Whose Accent Matters? Vietnamese English Linguistics Majors' Attitudes Toward Native and Vietnamese English Accents

Nguyen Thi Mai Tram

Lecturer, School of Languages

International University, Vietnam National University HCMC

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Email: tramntm@hcmiu.edu.vn

Phan Thanh Quang

Lecturer, School of Languages

International University, Vietnam National University HCMC

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Email: ptquang@hcmiu.edu.vn

Abstract

In today's globalized world, English is not only a tool for international communication but also a site where identity, professionalism, and cultural belonging are negotiated. This study investigates Vietnamese English majors' attitudes toward native-accented (e.g., American/British) and Vietnamese-accented English, revealing how language preferences intersect with self-perception and social aspirations. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach, we surveyed 116 English linguistics students using a modified Language Attitudes Scale–Student Form (LASS) and open-ended reflections to explore their beliefs, emotions, and intended behaviors regarding English accent use. Quantitative results show a statistically significant preference for native-like pronunciation across cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, highlighting the continued symbolic value attached to native speaker norms in educational and professional spaces. However, qualitative insights add complexity: many students expressed pride in their Vietnamese-accented English, viewing it as a reflection of cultural roots and communicative authenticity. This dual stance, valuing native accents for career mobility while defending local ones as identity markers, reflects the nuanced realities of learners navigating global and local pressures. This study contributes to conversations on language and identity in multilingual societies, as well as the role of English education in fostering intercultural competence. It underscores the need to rethink pronunciation instruction: shifting from accent imitation toward intelligibility, confidence, and inclusiveness. We argue that embracing diverse Englishes in language classrooms not only improves communication but also affirms students' cultural identities, bridging the gap between global aspirations and local realities. As English continues to evolve as a global lingua franca, such attitudinal research offers vital insights into how young professionals understand their place in a multilingual world.

Key words: *language attitudes*; *accent attitudes*; *native-speakerism; Vietnamese English accents; language ownership*

I. Introduction

In many English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, native-speaker accents, particularly American and British, are viewed as the gold standard for pronunciation and teaching (Hendriks et al., 2021). This belief, often described as native-speakerism, assumes that native speakers represent ideal English models (Holliday, 2017), leading learners and educators to favor native-like accents over local varieties, often at the expense of intelligibility, identity, and communicative effectiveness. However, scholars have challenged the validity of these norms, arguing that since English is natively spoken in only a few countries, it is unrealistic and inequitable to expect learners worldwide to conform to native standards (Jenkins, 2006; Byram,

1997; Davies, Hamp-Lyons, & Kemp, 2003; Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2001). Language attitudes, defined as evaluative dispositions toward language varieties (Sarnoff, 1970), encompass beliefs, emotions, and behavioral intentions. These attitudes significantly influence learning motivation, frequency of use, and perceived language value (Gardner, 1982; Dörnyei, 2003; Wesely, 2012). In Vietnam, research confirms that motivation and positive attitudes are key factors in language learning success (Pham, 2021; Kuteeva, 2020; Li & Wei, 2022).

In Vietnam, where English functions as a foreign language and a tool for academic and professional advancement, it is crucial to examine whether these native-speaker ideals still shape students' attitudes, particularly among English Linguistics majors preparing for careers in language-related fields. Nevertheless, most Vietnamese studies focus narrowly on preferences between British and American English (Phan, 2020; Nguyen, 2022; Truong, 2020; Ton & Pham, 2010), with little attention to how students perceive their own Vietnamese-accented English or how these views relate to confidence, identity, or beliefs about language ownership. This gap is particularly relevant in EFLcontexts, where students' attitudes may influence their future teaching practices and reinforce or resist native-oriented norms.

To address this, the present study investigates English Linguistics majors' attitudes toward native and Vietnamese-accented English in a Vietnamese university. Using a modified version of the Language Attitudes Scale-Student Form (LASS) developed by Li and Wei (2022), along with open-ended questions, the study explores students' beliefs, emotions, and intentions related to accent, and how these align with their personal and professional self-perception.

We posed two main research questions:

1. What are Vietnamese English Linguistics majors' attitudes toward native-accented English versus Vietnamese-accented English across the three dimensions of the LASS?
2. How do students perceive their own English accent in relation to their future professional communication and their linguistic identity?

II. Literature Review

1. Global Accent Norms and Emerging Attitudes Toward English Varieties

Kraj Kachru (1992) introduced the "Three Concentric Circles of English" model which categorizes the global spread and use of English into three groups: the Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle. In European and global contexts, Inner-Circle varieties like British RP and American GA are often upheld as "prestigious" or "desirable," partly due to their dominance in global media and ELT materials (Phillipson, 1992; Kachru, 2005). This reinforces the idea that these accents represent the standard. Research in Asian EFL contexts aligns with these observations. For example, Hiraga (2005) found Japanese learners rated British English highest on status, and Zhang (2009) reported Chinese students' preference for native accents as models. In Southeast Asia, Effendi et al. (2021) noted that Indonesian students viewed American English as more desirable for employment.

