of good qualities, either. A not very convincing, middle-aged product of Finnish schooling, who has a bad accent (which is typically Finnish) is how the guise was projected by the respondents in the open-ended questions. However, the guise was also considered to be neutral and reliable. Other expressed qualities include hesitant, insecure, shy and timid.

## **SA**

Standard American was very much average in this respondent group. The guise finished third overall with no highest or lowest scores. The SA speaker did better on the dimensions of Social Attractiveness and Competence than on Status; Social Attractiveness and honesty are the best scores received by the guise.

The SA guise was characterized as confident, relaxed, unreserved and popular albeit pretentious and bigheaded. The guise was deemed a stereotypical, young American woman with a typical American accent which does not evoke trust because there were too many 'umms' and the speaker was hesitant and annoying, too.

## **BeIE**

The Belgian speaker was clearly the best rated guise. It topped only one of the attributes, that of industriousness, but received good marks all through. The BeIE speaker was the only one to do worst on Social Attractiveness as compared to the other dimensions. Yet, with all dimensions scoring above 5 there is no doubt over the most agreeable accent among the respondents in this group.

The Belgian speaker was described as neutral, flat and bland but also as clear, fluent, easy to like and easy to follow. Imagine a person who is empathetic, cynical, ordinary, uninteresting and yet exuberant! They are all qualities attached to the BeIE guise. Furthermore, he was described as an uncivilized, non-native speaker who is sensitive and understanding. He was also said to be Finnish, and Stephen Hawking.

## **ScoE**

Scottish English was seen as very appealing when it comes to Social Attractiveness. Both the attributes of honesty and pleasantness fetched the highest scores across the guises. This was true of the attribute of credibility as well. Competence, however, was not seen as being an essential part of the guise, and that is why the guise finished second overall.

Finally, the ScoE speaker was regarded as being a Scottish or Irish native speaker of English with a lovely accent. She comes from the countryside; less educated and working class but natural, calm, homely and genial. The guise was characterized as meditative and philosophical yet lame, monotonous and insecure. The speaker was also considered 'older' and nice.

## **5.4 Results Summary**

The results of the current study are quite clear, and straightforward. All the respondent groups clearly preferred the BelE guise while expressing quite strong dislike for the FinE guise; it was rated last by all groups. The GhaE guise was rated fourth by one group and fifth by the other two. RP was rated second, fourth and fifth, while SA was rated second, third and fourth. Scottish English was the second most successful guise in the study, with one second place and two third places.

The research questions have thus been answered very much along the lines of the hypotheses that followed (see 3.1), apart from hypothesis iii. Different attitudes toward different accents do exist, and they do vary, depending on the accent and the respondents. There were differences between the attitudes expressed by the

three respondent groups, but they were rather small. The teacher trainees expressed more positive attitudes altogether but yet their ratings were in unison with the other groups. It has to be noted, though, that the difference between the lowest scoring and highest scoring guise varies according to respondent group. In the lower secondary school group this difference was 1.33 while in the upper secondary school the same difference was 1.27. The teacher trainees were much more egalitarian about it, and the difference between the first and last in this group was only 0.72. Thus the younger respondents seem to have stronger views on the accents. This is also reflected by the fact that the range was biggest with the lower secondary group, and smallest with the teacher trainee group.

The researcher assumed that the more familiar accents, RP and SA, would be regarded somehow better than the more unfamiliar ones. This, however, was not the case. Indeed, they did not get high or low ratings but were both average. They were not rated very positively and very negatively any more than the other guises, which could have caused the mean of all ratings to approach the neutral average. In fact, in all respondent groups the standard deviations for RP and SA were smaller than those of FinE and GhaE, which were the least successful guises in the study.

As predicted, the Finnish accent did yield more negative reactions than the other attitudes, even if only slightly so. The more familiar accents, RP and SA, received both positive and negative descriptions, but this was true of all the guises in the study. Answering the research question "What kind of attributes do the respondents associate the different accents with?" is both difficult and easy. The answer is: with all kinds. In a group of people there will almost certainly be both positive and negative views of a subject matter, as was very much the case with the respondent groups in

this study. However, a tendency to appreciate some accents more than others can definitely be seen.

## 6. Discussion

All the respondent groups produced both positive and negative responses to all guises. The younger the respondents were, the stronger their views were. The older they were, the more narrow the differences between the ratings got. Otherwise, in terms of preference and dislike, the results between the three informant groups were strikingly similar.

