Research on Identification and Attitudes Towards Varieties of English

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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Study Programme: Double Major MA Study Programme in English Language and Literature and German Language and Literature – Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Filip Alić

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Istraživanje o identifikaciji i stavovima vezanim uz varijante engleskog jezika

Diplomski rad

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Abstract

The present study focuses on students' attitudes towards different English varieties, while also testing how precise they can be in correctly identifying them. A questionnaire was used to elicit language attitudes from 68 first-year students in the dimensions of prestige, social closeness, and linguistic attractiveness. The findings show that the participants perceive the South English variety as the most prestigious and the most linguistically attractive one, while the Scottish variety was perceived as the most socially close to our participants. The Croatian speaker was the most correctly identified, but he was also one of the most poorly rated in the dimensions of prestige, social closeness, and linguistic attractiveness. The Northern Irish variety was the most misidentified one. The participants would predominantly like to speak with either British accent or American accent, and the South England variety is, they believe, the most suitable for Croatian ELF teachers.

Key words: accent, dialect, English variety, language identification, language attitude

Sažetak

Provedeno istraživanje usredotočeno je na stav studenata prema varijetetima engleskog jezika, testirajući pritom s kojom ih preciznošću mogu prepoznati. Kako bi se utvrdio stav 68 studenata prve godine studija upotrjebljen je upitnik s kriterijima: prestiž, društvena bliskost i lingvistički afinitet. Rezultati pokazuju da sudionici percipiraju varijetet koji se govori u Južnoj Engleskoj kao onaj koji uživa najviše prestiža i koji je jezično najdopadljiviji. S druge strane, varijetet koji se govori u Škotskoj percipiran je kao društveno najbliži sudionicima ovog istraživanja. Izvornog govornika hrvatskog jezika prepoznao je najveći broj sudionika, no on je ujedno bio i najlošije ocijenjen prema kriterijima prestiža, društvene bliskosti i dopadljivosti jezika. Varijetet engleskog jezika koji se govori u Sjevernoj Irskoj najviše je puta bio pogrešno prepoznat. Sudionici bi pretežno željeli govoriti britanskim ili američkim naglaskom, dok varijetet engleskog jezika koji se govori u Južnoj Engleskoj smatraju najprimjerenijim hrvatskim nastavnicima engleskog jezika kao stranog jezika.

Ključne riječi: naglasak, dijalekt, varijetet engleskog jezika, jezična prepoznatljivost, stav prema jeziku

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1. Introduction

Language is often viewed merely as a means to communicate, that is to convey information from one person to another. Even Cambridge Dictionary defines it as "a system of communication consisting of sounds, words, and grammar", yet it is much more complicated than that. Even if people do speak the same language, it is not guaranteed that they will be able to communicate. English is the official language of both the United Kingdom and the USA, yet some Americans will not understand if an individual from London says "bonnet" or "jumper", even though these words are a part of the standard British English. Engel and Whitehead (1996) claim that "Language is always changing gradually" (p. 37), and this resulted in linguists coining terms such as accent, dialect, and language variety.

These linguistic concepts will be thoroughly explained in the theoretical part of this study. They need to be understood in order to fully comprehend the aims of this study. Because language is always evolving and there are more and more "types" of English, people tend to view these varieties differently. These attitudes will also be explored to see if there is a certain pattern present, if students generally like or dislike a specific variety, and compared with previous studies done on the topic. The paper will also reveal what English variety students think they speak, thus analysing the perception of their own accent. They will also describe what kind of English they would like to speak, once again eliciting their honest opinions towards different language varieties. Next, we will try to identify various English varieties in order to determine what kind of varieties they are familiar with. The results will be presented with a final observation regarding the suitability of the speakers as potential EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers.

Considering English is spoken around the world and the number of speakers is growing by the minute, this data could be essential. Students of the English language should be exposed to as many varieties as possible to avoid misconceptions such as one form of English being the "correct" or the "standard" one. Hughes, Trudgill, and Watt (2012) argue that this has already happened, stating younger generations associate RP (Received Pronunciation, generally labelled as British English) with "affectation, social snobbery, arrogance, aloofness…" (p. 5). This study will try to determine what the participants feel about a particular variety and whether they can identify the speaker of a particular variety.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Accent

To understand the work that has been done in this study, one must understand the key terms surrounding the topic. Many linguists define the term accent in a similar way. Collins and Mees (2013) simply explain it as "several ways in which the language can be pronounced" (p. 2), while Levis and Zhou (2018) describe it as "socially significant bundles of phonetic characteristics" (p. 1). Most linguists agree that accent is "purely the sound you make when you talk, your pronunciation." (Bauer, 2002, p. 2). A common misconception among the general public is that someone has either too much accent or has none at all, where both claims are false. Firstly, having too much accent is simply not possible. Rather, this phrase implicates that a non-native speaker pronounces words differently from the so-called "standard" English such as RP (Received Pronunciation) or GA/GenAm (General American). These accents are often considered to be the "correct" way to speak, especially RP, considering the translation of the term "received" as either "socially acceptable" (Collins and Mees, 2013, p. 3) or "accepted in the most polite circles of society" (Hughes, Trudgill, and Watt, 2012, p. 3). Even though RP is described by many linguists and a lot of students as prestigious and socially acceptable (cf. Paunović 2009; Coupland and Bishop 2007; Margić & Širola 2014; Ladegaard and Sachdev 2006), Levis and Zhou (2018) note that "no accent is linguistically superior" (p. 1). Secondly, the notion that somebody does not have an accent is also impossible, "since everybody has a pronunciation of their language, everybody has an accent" (Bauer, 2002, pp. 2-3). The way people speak can describe them as an individual and Matsuda (1991) explains this as following:

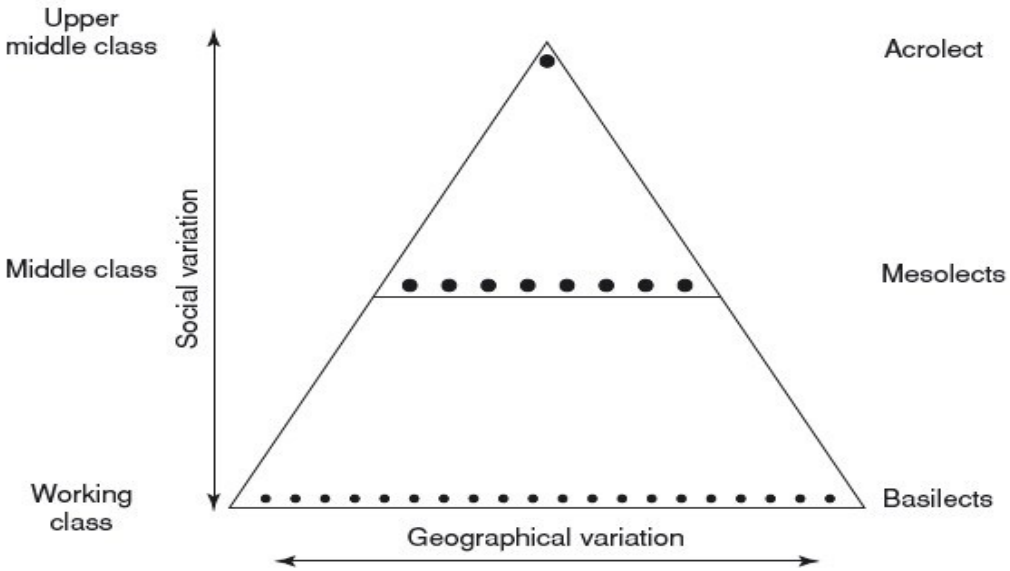
> Your accent carries the story of who you are – who first held you and talked to you … where you have lived … the language you know, your ethnicity … your class position: traces of your life and identity are woven into your pronunciation. (as cited in Levis and Zhou, 2018, pp. 1-2)