However, scholars have increasingly challenged this dominance. Widdowson (1994) conceptualizes English as a "shared global resource," no longer the exclusive property of native speakers. Jenkins (2007) and Seidlhofer (2011) argue that in international contexts, intelligibility should take precedence over strict adherence to native norms. Building on this view, Kirkpatrick (2010) advocates for English teaching in Asia to recognize regional varieties as legitimate models, particularly in multilingual ASEAN environments where communicative effectiveness often relies on context-sensitive Englishes rather than native benchmarks.

2. Language Attitudes and the LASS

Language attitude is often defined as a person's "disposition to react favourably or unfavourably" toward a language (Ajzen, 1988). However, language attitudes are not fixed or universal; they are shaped by individual perceptions and mediated by broader social, political, and cultural contexts. As Albury (2020) argues, attitudes toward language can manifest in both overt and subtle ways across daily life, from conversations and media to institutional messaging. Importantly, attitudes are not limited to specific languages but may also extend to language policies, teaching practices, or even the broader concept of multilingualism. Studies from Catalonia (González-Riaño et al., 2019), Morocco (Marley, 2004), and Hong Kong (Lai, 2011) demonstrate that language attitudes vary across generations, communities, and political landscapes, directly influencing the uptake and success of language education policies.

Beyond these contextual factors, language attitudes also play a critical role in the vitality and prestige of languages. As Hymes (1971) observed, they form an integral part of communicative competence. Positive attitudes can expand a language's functional and demographic power, while negative attitudes often lead to language shift, marginalization, or discrimination (Kirilenko, 2020). This is especially salient in multilingual societies, where attitudes influence whether speakers maintain or abandon minority or heritage languages. Attitudes may shift naturally due to changing life needs, such as the desire for social mobility or the influence of dominant cultural norms. However, they can also be shaped artificially through language planning. For example, supportive policies like scholarships for studying indigenous languages in Russia or Welsh-English bilingual job requirements in Wales (Baker, 1992) have contributed to revitalization efforts. In contrast, negative reinforcement, such as language

discrimination or ridicule, as seen in cases of Mock Spanish (Callahan, 2010), can foster language shame and reduce use.

These insights underscore that language attitudes are not static traits but dynamic and ideologically charged responses that reflect evolving sociopolitical realities. Studying them is not only key to understanding speaker behavior but also vital to designing effective, inclusive, and equitable language policies.

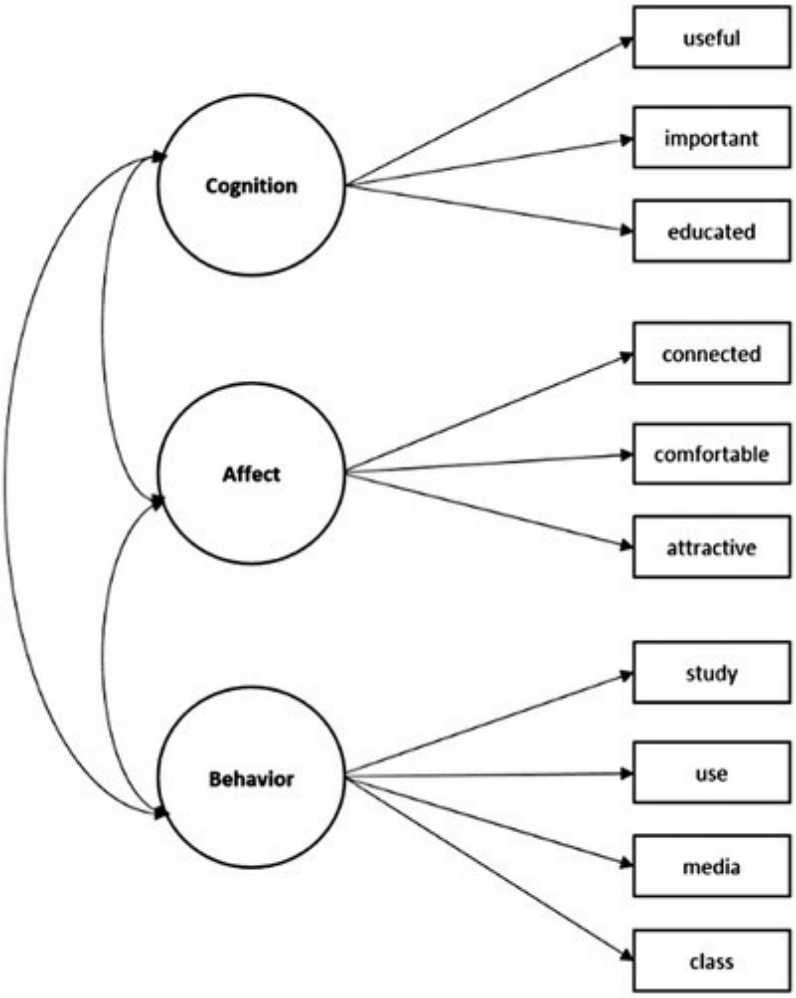
A useful framework for understanding attitudes is the ABC Model (Baker, 1992; Eagly & Chaiken, 1998), which divides attitudes into three interrelated components:

1. Affective: emotional responses toward a speech variety.
2. Behavioral (conative): actions or intentions that follow from those beliefs and emotions.
3. Cognitive: beliefs or knowledge about the language variety.

