English Accent Evaluation: A Study on Indonesian EFL Learners' Perception

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Abstract: This paper is based on the survey of one hundred and six English Department Students' perception of four English accents: North American English, British English, Australian English and New Zealand English. The study reveals the students' identification of the four English accents, their perceived ease of comprehending them, and their exposure to the English accents, seen through their stay in the English speaking countries and the three mostly watched un-dubbed English TV programs/films.

Key words: English accent, perception, exposure.

English, as a global language, is spoken as a native language in many regions, each with its own accent, its own pattern of pronunciation, showing that "English is not at all uniform in pronunciation" (Ronowicz & Yallop, 1999, p. 26). Concerning the spread of the English language around the world, Kachru suggests "three concentric circles, representing different ways in which the language has been acquired and is currently used". The three circles are "the inner circle, the outer circle or extending circle and the expanding circle". The inner circle refers to "the traditional bases of English including the USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand". The outer circle refers to the earlier phrases of the spread of English in non-native settings where the English language plays an important "second language" role in multilingual settings which includes "Singapore, India, Malawi and over fifty other territories". The expanding circle involves "those nations which recognize the importance of English as an international language including China, Japan, Greece, Poland and a steadily increasing number of other states". (Crystal, 2002, pp. 53-54) Considering its role as a foreign language in the society, Indonesia can be considered the expanding circle.

As a foreign language in Indonesia, English is recognized as an international lingua franca. Due to its importance in global communication, English has gained a significant place in education, formally as well as informally. In recent years English has been introduced since the elementary schools. Some preschools or playgroups even include it as the subject matter to be taught to very young learners. There has also been an increase of number of English programs and institutions offering courses to adults as well as young learners. Considering its role as a global language, English learners need to be made aware of the fact that English is not uniform in pronunciation, that there are different accents of English spoken in different regions besides the accent being taught to them, which, in Indonesia, is usually modeled after the two mostly known accents, British or American.

Evaluating English Accents Worldwide is a multinational English accents evaluation survey, designed by Bayard and Weatheall, based in University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. It is made up of an international group of researchers interested in analyzing the evaluation of different national and ethnic groups on four of the standard accents of English: Near Received Pronunciation, the educated Southern English English or Near-BBC English, General North American, Australian and New-Zealand. There were twenty researchers in fourteen different countries participating in the project, published in its website, (http:/www.Otago.ac.nz/anthropology/linguistics.html), retrieved in April, 2004, whereas none was working on the Indonesian subjects. It was also stated that all researchers share access to the data obtained and may use them for any ethical research purpose. This has aroused my interest to take part in the multinational project, focusing on the Indonesian EFL learners' perceptibility in identifying the four different accents of English and their relative ease of comprehending them and the factors that may affect their perceptibility and ease of comprehending the four different accents.

Accordingly the purpose of the study is to find out the extent to which the students can identify the four different accents, their perceived ease of comprehension of the accents and also the factors that may affect the students' perceptibility and perceived ease of comprehending the different accents.

This study is expected to give some understanding about the students' perceptibility in the four different English accents and their perceived ease of comprehending them. It also, hopefully, gives a

broader view concerning English accents particularly for those who are involved in teaching English as a foreign language.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ENGLISH ACCENTS

Basically the four accents of the inner circles-British English, American, Australian and New Zealand-share a lot in common and their speakers are capable of understanding one another despite the fact that each accent carries certain noticeable features of pronunciation.

Following Wells' description on differences between accents, we can distinguish different accents based on "their phonetic detail, phonological structure and the differences in the use of particular phonemes in particular words or morphemes" (1995, pp. 72-73). Differences in phonetic detail refers to "the phonetic realization of a given phoneme, i.e. the vowel in words such as *goat* is generally [əʊ] in Received Pronunciation may be more monophthongal [o] in General American English. (p. 123).