According to Collins and Mees (2013) we can presumably determine through a person's accent where they come from and what social group (social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, age) they belong to. They classify this as regional variation and social variation, respectively. Regional variation is self-explanatory, with certain accents being present exclusively in certain

countries/regions/cities and this categorisation should be accepted without question. However, Collins and Mees (2013) also state that the social variation is controversial to some extent, as things usually are when social classes are discussed. Moreover, they divide this variation even further into three groups – basilects, mesolects, and acrolects. Basilects, the wide-ranging local accents, are the accents of the working class. Acrolects are accents associated with the most prestigious class, with RP being the best example for this group. Everything in between

Figure 1.

The Sociolinguistic Pyramid (Collins and Mees, 2013, p. 3)



these two groups fall into mesolects, accents of the middle class. Collins and Mees (2013) call this the sociolinguistic pyramid (Figure 1), with the bottom of the shape (basilects) being the widest, the middle part (mesolects) being narrower, and the top (acrolects) converging into a single point.

This theory presumes that we could geographically pinpoint a person through his accent if the individual is a part of the working class, while a person who speaks RP could only be identified as upper middle class and coming from England. Trudgill (2013) further explain this in an example:

> Thus, an unskilled manual worker might be recognisable by anybody having the appropriate sort of linguistic knowledge as coming from Bristol, a non-manual worker as coming from the West Country, a middle-class professional person as coming from somewhere in the south of England, and an upper-middle class RP speaker as coming simply from England, even if all of them had their origins in Bristol. (p. 287)

The way people pronounce whilst using the English language is not just a part of language learning, it is rather a form of expressing oneself as an individual.

2.2. Dialect

Before talking about dialects and their role in phonetics and phonology, it should be properly defined. Bauer (2002) describes it as "a kind of language which identifies you as belonging to a particular group of people." (p. 3). When talking about dialects, linguists most often mention Standard English as an example, similar to when talking about accents and mentioning RP. This is by no means an accident, seeing as most RP speakers also have a Standard English dialect. However, "most users of Standard English have regional accents." (Hughes, Trudgill, and Watt 2012, p. 13), which is one example of the difference between an accent and a dialect. Hughes, Trudgill, and Watt (2012) also describe the term dialect more closely, depicting it as "varieties distinguished from each other by differences of grammar (morphology and syntax) and vocabulary (lexis)." (p. 13). When talking about an accent, linguists are referring to the way the speaker speaks (pronunciation), and when talking about a dialect, they are focusing on what the speaker is saying (vocabulary and grammar).

Even though the distinction between accent and dialect is mostly clear, linguists had a hard time defining the position of a dialect within a language ever since the term dialect first appeared "in the Renaissance, as a learned loan from Greek." (Haugen, 1966, p. 922). In the 17th century the Greek had multiple types of languages that they used in literature, "Ionic for history, Doric for the choral lyric, and Attic for tragedy." (Haugen, 1966, p. 923). Haugen (1966) also explains how these types of languages were also regional, meaning the Greek language consisted of multiple "variations" of the same language, mainly differing in the written form. Thus, the term dialect was coined to hinder the possibility of any slight variation in speaking or writing to be perceived as an entirely new language. This distinction became somewhat ambiguous as languages, and our understanding about them, change. "Mutual comprehensibility" (Bauer, 2002, p. 4) is frequently used to divide the language and dialect, which states "if two speakers understand each other, they

speak the same language." (Bauer, 2002, p. 4). This claim has its faults when it is used to draw a line between language and dialect. People from Croatia, Serbia, and Bosna and Hercegovina all speak different languages, yet can understand each other and communicate normally. On the other hand, an individual from Texas would have a hard time understanding someone from Glasgow, and yet they both speak English. Haugen (1966) tries to distinguish language and dialect by explaining that a dialect is always a part of a language, with the former being the subordinate term and the latter being superordinate. With this in mind, he concludes that "every dialect is a language, but not every language is a dialect." (p. 923).

As with accents, dialects also have a social aspect. According to Hughes, Trudgill, and Watt (2012) "the higher people are on the social scale, the fewer of these regional forms their speech will exhibit." (p. 18), implying a person coming from the upper middle class will have a less noticeable dialect than a working class individual. Linking this to the discussion about accents in the previous chapter, a highly prestigious person would, in theory, speak RP and use the Standard English as a dialect. With this in mind, it is not surprising that people generally associate having a dialect with lower social class. Haugen (1966) explains, that in the United States the word dialect is often associated with "rural speech" (p. 924) and can label a person as a working class citizen, even though that is not the case. Because of this negative connotation, no one ever uses phrases such as New York dialect or Texas dialect. Nevertheless, when talking about English varieties, terms like "Lancashire dialect" or "Irish dialect" (Haugen, 1966, p. 924) are frequently used.

It is also a common misconception that a person only speaks one dialect, when in reality everyone uses at least two in their day to day lives. Hughes, Trudgill, and Watt (2012) explain this phenomenon by looking at how we use the English language. People do not speak the same way when talking to their superiors at work, and when sitting at the dinner table talking to their friends and family. This also implies written language, denoting a big difference between texting a friend and writing an e-mail to a professor. Some people even use multiple dialects in a scenario where they either have to or want to fit into multiple social groups.

2.3. Language Variety

The term language variety can be problematic to define, especially when compared to accent and dialect. Linguist sometimes use it interchangeably with accent or dialect, thus confusing those who want to know if there really is a difference. When the term variety is used in the present study, it refers to the definition from Collins and Mees (2013), where they describe it as "a term covering

both accent and dialect, referring to variation in language usage between various groups of people." (Collins and Mees, 2013, p. 307) in their glossary. This would mean that a variety is a blanket term for both dialect and accent, thus avoiding the need to specify if some is talking about both terms or just one of them. The best and the easiest example would be the British English variety, which consist of Received Pronunciation (accent) and Standard English (dialect). Because language variety covers concepts that are often subject to change and are not always perfectly defined, its definition varies. According to Bauer (2002):

> We can use 'variety' to mean a language, a dialect, an idiolect or an accent; it is a term which encompasses all of these. The term 'variety' is an academic term used for any kind of language production, whether we are viewing it as being determined by region, by gender, by social class, by age or by our own inimitable individual characteristics. (p. 4)

Looking at Bauer's (2002) statement, it obviously depicts a slight deviation from the first definition. However, both explanations describe that the term language variety encompasses multiple concepts that relate to language production (accent, dialect, idiolect, language).