Importantly, as Oakes (2010) shows, these components do not always align perfectly. For instance, in Quebec, Francophone youth may feel strongly attached to French (affective), yet acknowledge English's global utility (cognitive) and still learn English for pragmatic reasons (behavioral), even if this conflicts with their emotions. Such divergences illustrate how complex and sometimes ambivalent language attitudes can be.

This study uses an adapted version of the Language Attitudes Scale–Student Form (LASS) developed by Li and Wei (2022), originally validated with over 5,000 multilingual students and teachers in China. The original scale proved effective in predicting language ability and academic outcomes. In this study, it was modified to compare students' perceptions of native-accented English (e.g., American or British) and Vietnamese-accented English, focusing on perceived importance, emotional appeal, and communicative usefulness. The scale captures both explicit preferences and underlying beliefs, offering insights into how accent attitudes shape

learners' identity, career aspirations, and acceptance of localized English varieties.



Picture 1: Language Attitudes Scale-Student Form (Li & Wei, 2022)

3. English Accent Attitudes in Vietnamese EFL Context:

Despite increasing global recognition of localized English varieties, Vietnamese classrooms continue to favor native norms. Studies show that while Vietnamese-accented English is often intelligible (Tran, 2017), learners and teachers still idealize native accents as more appropriate for academic and professional settings (Nguyen & Lo, 2022; Tran et al., 2021). Even when educators support inclusive models like English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), classroom practices rarely reflect that stance (Tran, Nguyen, & Duong, 2022). In higher education, lecturers aware of World Englishes still default to native-accented teaching due to institutional pressures,

and students mirror these attitudes (Tran & Moore, 2015; Phan, 2020; Phuong, 2021). This persistent preference suggests that native-speaker norms remain deeply embedded in policy and pedagogy in Vietnam.

III. Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design with a primarily quantitative focus, complemented by qualitative insights. We followed a concurrent triangulation approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018): both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in a single survey instrument, then analyzed separately and merged for interpretation. This design allows general patterns to be supported and enriched by personal narratives, providing a nuanced understanding of student attitudes.

2. Participants

The study involved 116 Vietnamese undergraduate English majors (76.7% female, ages 18–22) from various years of study. Most had substantial exposure to both native and local English accents. While 59% reported hearing American English most often, 35% were most exposed to Vietnamese-accented English, and 6% to British English. Nearly all had been taught by both Vietnamese (81%) and native English-speaking teachers (79%). Vietnamese-accented English was commonly heard in academic and professional settings, with 67% hearing it “very often.” This suggests students are regularly exposed to a mix of local and native accents, though native ones retain higher perceived prestige.

3. Instruments

Data were collected via an online survey consisting of three parts: (1) demographics/background, (2) a quantitative attitude scale, and (3) optional open-ended questions.

A. **Demographics:** The survey first gathered personal and background information, including gender, academic year, any experience living in an English-speaking country, and exposure to different English accents. These questions provided context for interpreting the attitudes (for example, a student who has never met a foreigner might feel differently about native accents than one who has studied abroad).

B. **Quantitative Attitude Scale:** We adapted Li and Wei's (2022) Language Attitudes Scale-Student Form (LASS) to specifically compare attitudes toward a *native-like English accent* versus a *Vietnamese English accent*. Essentially, we created two parallel sets of 10 statements – one set referring to "English with a native-like accent (e.g. American/British accent)" and the other referring to "English with a Vietnamese accent." Each statement was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The 10 statements for each accent were designed to tap into the three attitude dimensions (cognitive, affective, behavioral) as follows:

- **Cognitive (beliefs about the accent)** – Items 1-3 for each accent. These addressed perceived status or utility. Example (native accent version): *"Speaking English with a native-like accent is useful in Vietnamese society."*
- **Affective (feelings toward the accent)** – Items 4-6 for each accent. These captured emotional attachment and social appeal. For example: *"I feel emotionally attached to a native-like English accent."* (versus *"…attached to my Vietnamese English accent."*)

- **Behavioral (intentions/actions regarding accent)** – Items 7-10 for each accent. These gauged what students would prefer to do in practice. For instance: *"I am willing to learn to speak English with a native-like accent."*

It's worth noting that the LASS has demonstrated good reliability in prior studies; in our adapted version, internal consistency was high for each subscale (Cronbach's α was approximately .82 for cognitive items, .76 for affective, .81 for behavioral), indicating that the grouped items were measuring cohesive constructs.

C. **Open-Ended Questions:** To complement the numerical data, the survey included four open-ended prompts where students could freely express their thoughts. These questions were optional (not all students responded), and they were designed to probe deeper into the second research question about self-perception and identity. The prompts were:

- *"How do you feel about your own English accent?"*
- *"In your future career (e.g., as a teacher, translator, or other professional), how important do you think your English accent will be?"*
- *"Do you feel any pressure to improve or change your English accent? Why or why not?"*
- *"Do you consider English (and the way you speak it) part of your identity? Explain."*

4. Procedure

The survey was administered during class time with the cooperation of course instructors. After obtaining informed consent, students accessed the questionnaire via a secure online form (using their smartphones or laptops in the classroom). They were assured that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be anonymous. To reduce social desirability bias, we emphasized that honest opinions were needed for research purposes and that there were no right

or wrong answers. Throughout the survey, the two sets of attitude questions (native-accent and Vietnamese-accent) were presented in separate blocks but back-to-back for easy comparison. The order of the two blocks was not randomized (all students rated the native-like accent first, then the Vietnamese accent). This is a minor limitation, as it could introduce an order effect, but we judged the risk to be low given the direct and clear nature of the items. After the Likert scale section, the open-ended prompts were shown.