Differences in phonological structure or phonotactic distribution refers to "the environment in which particular phonemes do or do not occur". It is further stated that "one fundamental division in English accent type depends upon a difference in phonotactic distribution of consonant /r/ (p. 75). The rhotic accents, for example, include those typical of Scotland, Ireland, Canada, Barbadoes, and certain western part of England. Most of the accents of the United States including General American are the rhotic accents, where "the /r/ occurs in a wide variety of phonetic contexts including pre-consonantal and absolute final position" (p. 75). While in the non-rhotic accents, /r/ is excluded from such environment. They are typical of "Australia, New Zealand, most of the England and Wales including RP" belonging to the non-rhotic accents (p. 76). The third differences lie in the different use of particular phonemes in particular words or morphemes, i.e. the vowel in *bath* in General American is [æ], but in Received Pronunciation [a:] is used. Another type of difference is in their “phonemic system, the number or identity of the phonemes used" (p. 76). The example given is that "most accents of English have two distinct vowel phonemes in the close back area, a short /ʊ/ as in *foot* and a long /u:/ as in *boot*"; which are represented as "a single phoneme /u/ in Scottish" (p. 77).

The accent that has the "highest prestige" in England is known as Received Pronunciation (RP), which is properly referred to as "BBC English" or "Standard English". It is "the most general type of educated

British pronunciation" (p. 117). In the United States, however, there is no accent whose status and role corresponding to the RP in England. The type of educated pronunciation taught at schools and to speakers of other languages is "General American English", spoken by "two-thirds of the American population". It is commonly called North American English. General American comprises "that majority of American accents which do not have marked Eastern or Southern characteristics" It is the variable most acceptable on television networks covering the whole United States (Wells, 1993, p. 470). It is also stated that "one of the most striking characteristics of American pronunciation to the ears of a non American is the intervocalic consonant in words like *better*, which sounds like /d/ rather than /t/, pronounced like a rapid tap and frequently" (Wells, p. 248). While the typical British pronunciation is a voiceless alveolar plosive /t/. On the other hand, in British English, glottalization occurs when "the voiceless plosives /p,t,k/ are in the certain syllable final like in *look*.

Australian English, following Michell & Delbridge (1965), quoted by Wells (1993, p. 594), is distinguished into three main types: Broad, General and Cultivated, identified principally by differences in the quality of the vowels in “FLEECE, FACE, GOAT, PRICE and MOUTH”. In Cultivated Australian those vowels are similar to those of RP, while in General Australian, they have undergone “Diphthong Shifting”, and in Broad Australian those vowels are similar to those of General Australian, but have “extra duration in the first element of the diphthong” (Wells, 1993, p. 596). Another pronunciation feature of Australian English is the “raising of the front short vowels” and the “fronting of the GOOSE, START, and NURSE vowels”, which is phonologically very close to RP. The most noticeable consonantal phenomena are perhaps “T voicing and the quality of /l/”. Intervocalic/t/ may undergo “T voicing”, which may be either changed into “/d/ or Tapping”. This has not been much studied in Australian speech. Similarly, the quality of /l/ has not been “adequately researched upon”. Wells’ impression is that it is of a “pharyngealized quality occurring in all environments” (Wells, 1993, p. 603)

New Zealand English is very like Australian English and has a range of accent extending from cultivated to Broad. They are so similar that "it is difficult for outsiders to tell them apart" (Wells, 1993, p. 605). What differentiate them mostly is the "KIT vowels which has become a

central vowel not distinct from /ə/. Thus the vowel in *ship* is pronounced as [ə] instead of [ɪ]. Concerning the centring diphthongs, the diphthong in SQUARE is pronounced as [eə] instead of [æə] as in RP. Similarly, the diphthong [eə] in *fair* sounds like [ɪə]. According to Hawkins, quoted by Wells (1993, p. 608), "some speakers merged the two fronting centring diphthongs [eə] and [ɪə]", so that minimal pairs such as *fair* and *fear* are pronounced alike as [*f*ɪə]". The lateral in New Zealand English, like Australian English "tends towards a rather dark /l/, possibly pharyngealzed in all environments". Besides, he suggests that vocalization is a variable rule in current New Zealand speech, as it was reported by Hawkins (1976) that " In New Zealand English final and pre-consonantal /l/ has entirely lost the alveolar tongue tip contact, so that it is in fact realized as a back vowel close to [o]" (Wells, 1993, p. 606).