Quirk (1990) also talks about English varieties and describes what he calls "a taxonomy of varieties of English" (p. 5). First he splits varieties into two main groups – use related and user related. He explains that most English speakers wield multiple use related varieties, while only having one user related. He exemplifies "legal English", "computer English", and "literary English" (p. 5) as use related, while American and British English as user related. Second, he further divides user related varieties into ethnopolitical and linguistic, the former being the social and the latter being the linguistic influence on a variety. Furthermore, linguistic varieties are then described as being either native or non-native. Native varieties include all the speakers with their L1 being English (American English, Australian English, British English…), and non-native speakers having mastered the English language as their second or foreign language. Quirk (1990) concludes his taxonomy with a final distinction, separating native varieties as non-institutionalised and institutionalised. He defines the institutionalised varieties as "being fully described and with defined standards observed by the institutions of state." (p. 6). The only examples of institutionalised varieties are American English, British English, and to some extent Australian English as these three have gone through language standardisation and can be put into this category. Every other variety that deviates from this description is considered non-institutionalised.

3. The Research Study

3.1. Aim and Purpose

There were multiple aims in this study. The first one was to determine a first-year student's attitudes towards different English varieties (see **3.3.2**). The focus was to see the students' perception of these varieties and what social traits the students would assign by merely listening to a short audio example of said English varieties. The second aim of this study was to find out how well the students can identify the different varieties of the English language and if this process of identification influences the aforementioned attitudes of the students. Lastly, this study will also show which variety first-year students consider most well-suited and which the most ill-suited for an EFL teacher. As potential EFL teachers, this information could give us an insight into desirability of a particular accent and which accent could be placed more focus on in some courses.

3.2. Sample

There were 68 participants, all of whom were first-year students at the English Department of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. The group consisted of 15 (24%) male, 47 (74%) female, and 1 (2%) non-binary students. Their cumulative average age was 19.13 years and the average time of formal English learning was 12.41 years. None of the 68 participants have ever lived in an English speaking country. Because of the current global COVID-19 pandemic it was very difficult to simultaneously bring together a larger group of students due to the fact that most of the lectures were held online. The study wanted to encompass students from other years as well, but due to the restrictions at the time, first-year students were the only ones able to take part in the study.

3.3. Instrument

The participants were given a 20-page questionnaire (see **Appendix**). The questionnaires were completed anonymously. The items for the questionnaire (see **3.3.1** and **3.3.2**) were adapted from Paunović (2009), and several additional items (questions and varieties) were added by the author. The participants listened to the speakers from the following places: Australia, Birmingham, California, Croatia, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, South Africa, South England, and

Southern USA. Also, both the author and the advisor agreed the adjective trait "skilful", found in Paunović's questionnaire, will be omitted from this study. In order to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data, the items in the questionnaire consisted of: a) attitude scales presented on a five-point Likert scale (1= I strongly disagree; 5= I strongly agree), b) questions which asked the participants to determine how suitable the speaker would be as an EFL teacher and how coherently the participant understood the speaker. Again, five-point Likert scale was used (1= not at all; 5= completely). There were c) open-ended questions, one of which the participant had to explain why would or would not the speaker be a suitable EFL teacher and the second question asked the participant to assume where the speaker comes from. There was, d) one multiple-choice question for every speaker, where the participants were asked to determine the speaker's place of origin. The participants listened to the audio recordings of 10 different speakers in order to determine the speaker's place of origin, but to avoid random guesses the questionnaire listed 15 places for participants to choose from (we included Canada, India, Jamaica, New Zealand, New York.). The last part in the questionnaire elicited biodata (gender, age, number of years learning English, and if they ever lived in an English speaking country).

3.3.1. Choice of Traits

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of 15 traits that were chosen to test and analyse the attitudes of the first-year students towards different English varieties. For the process of analysing the data, these traits were categorized into three main groups: **prestige** (educated, sophisticated elegant, intelligent, reliable, successful, respected), **social closeness** (friendly, honest, helpful, interesting/good company, witty/sense of humour), and **linguistic attractiveness** (communicative, pleasant to listen to, eloquent).

3.3.2. Choice of Varieties

The choice of the varieties was mostly taken from Paunović (2009), with several changes. The English varieties used in the study were presented in this particular order to the participants, who listened to the speakers coming from: Australia, Birmingham, California, Croatia, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, South Africa, South England, and Southern USA. All of the speakers were male and all of the recordings were downloaded from the Speech Accent Archive. The Croatian speaker was the only EFL speaker present in the varieties selection. Croatian speaker was selected for obvious reasons. Birmingham is the only city among the countries or regions in the

roster, because the author of this study insisted on it specifically. Previous research (Coupland and Bishop, 2007) showed that the Brummie accent was often evaluated below average in terms of prestige and social attractiveness. In recent years Birmingham accent has gotten a lot more popular in the mainstream media because of the TV series *Peaky Blinders* which is set in 1900s Birmingham, and because the author is surrounded by fans of the aforementioned TV series the accent was included in this study. We wanted to see if there was any significant difference regarding the attitude of our participants towards the Brummie accent.

The study was conducted in a classroom at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek, where every student received a paper-based copy of the questionnaire. Because of the Covid-19 restrictions, only 15 students were questioned at a time. The questionnaire took about 35 minutes to complete.

3.3. Procedure

Before the start, every student received their copy of the questionnaire and then was given instructions on how the study will be conducted. The students had to listen to 10 speakers reading out the same text, that consisted out of 69 words, titled "Please, call Stella". Firstly, they would listen to the speaker of a particular variety and answer 15 attitude scales which described various social traits. As they were listening to the recording, they would respond quickly by circling on a scale from 1 to 5 how much they associated the social traits with the variety of English they were listening at the time. After the first listening there was a pause of about 15-30 seconds, and then the same audio recording would be played again, but this time the participants had to determine the origin of the speaker. The same procedure was performed for all ten speakers. The last part of the questionnaire asked the students to state what kind of accent they think they have and what kind of accent they would like to have.

The results of the study were analysed through the program IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor. The quantitative data analysis included standard descriptive statistics.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Language Attitude

The first part of the questionnaire consisted out of listening to an audio recording of one of the speakers and promptly, without second-guessing oneself, circling numbers 1 to 5 on a Likert scale. Through these numbers, the attitudes towards ten different English varieties can be determined. While analysing the data, the 15 traits were separated into three dimensions: prestige, social closeness, and linguistic attractiveness.

4.1.1. Prestige

Table 1

The Mean Score of All Ten Varieties Ranked by Prestige

Prestige					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
South England	68	2.43	5.00	4.0819	.71846
California	68	1.43	5.00	3.4916	.72817
South Africa	68	1.57	5.00	3.4769	.79429
Australia	67	2.29	5.00	3.4229	.69104
Ireland	68	1.71	5.00	3.2059	.64524
Scotland	68	1.29	4.86	3.1695	.79653
Birmingham	68	1.57	4.86	2.8995	.75282
Southern USA	68	1.00	5.00	2.8676	.83201
Northern Ireland	68	1.00	5.00	2.5508	.70950
Croatia	68	1.00	3.43	2.1989	.62684
Valid N (listwise)	67				

Looking at the prestige dimension, it is of no surprise that the speaker from South England (an English variety often referred to as 'Received Pronunciation') had the best score in this category (M = 4.08). This is in line with prior studies that were conducted. Ladegaard and Sachdev (2008) obtained similar data, where RP received the best scores relating to social status and competence. Paunović (2009) had similar findings, where the speaker from South England scored highest in this dimension and the Southern American variety scored the lowest in the same category. In this study Southern USA variety also scored below the average (2.867), just above Northern Ireland (2.550) and Croatia (2.198). Drljača Margić and Širola (2014) also presented similar findings in

their study, but they did not use the same form of data analysis as this study or Paunović (2009), where they determined language attitude through social traits, but rather through adjectives associated with the different varieties. British and American English were mostly described as "standard" and "correct", but more participants described American English as "simple" and "informal".