5. Data Analysis

We used both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the quantitative data. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for all 20 attitude items. To address RQ1, composite scores for cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions were computed separately for native- and Vietnamese-accented English. Paired-sample t-tests ($p < .05$) were then conducted to determine if differences between accent attitudes were significant. Analyses were performed using SPSS and verified in Excel.

For the qualitative data, we applied thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Two researchers independently coded open-ended responses, identified recurring ideas, and grouped them into broader themes, such as "Accent and Career Impact." Contrasting views were noted, and representative quotes were selected (with pseudonyms) to illustrate each theme. Minor language errors were preserved. The analysis was done manually using spreadsheets.

This mixed-methods approach allowed us to triangulate findings: quantitative data revealed general attitude patterns, while qualitative insights explained the reasons behind them.

IV. Results

1. Quantitative Findings

Across all three dimensions, students on average rated the native-speaker accent significantly more favorably than the Vietnamese accent. The behavioral dimension showed the largest gap: on statements about intended behavior, the mean score for native-accent orientation was 4.24 (indicating strong inclination toward adopting or using a native accent) versus 3.24 for the local accent. This gap of 1.00 point was highly significant ($t = 8.13$, $p < .001$), suggesting that when it comes to actions (like which accent they would imitate or want to use in their career), students lean heavily toward native norms. The affective dimension also showed a strong preference for native accents (mean 4.06 vs. 3.33, $t = 8.02$, $p < .001$); students reported liking or feeling positively about native accents more than the local accent. The cognitive dimension (beliefs about status/correctness) had a slightly smaller difference (4.11 vs. 3.45, $t = 7.85$, $p < .001$), but it was still substantial. In short, quantitatively, the students as a group perceive a native-like accent as more status-worthy, pleasant, and useful than a Vietnamese English accent.

These results suggest that students generally perceive native-like accents as more useful and respected in Vietnamese society. In particular, the fact that the behavioral dimension had the highest disparity indicates that students' intentions and self-reported behaviors (e.g., how they practice speaking or whose speech they try to emulate) are the most strongly skewed by native-speakerist attitudes. They might cognitively know that Vietnamese English can be intelligible (hence the cognitive gap was slightly smaller), but affectively they still feel the native accent is nicer, and behaviorally they act on the assumption that the native accent is the ideal goal.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Attitudes Toward Native and Vietnamese Accents Across LASS Dimensions (N = 116)

Dimension	Native Mean	Native SD	Vietnamese Mean	Vietnamese SD	Mean difference
Cognitive	3.78	0.70	3.35	0.67	0.43
Affective	3.95	0.62	3.42	0.70	0.53
Behavioral	4.24	0.63	3.24	0.96	1.00

Table 2

Paired-samples t-test Results Comparing Attitudes Toward Native vs. Vietnamese Accents

Dimension	*t*	*df*	*p*
Cognitive	5.12	115	< .001
Affective	6.47	115	< .001
Behavioral	9.13	115	< .001

In summary, Vietnamese English majors exhibited a strong overall preference for the native-like English accent across belief, emotion, and intention measures. They perceive a native accent as more useful and prestigious, feel somewhat more positively toward it, and, most strikingly, they show a clear desire to acquire and use a native accent themselves. However, it's worth noting that attitudes toward the local accent were not entirely negative. Many students still rated several aspects of Vietnamese-accented English around the midpoint (3 = neither agree nor disagree).

This suggests a degree of ambivalence – they don't outright "reject" their local way of speaking, but they certainly don't elevate it to the same status as a native accent. The qualitative findings help to illuminate the reasons behind these numbers, particularly by addressing how students feel about *their own* accent and its role in their lives.

2. Qualitative Findings

The open-ended responses provide further insight into students' perceptions of accents in relation to their professional communication and identity. Thematic analysis of the 85 responses revealed four prominent themes:

A. Clarity over Perfection

Nearly all students agreed that being understandable in English is crucial for their future careers. Many mentioned that as future teachers or professionals, the priority is to speak clearly so that others (students, colleagues, clients) can comprehend them. For some, this emphasis on clarity comes even if their accent isn't perfectly native-like. For example, one student wrote:

> *"I'm comfortable with it. It's clear and understandable, which I value more than sounding native." – Student 86*

This sentiment, echoed by others, suggests that while a native-like accent is seen as desirable, it is not the *only* path to effective communication. A number of respondents stressed that intelligibility and correct pronunciation of technical terms might matter more than having a particular accent. As one future teacher explained, *"the most important thing is being able to explain things clearly and communicate effectively… especially with my students."* There is a

recognition that an accent, by itself, does not convey meaning, speaking with correct grammar and adequate vocabulary, in a clear voice, is what ensures the message gets across.