METHODS OF STUDY

The subjects are limited to one hundred and six students of the English Department–Petra Christian University who have finished their oral skill courses, having thus achieved considerably mastery of the oral English language. The subjects are of different ethnicities: Chinese and different ethnic groups of indigenous Indonesian: Javanese, Madurese, Sundanese, Ambonnese, and Banjarese

The instrument used to collect the data was a questionnaire and a recorded tape of a 30 second passage read by male and female speakers. The stimulus tape, as it was described used male and female voices of the middle range of the four regional accents, general New Zealand English (NZE), Australian English (AusE), Inland Northern American (NAmE), and United Kingdom near-Received Pronunciation (EE). The tape began with an introductory female NZE voice to provide practice for the subjects, which was not analyzed (http:/www.otago.ac.nz/anthropology/linguistics/wethods.html).

The questionnaire, designed by Bayard originally, was used to record the participants' personal data and their impressions of the speakers on 13 six-point semantic scales (reliable, ambitious, humorous, authoritative, competence, cheerful, friendly, dominant, intelligent, assertive, controlling, warm and hard working) and their impression of the speakers' voice on five six-point semantic scales

(pleasant, attractive, powerful, strong, educated and easy to understand). In addition, the subjects were asked to fill out the perceived age, ethnicity, educational level, occupation, annual income and social class.

Related to the purpose of the study, the data collected, were selected based on the relevance to the research questions, relating to their exposure to the English language, their perceived ease of understanding and the ethnicity of the speakers. Their exposure to the English language was indicated by the time spent in English speaking countries, hours spent watching un-dubbed English language TV/films per week, and the three un-dubbed English language TV programs watched most.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Perceptions of the Accents

Students' perception of the four different accents is indicated by their perceived ethnicity from the choices of ethnicities: New Zealand European, American, New Zealand Maori, Canadian, Asian, English, Australian European, South African, Australian Aborigine, Black American, Scottish, and Other European. All voices except the two American voices were poorly identified as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Students' Accents Guesses

	F NZE		M NZE		F Aus E		M Aus E		FNAm E		MNAm E		F E E		M E E		Total	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
New Zealand E	11	10.4	6	5.7	5	4.7	7	6.6	2	1.9	3	2.8	14	13.2	5	4.8	53	6.3
New Zealand M	1	0.9	5	4.8	1	0.9	1	0.9	0	0	0	0	1	0.9	1	0.9	10	1.2
Australian E	26	24.5	15	14.2	9	8.5	16	15.1	2	1.9	5	4.7	13	12.3	17	16	103	12.3
Australian A	1	0.9	2	1.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3.8	2	1.9	9	1.1
Canadian	9	8.5	11	10.5	15	14.2	15	14.2	1	0.9	3	2.8	13	12.3	11	10.4	78	9.2
American	18	17.1	25	23.6	46	43.4	22	20.8	78	73.6	78	73.6	7	6.7	12	11.3	286	33.7
Black Am	1	0.9	6	5.7	1	0.9	7	6.6	3	2.8	1	0.9	4	3.8	3	2.8	26	3.1
English	28	26.4	10	9.4	15	14.2	13	12.3	8	7.5	13	12.3	23	21.7	26	24.5	136	16
Scoltish	7	6.6	14	13.2	2	1.9	8	7.5	1	0.9	1	0.9	8	7.8	16	15.1	57	6.7
Asian	2	1.9	2	1.9	6	5.7	1	0.9	6	5.7	1	0.9	8	7.8	3	2.8	29	3.4
South A.F.	0	0	3	2.8	0	0	0	0	2	1.9	0	0	0	0	1	0.9	6	0.7
Other European	1	0.9	6	5.7	4	3.8	12	11.3	1	0.9	0	0	9	8.5	7	6.6	40	4.7
Total	105	99	105	99.4	104	98.1	102	96.2	104	98.1	105	99.1	104	98.1	104	98.1	833	98.2
Missing	1	0.9	1	0.9	2	1.9	4	3.8	2	1.9	1	0.9	2	1.9	2	1.9	15	1.8
Total	106	100	106	100	106	100	106	100	106	100	106	100	106	100	106	100	848	100

The lowest was the New Zealand male voice, which was correctly identified by only 5.70% of all the respondents, followed by the Australian female voice (8.50%), New Zealand female (10.40%) Australian male voice (15.10%), UK female voice (21.70%) and UK male voice (24.50%). The American voices, however were correctly identified by 73.60% of respondents.

