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“That’s not proper English!”: Using Cross-cultural Matched-guise Experiments to Raise Teacher/Teacher-trainees’ Awareness of Attitudes Surrounding Inner and Outer Circle English Accents

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From a structural perspective, some English accents (be they native or foreign) carry higher status than others, which in turn may decide whether you get a job or not, for example. So how do language teachers approach this enigma, and how does this approach differ depending on the cultural context you are operating in? These are some of the questions addressed in this article. The study is based on a matched-guise experiment conducted in Sweden and the Seychelles, a small island nation outside the east coast of Africa, where respondents (active teachers and teacher trainees) were asked to evaluate the same oral presentations on various criteria such as grammar, pronunciation, structure etc. Half of the respondents listened to a version that was presented in Received Pronunciation (RP), while the other half evaluated the same monologue presented by the same person, but in an Indian English (IE) accent. Note, that careful attention was paid to aspects such as pacing, pauses etc. using ‘Karaoke technique’. Our results indicate that the responses from the two respondent groups differ significantly, with the Seychelles group being far more negative towards IE than the Swedish group. We try to explain these results in the light of subsequent debriefing discussions with the respondent groups, and we also reflect over the benefits and drawbacks of this type of exercise for raising sociolinguistic awareness among teacher trainees and active teachers. The study is part of a larger project (funded by the Wallenberg foundation) that approaches the challenge of increasing sociolinguistic awareness regarding language and stereotyping, and highlighting cross-cultural aspects of this phenomenon.

Keywords: Language attitudes, Language education, Matched-guise, Received Pronunciation and Indian English, Language awareness.

1. Introduction

With the rapid growth of English as a global lingua franca, the traditional native-speaker normative (NS) understandings of English as a school subject are being challenged in English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts. Concepts such as ‘International English’ (EIL - see McKay, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2012; McKay & Brown 2016), ‘English as a lingua franca’ (ELF- see Jenkins, 2000, 2002, 2007, 2009, 2012 and 2015; Seidlhofer, 2011), and ‘World Englishes’ (WE - Jenkins, 2003; Kachru, Kachru & Nelson, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2007, 2010, 2011) constitute a paradigm shift in ELT with far-reaching consequences. Not only is the object itself, i.e. ‘English’, being redefined and redescribed by the WE movement to accommodate more variation and englishes that reach outside the inner-circle varieties

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(Kachru, Kachru & Nelson, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2010, 2011), but EIL and ELF pedagogic models also mean that the focus in ELT is being shifted from the attainment of native-like competence in English to a greater focus on cross-cultural communication and accommodation of cultural conventions and pragmatic practices that fall outside Anglo-American norms. In this way, learning materials (McKay, 2000), learning goals, and approaches (McKay, 2002) are being re-examined. This shift is motivated. Of the two plus billion English speakers in the world (Schneider, 2011), only a fraction can be classified as inner-circle natives, and it is safe to say that most communication conducted in English around the world today is taking place between speakers that do not fit the traditional NS norms.

Having said this, evaluative beliefs and attitudes surrounding English accents and dialects still prevail in society/ies at large. Hardly surprising, studies among L1 inner circle speakers show that standard accents and dialects tend to be evaluated more favourably (Coupland & Bishop, 2007; Lippi-Green, 2012). Consequently, Milroy (2007, p. 133) maintains that language attitudes are still “dominated by powerful ideological positions that are largely based on the supposed existence of the standard form”. Such attitudes are also mirrored in attitudes towards varieties of English among L2 speakers, especially in geographical regions that have a strong historical connection to Britain or the United States, such as Hong Kong (Zhang, 2013; Chan, 2016), India (Jindapitak & Teo, 2013; Shabeb Al-Dosari, 2011; Bernaisch & Koch, 2016), South Africa (Álvarez-Mosquera & Marín-Gutiérrez, 2017) and Trinidad (Deuber & Leung, 2013). Though slightly more complex, similar attitudes (i.e. a preference for NS-norms) seem to prevail in Europe (Groom, 2012), and more specifically in Scandinavian contexts (see for example, Eriksson, 2018, Sweden; Ladegaard & Sachdev, 2006, Denmark; and Rindal, 2010, Norway), contexts that have no colonial history. The overall findings seem to suggest that L2 speakers of English generally are in favour of inner-circle varieties of English speech.

This has practical implications for ELT. If, as illustrated above, some English variants (especially signalled through accent) carry universal higher status than others from a folk-linguistic perspective (Hoenigswald, 1971; Niedzielski & Preston, 2003), can we as educators ignore this state of affairs?

Attitudes towards language do after all have practical implications for learners in areas such as future academic attainment, employability, and social status. How do we as educators approach this enigma? Should we propagate the uniformitarian assumption that all languages, dialects, and accents are equal (in terms of functionality etc., see Wright, 2004)? Should we consequently also acknowledge the primary function of English in the world today (i.e. that of a lingua franca) and lay our focus on understandability and cross-cultural communication? Or should we acknowledge the ‘real’, but, unfortunately, unfair, world, where some variants clearly pave the way to ‘success’, while others do not? How do we approach these sensitive issues in a productive and informed way in the language teacher classroom? And perhaps more importantly, how do we raise awareness among teachers, teacher students and learners how we are all inadvertently affected by language attitudes and stereotypes in our interpretations and evaluations of language events that surround us?

Another important aspect related to the above, especially relevant with regard to English given its global impact and colonial past, is how belief structures may differ and develop depending on cultural context.

These are some of the issues dealt with in this article. By approaching these queries, we try to meet the call for a “need for an understanding of [language] beliefs in all areas of applied linguistics” (Pasqual & Preston, 2013, p. 163), and, in particular, the need for such research in language teaching and learning (Kajala, 2003; Niedzielski & Preston, 2003; Monfared & Khatib, 2018). As Monfared and Khatib (2018, p. 59) point out, attitudes towards a particular language variant may result in inadvertent stereotyping favouring NS, “which can be advantageous to one group and/or detrimental to others”. Further, the authors point out that exposing learners to, and raising awareness of, different variants of English lead to learners being better equipped to lead their “affective and behavioural reactions in their own English usage” (p.59).

Our point of departure is a comparative experiment conducted in Sweden and the Seychelles, a small postcolonial island nation outside the east coast of Africa, in which respondents (active teachers and teacher trainees) were asked to evaluate recordings of two versions of the ‘same’ oral presentation in a matched-guise set-up (Lambert et al. 1960). Half of the respondents listened to a version that was

presented in British RP (Received Pronunciation), while the other half evaluated the same monologue presented by the same person, but in an Indian English accent. Note, that careful attention was paid to aspects such as pacing, emphasis, pausing etc. using a so-called ‘Karaoke technique’. Respondents were asked to evaluate the presentations on various criteria such as grammar, pronunciation, structure etc. Opinions regarding the speaker’s general language abilities, education and intelligence were also included in the response questionnaires. The results from the above experiments were then used as a starting point for subsequent classroom discussions aimed at critically evaluating the response patterns. The overall aim of this exercise was not to define correct or incorrect interpretations, but rather to encourage discussions on how accent can influence our impressions (and evaluations) of speaker language performance in more general ways, and how we as teachers should approach this issue. In a subsequent post-survey, respondents were also given an opportunity to evaluate the exercise and reflect over how/whether it had affected their own self-awareness on how stereotypes may affect us.