The characterizations made by the lower secondary school students differed from those of the other groups in that they frequently made use of the same attributes that were given in the SD scales to describe the guises. These respondents also gave rather similar descriptions; many of the judges used the same or almost the same words or expressions to characterize the voice they had just heard. This happened in the other informant groups as well, but not to the extent it did in the lower secondary group. The youngest respondents had the strongest differences of opinion, and they also produced the most negative responses.

The upper secondary school respondent group functioned as expected: they expressed clear, quite strong views both for and against the guises, also characterizing them openly, not avoiding negative attributes. Some of the characterizations were quite humoristic, which could be interpreted as the use of a tool in presenting negative attitudes; the humoristic comments mostly touched upon more delicate issues such as ethnic minority (as in "tänk ju kom egen" referring to the Indian Kwik-E-Mart owner from the TV-show Simpsons) or the perceived failure of the Finnish speaker (as in "car was good and Michael was good..." reflecting the embarrassment felt by some Finns over the poor English skills of our motor sport stars).

The teacher trainees as an informant group appeared a rather politically correct one. Although they gave both positive and negative characterizations to all guises, there were no jokes or scolding like in the other two groups. The teacher trainees also rated all guises much more positively than the other respondent groups; all the guises scored above the neutral average 4.0. As future teachers of English, and having studied English most likely for years, the trainees were probably too much aware of what they were being asked about. Therefore they may have held back on their genuine attitudes. However, differences in the means of the ratings of the guises did emerge, and what is more, they were similar to those of the other groups. Therefore, it is the researcher's conclusion that, should the teacher trainees have held back in their attitudes, they did so only as far as the expressed strength of the negative attitudes go; perhaps they did not want to be negative about the accents, but instead they were more positive about some than others. It is, of course, also possible that the teacher trainees, as professionals of the English language, have very positive attitudes in general toward different accents of the language, which would be a good thing. If future teachers are flexible when it comes to pronunciation in class, their students are likely to enjoy a more encouraging atmosphere during their lessons, which in all probability will increase their willingness to use the language being taught.

Scottish English did interestingly well in the study. It is rather surprising that it did better overall than the more familiar accents included in the study. It was generally seen as a warm, motherly and authentic but somewhat boring accent. All the informant groups rated ScoE lowest on the dimension of Competence. This may be because of the perceived lack of dynamism in the accent, or in the

speaker: the possible effect of the person in research such as the current one cannot be ignored.

In all informant groups, RP scored low on the evaluative dimension of competence, while it did better on other dimensions. SA, on the other hand, scored quite evenly on all dimensions. The fact that the BeE guise was rated the highest in all three informant groups has to be considered quite a surprise. RP and SA, the accents that were presumed to be on top, were not even close. There are plausible explanations for the results. BeE must have been a compromise on some level; it lacks the value laden familiarity of RP and SA. The guise was rather level and easy to approach. Also, it could be seen as a merger between RP and SA on a phonetic level, but devoid of the marked features of pronunciation carried by both of the familiar accents. Thus it provides a safe and clear alternative to the native accents. This result supports the idea of not striving for native-like pronunciation. Achieving such a level of pronunciation can be very difficult for non-native speakers, and attempting to reach such a level can eat into the time and energy available for learning the language.

The GhaE speaker was rated relatively poorly in all groups. This is most probably because the strong accent is easily identifiable as coming from outside the familiar Anglo-American context. New and strange things tend to cause scepticism or even outright negative attitudes. There are reports (see e.g. Crystal 2003, 168-172) of syllable-timed indigenous languages affecting the rhythm of the English spoken in former British colonies around the world – in West Africa as well. The unfamiliar rhythm and, for example, the lengthening of vowels at the ends of words might easily create an image of bad English to those who are not used to hearing such differences, which, in Finland, would definitely be the case with

most people. The reactions to the guise were somewhat mixed. A speaker of such an accent might, then, become friends with the informants, but the informants would not like to speak in the same way themselves.