That said, many students still associate a clear accent with a native-like accent. In other words, they believe sounding more native will enhance clarity and effectiveness. Some noted that having a "standard" accent (implying American/British) could *"build credibility"* or *"make people see me in a more positive light"*. Here we see clarity and native-like quality being conflated, the assumption being that a native accent is inherently clearer or more correct.

B. Pressure to Sound "Native"

When asked if they feel pressure to improve or change their English accent, responses were split. About half of those who answered said yes, they do feel some pressure, mainly self-imposed. The pressure stems from wanting to be perceived as professional and competent. *"Yes, I do feel some pressure to improve my English accent because I want to be clearly understood by others, especially in professional or academic environments,"* wrote one student. This reflects an internalized belief that a less "foreign" accent (often termed *neutral*) will smooth their interactions. Another student frankly stated, *"a more natural accent can help me sound more professional and confident, especially in international settings."* Such comments show that students anticipate working in contexts where a heavy Vietnamese accent might invite negative judgment or confusion, so they feel driven to polish their pronunciation.

Some students described actively practicing to change their accent, for example, mimicking native speakers from movies, recording their voice and correcting it, or training specific pronunciation points. One student shared an interesting journey:

"I used to [feel pressure]. At first I thought it would be great if I could use a British accent. I'd get more respect and a high-salary job. Then I realized it was not as essential as I thought, so I still keep using an American accent, and sometimes I still have a Vietnamese accent while speaking." – Student 76

On the other hand, a significant number of students said "*No, I don't feel pressure*". Different reasons were given for this lack of pressure: A common view was that accent is a personal choice or natural outcome, and one should not be shamed for it.

C. Self-Assessment of Accent:

In describing their own English accent, students often gave a *measured* self-assessment. Very few flatly said "my accent is bad." Instead, the prevailing description was along the lines of *"It's okay, but not perfect."* A typical response was: *"I think my English accent is good, clear, easily understandable, and quite native-like."* Many used qualifiers like "quite" or "a little bit" native-like, suggesting they recognize influences from native accents in their speech. In fact, several students mentioned their accent is a mix of Vietnamese and native (American or British). For example, *"My accent is mixed between Vietnamese and American accent, but Vietnamese is stronger,"* or *"I think my accent is affected by both Vietnamese and British accents."* This reflects how their spoken English has been shaped by exposure to multiple sources.

A number of students expressed a desire to improve further, even if they felt their accent was decent. *"Not good enough. I need to improve more,"* wrote one. This striving is consistent with the earlier point about pressure and the strong behavioral intent to learn a native accent: many are not fully satisfied with their current way of speaking and want to polish it. On the flip side, a few students took pride in how far they've come.

One interesting perspective that emerged was valuing a “neutral” accent. A student commented that their goal was to have a neutral international accent rather than a heavy native regional accent or a heavy Vietnamese accent. The idea of a globally intelligible accent, not tied to any specific country, seems appealing to some, as it might combine clarity with authenticity.

D. Accent and Identity*:*

Perhaps the richest theme was how students link language to identity. A majority of respondents answered that yes, English (and specifically their accent) is part of their identity. However, they described this in two nuanced ways:

Many students see their accent as a reflection of their heritage and personal journey. For example, one student proudly stated: *“My accent shows where I come from and the effort I’ve put into learning English, so I’m proud of it.”* (This comment came from a student who also acknowledged feeling self-conscious around native speakers, yet ultimately took pride in the accent as evidence of hard work and origin.) These views align with the idea that a Vietnamese accent in English carries a solidarity or identity value. Rather than viewing this negatively, students like these frame it as a “signature” of Vietnamese people, something unique they bring to the global English tapestry. Some students emphasized that English itself has become embedded in their identity due to frequent use. For these individuals, being an English speaker (regardless of accent) is part of their self-concept, perhaps not surprising for English majors immersed in the language daily. Their accent, in turn, is a personal style of expression. One student wrote that the slang and expressions they use in English reflect their personality, implying that language choice and accent are interwoven with identity and self-expression.

It is important to note that not everyone wholeheartedly embraced the identity

connection. A few students were unsure or neutral, saying *"I have no idea"* or that they hadn't thought about it deeply. One respondent said, *"I think English is part of my identity, but not a very big part… my first language and culture still shape most of who I am."* This indicates that while English is important to them academically and maybe professionally, their core identity remains tied to their native language (Vietnamese) and culture.

V. Discussion

This section interprets the findings in light of the two guiding research questions:

RQ1: What are Vietnamese English majors' attitudes toward native-accented and Vietnamese-accented English across the three dimensions of the Language Attitudes Scale (LASS)?

Quantitative results from this study clearly show a statistically significant preference for native-accented English (particularly American and British) across all three dimensions of the LASS. The behavioral subscale showed the most pronounced gap (M = 4.24 vs. 3.24), indicating that students continue to view native-like pronunciation as the ideal, particularly in professional or academic contexts. This enduring preference reflects the deep entrenchment of native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006), not merely as a personal preference but as an institutionalized linguistic ideology reinforced by educational policies, hiring practices, and cultural representations.