Looking at the other speakers in the present study, the second highest rated variety is in fact California (*M*= 3.491), an American accent. Seeing as the Californian variety has an immense influence on EFL students outside of the classroom, it is not surprising that it was favoured in the dimension of prestige. However, this is not the case in Paunović's research (2009), where the speaker from California was ranked 5th in the prestige domain. South Africa seems to be considered as one of the more prestigious varieties, receiving both in present study and the one done by Paunović (2009) a higher than average score (*M* =3.476*)*. This could be because South African accent and South England accent share some similarities, meaning that participants possibly associate it with some form of a "British accent" and rank it higher in the prestige dimension. Irish (*M* = 3.205) and Scottish speakers (*M* = 3.169) find themselves in the middle of the group, suggesting participants find them neither prestigious nor non-prestigious. Furthermore, Birmingham accent was rated slightly higher than expected (*M* = 2.899), scoring just above the speaker from Southern USA, Northern Ireland, and Croatia. Coupland and Bishop (2007) tested approximately 140,000 individuals through an online survey to see what the attitudes towards 34 different varieties are with regard to social attractiveness and prestige. Out of all 34 varieties, Birmingham scored the lowest in both social attractiveness and prestige. It would seem that Croatian first-year students do not see it as such a non-prestigious and socially unattractive accent as the general British public does. In contrast to this fact, the students are pretty negative to their own accent, i.e. the speaker from their own country, Croatia. Speaker from Northern Ireland (*M* = 2.550) scored poorly, but Croatian speaker (*M* = 2.198) was even below that. The research on identification of and attitude on Croglish does not exist to this point, so we were unable to compare the Croatian speaker's results with any data. Drljača Margić and Širola (2014) talk about International English being perceived as 'simple', 'standard' and 'correct', but it is unclear what kind of speaker uses this variety. It is possible that the participants recognised their own accent and deliberately rated it with a low score, depicting how non-standard they perceive it to be.

4.1.2 Social Closeness

Table 2

The Mean Score of All Ten Varieties Ranked by Social Closeness

Social Closeness					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Scotland	68	1.40	5.00	3.7926	.76066
Australia	68	1.20	5.00	3.7071	.72256
Ireland	67	2.20	5.00	3.6784	.70185
South England	68	2.20	5.00	3.5873	.71425
Southern USA	68	1.00	5.00	3.4735	.98156
South Africa	68	1.80	5.00	3.4324	.68555
California	68	1.00	5.00	3.3529	.77642
Northern Ireland	68	1.20	5.00	3.0475	.89749
Croatia	68	1.00	4.40	2.6588	.85208
Birmingham	68	1.00	5.00	2.3824	.68304
Valid N (listwise)	67				

Looking at Table 2, the difference in perception between prestige and social attractiveness is quite noticeable. This time the speaker from Scotland (*M* = 3.792) is perceived as having the most socially attractive variety and the speaker from Birmingham (*M* = 2.382) as the one with the most unattractive of the varieties. These results are comparable to Ladegaard and Sachdev (2008), where they stated that the Scottish speaker was the overall most favourable on the social attractiveness (social closeness) dimension. In addition, Coupland and Bishop (2007) got, to some extent, similar results as this study in which the speaker from Edinburgh was one of the top five among the aforementioned 34 varieties. Similarly, the speaker from the present study is originally from Edinburgh as well, as the records on the Speech Accent Archive website show. Paunović (2009) also had a Scottish variety, but it did not rank that high as in the previously mentioned research.

After the Scottish speaker next best ranked is Australian speaker (*M* = 3.707), and these results are similar to Paunović's study (2009), where the Australian variety scored the most for the social closeness dimension. On the other hand, Drljača Margić and Širola (2014) note that the Australian accent was described mostly as "exotic" and to some extent "correct". They explain that participants more often attribute the notion of exoticism to lesser-known varieties thus resorting

to stereotypes. Looking at the Table 2, Irish English (*M* = 3.678) was also looked upon favourably, which, we believe, is not that surprising. Croatia and Ireland do not have a lot in common, linguistically or culturally, but there has been a connection between these countries, especially in the last decade. A lot of Croats emigrate to Ireland to find a job and a lot of people have family there because of it. Perhaps this shift has changed the perception of the Irish speakers from the Croatian standpoint, as well as Irish English being more familiar to Croatian speakers than some other versions of English.

The Southern England speaker (*M* = 3.587) again scores mostly positively in this dimension, contributing once again to the fact that it is one of the most favourable varieties for EFL learners. For the speakers from Southern USA (*M* = 3.473), South Africa (*M* = 3.432), California (*M* = 3.352), and Northern Ireland (*M* = 3.047) our participants had neutral attitudes towards the proposed traits and they received more of an average result. The Croatian speaker was once again rated with almost the lowest grades, labelling them mostly as non-prestigious and socially distant. The lowest ranking accent in this dimension is Birmingham variety. This data is in line with Coupland and Bishop's (2007) study, where Croatian participants have almost the same perception of the Birmingham variety as the participants from the United Kingdom. Over the last five years the accent has been, to some extent, looked upon more favourably due to the TV series *Peaky Blinders*, especially to the fans of the series, which led the author to believe that it would rank much higher on at least one of the dimensions found in this study.

4.1.3. Linguistic Attractiveness

Table 3

The Mean Score of All Ten Varieties Ranked by Linguistic Attractiveness

Linguistic attractiveness					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
South England	68	2.33	5.00	4.0858	.72476
Ireland	67	1.33	5.00	3.5423	.85642
California	68	1.00	5.00	3.5221	.87479
Australia	67	2.00	5.00	3.5124	.87295
Scotland	68	1.33	5.00	3.4363	.92237
South Africa	68	1.67	5.00	3.4363	.86436
Southern USA	68	1.00	5.00	3.1495	1.00130
Birmingham	68	1.00	5.00	2.5049	.84149
Northern Ireland	68	1.00	5.00	2.4975	.83730
Croatia	68	1.00	3.67	2.0392	.72512
Valid N (listwise)	66				

The next table depicts the dimension of personal integrity as part of the language attitude research. Yet again, speaker from south of England (*M* = 4.085) scored extremely positively and is thus ranked number one, same as in the first dimension, prestige. Similarly, Irish English (*M* = 3.542) and Californian (*M* = 3.522) have also been very favourably ranked when looking at all the three dimensions. This mostly concurs with Paunović's (2009) results, where speakers from South England and Australia have been positively scored and Scottish remained for most of the dimensions neutral, i.e. somewhere in the middle position. Present study likewise shows Scottish accent (*M* = 3.436) in almost the same position, with people giving it an average score. Following the speaker from Scotland are the speakers from South Africa (*M* = 3.436) and Southern USA (*M* = 3.149), with average scores, and finally at the bottom of the table there are, yet again, Birmingham accent (*M* = 2.504), Croatian speaker (*M* = 2.039), and the speaker from Northern Ireland (*M* = 2.497). These three varieties are constantly rated negatively when it comes to language attitude, which is not surprising considering that the speaker from Croatia is the only

EFL speaker of the ten varieties in this study and Northern Ireland and Birmingham have rated negatively in previous research (cf. Paunović 2009; Coupland and Bishop 2007).