The focus of this study is thus two-fold: a) to analyse and contrast the quantitative data from the response questionnaires in the two educational contexts in order to highlight and explain differences and similarities in the response patterns of the two groups, which indeed represent very different cultural/historical settings as regards the function of English in education, and b) to evaluate the pedagogic merits and shortcomings of this exercise as a method for raising sociolinguistic awareness among teacher trainee students and practitioners. The study is part of a larger project context (funded by the Wallenberg foundation) that approaches the challenge of increasing sociolinguistic awareness regarding language and stereotyping, and highlighting cross-cultural aspects of this phenomenon.

2. Background and context

2.1 Judging speakers on the basis of accent

Accent Prestige Theory (APT) purports that accent mediates social stereotypes related to social class and ethnicity, which in turn affect judgments on aspects such as intelligence, education, social class

and success (Giles, 1970). On the whole, the theory states that accents of politically and historically strong nations and regions will rank higher than other accents because the accent triggers existing stereotypes and prejudices surrounding aspects such as socioeconomic status, education etc. (Bayard, Gallois, Pittam & Weatherall, 2001). In other words, accents are intimately connected to the stereotypic image that the listener holds of a specific group, and this in turn may be very culturally bound (Mai & Hoffmann, 2011; Bernaisch & Koch, 2016).

Looking at English specifically, there is much support for this theory. In their meta-analysis of 20 studies exploring attitudes towards English accents, Fuertes, Gottdiener, Martin, Gilbert and Giles (2012) found that standard accents (such as RP and standard American) scored significantly higher on dimensions such as status, solidarity and dynamism, and that effect sizes were particularly high for status variables. This was especially evident in education, employment and sales settings (p.127). Fuertes et al. conclude that such effects may have considerable consequences: “For the standard speaker, it represents a huge advantage, and for the non-standard speaker, it represents nothing less than a considerable handicap” (p. 128). Looking at ‘foreign’ accents, several studies confirm the low status of Indian English and other ‘foreign’ accents compared to RP in educational contexts (Jindapitak & Teo, 2013; Shabeb Al-Dosari, 2011; Bernaisch & Koch, 2016). Strikingly, this also seems to be the case in India itself, as Bernaisch & Koch’s study (2016) shows: the 94 Indian respondents, the majority of whom were university students, rated RP higher than standard Indian English for the variables competence, power and status. However, this was not the case for solidarity attributes such as ‘humble’ and ‘friendly’. The authors conclude that attitudes towards RP found in their study are indicative of the colonial baggage the accent carries in South Asia and elsewhere.

Traditionally, language attitudinal studies have been conducted via matched-guise techniques, often looking at the affective component of attitude in relation to stereotypical impressions of *the speaker*. In our study, we instead look at how stereotypical attitudes triggered by the accent may affect the evaluation of other aspects of English language performance (such as grammar, structure, vocabulary, etc.). In this way, we can address a very real potential pedagogic dilemma, i.e. that

stereotyping and prejudice inadvertently might spill over on the evaluation of language performance other than accent.

With the above in mind, it is relevant to discuss potential differences in stereotypic notions surrounding Britain and India that may exist in the two cultural contexts under examination. In both the Seychelles and Sweden, Britain is arguably held in high esteem. In the Seychelles it was the colonial power during 160 years that has obviously left its mark. Sweden has a long history of trade, cultural exchange, etc. with Britain, and we would argue that it is generally seen as ‘an equal’ and as a powerful economic international player. Accordingly, it is reasonably safe to assume that Britain qualifies as a “politically and historically strong nation” (c.f. Bayard et al. 2001 above).

Stereotypes regarding India are arguably more complex and differ between the two countries. The Seychelles has always had a significant merchant population of Indian descent (first, second and third generations). Unlike most Creoles of European, African, Chinese, Malagasy and Arabic descent, a proportion (but by no means all) of families of Indian descent have retained Indian cultural expressions (clothing, language, religion, food, etc.). This relative difference, coupled with the fact that many have been traders, has meant that a certain degree of anti-Indian sentiments has traditionally existed in the Seychelles, probably induced by jealousy and suspicion of difference. Note that this tendency has historically been slight and is in no way comparable to Indophobia in other parts of East Africa, such as Uganda (see Mazrui, 1973, for example). In the past decade or so, there has, however, been a considerable influx of relatively uneducated, low status guest workers from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, in particular in the construction industry. According to World Bank statistics (2015), there were more than 13 000 migrant workers in the Seychelles in 2015 (i.e. 13% of the population), and the majority of these came from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. This has resulted in some friction and certain negative attitudes towards these groups among the Creole population. Worth noting here is that there are expressed worries among the Creole population that the Seychelles may be heading towards a demographic situation that resembles that of neighbouring Mauritius, where the Creole population has been partly marginalised by the majority of inhabitants, who are of Indian descent. In addition, the Seychelles is experiencing geopolitical pressures from

India, who is trying to establish naval bases in Seychelles' territorial waters on Assumption Island. In short, the current situation in the Seychelles is one where Indophobia may be flourishing.

It is hard to say anything about Indian stereotypes in Sweden. Sweden has had little historical contact with India, and the number of Indian immigrants is marginal. The few stereotypes that may exist probably primarily stem from international media. Here TV-shows such as the *Big Bang Theory* have long portrayed Indians as rather harmless 'nerds', and recent Indian advances in the high-tech industry in places such as Bangalore may strengthen such views; but this is, of course, highly speculative. We do, however, find it reasonably safe to say that stereotypes surrounding Indians in Sweden are less well defined and probably less negative than those that exist in the Seychelles.

2.2 The role of English in two different educational settings, the Seychelles and Sweden

The Seychelles is a small island nation with approximately 100 000 inhabitants off the east coast of Africa. The mother tongue of more than 94% of the populations is Kreol Seselwa (Moumou, 2004, p.46), a creole language with French as the lexifier language. English, is, however, one of the three official languages, the other two being Kreol Seselwa and French. English is also the most important administrative language: in law, in media, in business and in educational contexts. The Seychelles has no native indigenous population and was uninhabited until 1770, when the French established a small settlement made up of African slaves governed by a relatively small group of French land owners (Scarr, 2000; Fleischmann, 2008). It became a British colony in 1815, but the British presence was initially mainly restricted to the administrative sphere, where English also was the official language. French remained the medium of instruction in schools until the 1940s, when the church-owned schools were replaced by more formal and organized arrangements based on the English system and language (Fleischmann 2008, p. 74). All this time, Kreol Seselwa was completely banned from education, although it remained the main language for everyday communication. A prerequisite for access to positions of power among the general Creole speaking population was thus mastery of 'proper' English. Although serious attempts were made to break the dominance of English in education after independence in the 1980s, with the introduction of Kreol Seselwa in

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schools, there has been a backlash since the mid-nineties, largely a result of globalisation trends (see Laversuch, 2008; Zelime, & Deutschmann, 2016). Today, English is the sole medium of instruction from primary three onwards, and secondary school is based on the Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSEs) curriculum. The English curriculum in the Seychelles has been described as one which “places great emphasis on formal structural aspects of language” (grammar, spelling, punctuation, pronunciation, etc.), and here British RP is the NS norm to which teachers and students aspire (Deutschmann, 2019, p. 4).