Interestingly, the gaps between native and local accent attitudes were not uniform across the ABC components. The fact that the behavioral and affective components showed larger disparities than the cognitive component is telling. It suggests that even if students acknowledge on some level (cognitively) that English is an international language that can be spoken in different ways (reflecting some awareness of language ownership ideas), their feelings and

intended behaviors haven't caught up to that intellectual idea. This pattern is consistent with observations by Kircher and Zipp (2022) that the affective, behavioral, and cognitive components of language attitudes can "pull in different directions." In our case, students might intellectually agree that in theory Vietnamese English is acceptable, yet emotionally they still feel prouder or more impressed by native accents, and behaviorally they act on the native-accent ideal. This internal inconsistency highlights the persistence of underlying ideologies: the heart and habits lag behind the mind's acknowledgment of new concepts.

Crucially, these findings echo broader regional trends in East and Southeast Asia. Studies from Japan (Hiraga, 2005), China (Zhang, 2009), and South Korea (Park, 2011) have consistently shown that EFL learners across Asia associate native accents with credibility, intelligence, and social capital. In Thailand, recent research by Choomthong and Manowong (2024) found that while students rated some Expanding-Circle Englishes as quite intelligible, they still preferred American and British accents due to their perceived prestige and global cachet. This pan-Asian pattern suggests that the prestige of native accents is not rooted in communicative necessity but in what Bourdieu (1991) would call symbolic power. A native-like accent functions as a form of linguistic capital that indexes modernity, cosmopolitanism, and even, in some contexts, moral trustworthiness or leadership ability (Park, 2011). In effect, native-accented English becomes a marker of being "worldly" and upwardly mobile, whereas local-accented English can be subtly stigmatized as parochial or second-rate. Our Vietnamese context fits this pattern: despite increasing exposure to global Englishes, the native voice still largely symbolizes the "best" English.

RQ2: How do students perceive their own English accent in relation to their professional communication and linguistic identity?

As for the second research question, it focused on how students perceive their own English accent in relation to their professional communication and personal identity. The qualitative responses to this question suggest that students engage in a complex internal dialogue about their accents. Many participants described feeling uncomfortable about their Vietnamese-accented English in certain situations, especially during job interviews, public speaking, or when addressing authority figures. This sentiment aligns with Phuong's (2021) observation that Vietnamese learners often see their accent as a liability in formal contexts. Bourdieu's (1991) notion of linguistic capital is also applicable here, since students recognize that speaking with a native-like accent can confer tangible advantages in their careers and social mobility.

At the same time, the data revealed a smaller but significant group of students who resisted these dominant norms. Some students defended their Vietnamese accent as a point of cultural pride rather than a flaw. One even said, "My accent reflects where I come from. I don't want to erase that." These participants are adopting a language ownership stance (Widdowson, 1994) and show that intelligibility doesn't require sounding native. Their voices echo emerging attitudes identified by Sung (2014) and Chowdhury (2024), who documented similar, though still minority, moves toward accepting localized English across East and Southeast Asia.

Despite this growing assertiveness, many still wrestle with the tension between career aspirations and cultural identity. While they see benefits in sounding native for professional reasons, they also report feeling guilt, pride, or mixed emotions about their own accent. The same findings can be seen in Foo and Tan's (2019) study of Singaporean students, who felt both insecure about their English pronunciation and determined to preserve it as an identity marker. Their work highlights that linguistic insecurity is not simply a lack of ability but a response to conflicting pressures, from global norms on one side and personal identity on the other.

These insights point to an urgent need for pronunciation teaching in Vietnamese higher education that respects both intelligibility and identity. Approaches like Global Englishes Language Teaching (Rose & Galloway, 2019) and ELF-aware pedagogy (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015) offer promising frameworks to normalize accent diversity. Still, as Chowdhury (2024) warns, many teachers who support these ideas feel constrained by entrenched curricula and institutional expectations. This reveals a critical tension: goodwill is not enough. Real change requires systemic reform: revamping materials, assessments, and teacher training to genuinely embrace linguistic diversity.

Limitations

This study's conclusions must be tempered by several limitations. First, the sample (116 English majors from a single university in southern Vietnam) may not represent all Vietnamese learners. These students are in a metropolitan, internationalized campus environment where they regularly interact with foreign teachers and media. Their attitudes could differ from students in more rural areas or in programs with less exposure to international English. Second, the data are self-reported via questionnaires. Responses on sensitive attitude questions could be influenced by social desirability bias. For example, some students might downplay prejudices or exaggerate accepting attitudes in writing. While anonymity was assured, subtle bias in responses cannot be ruled out. Additionally, the qualitative data, though rich, came from open-ended survey questions rather than in-depth interviews. Answers varied in length and depth; some students wrote extensive reflections, but others gave only brief phrases, limiting our ability to probe further. To build on this work, future research could pair surveys with interviews or focus groups. That way, we would go beyond numbers to understand why students hold certain views about accents

VI. Conclusion and Suggestions for Practical Use

Overall, these findings carry weighty sociolinguistic and pedagogical implications for ELT in Vietnam and similar EFL environments. First off, we have to bust the myth that "good English" equals a native accent. Pronunciation teaching should shift its emphasis from imitation to intelligibility by helping students communicate clearly rather than sound American or British. This change in focus can reassure learners that their accents are not mistakes to be hidden, but parts of who they are. Classrooms alone are not enough. We need teacher training materials and curricula that reflect a richer, sociolinguistic view, one that treats English as a worldwide, shared language. For instance, curriculum could incorporate listening materials featuring proficient non-native English speakers from various backgrounds to both improve students' exposure to global English accents and reinforce the idea that effective communication is not limited to the inner-circle accents.