In Table 1 and Table 3 the ranking of varieties is rather similar with no noticeable variation, where speakers from South England, Ireland, California, and Australia are ranked above-average, those from Scotland and South Africa mostly average, and speakers from Southern USA, Northern Ireland, Birmingham, and Croatia below average. Comparing the three dimensions, Table 2 has different scoring for varieties, considering the obtained results about attitudes of social closeness. In this case, Scottish accent was ranked very positively and the most favourable variety, speaker from South England, has a score somewhere in-between above-average and average. Lastly, Californian speaker was 7th in terms of social closeness, as opposed to 2nd in prestige and 3rd in linguistic attractiveness, which depicts a visible difference between the three dimensions. The particular rating of Scottish accent is in line with the results presented by Paunović (2009), where she specifically comments "The most striking difference between their rankings on social status and social closeness occurred with the speakers from Scotland…" (p. 534).

4.2. Choice of Personal Variety

When discussing the participants' own accent and which variety they would prefer to speak, the results do not vary that much from the attitudes about various variety traits already established in this study. At the beginning of the questionnaire every student had to write the following information: what kind of accent they have, what kind of accent they would like to have, and to name a reason why they prefer this exact accent.

Table 4

Participant's Personal Varieties Ranked by Mean Score

Personal variety				
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
American	43	63.2	69.4	85.5
Croatian	8	11.8	12.9	16.1
Slavic	4	5.9	6.5	95.2
New York	2	2.9	3.2	3.2
German	2	2.9	3.2	88.7
British	2	2.9	3.2	100.0
Russian	1	1.5	1.6	96.8
Total	62	91.2	100.0	
Missing	6	8.8		

As expected, most participants believe they have American accent, with 43 (63.2%) of them describing it as their own accent, results that strongly resonate Paunović's (2009) findings. Furthermore, Croatian English was noted down by 8 (11.8%) students, which is quite interesting when comparing these results to Paunović's (2009) study. When she depicts the choice of personal variety by first-year students, she notes that 50% of them described their accent as Serbian or neutral. This shows a noteworthy difference between Croatian first-year students, of which only 11.8% believe that they speak with the Croatian variety, while half of Serbian first-year students show a far more significant influence of their first language on their English. Nevertheless, 4 (5.9%) defined their personal variety as Slavic, presumably implying they speak some sort of a combination between their own native language and English. The rest of the participants were somewhat diverse in their statements, with 2 (2.9%) of them picking the New York accent as their own, 2 (2.9%) claiming that they speak English with German accent, 2 (2.9%) speak British English, and 1 (1.5%) participant claims that they have Russian accent. It is important to note that the two students that depicted their own accent as German are most likely also students from the German Department of the same Faculty in Osijek, possibly leading them to believe that their English was influenced by their knowledge of the German language. Only 2.9% of the participants find that their accent sounds as a British one, far less than the 14.9% in the study from Paunović

(2009). When looking at Table 4, one could more effectively group the answers given by the students. Most of them presumably consider American and the New York accent practically the same variety, and the same goes for Croatian, Slavic, and Russian. The latter group could be described as "foreign" or "not like American or British".

After identifying what their own accent is, the participants were asked to write down what accent they would like to have, which yielded predictable results. The numbers perfectly line up with previous research from Paunović (2009), Drljača Margić and Širola (2014), and Ladegaard and Sachdev (2008), whose findings also suggest that the majority of the participants (in this study 52.9%) prefer the British accent as their own. Additionally, the second most preferred accent, the American accent (25%), also corresponds with the aforementioned research. Out of the 68 participants, 5 of them chose Australian (7.4%) as the accent they would like to have and the rest of the group selected the following accents: Scottish (7.4%), Italian (1.5%), Californian (1.5%), Polish (1.5%), and French (1.5%). A small minority depicted their preferred accent as something "different", while the majority (77.9%) chose either British or American English, viewed most often as the "Standard English" according to Paunović (2009). Paunović (2009) similarly concludes that these findings show to which extent the students feel that British English represents an unattainable but desirable "standard".

4.2.1. Reasons Behind the Preferred Accent

The students also had to explain why they chose the accent that they did by answering an open-ended question. Not all the students participated in this task, so instead of 68 participants, 56 answers will be presented, as 12 participants choose not to specify the reasons behind their preferred accent. These answers were categorized by their context and analysed in SPSS through descriptive statistics analysis and the results can be seen in Table 5

Table 5

Frequency of Participants' Explanation of Their Preferred Accent

Reason for the preferred accent								
	British	**Australian**	**American**	**Italian**	**Californian**	**Scottish**	**Polish**	**French**
Sophisticated	5	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Elegant	6	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Nice	7	3	/	/	/	/	/	/
Attractive	2	1	1	/	/	/	/	/
the Best	/	/	1	/	1	/	/	/
Eloquent	/	/	1	/	/	1	/	/
Cool	3	/	1	/	/	/	/	1
Funny	/	/	/	/	/	/	1	/
Different	1	/	/	/	/	1	/	/
Sounds Good	4	/	4	1	/	/	/	/
Standard	1	/	1	/	/	/	/	/
Fancy	2	1	/	/	/	/	/	/
Native-like Proficiency	1	/	4	/	/	/	/	/

Looking at the results, it is clear that most of the comments regarding the preferred accent are describing either British or American English, with a couple of them depicting the rest. The participants answered this open-ended question with a full sentence, but for the sake of data analysis all of the responses were categorizes into the following 13 descriptors: sophisticated, elegant, nice, attractive, the best, eloquent, cool, funny, different, sounds good, standard, fancy, and native-like proficiency. With British English being the favourite accent, it also received the most comments, ranging from "sophisticated", "elegant", and "attractive" all the way to "sounds good", and "standard". It is important to note the strong similarity with Paunović (2009), where British English was also exclusively described as "sophisticated", followed with descriptors such as "beautiful" and "I just like it". Furthermore, Drljača Margić and Širola (2014) have examples in their work of students labelling British as "ideal" and "standard" or "natural". American was also associated with descriptors like "sounds good" and "native-like proficiency", indicating students' perception of the American accent as proficient and natural, where British seems to carry higher social status and has more pleasing aesthetic value. This portrayal of American English is

not that surprising considering how much of an impact American media has on the world, with Croatia being no exception. Ladegaard and Sachdev (2008) describe this phenomenon with their students from Denmark, but the same conclusion can be said for the students in the present study:

> The participants in our study come from a small country which, seen from an international perspective, has relatively little political power and media attention, and which is relatively homogeneous, both culturally, socially and ethnically. Consequently, we would argue that these perceptions of America could in fact be more appropriately seen as cultural characteristics of the observer rather than of the object of observation, i.e. they reflect what Denmark is not, rather than what America is… (p. 102)

Table 5 also shows the Australian accent is favoured by 5 participants, with descriptors such as "nice", "attractive", and "fancy". Scottish was described as "different" and "eloquent" by 2 participants. Finally, Italian, Californian, Polish, and French all received just one comment, ranging from "sounds good" to "the best" and "cool". Polish was the only accent that was described as "funny" out of 8 accents that were mentioned being spoken by the participants.