In Sweden, the medium for content-based instruction is Swedish, while English constitutes a core subject (with the exception for International Baccalaureate programs and content-based foreign language instruction programs (SPRINT), forms which make up a mere 3.5% of Swedish upper-secondary schools (Cabau-Lampa, 2005). Historically, initial emphasis in the teaching of English lay on the formal aspects of the language (grammar, spelling, etc.), and NS norms (primarily British RP) constituted the ideal form. According to Malmberg (2001), there was, however, a general shift from form to function in the 1970s. This included the introduction of communicative language teaching methods and an increased emphasis on intercultural communication. The current Swedish syllabus for English mirrors a growing trend in ELT which is moving away from a view that learning English primarily prepares the student to communicate with native speakers. Instead, the focus lies on English use for intercultural communication and an awareness of global variation (cf. Berns, 2005). According to Hult (2012), the position of English in the Swedish school system is somewhat complex. It is not a second language, but neither does it hold the status of ‘mere’ foreign language. Through analyses of various policy documents, Hult positions English on top of the Swedish language hierarchy (together with Swedish) and as “part and parcel of modern Swedish life”. English is not merely portrayed as a means through which Swedes gain access to the global market, but also as a means for being worldly in Sweden – a local lingua franca in an increasingly multicultural society. Hult thereby describes English in Sweden not as “foreign language, but as a *Swedish* language” (p. 239).

3. Aims and research questions

This study’s overarching aim is to investigate how/whether English accents may affect respondents’ perceptions of other aspects of language production. The accents in question were chosen to represent traditional educational NS norms (RP) and a well-established WE variant (represented by Indian English). With the role of English as a global language in mind, we also wanted to compare findings from two very different historical, social and educational settings. Here Sweden represents a western setting, where English plays an important role but is not defined by NS norms, and where the national language (i.e. Swedish) has an equally strong position in education. The Seychelles, on

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the other hand, represents a very different, and typically postcolonial, context, where English as a second language dominates education at the expense of the local language, and where English historically has been defined and described by the coloniser (i.e. Britain). The ultimate aim of this exercise has been to raise awareness about complex issues surrounding English in educational contexts, which also motivates the choice of respondents: teacher trainees and active teachers. Note that the groups' responses to the experiment were also used as the starting point for seminar group discussions attended by the respondents themselves. In this way, we hoped to get different perspectives on issues surrounding English/Englishes and how we as educators should approach questions such as the ones raised in the introductory paragraphs (i.e. how we should relate to NS norms/variation, cross-cultural communication, ELF, etc.). The above aims can be broken down into a number of specific research questions:

1. How do the Swedish and Seychellois respondents perceive and judge the Indian English recording compared to the Received Pronunciation recording linguistically? Note here that the only difference between the recordings is the accent. All other aspects such as grammatical slips, hesitations, shortcomings in logical structure, etc. are identical.
2. Are there any systematic differences in the groups' responses and how can these be explained?
3. What are the gains and potential shortcomings of subjecting the respondents to their own biases and stereotyping with the aim of raising awareness of how stereotypes may influence language perception and judgement?

4. Method

4.1 Overview

The methodological framework used in the study is, in essence, a modified matched-guise set-up, where respondents were exposed to two different recordings, or guises, of the same text performed by the same person (see Figure 1 below). A bidialectal speaker performed one recording in standard British RP, while the other was performed with an Indian English (IE) accent. Roughly half of the respondents of each group were exposed to the IE version, while the other half were exposed to the RP version. After listening to the recording, respondents were tasked to rate the guise on different linguistic variables, such as fluency, pronunciation, grammar, logical structure, etc. We also included some variables that related to the personal attributes of the speaker (e.g. level education, skilful presenter, sensible views, etc.). After the initial activities of listening and responding to the recording, the resulting data were used as a starting point for discussion seminars where respondents could express their views and critically examine their own judgements of the two guises. Note that respondents were unaware of the design of the experiment at the onset of the activities, but that this was revealed in the discussion seminars. See 4.2-4.8 below for further details.