It is seen from table 1 that New Zealand female voice was mistakenly identified mostly as English (26,40%) or Australian (24.50%). While the male voice was mistakenly identified mostly as American (23.60%). The Australian female and male voices were identified mostly as American English, 43.40% and 20.80% respectively. Whereas the English voices were better recognized by the respondents, being correctly identified by 21.70% for the female voice and 24.50% for the male voice. The rest mistakenly identified the female voice as New Zealand European (13.20%), Australian European (12.30%), Canadian (12.30%), Other European (8.50%), Scottish (7.80%), Asian (7.80%), American (6.70%), and Black American (3.80). The English male Voice, on the other hand, was mistakenly identified mostly as Australian European (16%), Scottish (15.10%), American (11.30%) and Canadian (10,40%). The rest identified it as Other European (6.60%), New Zealand European (4.80%), Black American (2.80%), Asian (2.80%), Australian Aborigine (1.90%), New Zealand Maori (0.90%), and South African (0.90%). The American female voice was incorrectly identified mostly as English (7.50%), followed by Asian (5.76%), Black American (2.80%), South African (1.90%), New Zealand European English (1.90%), Australian European (1.90%), Canadian (0.90%), Scottish (0.90%), and Other European (0.90%). Similarly, the male voice was mistakenly identified mostly as English (12.30%). The rest identified it as Australian European (4.70%), New Zealand European (2.80%), Canadian (2.80%), Black American (0.90%), Scottish (0.90%), and Other European(0.90%).

The whole picture of the students' accent guesses points to the implication that the students are more familiar with the American accent and have the tendency to identify the other accents – New Zealand and Australian – as American. This may be explained through their exposure to the variety of the English accent in their linguistic environment.

Students' Exposure to the English Accent

Students' exposure to the English accent(s) is seen through their direct contact with the English speaking countries and the indirect contact through watching un-dubbed English language TV/films

Of all the 106 respondents, there were only fourteen respondents who had the chance spending some time in the English speaking countries. The most visited country is Australia, being visited by 6 (six) respondents, followed by Singapore, 4 (four) respondents, USA, 2 (two) respondents (table 2). The duration of their visit was relatively short, ranging from less than one to thirteen months or more: less than one month 7 respondents, 1-6 months 5 (five) respondents, 7-12 months 1 (one) respondent, more than 12 months 2 (two) respondents (table 3). This may explain why the experience of staying in the English speaking countries does not show a significant influence on their accent guesses as shown in table 4a-h Time Spent in English Speaking Country and Accent Guesses. Of the six respondents who had stayed in Australia only one could identify the Australian female voice and one for the male voice. The four respondents who spent some time in Singapore all failed to identify the New Zealand female voice, UK male voice, Australian female and male. Out of those four, there was only one who made a correct guess for UK female voice, one for New Zealand male, but there were three who correctly identified the American female voice and two for the male voice. The two respondents who visited USA made wrong guesses in all voices except one correct answer each for the UK female, American male, and American female voices. The only respondent who stayed in India for some time made all wrong guesses except one correct guess for American male voice. The one respondent who stayed in New Zealand could not identify the New Zealand voices. The only correct choice was for the American male voice. The American male voice appears to be the most correctly identified accent by the respondents who spent some time in the English speaking countries, in spite of the fact that most of them stayed in the countries other than the USA. Similar result occurs in the guesses for the American female voice, which was correctly identified by nine of the respondents (table 4a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h).