4.3. Language Identification

After we have established participant's attitudes about certain traits, we wanted the students to identify the English variety they just heard. The results vary from variety to variety, but there is a clear distinction between the ones they have clearly recognized and the rest. The most recognized and precisely identified was the Croatian variety (77%), which comes as no surprise seeing that, firstly, it is their first language and secondly it is the only EFL speaker out of all the varieties in the present study. Further findings are mostly in line with previous research (cf. Paunović 2009; Jarvella et al. 2001), with American English (Southern USA 72%) being one of the most recognized varieties. One key difference between this study and Paunović's (2009) is, although both Scottish and South England speakers were fairly well identified, Scotland (with 42% of correct identification answers) outranks South England (33% of our participants correctly identified the speaker) in the present study. Interestingly enough, the participants in the Paunović (2009) study have correctly identified the South England speaker almost twice as often (60%) when compared to the present study (33%). Looking at the rest of the data, Birmingham accent was recognized more than the author expected (27%), perhaps suggesting that popular media did, indeed, have an influence on the students. It did not change the way they perceive it in terms of the tested traits, but maybe give them an auditory sensation of the accent, enough for them to

identify it to some extent. The rest of the varieties have mostly poor recognition ratio, with one out of four participants identifying Australian variety (25%) followed by Californian speaker (18%), Irish English (17%), South African (13%), and Northern Ireland variety (11%).

Table 6

Language Identification

Language Identification										
	Cro	**S USA**	**Sc**	**SE**	**Bir**	**Aus**	**Cal**	**Ir**	**SA**	**NI**
Croatia	50	/	1	/	1	/	2	1	1	1
Southern USA	/	46	1	/	2	4	12	9	4	1
Scotland	/	1	28	1	3	3	2	2	2	13
South England	/	1	1	21	15	19	2	2	9	5
Birmingham	/	/	3	14	17	8	5	5	8	2
Australia	/	5	3	1	4	17	2	1	4	3
California	/	2	/	/	1	3	13	8	4	/
Ireland	/	/	20	3	6	3	2	11	1	16
South Africa	2	1	1	/	/	/	/	1	9	4
Northern Ireland	/	1	4	2	6	2	1	7	6	7
Canada	/	/	/	11	/	3	11	5	3	/
India	11	/	/	/	/	/	/	1	2	6
Jamaica	2	2	3	1	1	/	/	2	1	3
New Zealand	/	1	1	3	5	3	1	4	11	3
New York	/	4	1	7	1	2	13	4	2	1

Table 6 portrays how well the students have identified the given varieties in the questionnaire, but it also shows what they have mistaken a particular variety for. Shaded areas present 5 places that were not represented by any speaker in our study, but were added to the list to avoid random guesses. This data also serves to some extent as an indicator of how they perceive the varieties, as Paunović (2009) explains that "misidentifications are more revealing than correct identifications" (p. 540). The Croatian speaker is the most recognised one, with fewest number of

misidentifications. Most students had no problems in recognizing this speaker, but those who were unable to pinpoint this speaker to Croatia almost exclusively chose the speaker to have the Indian accent, which is very peculiar. No research has been done on Croatian English in terms of identification, so we have nothing to compare it to. Croatian and Hindu have almost no linguistic similarities, nor do their respective English varieties, yet Croglish was often misidentified as Indian English. It probably has to do with how Croatian speaker was perceived by the participants. He is the only EFL speaker in the present study. Possible explanation could be found in the way Croatians pronounce the sound /r/. In Croatian English or Croglish /r/ tends to be realised by a flap or a trill sound (Josipović-Smojver, 2010), and this is often the case in Indian English as well. This possibly led to misidentification. Speakers from Ireland, South Africa and Northern Ireland were also sometimes misidentified with Indian English speaker, but this could be disregarded seeing that these three accents were misidentified with every possible accent in the study. It is possible that the students perceive the Indian speaker as an EFL speaker, even though English is one of the official languages in India. The Croatian English was also mistaken for Jamaican and South African (4 participants). Table 6 also shows the Southern USA variety being misidentified mostly for Australian and the New York accent. Despite the fact that New York and the Southern USA speaker display obvious phonetic differences, they are still both "American" accents. Seeing as Australian English shares some characteristics with the general "British English", it is unclear why the Southern USA accent was mistaken for Australian.

Scottish English was the third most recognised accent in the study. The participants circled Birmingham, Australia, and Northern Ireland, but majority of them mistook it for Irish. This is not surprising as both Scottish and Irish are Celtic languages and share a number of similarities. Out of the 68 participants, 41.2% correctly identified the Scottish accent, yet almost all of the remaining students perceived it as Irish English. Furthermore, there are some interesting numbers to observe in the cases of the Birmingham and South England variety. The South England variety has been identified far less when compared to Paunović's study (2009), where it was the second best recognized variety with 52.6% of correct identifications. In the present study it is in the 4th place with only 33% of the correct answers, but at the same time it was often misidentified with 2 other varieties, Birmingham and Canadian one. It is hard to explain why it was so often mistaken for the Canadian variety, but the Birmingham variety and the South English variety do have some similarities. Moreover, the Birmingham variety was also commonly mistaken for Southern English, indicating that the participants had a hard time telling them apart. When asked to identify the 2nd speaker (the speaker form Birmingham) during the study, 27% of the participants identified

it as the Birmingham variety, however 24% mistook it for the South England variety. Looking at it from a geographical standpoint, it does make sense why the two varieties seem to be mistaken for one another. The city of Birmingham is 200 km away from London and although this may seem far away, it is still much nearer than some other cities that were mentioned in this study. Aside from South England, Birmingham was also misidentified as multiple varieties including Irish, Northern Irish, and New Zealand. Out of 68 participants, 12 of them described the Birmingham variety as Irish and Northern Irish.