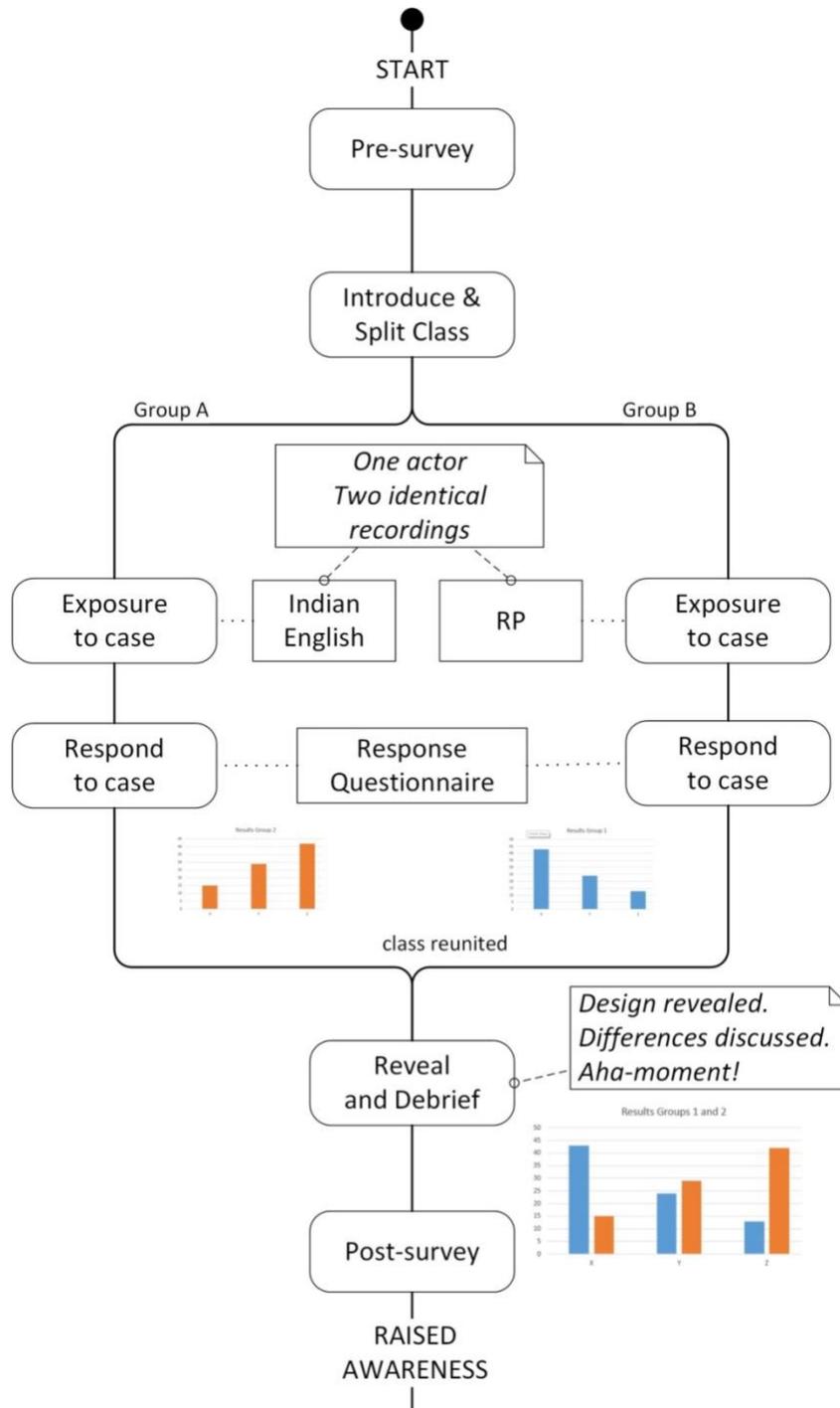


Figure 1. Overview of the matched-guise set-up

4.2 Introduction & Contextualisation

To ensure genuine responses based on the respondents' perceptions, it was essential that they remained unaware of the real purpose of the experiment until after we had collected their responses. The exercise was thus initially contextualised as a workshop on evaluation, where the teacher trainees and active teachers would listen to an oral presentation performed by an adult student and evaluate the language performance of the same.

They were not aware of the fact that there were two versions of the recording at this stage. Respondents were also told that their responses would form the basis of a follow-up seminar discussion, where evaluations of the “student” would be in focus.

4.3 Script and Recording

We wanted to create a script that was believable within the context of the exercise. We thus chose to contextualise the language event as a recording of an exercise in oral presentation, performed by an adult male taking a course in academic English. The topic of the presentation was “social media and its effects on society”. So that we could work in imperfections, the script reflected a speaker who was rather hesitant and unsure of himself. There were, for example, long pauses interspersed between ‘uhms’ and ‘ahs’, and some grammatical mistakes motivated by false starts, as well as incorrect use of terminology here and there. The total length of the recording was 2 minutes and 43 seconds.

4.4 Karaoke technique

To make sure that the pacing and style of the recording were identical in both versions, a karaoke-esque method was used. First a script was written, which a bidialectal “actor” then recorded in an RP accent. This was achieved by doing multiple takes until a natural-sounding monologue was produced. The RP recording then became the basis for a new script, where hesitations and pauses were included in the manuscript. With the help of the revised manuscript, the actor used a playback of the RP recording to make a sentence by sentence ‘identical’ IE recording where all language pragmatic features were included. With the help of this playback method, the actor was able to re-

record the same sentence, or even word, several times until the pacing, pauses, pragmatic features, etc. matched that of the original RP version. This ensured that the length of the sentences and overall impression were the same in both versions. Figure 2 below illustrates this process.

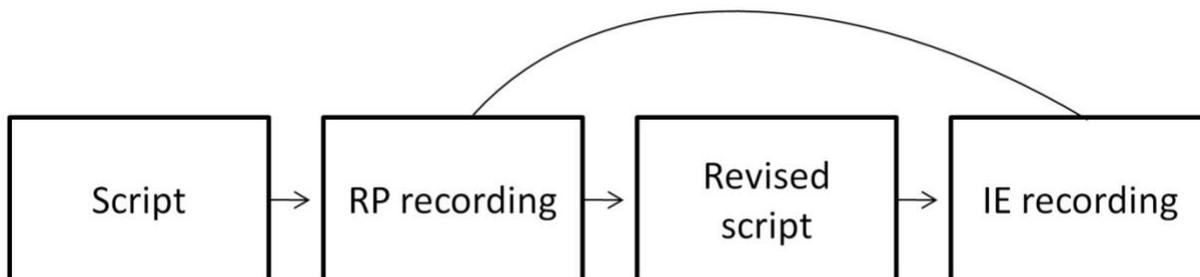


Figure 2. The “Karaoke method” used for recording the monologues.

4.5 Pre-survey

Basic metadata (age, sex, etc.) was obtained in a short survey before respondents listened to the recording. We also asked a question regarding how much respondents thought they were affected by stereotyping in their judgements. Participants were asked to create an anonymous identity so that their responses could be tracked through the response survey and post-survey.

4.6 Response survey

After listening to the recording, respondents were asked to respond to nine statements regarding language usage and five statements of general evaluative nature. The linguistically oriented statements were inspired by the Swedish School Authorities’ (Skolverket) recommendations for evaluations of the oral section of the national tests, but were formulated in such a fashion that they should be understood in the Seychelles context. The five questions of general evaluative nature were chosen because they potentially highlight bias that goes further than language, and that thereby could inspire more general discussions regarding language and identity in the seminars. A seven-point Likert scale was used (ranging from 7-agree completely to 1-disagree completely) to gauge respondents’ impressions of the following statements:

Statements related to linguistic aspects

- It is easy to understand what the speaker is trying to say (*Understandability*)
- The speaker's language production is varied and nuanced (*Language variability*)
- The speaker's arguments are well structured and thought-out (*Language structure*)
- The speaker's comparisons between his own experiences and knowledge shows that he can adapt his language to suit his needs in arguments (*Language adaptability*)
- The speaker has good command of English vocabulary and phraseology (*Vocabulary*)
- The speaker has good command of English grammar (*Grammar*)
- The speaker can formulate himself in such a way that his talk is fluent (*Fluency*)
- The speaker has good pronunciation and is easy to understand (*Pronunciation*)
- The overall impression of this presentation is excellent! The speaker has very good command of English (*Overall impression*)

General evaluative statements

- The speaker speaks good English
- The speaker is a skilful presenter
- The speaker gives an intelligent impression
- The speaker is probably well educated
- The speaker has sensible views

4.7 Discussion seminar and post-survey

Following the response survey, a discussion seminar was held where the true purpose of the experiment was revealed. During this seminar, respondents had the chance to critically examine their own response patterns of the two guises and discuss various stereotype and bias structures that may have affected these. These discussions also focussed on the implications of the results in an educational context. Respondents also filled out a post-survey, where we repeated the question regarding how much respondents thought they were affected by stereotyping in their judgements in

order to see if there had been any change in opinions. They also had the opportunity to write down their thoughts of the experiment and how it might have impacted on their attitudes and teaching.

4.8 Respondents

Sweden

We conducted two workshops in Sweden: one with active teachers and one with teacher trainees. In all, 46 Swedish respondents participated, and roughly half of them were employed teachers. Of these, 34 were female and 12 male. In total, 23 listened to the IE recording and 23 listened to the RP recording.

The Seychelles

In the Seychelles we conducted three workshops in all, and 59 Seychellois teacher trainees and 20 active teachers participated. Of these, 69 were female and 10 male. In total, 40 listened to the IE recording and 39 listened to the RP recording. Table 1 below summarises the respondent population.

Table 1. Respondents

	Sweden		Seychelles	
	Indian English (n=23)	RP (n=23)	Indian English (n=40)	RP (n=39)
Female respondents	17	17	34	35
Male respondents	6	6	6	4
Total	46		79	

4.9 Statistical Analyses

IBM SPSS Statistics was used for all statistical analyses. A two-sample T-test was used to analyse the effect IE/RP has on Swe/Sey respondents, while linear regression model and repeated measure design were the statistical tests run to determine the interaction between recording version, Swedish and Seychellois respondents. All statistical models were adjusted for gender.