At the same time, students' aspirations for native-like pronunciation should be acknowledged, but framed within a broader understanding of English's global nature. Raising awareness about accent bias empowers learners to value their own voices. As Pennycook (2025) argues, pedagogy should respect learners' need to be heard. Recognizing local accents affirms that Vietnamese English is part of World Englishes, helping students build both confidence and critical awareness.

In summary, this study explored how Vietnamese English majors feel about native and Vietnamese-accented English through both surveys and open-ended responses. The survey results made it clear: most students still lean toward native-like accents in terms of beliefs, emotions, and intentions, an indication that native-speakerism remains powerful in Vietnam's EFL landscape. But the interviews revealed something more subtle: while many strive for native-perfect pronunciation for career reasons, others prioritize clear communication and staying true

to themselves. Importantly, a notable minority expressed pride in speaking English with a Vietnamese accent, a sign of growing confidence and a shift toward treating English as a shared, global resource.

These findings suggest that although dominant ideologies continue to shape learner preferences, attitudes are beginning to shift toward more inclusive understandings of English. For educators and policymakers, this highlights the need to critically reflect on accent models promoted in classrooms and to support teaching practices that affirm diverse linguistic identities while maintaining intelligibility. And future research could help us understand how these attitudes evolve over time, especially as students move into professional roles, ultimately informing efforts to create more equitable, real-world English education.

VII. References

Ajzen, I. (1988). *Attitudes, personality, and behavior.* Dorsey Press.

Albury, N. J. (2020). Language attitudes and ideologies on linguistic diversity. In A. C. Schalley & S. A. Eisenchlas (Eds.), *Handbooks of Applied Linguistics* (pp. 357-376). Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. doi:10.1515/9781501510175-018

Baker, C. (1992). *Attitudes and Languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Bayyurt, Y., & Sifakis, N. C. (2015). Developing an ELF-aware pedagogy: Insights from a self-education programme. In P. Vettorel (Ed.), *New Frontiers in Teaching and Learning English* (pp. 55–76). Cambridge Scholars.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power* (J. B. Thompson, Ed.; G. Raymond and M. Adamson, Trans.). Harvard University Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brutt-Griffler, J. (2002). *World English: A Study of its Development.* Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence.* Multilingual Matters.

Callahan, L. (2010). U.S. Latinos' use of Mock Spanish and the politics of language shame. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 14(2), 227–244.

Choomthong, D., & Manowong, S. (2020). Varieties of English accents: Preference and intelligibility among Thai university students. *Manusya: Journal of Humanities,* 23(2), 151–169.

Chowdhury, R. (2024). ELF on the ground: Teachers' voices resisting and reinforcing native-speakerism in Asian classrooms. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca,* 13(1), 9–27.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Cronbach, L. J., & Meehl, P. E. (1955). Construct validity in psychological tests. *Psychological Bulletin, 52*(4), 281-302. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0040957

Davies, A., Hamp-Lyons, L., & Kemp, C. (2003). Whose English is it, anyway? *ELT Journal*, 57(4), 295–304.

Dörnyei, Z. (2003). Attitudes, orientations, and motivations in language learning: Advances in theory, research, and applications. *Language Learning*, 53(S1), 3–32.

Eagly, A. H. Chaiken. S.(1998). Attitude, structure and function. *Handbook of social psychology*, 269-322.

Effendi, F. E., Rangkuti, R., & Rosa, R. N. (2021). *Exploring students' attitudes towards their own English accent: Insights from Indonesia.* Proceedings of the 18th Asia TEFL Conference.

Foo, A. L., & Tan, Y.-Y. (2019). Linguistic insecurity and the linguistic ownership of English among Singaporean Chinese. *World Englishes, 38*(4). https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12359

Gardner, R. C. (1982). Language attitudes and language learning. In E. B. Ryan & H. Giles (Eds.), *Attitudes Towards Language Variation* (pp. 132-147). Edward Arnold.

González-Riaño, X. A., Lapresta-Rey, C., Fernández-Costales, A., & Huguet, Á. (2019). Language attitudes towards Spanish and Catalan in autochthonous and immigrant families in Catalonia: Correlating student and parent attitudes. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 22(6), 754–767.

Hendriks, B., van Meurs, F., & Reimer, A. K. (2018). The evaluation of lecturers' nonnative-accented English: Dutch and German students' evaluations of different accent strengths. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 34, 28–45.

Hiraga, Y. (2005). British attitudes towards six varieties of English in the USA and Britain. *World Englishes*, *24*(3), 289-308. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0883-2919.2005.00411.x

Holliday, A. (2006). *Native-speakerism.* ELT Journal, 60(4), 385–387. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccl030

Holliday, A. (2017). Native-speakerism: Troubling native-speaker voices in ELT. In J. Liontas (Ed.), *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* (pp. 1–7). Wiley.