The rest of the varieties were more often misidentified than correctly identified, starting with 5th ranked, Australian variety. 25% of the students described it correctly as Australian, whereas 29% misidentified it as the South England variety. Considering Australia's British roots and the phonetic similarity between the two, these could be the reasons for the confusion between the South England and Australian variety. Californian was correctly identified 18% of the time and mistaken repeatedly for Southern USA (18%), Canada (17%), and New York (20%). Paunović (2009) describes a similar situation in her study, where the "participants operated with broad general constructs of "British" and "American" English, and were not familiar with regional accent differences." (p. 541). The participants in the present study recognised it that it is, in fact, an American accent, but they could not specify which region it was. In addition, when comparing once more the data from the Californian variety, the participants from the present study (18%) recognized it less often than in Paunović's (2009) study (24.6%). When looking at the Irish speaker, it is clear that the majority of the participants were not sure how to identify him, with 83% misidentification rate and the fact that this variety was mistaken for every single variety in the present study. This does fall in line with Jarvella et al. (2001) observation, with the Irish speaker being the "most difficult to place, being confused with each of the other three varieties at least this often." (p. 45). However, the findings in the present study contradict Jarvella et al. (2001) in regards of the "symmetric data" (p. 45) between the Scottish and the Irish speaker. In their study, the participants have regularly mistaken Irish for Scottish and vice versa, where in the present study only Scottish was mistaken for the Irish variety. Merely 2% of the students misidentified it as the Scottish variety, which is a small minority when compared to the other varieties it was misidentified as (Southern USA 14%, California 13%, Birmingham 7%, Canada 7%). The connection with the Northern Irish speaker is obvious, but misidentifications such as Southern USA and California remain unclear. The Northern Irish variety was also mistaken for Irish (25%), even more often than it was correctly identified (11%). This suggests that the students have noticed the similarities between the two varieties, yet were not able to identify them as Irish/Northern Irish.

The South African variety was also poorly recognized (13%) and the inconsistent misidentification implies that the students were mostly confused as to where to place it.

4.4. Suitability as an EFL Teacher

While listening to each English variety in the present study, the participants had to evaluate each speaker if they were suitable to be an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher. They had to circle a number ranging 1 to 5 (1= I strongly disagree; 5= I strongly agree) to indicate their own opinion on the matter. Looking at the previous studies done on this topic, students generally prefer a teacher with a native-like accent, while being more negative towards non-native-like accents. According to Mandarić (2016), 74% of the participants in her study either strongly agree or partially agree that a teacher should have a native-like accent. Furthermore, she concludes that "there is still a belief that the students would have a better accent if they were taught by native speakers of English, …" (p. 37). Similar findings can be observed by Buckingham (2014) and Luk (1998), where the majority of the participants prefer a native-like accent when listening to a teacher.

Table 7

The Mean Score of All Ten Varieties Ranked by Suitability as an EFL Teacher

Suitability as an EFL teacher					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
South England	67	1	5	4.28	.966
California	66	1	5	3.64	.939
South Africa	65	1	5	3.49	1.214
Ireland	65	1	5	3.17	.993
Australia	68	1	5	3.13	1.105
Scotland	67	1	5	2.94	1.290
Southern USA	67	1	5	2.91	1.164
Birmingham	66	1	5	2.35	1.045
Northern Ireland	65	1	5	2.09	1.027
Croatia	65	1	4	1.49	.687
Valid N	61				

In the present study, the students were not directly asked if they think that a teacher should have a native-like accent, but rather to evaluate the speakers as potential EFL teachers. The most favourable variety is the South English one (*M* = 4.28), a variety commonly described as linguistically attractive and prestigious (cf. Paunović 2009, Coupland and Bishop 2007, Ladegaard and Sachdev 2008, Drljača Margić and Širola 2014). Looking at the rest of the varieties in Table 7, a big difference in the mean score can be seen between the South English variety and the remaining varieties, with South England being rated much more positively than the rest. When compared to Paunović's research (2009), the South English variety is positively rated, but the most favourable variety in her study is the Australian one. In the present study the Australian speaker is ranked much more neutral, with a mean score of *M* = 3.13. Following South England in 2nd place is the Californian variety (*M* = 3.64), which is significantly higher than the Californian speaker in Paunović's (2009) study. The positive attitude towards this particular variety could be ascribed to the substantial exposure of this variety outside of the classroom, with a considerable portion of movies/TV shows being produced in Los Angeles, California. The last to be rated somewhat positively is the South African speaker (*M* = 3.49), which also falls in line with Paunović's (2009) findings. Ireland (*M* = 3.17), Australia (*M* = 3.13), Scotland (*M* = 2.94), and Southern USA (*M* = 2.91) were rated generally neutral. This could indicate that the participants were either unsure of the variety they were listening to, or they just do not have an opinion on it. The Birmingham variety was rated fairly negative (*M* = 2.35), a perception that resembles the findings of Coupland and Bishop (2007), where it was identified as the most non-prestigious and socially unattractive in their study. When asked in the present study if the speaker would be a suitable EFL teacher, the answers were mostly negative. However, it is still above the North Irish (*M* = 2.09) and the Croatian (*M* = 1.49) varieties. The Northern Irish speaker was also described as an ill-fitting accent for an EFL teacher in in Paunović's (2009) study, ranking at 8th place out of 10. Nevertheless, the most unfavourable variety in the present study is Croatian. Even though most of the participants recognised the variety's origin as their own country, it was still rated extremely negative when compared to any other variety in the study. The Croatian speaker is the only EFL speaker in the present study, implying that the participants do not recognize an EFL speaker as a suitable EFL teacher. This falls directly in line with previous research (cf. by Buckingham 2014, Luk 1998, Mandarić 2016), where the majority of the participants do, in fact, perceive a native English speaker as the perfect fit for an EFL teacher.

After identifying the suitability of every speaker as an EFL teacher, the students were required to explain their choice by answering an open ended question. All of the replies were analysed and

categorized into multiple groups according to context. Through descriptive analysis, using the SPSS program, Table 8. was constructed to depict a more detailed insight into why the students consider some varieties suitable, while others unsuitable.

Table 8

EFL Teacher Suitability - Explanation

EFL Teacher Suitability										
	Cro	**S USA**	**Sc**	**SE**	**Bir**	**Aus**	**Cal**	**Ir**	**SA**	**NI**
Unintelligible	13	6	10	/	7	21	2	8	4	18
Pleasant	/	2	2	4	/	4	4	1	2	/
Unpleasant	2	1	2	/	2	5	3	1	2	4
Sophisticated	/	/	/	1	/	1	1	/	/	/
Intelligent	/	/	1	2	1	2	3	1	3	/
Coherent	/	4	3	11	2	4	12	5	8	/
Good	/	2	2	5	/	4	3	3	1	1
OK	/	1	/	1	/	2	2	2	3	2
Friendly	/	1	3	1	/	2	/	4	3	1
Uninteresting	1	/	/	/	8	1	1	1	/	1
Strange	/	1	1	2	1	2	/	1	/	/
Eloquent	/	/	4	5	1	2	4	3	2	/
Funny	/	3	3	/	1	1	1	1	/	1
Unsophisticated	/	/	1	/	/	2	1	/	/	/
Casual	/	3	1	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Fast-talking	/	1	/	1	/	2	/	1	/	/
Bad	22	2	3	1	/	1	/	/	3	4
Unenthusiastic	/	1	/	/	7	/	/	1	1	/
Slow-spoken	2	/	/	/	3	/	/	1	/	/
Monotonous	/	1	/	/	8	/	2	1	/	1
Dull	1	/	/	/	4	/	1	/	/	/
Boring	1	2	/	/	8	/	2	1	1	2
Communicative	/	/	/	2	/	/	/	/	2	1
Unqualified	3	2	2	1	/	/	/	2	/	2
Qualified	/	/	2	1	/	/	/	1	3	1
Perfect	/	/	/	5	/	/	/	/	/	/
Uneducated	1	2	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	1