5. Results

Section 5.1 to 5.3 below will address our three research questions separately. We summarise our results in 5.4.

5.1 Perception and judgement of the monologue- How do the Swedish and Seychellois respondents perceive and judge the IE recording compared to the RP recording

Linguistic variables

Overall, the interpretations of the IE version of the recording by the Seychellois respondents stood out. Here the scores were generally lower than for the other groups (see Figure 3 below)

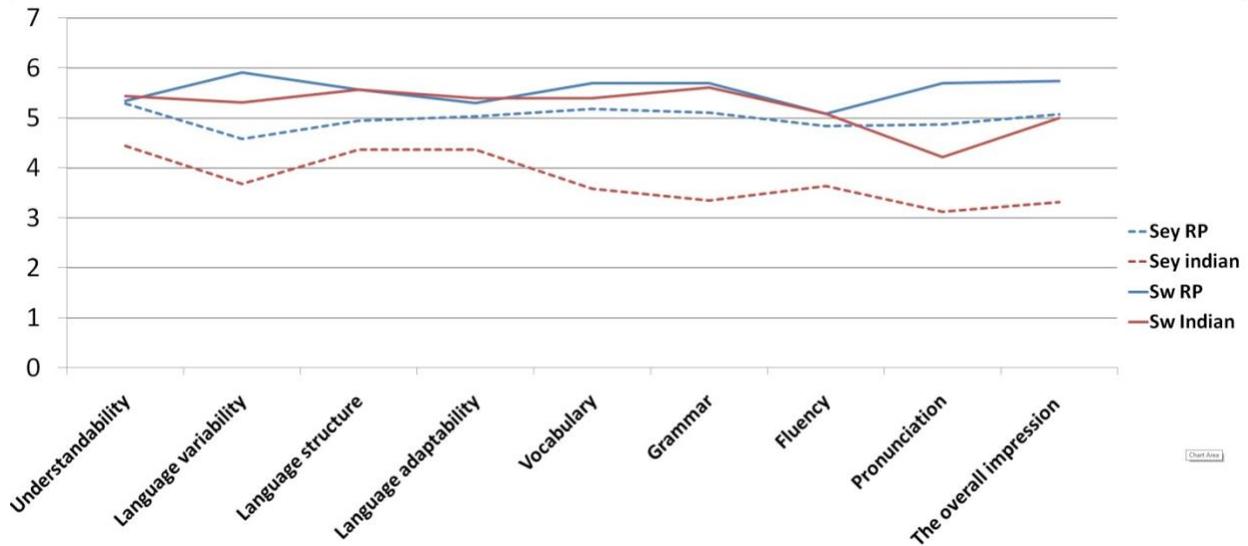


Figure 3. Impressions of linguistic variables.

Of the variables in the figure above, IE was interpreted differently from RP in the Seychelles for all eight variables. *Understandability* ($p=0.018$), *language variability* ($p=0.002$), *language structure* ($p=0.049$), *language adaptability* ($p=0.028$), *vocabulary* ($p=0.000$), *grammar* ($p=0.000$), *fluency* ($p=0.000$), *pronunciation* ($p=0.000$) and *overall impression* ($p=0.000$). In Sweden, only the difference in impressions of *pronunciation* ($p=0.000$) was significantly different between RP and IE groups. Remaining impressions were not ($p=0.087-0.983$). It is thus clear from the above that the overall evaluations of language performance of the IE version were significantly more negative among the Seychelles respondents compared to the Swedish respondents, who only interpreted the recordings differently for the variable *pronunciation*.

General evaluative statements

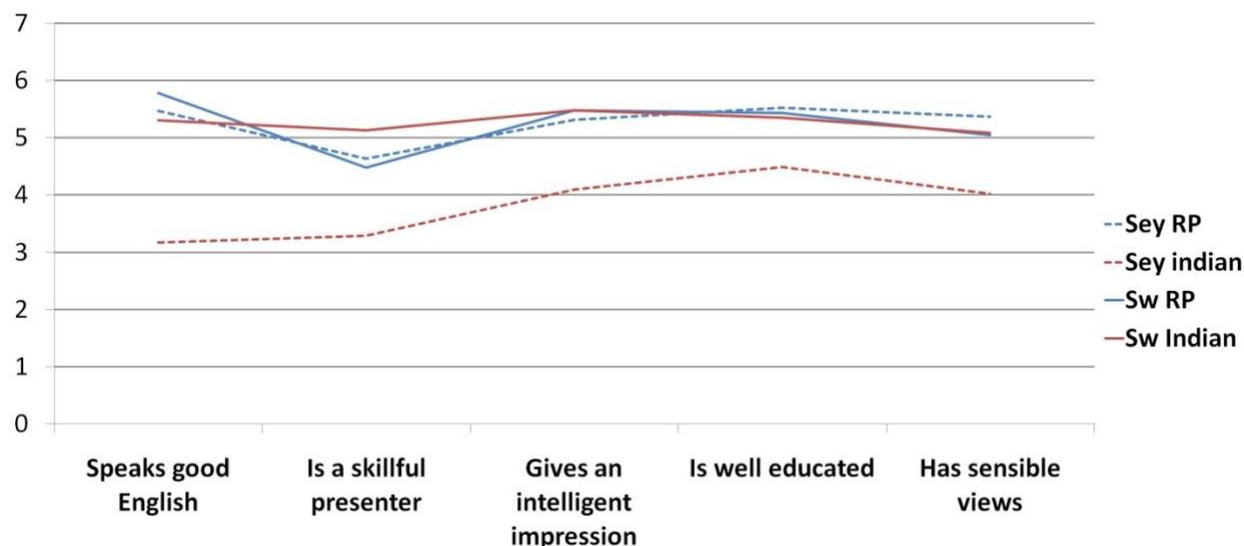


Figure 4. General evaluative statements.

In this dataset, IE was interpreted differently from RP in the Seychelles for all five variables: *speaks good English* ($p=0.000$), *skillful presenter* ($p=0.000$), *gives an intelligent impression* ($p=0.001$), *is well educated* ($p=0.001$) and *has sensible views* ($p=0.000$). The Seychelles respondents were generally more negative towards the IE-version. Among the Swedish respondents, none of the variables above were interpreted differently ($p=0.127-0.947$).

5.2 Are there any differences in responses between the Seychelles and Swedish groups? (interaction effects)

The interaction effect measures the effect that changing guise (RP vs IE) has on Seychellois respondents compared to the same effect on Swedish respondents. A significant effect means that Seychellois respondents interpret the change in guise differently than the Swedish respondents do.