Table 2. English Speaking Country Visited * Ethnicity Identified

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	AUSTRALIA	6	5.7	42.9	42.9
	INDIA	1	.9	7.1	50.0
	SINGAPORE	4	3.8	28.6	78.6
	NEW ZEALAND	1	.9	7.1	85.7
	USA	2	1.9	13.3	100.0
	Total	14	13.2	100.0	
Missing		92	86.8		
Total		**106**	**100.0**		

Table 3. Time Spent in English-Speaking Country

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NONE	91	85.8	85.8	85.8
	> 1 MS	7	6.6	6.6	92.5
	1-6 MS	5	4.7	4.7	97.2
	7-12 MS	1	.9	.9	98.1
	13 MS +	2	1.9	1.9	100.0
	Total	**106**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 4a. English Speaking Country Visited * Ethnicity Identified

		Ethnicity, NZ. Female		Total
		False	True	
ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY	AUSTRALIA	4	2	6
	INDIA	1		1
	SINGAPORE	4		4
	NEW ZEALAND	1		1
	USA	2		2
Total		**12**	**2**	**14**

Table 4b. English Speaking Country Visited * Ethnicity Identified

		Ethnicity, Aus. Female		Total
		False	True	
ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY	AUSTRALIA	5	1	6
	INDIA	1		1
	SINGAPORE	4		4
	NEW ZEALAND	1		1
	USA	2		2
Total		**13**	**1**	**14**

Table 4c. English Speaking Country Visited * Ethnicity Identified

		Ethnicity, NAm Male		Total
		False	True	
ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY	AUSTRALIA	1	5	6
	INDIA		1	1
	SINGAPORE	2	2	4
	NEW ZEALAND		1	1
	USA	1	1	2
Total		**4**	**10**	**14**

Table 4d. English Speaking Country Visited * Ethnicity Identified

		Ethnicity, UK Male		Total
		False	True	
ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY	AUSTRALIA	3	3	6
	INDIA	1		1
	SINGAPORE	4		4
	NEW ZEALAND	1		1
	USA	2		2
Total		**11**	**3**	**14**

Table 4e. English Speaking Country Visited * Ethnicity Identified

		Ethnicity, UK Female		Total
		False	True	
ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY	AUSTRALIA	6		6
	INDIA	1		1
	SINGAPORE	3	1	4
	NEW ZEALAND	1		1
	USA	1	1	2
Total		**12**	**2**	**14**

Table 4f. English Speaking Country Visited * Ethnicity Identified

		Ethnicity, NZ Male		Total
		False	True	
ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY	AUSTRALIA	4	2	6
	INDIA	1		1
	SINGAPORE	3	1	4
	NEW ZEALAND	1		1
	USA	2		2
Total		**11**	**3**	**14**

Table 4g. English Speaking Country Visited * Ethnicity Identified

		Ethnicity, NAm Female		Total
		False	True	
ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY	AUSTRALIA	1	5	6
	INDIA	1		1
	SINGAPORE	1	3	4
	NEW ZEALAND	1		1
	USA	1	1	2
Total		**5**	**9**	**14**

Table 4h. English Speaking Country Visited * Ethnicity Identified

		Ethnicity, Aus. Male		Total
		False	True	
ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRY	AUSTRALIA	5	1	6
	INDIA	1		1
	SINGAPORE	4		4
	NEW ZEALAND	1		1
	USA	2		2
Total		**13**	**1**	**14**

Unlike the direct exposure to the English accents in the English speaking countries, the indirect exposure to the English language was experienced by almost all the respondents, by watching un-dubbed English language TV/films, except for four respondents, who did not watch them. Those who did spent quite a lot of time watching undubbed English TV/films: 1-4 hours per week (26.4%), 5-9 hours per week (32.1%), 10-19 hours per week (16%), and 20 hours and more per week (21.7%) (table 5). The programs watched were mostly American, using American accent accordingly, as seen in the three un-dubbed English TV programs they watched most (see table 6 ,7, 8). The first mostly watched program was *Friends*, watched by 25.5% of the respondents, the second one was also Friends (17.0%) and the same program was chosen as the third mostly watched program (10%). Besides, almost all of the un-dubbed English TV programs/films watched are originated from the United States, which naturally employ the American accent, i.e., Discovery Channel, Ally Mcbeal, Bay Watch, Charmed, Sex and the City, CNN, The Nanny, Dark Angel, Gillmore Girls, Pasadena, Smallville, X Files, Mc.Gyver, NBC, Law and Order, The Pretender, Star Trek, That 70's Show, The Cosby Show, The Adams Family,

Dharma & Greg, Reuters, VIP and MTV, which are more inclined to American Accent. There was only one TV program in British English, i.e., Premiership or Champions league. Some of the programs are unidentified in relation to the English accents used, i.e., news and films/movies.