Table 8 contains 27 descriptors of the ten varieties used in the study, where 14 descriptors were shaded grey to indicate the ones that are negative, while the rest will be referred to as positive. The varieties appear in no particular order. Starting from the left, Croatian is once again portrayed as the worst variety in the study. There is a noticeable pattern throughout the study, with the Croatian speaker being the lowest rated in regards of prestige, and second to last in social closeness and linguistic attractiveness. Not only was it ranked as the most unsuitable variety for an EFL teacher, but it was also the only variety in the study that elicited exclusively negative descriptors, being described as "unintelligible", "bad", "unqualified" etc. This negative attitude towards a Croatian EFL teacher could be because, in Croatia, "English is taught to communicate with native speakers, thus leading to accepting language standards of native varieties rather than non–native varieties." (Stanojević and Smojver, 2011, p. 122). With such a perception of an English teaching in Croatia, it is not surprising that Croatian students prefer an EFL teacher with a "proper" or "standard" accent. The data also portrays the South USA speaker being more often described negatively than positively, however that is not entirely the case. It is important to note that this speaker was the last one in the questionnaire, which led to a poor response rate to this particular question due to fatigue. Out of 68 participants in the study just 35 of them wrote an answer to this question, and more than half of them used negative descriptors such as "unintelligible", "bad", "unenthusiastic", "unqualified". On the other hand, it was also labelled as "funny", "causal", and "coherent", indicating the attitude of the participants to be somewhat mixed or neutral, which falls in line with the rest of the results. In the dimensions of prestige, social closeness, and linguistic attractiveness the students were similarly opinionated, placing it often somewhere in the middle or just below. Comparing this to Paunović (2009), the participants in her study were a lot harsher, describing it mainly as either "unpleasant", "dull", and "lowly", but also "funny". Drljača Margić and Širola (2014) also comment that the American variety in their study was perceived as "'simple' and 'informal' by a significant percentage of respondents (50% and 39%, respectively), and 4% even consider it 'corrupted'." (p. 50). They also note that the "American English was ranked less favourably than British" (p. 51), which is also the case in the present study. The South England variety was almost entirely described through positive descriptors such as "pleasant", "intelligent", "coherent", "eloquent". One key difference between this variety and the rest can be pointed out through the "perfect" descriptor. This descriptor was constructed solely because of the South England variety, where the students commented multiple time that it is the "perfect accent", and no other variety received a similar remark. This positive attitude towards British English is a

pattern throughout this study and previous studies as well (cf. Jarvella et al., 2001; Paunović, 2009).

The Scottish speaker is portrayed by the data in Table 8 through mostly positive descriptors, but somewhat hard to understand. A lot of students described it as “funny”, “eloquent” or “friendly”, falling directly in line with the highest score it received in the social closeness dimension. However, the most frequent descriptor of this variety was “unintelligible”, indicating that the students had a hard time understanding the speaker. These findings contradict Paunović (2009), where only 2 participants labelled the same variety as “unintelligible”, with the rest of the participants choosing descriptors like “funny”, “interesting”, and “pleasant”. The Birmingham variety was mostly labelled with negative comments, with the students describing it as “boring”, “dull”, “monotonous”, “unenthusiastic”, and “uninteresting”. Just like the Croatian variety, Birmingham also received poor ratings in every dimension. A tremendous amount of participants (21) described Australian as “unintelligible”, surpassing even Northern Ireland in this aspect, despite being correctly identified twice as much during the language identification phase. Some also describe Australian us “unpleasant”, while others as “coherent” or “good”. The most used descriptor for the Californian variety was “coherent”, which is not surprising. Students are generally most often exposed to this specific variety outside of the classroom, which is why they find it so easy to understand – they are constantly listening to it. The remaining comments relating to the Californian speaker are largely positive. The Irish variety has descriptors at both ends, being portrayed as “unintelligible”, while others see it as “coherent”. When looking at the varieties with poor language identification rate, it can be observed that the students do not know how to describe it precisely. Same can be observed for the South African variety, with many participants skipping the question entirely or writing a short answer like “bad” or “just no”. With Northern Ireland being the most misidentified variety in the study, it comes as no surprise that 18 participants described it as “unintelligible”, while others perceived it negatively through descriptors like “unpleasant”, “bad”, “boring” or “unqualified”.

5. Conclusion

The present study aimed to determine how the first-year students at the English Department of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek perceived and identified different varieties of the English language. The data clearly shows their preference towards the speaker of Southern English in the dimensions of prestige and linguistic attractiveness, while the speaker of Scottish

variety is the one they feel socially close to. Croatian variety triggered strong negative connotations in almost every aspect of the study. The same variety was also the most recognisable one, implying that many of the participants knowingly rated Croatian so poorly. The Northern Irish variety was the most misidentified one, probably due to the lack of representation of such speakers in audio materials of Croatian textbooks, as well as in the media. The participants also perceive their own accent as an "American" one, with more than two thirds of the participants thinking this way. The rest describe their own accent as Croatian, which most of them so clearly dislike. When asked what accent they would like to have, unsurprisingly, the selected accent is either the highly-admired "standard" British English or the all-present American English. The answers they gave as reasons behind choosing these accents show that they want the prestige that comes with the British variety or to show off their native-like proficiency with American variety. These attitudes are also reflected in the choice for the most suitable accent for an EFL teacher. The same variety, the South English variety, is the one they consider a qualified teacher should speak.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Please circle the answer which best corresponds to your opinion. When you are asked to assess a statement on a 5-point scale, please use the following values:

Strongly disagree 1	Partially disagree 2	Neither agree nor disagree 3	Partially agree 4	Strongly agree 5

Listen to the speaker, respond quickly and record your first impression. The speaker is:

educated	1	2	3	4	5
friendly	1	2	3	4	5
pleasant to listen to	1	2	3	4	5
sophisticated	1	2	3	4	5
honest	1	2	3	4	5
eloquent	1	2	3	4	5
elegant	1	2	3	4	5
helpful	1	2	3	4	5
communicative	1	2	3	4	5
successful	1	2	3	4	5
interesting/ good company	1	2	3	4	5
respected	1	2	3	4	5
witty/ sense of humor	1	2	3	4	5
intelligent/smart	1	2	3	4	5
reliable	1	2	3	4	5

How suitable you think the given speaker would be as an English teacher?

	1	2	3	4	5

Please explain your choice

_____

Where do you think the speaker comes from?

_____

Did you understand what the speaker was saying? (1 not at all, 5 completely)

	1	2	3	4	5
How easy was for you to understand this accent	1	2	3	4	5

Listen to the speaker and try to decide where the speaker comes from. Take your time and think about the speech properties of the speaker that might help you identify the speaker's place of origin

Canada

Croatia

India

Ireland

Northern Ireland

Jamaica

Australia

New Zealand

South Africa

Southern England

Birmingham

Scotland

Southern USA

California

New York

What kind of accent do you have?

_____

What kind of accent would you like to have?

_____

Why would you like to have such an accent

_____

Gender: Male/female/non-binary

Age:

How long have you been learning English _____

Have you ever lived in an English speaking country? Yes/No

If yes, how long and where _____