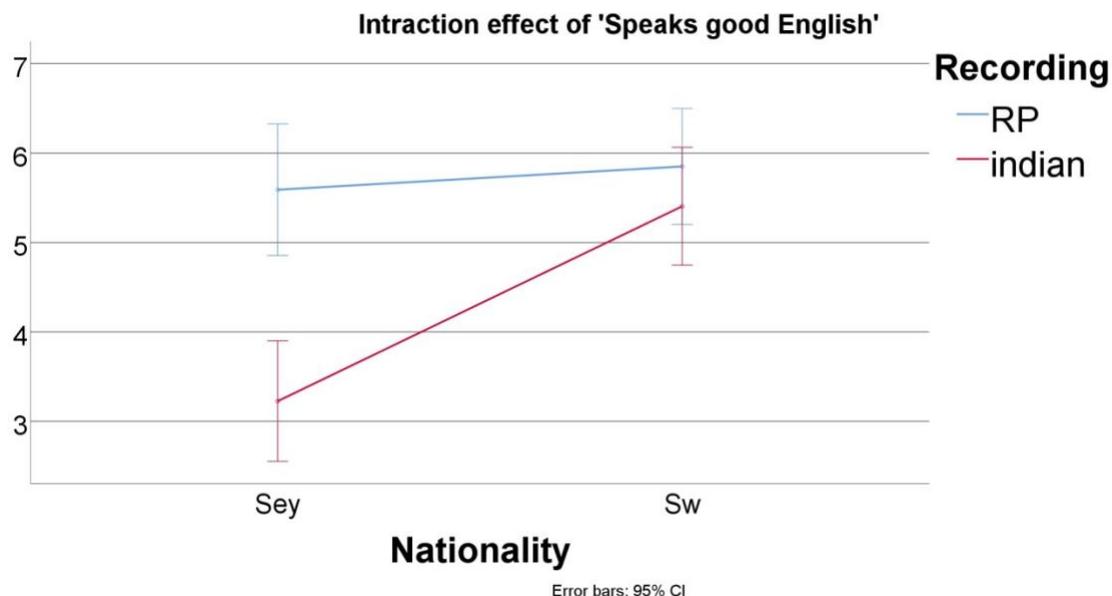


Figure 5. Interaction effect of 'Speaks good English'.

Figure 5 above constitutes a visual representation of one such interaction effect. To the left in the figure, we see that changing from Indian to RP recording significantly alters the way the recording is perceived as regards the statement *speaks good English* among the Seychellois respondents. This effect is, however, insignificant for the Swedish respondents, who interpret the two guises similarly (to the right in the figure). In other words, the effect of changing recordings is different between the two response groups (as illustrated by the non-parallel blue and red lines connecting the Seychelles and Swedish results in Figure 5.). This suggests that the nature of the stereotyping effect regarding *speaks good English* investigated here differs depending on context and culture.

Among the analysed variables, we find significant interaction effects for the following linguistic variables: *vocabulary* ($p=0.007$), *grammar* ($p=0.001$), *fluency* ($p=0.024$) and *overall impression* ($p=0.040$). Similarly, significant interaction effects were found for all the general evaluative variables: *speaks good English* ($p=0.001$), *skilful presenter* ($p=0.001$), *gives an intelligent impression* ($p=0.016$), *is well educated* ($p=0.043$) and *has sensible views* ($p=0.010$).

There were no significant interaction effects for the linguistic variables *understandability* ($p=0.120$), *language variability* ($p=0.391$), *language structure* ($p=0.229$), *language adaptability* ($p=0.119$) and *pronunciation* ($p=0.666$). In other words, we cannot say that the difference in interpretation between the two guises in the Swedish and Seychellois groups statistically differed for these variables. For example, the speaker in the IE recording is perceived as having poorer pronunciation than the speaker in the RP recording in both the Swedish and the Seychellois groupings. In other words, IE pronunciation is judged negatively by both response groups, and no interaction effect can therefore be found for that variable as illustrated in Figure 6 below.

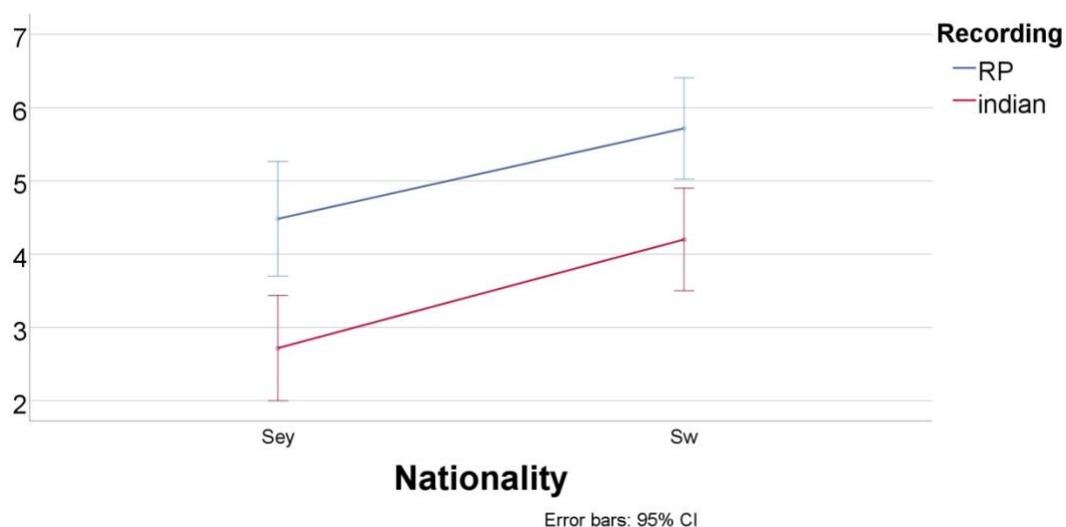


Figure 6. Interaction effect of 'Pronunciation'.

In summary, we can say that there were significant cultural differences in how the two recordings were interpreted. On the whole, these differences in interpretations primarily relate to easily identifiable structural aspects such as vocabulary, grammar and fluency, as well as the overall impressions and judgements of the speaker. In all of the above cases, the Seychellois respondents were more negative towards the IE version than the Swedish respondents.

5.3 Reflections and findings from the discussions and the post-surveys

Sweden

Firstly, the respondents were very positive to the exercise overall. There was nothing that indicated that participants had felt ‘tricked’ or took offence over the fact that we had initially kept them in the dark about the real purpose of the exercise. Given the results, there was also consensus that the responses illustrated a generally held opinion that all variants of English are of equal value, and that the focus of teaching and evaluation should lay on communication rather than on NS-like competence. This mirrors the general Swedish curriculum, and was thus partly expected. However, opinions related to the variable *pronunciation* were more divided, and partly contradicted the above. Here discussions centred primarily on professional aspects related to what English/es should be taught and presented to students in class, and how teachers should position themselves as regards different variants, such as IE. Many were of the opinion that RP still constitutes the ideal ‘proper’ accent that teachers should be striving for in their teaching. The logic here was that the accent is ‘neutral’ and that it is thus easy to understand. Others maintained that objectively there was no ‘correct’ accent, but that RP is the most prestigious and that this was the reason that we should aim for RP. In spite of such opinions, all agreed that exposing students to various WEs was important, but here the chief motivation related to understanding (i.e. reception), not production.