Hymes, D. H. (1971). Competence and performance in linguistic theory. In R. Huxley & E. Ingram (Eds.), *Language Acquisition: Models and Methods* (pp. 3–28). Academic Press.

Jenkins, J. (2006). Points of view and blind spots: ELF and SLA. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 16(2), 137–162.

Jenkins, J. (2007). *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity.* Oxford University Press.

Kachru, B. B. (1992). *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures* (2nd ed.). University of Illinois Press.

Kachru, B. B. (2005). *Asian Englishes: Beyond the Canon.* Hong Kong University Press.

Kircher, R., & Zipp, L. (2022). *Research Methods in Language Attitudes.* Cambridge University Press.

Kirilenko, S. V. (2024). *Language attitudes: Sociolinguistic aspect.* Research Result: Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, 10(1), 5–19.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2010). English as a Lingua Franca in ASEAN: A multilingual model. In A Kirkpatrick (Ed.), *English as an Asian lingua franca and the multilingual model of ELT* (pp. 121-139). De Gruyter Mouton. https://doi.org/10.1515/jelf-2012-0006

Kuteeva, M. (2020). Teaching and learning in English in parallel-language and ELF settings: Debates, concerns, and realities in higher education. *European Journal of Language Policy*, 12(1), 89–106.

Lai, M. L. (2011). Cultural identity and language attitudes: Postcolonial Hong Kong revisited. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 8(2), 71–89.

Li, C. and Wei, L. (2022) Language Attitudes: Construct, Measurement, and Associations with Language Achievements. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2137516

Marley, D. (2004). Language attitudes in Morocco following recent changes in language policy. *Language Policy*, 3(1), 25–46.

Nguyen, T. B., & Lo, Y. H. G. (2022). Perceptions of Vietnamese EFL high school teachers and students towards English as a lingua franca. *International Journal of TESOL & Education, 2*(1), 227-245. https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.222120

Nguyen, T. (2022). Vietnamese EFL/ESL Learners' Attitudes towards British English versus American English Accents. *Journal of Social Transformation and Education*. https://doi.org/10.54480/jste.v3i1.44

Oakes, L. "Lambs to the slaughter? Young francophones and the role of English in Quebec today" *Multilingua*, vol. 29, no. 3-4, 2010, pp. 265-288. https://doi.org/10.1515/mult.2010.013

Park, J. S. Y. (2011). The promise of English: linguistic capital and the neoliberal worker in the South Korean job market. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 14*(4), 443–455. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2011.573067

Pennycook, A. (2025). On being heard: English, voice, and linguistic authority. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 14*(3), 451–460. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v14i3.79476

Pham, H. T. (2021). Factors influencing English learning motivation among Vietnamese university students. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 37(4), 1–15.

Phan, L. H. (2020). Attitudes of Vietnamese university students towards American and British English accents. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 36*(2), 112-125.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.

Phuong, T. T. H. (2021). Who should teach English pronunciation?: Voices of Vietnamese EFL learners and teachers. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, *18*(1), 125-141. https://doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2021.18.1.8.125

Rose, H., & Galloway, N. (2019). *Global Englishes for Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316678343

Sarnoff, I. (1970). *Social Attitudes and the Resolution of Motivational Conflict.* In M. Jahoda & N. Warren (Eds.), Attitudes (pp. 279–284). Penguin.

Seidlhofer, B. (2011). *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca.* Oxford University Press.

Sung, C. C. M. (2014). Hong Kong university students' perceptions of their identities in English as a lingua franca contexts: An exploratory study. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication, 24*(1), 94-112. https://doi.org/10.1075/japc.24.1.06sun

Ton, N. N. H., & Pham, H. H. (2010). Vietnamese teachers' and students' perceptions of global English. *Language Education in Asia*, *1*(1), 48-61.

Tran, L. H. N., Tran, L. T., & Ngo, M. T. (2024). English language education for graduate employability in Vietnam. In L. H. N. Tran, L. T. Tran, & M. T. Ngo (Eds.), *Global Vietnam: Across time, space and community*, 49-69. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4338-8

Tran, Q. T., Nguyen, L. P., & Duong, M. T. (2022). Vietnamese teachers' attitudes toward English as a lingua franca (ELF) and classroom EFL teaching practices. *VNU Journal of Science: Education Research, 38*(4), 90-102.

Tran, T. H. (2017). The intelligibility of the Vietnamese-accented English. *English Linguistics Research, 3*(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.5296/elr.v3i1.10877

Tran, T. H., & Moore, P. (2015). Vietnamese English teachers' perceptions of incorporating World Englishes into their teaching. *Language Education in Asia*, 6(2), 107–121.

Truong, V. X. (2020). Vietnamese students' attitudes toward British and American English pronunciation. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 11(6), 933–940.

Wesely, P. M. (2012). Learner attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs in language learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 45(S1), 98–117.

Widdowson, H. G. (1994). The ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, *28*(2), 377–389. https://doi.org/10.2307/3587438

Zhang, F., & Yin, P. (2009). How is my English? Chinese university students' attitudes toward English accents. *SAGE Open*. https://doi.org/10.1177/215824402110382