It appears that it was through the TV programs that the students got exposed to the American accent, whereas there were hardly any TV programs in UK English watched by the students and none in Australian or New Zealand English (Appendix table 5,6,7). In fact, most English TV programs broadcast in Indonesia are in American English.

Table 5. Hours of English TV Watched/WK

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 HRS	4	3.8	3.8	3.8
	1-4 HRS.	28	26.4	26.4	30.2
	5-9 HRS.	34	32.1	32.1	62.3
	10-19 HRS.	17	16.0	16.0	78.3
	20 HRS. +	23	21.7	21.7	100.0
	Total	**106**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table 6. Favorite English TV Programs 1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ally McBeal	3	2.8	3.0	3.0
	The Adams Family	1	.9	1.0	4.0
	Baywatch	5	4.7	5.0	8.9
	Charmed	3	2.8	3.0	11.9
	CNN	4	3.8	4.0	15.8
	Discovery Channel	9	8.5	8.9	24.8
	Dark Angel	1	.9	1.0	25.7
	Film/Movies	9	8.5	8.9	34.7
	Friends	27	25.5	26.7	61.4
	Gilmore Girls	2	109	2.0	63.4
	HBO	1	.9	1.0	64.4
	Mc.Gyver	1	.9	1.0	65.3
	MTV	22	20.8	21.8	87.1
	NBC	1	.9	1.0	88.1
	News	5	4.7	5.0	93.1
	The Nanny	2	1.9	2.0	95.0
	Pasadena	1	.9	1.0	96.0
	Sex and the City	2	1.9	2.0	98.0
	X Files	2	1.9	2.0	100.0
	Total	**101**	**95.3**	**100.0**	

Table 7. Favorite English TV Programs 2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ally McBeal	5	2.8	3.0	3.0
	Baywatch	3	4.7	5.0	8.9
	Charmed	4	2.8	3.0	11.9
	CNN	2	3.8	4.0	15.8
	Discovery Channel	7	8.5	8.9	24.8
	Dark Angel	2	.9	1.0	25.7
	Freddie Starr	1	.9	1.2	28.2
	Film/Movies	8	8.5	8.9	34.7
	Friends	18	25.5	26.7	61.4
	Gilmore Girls	1	109	2.0	63.4
	Law and Order	1	.9	1.2	61.2
	Mc.Gyver	1	.9	1.0	65.3
	MTV	12	20.8	21.8	87.1
	NBC	1	.9	1.0	88.1
	News	3	4.7	5.0	93.1
	The Nanny	2	1.9	2.0	95.0
	The Pretender	1	.9	1.2	84.7
	Premiership or Champions League	1	.9	1.2	85.9
	Pasadena	2	1.9	2.4	88.2
	Sex and the City	4	3.8	4.7	92.9
	Smallville	2	1.9	2.4	95.3
	Star Trek	1	.9	1.2	96.5
	SITCOMS	1	.9	1.2	97.6
	That 70s show	1	.9	1.2	98.8
	X Files	1	.9	1.2	100.0
	Total	85	80.2	100.0	
Missing		21	19.8		
Total		**106**	**100.0**		

Relating to the influence of their exposure through the TV media, it is further examined whether the number of hours spent in watching English programs per week affected their accent guesses, particularly in their perception of the American English.

Seen in table 9, the percentage of correct choices of the American male voice tend to increase in line with the number of hours spent in watching un-dubbed English TV programs. The highest percentage occurs among those who watched 10–19 hours a week, which comprises 80% of 17 (seventeen) respondents. This phenomena, however, is not followed by those who watched 20 (twenty) or more hours, showing a little decrease to 78% of 23 (twenty-three) respondents. Similar condition happens in the perception of the American female voice, which was also correctly identified by the same number of respondents, 78 (seventy-

eight) respondents. There is a tendency of increase in the percentage of the correct guesses of the American female voice as the number of hours spent in watching un-dubbed English TV programs increases, except for those who watched 20 (twenty) or more hours, having less percentage of correct guesses than those who watched 10-19 hours/week (table 10).