The written responses in the post-survey more or less reflected the discussion. On the one hand, several participants seemed comforted by the fact that the group as a whole had been rather unbiased, as illustrated by the following statements: “*Well, on a whole it seemed like we weren't that prejudiced, which I didn't really expect*”, and “*I was happily surprised that I wasn't as judgemental as I thought before listening*”. Others were more self-critical: “*It gave me something to think about. I guess I am more judgemental towards people's accent than I thought*”; “*It is even more clear that I am biased even though I like to think I'm not*”, and “*I learnt that I am probably more biased than I would like to think*”. The distribution of these two categories of statements was about 50:50. The discrepancy between the above statements illustrates an important benefit with this type of exercise.

Even though we as researchers cannot trace answers back to an individual respondents, she or he obviously can. In this way, individuals can reflect over how their own response patterns compare to the group as a whole and reflect over this without having to 'expose' themselves and risk losing face.

The majority (approximately 75%) of responses indicated that most participants were positive to the set-up, as illustrated by the following statements: *"I found it very interesting and I learned lots of new things. I especially liked discussions around empirical studies as a way of problematizing language and stereotyping"*; *"I think it was fun. You totally blowed us away. Very interesting"*, and *"It was very interesting and an eye opener, not only for myself, but for how other teachers made their judgements"*. There was, however, a small proportion of the respondents that felt that they had learnt little new: *"I can't really say that I learnt something new"*, and *"I was just reminded of what I already know"*. This may partly have been a reflection of the fact that some respondents felt that the time for discussion was too short (i.e. too much time was spent going through the results): *"Interesting, but not enough time. I would've liked more time to discuss the results. I can't really say that I learnt something new, though"*.

Seychelles

The debriefing discussion in the Seychelles context was particularly interesting. The overall initial reaction was one of surprise and awe. The participants were not comfortable with the fact that the two versions had been rated so differently, but subsequent discussions also opened up for more complex self-reflections. For example, one respondent, an active male teacher, reflected over the fact that it was not being Indian itself that he saw as a problem, but rather a disinclination by this community in the Seychelles to partake and integrate with Seychelles Creole culture (food, language, religion, etc.). An Indian accent signalled this, he claimed. In response, others pointed out that many English expatriates in the country were guilty of the same type of behaviour, but they were not judged negatively. There were expatriates who had been there for decades without learning a word of Creole. The discussion that followed highlighted how status and nationality could lead to very different judgments of the same behaviour, and also how identity was signalled through accent.

Discussions also concerned how teachers should relate to the results in their teaching, and here the general consensus was that RP was the only relevant model.

After all, as one participant pointed out, the results had shown how much prejudice existed surrounding accents, and teachers would be doing their pupils a disservice by not teaching them 'proper' English. In addition, IE was difficult to understand.

Two sets of distinct categories of responses emerged in the post-survey. Firstly, the majority (about 80%) were awed by the results and thought that the experiment was educational and that it really helped to highlight the dangers of stereotyping: *"I was shocked by the results of the survey. I was unaware of the level of stereotyping that we do here in Seychelles."*; *"Maybe we fail to see and pay attention to how such preconceptions really can affect others in their everyday lives. It affects the whole society and stereotyping might be also the reason why we are experiencing so much social turmoil and instability in our little country"*; *"It made me aware of stereotypes here in Seychelles in fact about myself"*, and *"I have learned that we all tend to stereotype without us even realizing it"*.

Another smaller set of responses reflected a reluctance to take in the implications of the results and instead focussed on faults of the speaker in the IE recording and support for RP, as the following comments illustrate: *"In all I would say that the Indian speaker, due to his nationality, is difficult to understand. He does not use English as a native English speaker would"*, and *"The Indian speaker needs to work on his intonations; his presentation was monotonous"*.

Measure of awareness raising

In the post-surveys, we also made an attempt to measure awareness raising from this activity using a quantitative measure. In the pre-survey, we included the question "To what extent do you think that you are influenced by stereotypical preconceptions (conscious or unconscious) in your expectations and judgements of others?". Respondents could answer on a scale ranging from 0-100, where 0 indicated not at all and 100 to a very great extent. We posed the same question in the post-survey in an attempt to quantitatively measure awareness raising about stereotyping effects. Although average values for this measurement were encouraging (they rose from 30% to 48% in the Swedish group and from 42% to 55% in the Seychelles group), individual variation and the fact that many

participants did not answer this question in the post-survey meant that the differences could not be confirmed statistically.

5.4 Summary of results

This study has explored how English accents affect respondents' perception of other aspects of language production, and how to raise awareness about complex issues surrounding English in educational contexts. Two distinctly different cultural contexts were explored to get a better understanding of how stereotypes as signalled through accent may shape teachers' judgement of a person's language performance as a whole, as well as personal characteristics. Results indicate that accent did not significantly affect judgement of general language performance, other than for the variable *pronunciation* among the Swedish respondents. Neither were there any significant differences in how Swedish respondents evaluated aspects such as intelligence and level of education in the RP and IE versions. In contrast, the results suggest that accents significantly affected the judgement of other aspects of language performance, as well as personal characteristics, in the Seychellois response groups. This group rated IE lower than RP for all the investigated variables. The difference in perceptions for the two groups (i.e. interaction effects) were significant for the linguistic impression variables *vocabulary*, *grammar*, *fluency* and *overall impression*, variables which arguably are particularly salient and relatively easy to identify.

Results from the discussion seminars and post-surveys indicate that the activities were highly appreciated and served to raise awareness about issues surrounding language and stereotyping (although we could not confirm this statistically). Arguably the method thus does contribute to the “need for an understanding of [language] beliefs in all areas of applied linguistics” (Pasqual & Preston, 2013, p. 163). We do, however, note that some participants in the Swedish groups were unimpressed as they thought that nothing new was learnt and that some Seychellois participants resisted the implications of the results but instead defended their stances that the IE version was linguistically inferior to the RP version.

EDUCARE

6. Discussion

The differences in response patterns between the two investigated groups may well be a reflection of fundamental differences in how the subject of English is approached in the two educational contexts. As pointed out earlier (see Deutschmann, 2019), the Seychelles has a curriculum that largely focuses on form rather than on function, and the norm here is RP. In contrast, as pointed out by Hult (2012), the emphasis in the subject of English in Sweden lies on a communicative language learning approach, where function (as opposed to form) is of primary interest. Here English's role as ELF and its function in intercultural communication between non-native speakers are included. The above suggests that respondents from the two contexts place different focus on what to interpret when they hear the texts. The 'Swedish teacher ear' is trained to look for understandability, logical structure, etc., and thereby may be less focussed on grammatical correctness, vocabulary, etc. The 'Seychelles teacher ear', on the other hand, is trained to evaluate form first; and here accent is a clear marker pointing towards 'proper' or 'inferior' language competence. In this type of listening, it is likely that an IE accent will be conceived as 'incorrect', which also stimulates the respondents to notice other linguistic shortcomings in grammar, fluency and vocabulary (which were worked into the script). In the RP-version, there is no such accent trigger, and existing flaws are more likely to be left unnoticed. The assumption is, after all, that a native speaker has total language command. In other words, accent evokes stereotyping which "[acts] as a selective filter that directs and distorts cognition" (Lindvall-Östling, Deutschmann, & Steinvall, Forthcoming).