The case of the FinE guise and its poor success in the study was expected, but with the current results it raises a question: when a Finnish accent is clearly very undesirable, but a non-native accent, however, is the most desirable one, what is this all about? Why is the accent of a speaker of Dutch so much better than the accent of a Finnish speaker, when it comes to English? First of all, traditionally and, for the most part, today as well, students strive for native-like pronunciation in English. English is still treated like any other foreign language in schools: it is practiced as if its sole purpose was to serve in communication with native speakers of the language. This creates an image, according to which English cannot sound like Finnish, not even remotely. If it does, it equals poor English. Secondly, Dutch is a Germanic language, and even though Dutch or Belgian speakers might react to a BelE guise in the same way we do to a FinE guise, the BelE guise is not that far from native-like pronunciation of English, at least when compared to the FinE guise. It must be added that while English and Dutch are stress-timed languages, Finnish is syllable-timed. This can be heard in the FinE guise, and it might have affected the judgment it received. Thus the BelE guise, even though non-native, can be quite credible to a Finn, simply because it is fluent and sounds nothing like a Finnish speaker. Indeed, it does not sound like anything we are familiar with, but it does not sound like anything unfamiliar, either. This is possibly the key to its success.

If the students think an International, Transatlantic, or European (or whatever it may be called) accent is satisfactory or, indeed,

preferable to traditional national varieties, there is no point in using much time and energy in pursuit of native-like pronunciation. In fact, Orvomaa (2007) found in his study on the attitudes of Finnish upper secondary school students that the majority of his informants were neutral or close to neutral on whether they prefer a national accent or native-like pronunciation. Furthermore, Orvomaa's study indicated that the students felt confident that a Finnish accent would be understood abroad (ibid.). This is interesting, for if having a native-like accent is not that important, and preferring a non-native accent to native ones seems to be common, one could argue against the teaching of specific national varieties, and encourage the teaching of an international variety, be it Scandinavian, European or something else. This would, in light of the results of both Orvomaa (2007) and the current study, probably enhance the confidence of the students and reduce any possible negative effects the use of a national variety could have. However, it must be recognized that for some people the use of native speaker varieties are an encouragement and have a positive effect. Unless separate groups can be created for students with differing accent preferences, it is then another challenge for the teachers to differentiate their teaching according to the wants and needs of each student. This, needless to say, would demand more resources for teaching, as group sizes would have to be smaller.

Overall, the study managed to complete its task, which was to measure the attitudes Finnish students and teacher trainees have toward accents of English, as well as to map out some of the characteristics they associate the accents with. The results were somewhat surprising, yet credible and comparable. The study thus proved to be an efficient way of collecting and analyzing attitudinal data, and could be repeated in any similar conditions. For future studies, however, some improvements could be made: there should

be more time available for the careful collection and construction of guises, and open-ended questions could be given more emphasis to collect more data that is not in part predetermined by the use of scales or other restraints. For future studies, the significance of the social and situational contexts would also offer an interesting field to explore.

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## APPENDIX A

Questions used in interviewing the speakers.

1. What is 'friendship'? What does it mean to you? Can you define it?
2. What could be more important than friendship? Is there such a thing?
3. What is a good friend like? Can you characterize 'a good friend'?
4. What kind of friends do you have? Are your friends similar to one another, or different? Are you similar to your friends or different from them?
5. Has the concept or content of friendship changed over time? Are the friendships you have now somehow different from those of previous generations?
6. Is there a difference between male and female friendships? Are the friendships you have with men and women somehow different from each other?

APPENDIX B

**Pro Gradu research  
Henrik Hakala**

**Instructions:**

**You will hear six audio samples one at a time. After each sample you will have some time to fill in the answers. The procedure is exactly the same for all six samples.**

**There are two kinds of tasks:**

- 1) First, on a scale from 1 to 7, circle a number that best describes your view. The number 1 means "not at all x", and the number 7 means "very much x". There are six scales for each sample.**
- 2) In the second task you are asked to describe the speaker in your own words, using the empty space provided.**

**The research is anonymous.**

**Background information:**

**Sex (circle)    male                  female**

**Age \_\_\_\_\_**

**Thank you for your participation!**

**1. I think the speaker is...**

Not at all honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very honest
Not at all pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very pleasant
Not at all sophisticated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very sophisticated
Not at all credible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very credible
Not at all industrious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very industrious
Not at all determinate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very determinate

Describe the speaker in your own words.

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**2. I think the speaker is...**

Not at all honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very honest
Not at all pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very pleasant
Not at all sophisticated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very sophisticated
Not at all credible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very credible
Not at all industrious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very industrious
Not at all determinate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very determinate

Describe the speaker in your own words.

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**3. I think the speaker is...**

Not at all honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very honest
Not at all pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very pleasant
Not at all sophisticated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very sophisticated
Not at all credible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very credible
Not at all industrious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very industrious
Not at all determinate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very determinate

Describe the speaker in your own words.