Table 8. Favorite English TV Programs 3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ally McBeal	2	1.9	3.2	3.2
	Animal Planet	1	.9	1.6	4.8
	The Adams Family	1	.9	1.6	6.5
	Baywatch	6	5.7	9.7	16.1
	Charmed	1	.9	1.6	17.7
	The Cosby Show	3	2.8	4.8	22.6
	Dharma & Greg	1	.9	1.6	24.2
	Discovery Channel	1	.9	1.6	25.8
	Dark Angel	1	.9	1.6	27.4
	Dawsons Creek	1	.9	1.6	29.0
	Film/Movies	4	3.8	6.5	35.5
	Friends	10	9.4	16.1	51.6
	Gilmore Girls	2	1.9	3.2	54.8
	Mc.Gyver	1	.9	1.6	56.5
	MTV	7	6.6	11.3	67.7
	News	3	2.8	4.8	72.6
	Premiership or Champions League	1	.9	1.6	74.2
	Pasadena	3	2.8	4.8	79.0
	Reuters	2	1.9	3.2	82.3
	The Sopranoes	1	.9	1.6	83.9
	Sex and the City	4	3.8	6.5	90.3
	Smallville	3	2.8	4.8	95.2
	VIP	1	.9	1.6	96.8
	X Files	2	1.9	3.2	100.0
	Total	62	58.5	100.0	
Missing		44	41.5		
Total		**106**	**100.0**		

Table 9. Hours of English TV Watched/WK * Ethnicity Identified

Count

		Ethnicity, Nam Male		Total
		False	True	
HOURS OF ENGLISH TV WATCHED/WK	0 HRS.	2	2	4
	1-4 HRS.	11	17	28
	5-9 HRS.	8	26	34
	10-19 HRS.	2	15	17
	20 HRS. +	5	18	23
Total		**28**	**78**	**106**

Table 10. Hours of English TV Watched/WK * Ethnicity Identified Count

		Ethnicity, Nam Female		Total
		False	True	
HOURS OF ENGLISH TV WATCHED/WK	0 HRS.	2	2	4
	1-4 HRS.	11	17	28
	5-9 HRS.	7	27	34
	10-19 HRS.	3	14	17
	20 HRS. +	5	18	23
Total		**28**	**78**	**106**

The analysis based on cross-tabulation between numbers of hours spent in watching English TV/films per week and accent guesses of American English shows that there seems to be an indication that exposure to the English accents on TV may affect their identification of the accents.

Students' Perceived Ease of Comprehension

The students' perception about their ease of comprehension is presented in the following table.

Table 11. Students' perceived ease of comprehension

Accents		NZE				Aus E				N Am				EE				Total
Score		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		
Very Difficult	1	0	0	12	11.3	0	0	1	0.9	0	0	0	0	3	2.8	4	3.8	20	2.4
	2	8	7.5	33	31.1	0	0	13	12.3	1	0.9	5	4.7	23	21.7	34	32.1	117	13.8
	3	15	14.2	24	22.6	15	14.2	26	24.5	4	3.8	10	9.4	32	30.2	24	22.6	150	17.7
	4	27	25.5	15	14.2	28	26.4	18	17	12	11.3	14	13.2	18	17	12	11.3	144	17
	5	35	33	10	9.4	38	35.8	27	25.5	28	26.4	35	33	19	17.9	25	23.6	217	25.6
Very Easy	6	20	18.9	12	11.3	25	23.6	21	19.8	61	57.5	42	39.6	11	10.4	7	6.6	199	23.4
Total		105	99.1	106	100	106	100	106	100	106	100	106	100	106	100	106	100	847	
Missing		1	0.9																
		106	100																
Mean		4.42		3.13		4.69		4.13		5.36		4.93		3.57		3.39		4.2	

The NAmE female voice was perceived to be very easy to understand by 57.5% of the respondents, followed by the NAmE male voice (39.6%) in the second place. Taking the two highest scales, 6 and 5, ranging from very easy to easy to understand, we can see that the NAmE female voice is regarded as the highest in the relative ease of comprehension, being perceived by 83.9% of the respondents to be very

easy – easy to understand, followed by the NAmE male voice (72.6%), AusE female voice (59.4%), NZE female voice (51.9%), AusE male voice (45.3%). The three other voices –UK female, UK male and NZ male- range lower. The UK male was perceived as very easy-easy to understand by 30.2% of the respondents, the UK female by 28.3% of the respondents and the NZ male voice was at the bottom position, perceived by only 20.7% of the respondents as very easy to easy to comprehend.