With the above in mind, it is also interesting to note that significant interaction effects (i.e. where the Swedish and Seychellois interpretation patterns differed significantly) were found for linguistic variables typically associated with form-focused language teaching, i.e. *vocabulary* ($p=0.007$), *grammar* ($p=0.001$), *fluency* ($p=0.024$) and *overall impression* ($p=0.040$). These then were the variables that the two groups interpreted very differently. Patterns for more communicatively oriented aspects such as *understandability* ($p=0.120$), *language variability* ($p=0.391$), *language structure* ($p=0.229$) and *language adaptability* ($p=0.119$) were not significantly different between the two groups. Arguably, these

aspects are more difficult to pinpoint and analyse after one hearing, especially if one is not trained and used to doing so in every-day teaching. Arguably, Swedish teachers then are better equipped for separating accent from other aspects of language production since the Swedish system is based on a communicative approach to ELT, where the accent is of little importance as long as understandability is maintained.

In spite of this, it is interesting to note that both Swedish and Seychellois respondents gave significantly lower scores for the variable *pronunciation* in the IE groups. This essentially goes against the idea of the communicative approach, and it implies that Swedes, after all, do have a normative NS view of English when it comes to pronunciation, something that was confirmed in the discussion seminars. This does indeed support previous findings from Europe as well as the postcolonial world that RP “represents a huge advantage” (see Fuertes et al. 2012, p 128), and that this accent is regarded to be a ‘better’ representation of ‘proper’ English than IE, for example. This in turn has implications for teaching, because it leaves teachers with the conundrum of either saying that NS accents is the goal to strive for, which has clear societal benefits, or saying that all accents are equal. The dilemma is that by saying that a way of speaking is wrong, they are reinforcing the belief that some accents are inferior to others. On the other hand, by saying that all accents are equal you risk doing your students a disservice, since, as this study shows, not all accents are judged the same way.

In our study, accent did not only seem to affect the evaluations of the language event itself; but in the Seychellois group in particular, it had implications for how the speaker was judged as a person as well (the variable *intelligent impression, well-educated* etc.). This corroborates Accent Prestige Theory (APT), i.e. the idea that accents mediate social and ethnic stereotypes, which in turn affect judgments on aspects such as intelligence, education and success (Giles, 1970). It is hardly surprising that such ‘spill over’ effects are particularly visible in the Seychelles data. For starters, a colonial past has contributed to the idea of England and English culture as somehow superior. Such constructions are also still operant implicitly through the IGCSE curriculum. Furthermore, there are geo-political, demographic and economic reasons for the Seychellois to have potentially more

negative sentiments towards India than Swedes. After all, the latter group have little direct contact with India, and unlike in the Seychelles, there are no immediate fears regarding aspects such as migration, employment, military threat, etc. from India in Sweden. So while we in no way try to defend prejudice against individuals based on their accent, we can concur with Fuertes et al. (2012) that a ‘foreign’ accent “represents nothing less than a considerable handicap” in some contexts, and that such effects may be a result of structures that in fact have nothing to do with language itself.

So were the methods to raise socio-linguistic awareness presented above successful or not? Overall, we would argue that, based on the feedback we have received, this type of exercise is successful. Raising awareness by exposing respondents to their own linguistic stereotyping creates a very palpable link between theoretical knowledge, such as previous studies and theoretical models, and practical manifestations of the same relevant to our everyday lives. This was illustrated by the frequent recurrence of phrases such as *eye-opener*, *been made aware of*, etc. in the post-surveys. On the other hand, we also see some dangers with the method. Discussions are very much steered by the nature of the responses, and, as was the case in the Swedish group, minimal differences can lead to certain complacency and an impression that stereotyping is something that happens elsewhere. Further, there is a danger that results are misinterpreted, as was the case in the Seychelles discussions, where there was a tendency for some participants to question and deliberately deny the evidence of the results. As evidenced by some responses, a minority of respondents interpreted the results as indicating that the IE recording in fact was inferior to the RP version regarding aspects such as *understandability* and *pronunciation*. After all, this is what respondents signalled. There is, in other words, a risk that discussions as described above can take turns in ways that risk reinforcing some participants’ stereotypic beliefs as they are being defended or lead to the illusion that this is an issue that concerns others. We would, however, argue that this risk is minimal; and our experiences from this exercise, and others like it that have been conducted under the project, is that exposing respondents to their own stereotypic beliefs almost always leads to constructive self-reflection.

Finally, what implications do our findings have for the view of English as a subject and for the teaching of English as a global lingua franca? It is evident from the findings that the view of English

differs in the two contexts. In the Seychelles, accent matters, and it seems to signal a significant amount of sociolinguistic information in addition to what is being said, and, put simply, RP carries most benefits. Based on previous research from other similar postcolonial contexts, this state of affairs does not appear to be unique. While the focus on ELF and communicative competence in Sweden is motivated from the uniformitarian assumption that all language variants are equal in terms of functionality (Wright, 2004), greater awareness of what these variants signal in a global context is motivated if we truly want to equip our students as global citizens. Similarly, contexts like the Seychelles can learn a lot from the more communicative approach. As Monfared and Khatib (2018, p. 59) point out, less focus on form, correctness and speaking ‘proper’ would probably lead to teachers and learners becoming better equipped to lead their “affective and behavioural reactions in their own English usage” (p.59).

7. Conclusion

In this study, we have investigated how two response groups from two different cultures, the Seychelles, and Sweden, perceive and judge IE compared to RP, and how using respondents’ own reactions to these variants can be a good starting point for seminar discussions and awareness raising of issues surrounding language stereotyping. The systemic differences found between the two response groups can best be explained using historical, cultural and educational contextual models, which arguably have a profound impact on respondents’ perceptions of the recordings. What emerges is a very strong indication that fundamental differences in views of how to approach the English subject (i.e. as an ELI, or the NS approach) also lead to very different perceptions of what ‘proper’ English is. In addition, perceptions seem to be influenced by local economic, geo-political and cultural factors. An awareness of such issues is a key to understanding language attitudes and how these may differ in different cultural contexts, and should arguably be part of the curriculum when English is approached from a WE/ELF-perspective.

Based on our experiences from this exercise, we maintain that there is great potential in this type of awareness-raising activity. The approach has allowed us to meet potentially sensitive language issues

from a learner attitude perspective, while at the same time avoiding exposing a specific individual's beliefs, since it is always the group results that are the centre of focus in discussions.

In this way the exercise has worked as an eye-opener for many of the teachers and future teachers that partook. We thereby hope that the model presented above can contribute to the “need for an understanding of [language] beliefs in all areas of applied linguistics” (Pasqual & Preston, 2013, p. 163)

Looking forward, further studies and trials would help bolster the promising results found in this study. Variants of the set-up and more quantitative data could shed light on how respondents from different cultural contexts view not only Indian English and RP, but numerous other variants too. Continued developments (which we are doing) will also allow us to fine-tune and adapt the method for raising awareness of language stereotyping in various domains (language and gender, for example). The method can also be used to investigate attitudes outside the educational context. And here a greater number and more diverse groups of respondents better balanced for aspects such as gender, class, education, ethnicity, political affiliation, etc. will help to draw up a better map of how language bias and stereotyping surrounding English variants manifests itself in society/ies.

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