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**4. I think the speaker is...**

Not at all honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very honest
Not at all pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very pleasant
Not at all sophisticated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very sophisticated
Not at all credible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very credible
Not at all industrious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very industrious
Not at all determinate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very determinate

Describe the speaker in your own words.

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**5. I think the speaker is...**

Not at all honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very honest
Not at all pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very pleasant
Not at all sophisticated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very sophisticated
Not at all credible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very credible
Not at all industrious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very industrious
Not at all determinate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very determinate

Describe the speaker in your own words.

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**6. I think the speaker is...**

Not at all honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very honest
Not at all pleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very pleasant
Not at all sophisticated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very sophisticated
Not at all credible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very credible
Not at all industrious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very industrious
Not at all determinate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very determinate

Describe the speaker in your own words.

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## APPENDIX C

### Characterizations of the guises – Lower secondary school students

#### **GhaE**

annoying, ok, industrious (2), not credible, inarticulate (12), serious, determined, weird, honest (2), weird accent, bored, tired (2), terribly unpleasant, sounded funny, keyed up, credible, bad English (4), nervous, sounded like a peasant speaking to a king, sounded foreign, shy, African, normal.

#### **RP**

inarticulate (2), ok, industrious, nice speaker, not pleasant at all, insecure (2), unconvincing (2), nice sophisticated accent, relatively determined, fair, wise, not that industrious, bored, better than the former, honest, pleasant, weird, stiff, ok English, Chinese?, average townspeople, the robotic Santa from the Christmas chat program on TV, mechanic, hesitant, does not know what is talking about, a suit, unenthusiastic, normal.

#### **FinE**

not funny, Habla English?, out of his mind, uncivilized, not credible (2), not pleasant (4), not honest (2), insecure, pathetic, sounded like a Finn (4), annoying, did not know what was talking about, speaks like a Finn, inarticulate (2), sad, bad English (3), bad pronunciation (2), honest, unenergetic, interesting, standard Finn, Finnish, sounded as if was joking, speaks funnily, simple, sounded foreign (2), nervous, poor (English), typical Finnish accent, weird, quite funny (2).

#### **SA**

insecure (2), determined, industrious, does not know what is talking about, a bit weird, young (3), annoying (2), credible, nice, very pleasant, rather articulate, “um um”, serious voice yet unconvincing, good, social, middle-aged single parent of two, picky, boring (2), honest, pleasant.

#### **BelE**

a bit crazy, honest (3), determined (2), knows what is talking about (5), confident (2), quick-witted, sophisticated, young (2), not so pleasant, industrious (2), credible (2), nice (3), normal, sensible, pleasant, intelligible, realistic, office rat with boring life, boring (2), monotonous, faltering, weird.

#### **ScoE**

credible, ok (2), determined, normal, rather pensive, weird (2), distressed, young, tired, inarticulate, nice (2), not so determined, familiar, annoying, not very excited, bored, indifferent, boring, bitter (2), middle-aged, hesitant, authentic, sounded like mom, not pleasant, not credible.

## APPENDIX D (1/2)

### Characterizations of the guises - Upper secondary school students

#### **GhaE**

unclear (2), honest (2), clumsy (2), confused, immigrant, frustrated, difficulties in expressing himself, bad English, knew what was talking about, lazy (2), indeterminate, funny accent, obscure, insecure (3), yearning for public acceptance, faltering, not used to speaking, nervous (2), weird rhythm, agreeable, ordinary, friendly, unsophisticated, desperate, bursting to tears, confident, male Mother Amma, Indian, rambling, “tänk ju kom egen”, funny, easygoing, nice, boring, experienced, in a rush to the toilet, explanatory, scattershot

#### **RP**

neat, halting, agreeable (3), “accent affects me”, exciting, brave, young man, la-di-dah, cagey, clear (4), sophisticated (2), a bit lazy, unenthusiastic, educated, elegant accent, suspicious, natural, genuine, insecure, mumbling, British university lecturer, hesitant, British, cautious, not a nice person, Englishman in a pub, normal, matter-of-fact, boring, concise