Considering the mean scores in the respondents' perception, the American female voice was perceived as the easiest to understand (with the mean score 5.36), followed by NAmE male voice (mean score 4.93), AusE female voice (mean score 4.69), NZE female voice (mean score 4.42), AusE male (mean score 4.13), UK female voice (mean score 3.57), UK male voice (mean score 3.39) and the NZE male voice being at the bottom place, perceived as the least easy to understand (mean score 3.13).

Generally, the Indonesian subjects scored themselves relatively higher compared to the Hong Kong students and Japanese students in relation to their perceived ease of comprehending the four English accents, as seen in the following table:

Table 12. Perceived ease of comprehension of eight voices

SCORE		NZE Female		NZE Male		Aaus E Female		Aus E Male	
		H	J	H	J	H	J	H	J
Very Difficult	1	4	1	25	17		1	4	
	2	11	15	39	29	8	4	15	12
	3	39	29	20	25	45	17	41	22
	4	33	29	11	17	35	35	27	27
	5	11	23	5	8	11	29	11	31
Very Easy	6	3	3		3	2	15	3	8
Missing data			2				3		
	MEAN	3.44	3.67	2.32	2.77	3.52	4.32	3.33	4.02
SCORE		**NAm Female**		**NAm Male**		**EE Female**		**EE Male**	
		H	**J**	**H**	**J**	**H**	**J**	**H**	**J**
Very Difficult	1	3	1	1		8	6	7	4
	2	5		5	2	18	21	39	17
	3	9	5	21	6	47	39	37	36
	4	29	16	36	21	19	17	12	22
	5	40	29	28	29	8	12	5	16
Very Easy	6	13	50	8	42		5		5
Missing data					1	1		1	1
	MEAN	4.39	5.22	4.08	5.03	3.01	3.22	2.70	3.46

Created by: Owen Baxter, Modified: 25 Jun 2002, Made with Macintosh

http://www.otago.ac.nz/anthropology/linguistic/results/Hk.html. Similatly, the NAmE voices were perceived as the easiest to understand by the Japanese students, which was followed by the two AusE voices and the NZE female voice, the UK male and female voice, and the NZE male voice at the lowest position. The Hong Kong students, like the Indonesian students, perceived the two American voices as the easiest to understand, followed by Aus female, NZE female, AusE male, UK female and NZE male voice.

CONCLUSION

Using the stimulus tape and questionnaire designed by Donn Bayard, this study seeks to reveal the Indonesian EFL students' perception towards the four English accents–Near Received Pronunciation, General North American, Australian and New Zealand–in identifying and comprehending the different accents of English.

The findings show that the Australian, New Zealand and the UK voices were poorly identified, most of which were identified as American English, the NZE male voice being at the bottom place. However, the two American voices were correctly identified by most of the respondents. In the same way the American accents were perceived as the easiest to understand, whereas the NZE male voice was perceived as the least easy to comprehend.

This implies that the students are more familiar with the American accent, which may be related to their exposure to the American accent through the electronic media, TV and films. All the respondents, except four respondents, spent a lot of time watching un-dubbed English language TV/films, almost all of which were using American English, seen from their three most watched un-dubbed English programs. This exposure to the American accent may contribute to their accent identification and their perceived ease of comprehending the American voices. About three fourths of the respondents could be able to identify the American accent. Similarly, most of the respondents perceived the American voices as the easiest to understand. On the other hand, the three other accents were poorly identified and range lower in the students' perception of their relative ease of comprehension, with the English voices range a little higher in the students' accent guesses and perceived ease of comprehension. This may also be related to their exposure to the English accents through the media of TV and films watched by the

students. There were few in English accent but none in Australian or New Zealand English.

The results of this study, giving some inputs concerning the Indonesian EFL students' perception towards the four English accents and their perceived ease of comprehending them, may be taken into consideration in syllabus design for Indonesian EFL learners.

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