#### **FinE**

”learning languages can be difficult”, did not know what was talking about, difficult to understand, goofy, unpleasant, taciturn, outcast (2), submitting, a closet cynic, disturbing Finnish accent, sounds like a parody of a bad Finnish accent, honest, has trouble expressing himself, pronounced like a Finn, non-native speaker, bungling, uneducated, unsophisticated, afraid of making mistakes, bad articulation, strong accent, rambling on, insecure (3), bad English (2), sympathetic, determinate, not so skilled, normal, nice, ordinary, natural, genuine, concentrated, insincere, Finnish loser, Finnish (3), bad accent, limited vocabulary, Vesa-Matti Loiri, annoying, “car was good and Michael was good but there was a fucking hirvi on the road”, clumsy, funny Finnish-gibberish, youngster, nice and clear, bad pronunciation

#### **SA**

young (3), hesitant (2), ok (3), normal, nice, gossipy, self-confident, certainly beautiful, American accent, lazy (2), insensitive to the listener, meditative, determined, pompous, possibly a learned accent, vigorous, insecure, a bit annoying, suck-up, pleasant, knew what was talking about, unreliable, ordinary American woman, ordinary girl, unconvincing, stuttering, very pleasant, warm, semi-agreeable, snotty, selfish, annoying Texan, Sarah Michelle Gellar

## Appendix D (2/2)

### **Characterizations of the guises - Upper secondary school students**

#### **BelE**

clear (4), credible, firm, nasty accent, relaxed, quite enthusiastic, boring in the long run, sophisticated (2), pleasant (2), young, calm (2), quite confident (2), knows what is talking about (5), nice, not trying too hard (not overdoing it), “felt like the matter was important to the speaker”, ordinary American man, college student, sceptical, geek (2), unclear, normal guy, has a lot to say, genial

#### **ScoE**

knew what was talking about (2), nifty, ok, very agreeable, humble, personal, experienced, imposing, boring (2), careful, at first unpleasant then pleasant, shy, insecure, keyed up, friendly, determinate, humane, lazy (2), machine-like, Scottish, pleasant, Northern English youngster, melancholic, neutral, clear, nice (2), cool, ordinary, “almost as annoying as the Yank; better accent, though”, “a normal person, was possibly picked up on the street”

## APPENDIX E

### Characterizations of the guises - Teacher trainees

#### **GhaE**

communal, annoying (2), arduous, difficult to understand (4), knows what talks about, sure of his cause (2), trying to convince but not succeeding, not well educated judging from accent, an Indian, sincere, warm-hearted, perhaps a slum inhabitant, busy, preacher type, quite enthusiastic, enthusiastic, ethnic minority (Africa, Caribbean), credible, determined, African, West African, BrE regional dialect, Estuary English, safe, humane, genuinely nice, slightly insecure, vague

#### **RP**

theoretical, British, from a nature documentary, neutral, well educated, trying to appear authoritative, quite calm, not very enthusiastic, sleek, upper class Brit, too correct, not speaking from the heart, RP (2), strong British accent, sophisticated, meditative, stiff, a bit lazy, egocentric, a player, young 30-40 yrs, vigorous

#### **FinE**

middle-aged, product of Finnish schooling, not very convincing, Finnish (2), quite neutral, able to express himself, reliable, bad pronunciation, typical Finnish accent, unclear, not completely drippy, basic Finnish guy, bad accent, nerd, not so pleasant, annoying, clearly a Finn, timid (2), ok, weird pronunciation and rhythm, stiff, hesitant, obscure, insecure (3), shy

#### **SA**

American, Yank (2), nice and relaxed, pretentious, stereotypical American female, does not evoke trust, unreserved, interactive, typical American accent, hesitant (2), young (3), rather unsophisticated, wandering, annoying, AmE, unofficial, agreeable, insecure, tottering, “umm, umm”, confident, popular, slightly bigheaded, egocentric, good pronunciation

#### **BelE**

clear (3), Stephen Hawking, non-native, not subject to strong feelings, quite neutral, relatively agreeable speaker, indeterminate, uncivilized, natural, nice, exuberant, easy to follow, easy to like, fluent, agreeable, cynical, flat, uninteresting, hesitant, ordinary, bland, sympathetic, emphatic, sensitive, understanding, Finnish, knew what was talking about

#### **ScoE**

lovely accent, homely, genial, Scottish (2), native speaker, countryside, sympathetic, nice (2), agreeable (2), not as convincing as the other Brit; sounds less educated, natural, faltering and dragging, philosophical, Irish, meditative (3), not very excited, working class, calm, credible, realistic, lame, insecure, rather boring, monotonous, older