

Do Americans Sound Smarter? The Effect of Accent on the Evaluation of Speakers' Identities

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Abstract

This paper explored whether accent as a single facet of a speaker's identity is the determining rationale behind evaluating someone's personal and national identity. Two auditory clips were recorded by a single speaker: one in General American and one in Kuwaiti accented English. It was distributed alongside a survey to both male and female English major students in two governmental colleges in Kuwait. The survey implemented Osgood's semantic differential scale and Lambert's matched guise and results were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The results revealed the significant superiority of inner circle English varieties over outer circle varieties with a twist, where many students had favorable attitudes towards the local accented English expressing some national pride.

Keywords: identity, language attitudes, variety, accent, native speaker, English ideology

1. Introduction

The concept of stereotypes is not a new one, but when this practice is motivated by speakers' linguistic attitudes and behaviors, it becomes a concept worth revisiting. The first appearance of the term *stereotypes* was by the French printer, engraver, and type founder, Firmin Didot in 1796, who used it to describe an element in the business of typography and newspaper printing (Coccoli, 2008). Later, an American journalist, Walter Lippmann, used the term in another light in a social sense explaining how media images shape people's perceptions regardless of the truth or falsity of these pictures seen in the media; he found that the imagination forms somewhat firm stereotypes based on them (1922). There are many infamous linguistic stereotypes in sociolinguistic literature, for example men's speech is obscener and more direct and women's speech is politer and more decent among other stereotypes (Hass, 1979).

The current paper is inspired by Cargile and Giles's (1997) study that investigated the role and effect of social identity on evaluative reactions to speech. According to Zahn and Hopper, these kinds of studies, where evaluations play the dependent variables and are analyzed using the semantic differential or Likert type scales, are called speech evaluation research, speech style research, and language attitude research (1985). This paper attempts to explore the relationship between a linguistic construct, that is a speaker's accent and a social construct that is evaluative judgments, and stereotypes of identity. The evaluation is not about the accent per se, but rather acts as a marker of the speaker and his/her social group exemplified through the accent itself (Fuertes et al., 2012). It will also focus on accent as an independent variable. At the same time, it investigates language attitudes and judgments of identity and character as the new dependent variable. Therefore, the paper will focus on answering the following question: What is the effect of accent on the evaluation of speakers' identities and characteristics?

2. Literature Review

According to Dandy (1988), dialect differences interfere with our attitudes and that interference can negatively affect the learning environment in a class where teachers allow stereotypes of dialects to affect students. Similarly, variations in accent can drastically influence listeners' perceptions of speakers on a multitude of levels be it efficiency, competence, performance, or more personal traits. According to Fuertes et al (2012), there are standard and non-standard accents depending on their acceptability among speakers as the accent of the majority versus the accent of the minority or foreigners. Anne Hensley offers a comprehensive review on the types of definitions other researchers presented for "attitude". Hensley (1970) further explained the two different perspectives of attitude, cognitive and behaviorist, as well as the different techniques used to measure attitude.

Both Lambert (1960) and Anisfeld et al. (1962) compared languages and accents respectively and listeners'

perspectives of their speakers in terms of physical and personality traits. For instance, Bourhis and Giles (1976) selected a naturalistic setting, such as a movie theater, where participants had no idea their linguistic attitudes were being measured, four varieties of accents were evaluated based on the audience's willingness to answer the questionnaire based on the accent played over speakers. According to Jones (2003), it is not about the linguistic varieties themselves but the powers that come from their speakers who hold some sort of economic or political privileges that tend to exclude the linguistic varieties of those below them socially and deem them non-prestigious.

According to Anderson (2009), "degrees of prestige exist in every variety of English" (p.2) and that dialects and accents allow us to categorize people into different classes and identities that we ascribe to them based on linguistic features. Anderson further adds that these varieties not only reflect but also construct personalities or characters. Some of the adjectives that appeared in these kinds of experiments or studies besides personality traits are value judgments of the language variety itself whether it's a language, dialect, or an accent. For example, in comparing between Southern U.S. dialects and other American dialects, Hautalahti (2013) used adjectives as "standard", "non-standard", "positive", "negative", "highly educated", "uneducated", "serious-sounding", "not serious", "clear", "unclear", and "entertaining". In his paper, *Teaching implications of student's attitudes to differing English accents*, Sewell (2005) arrived at the conclusion that Korean students favor North American accents the most when investigating various accented English like British, Irish, South American, African, Middle Eastern, etc. Interestingly, Korean students favored the American accent the most not due to standardization or correctness but because of familiarity.

Phillipson (1992) came up with the "native speaker fallacy", a concept based on the idea that an ideal English teacher is a native English speaker. In another study conducted in Middle East, specifically UAE, Barlow (2009) sheds light at accented English and its effect on listening comprehension of EFL students using both the verbal guise and the matched guise techniques. Interestingly, she points out Chomsky's view on the dichotomy of native versus nonnative speaker being useless as well as discusses the "native speaker fallacy" by Phillipson (1992). At the same time, she recognizes the negative attitudes and stereotypes towards nonnative English speakers from ESL/EFL students as well as native speaker students.

Shah (2019) ponders the question: what causes these negative attitudes towards certain accents? And whether it's the difficulty in understanding the accents, the accent features, or some external factors outside the speakers themselves. Another concept that came across in the literature is language ideology and specifically the standard English language and native speaker ideology assuming ownership and authenticity (Karakas, 2019). He further discovered the positive attitudes towards native English speakers (NESs) in listening activities where they were characterized as "clear", "intelligible", and "correct".

Besides the concept of language ideology, a study in Turkey by Ozmen (2018) discussed the concept of inner circles and expanding circles of English speakers where most nonnative English-speaking teachers in Turkey, teaching at primary or secondary schools, chose General American as the ideal English accent and culture where 42% of them expressed dissatisfaction with their English pronunciation. In Ozmen's study (2018), teachers described the American accent as a lingua franca, more influential, more important, easier to understand, and the best representative of English culture. However, most of their English teaching materials and publications are RP oriented - just like in Kuwait. Inner circles here represent American and British speakers and expanding circles represent the other varieties of English. Moreover, Kachru (1985) talked about three circles: Inner (America, England, and Canada, etc.), Outer (India, Singapore, and Nigeria, etc.), and Expanding (Iran, Korea, China, etc.) (as cited in Moradkhani & Asakereh, 2018).

Seemingly, it is common in speech evaluation research to discuss not only concepts of language ideologies and inner versus expanding circles but also concepts like English as an international language where nonnative English speakers (NNEs) surpass the number of NESs. Within this scope, researchers have been discussing how less common world Englishes (WE) that have a vast number of speakers are still not fairly recognized or represented like other varieties such as RP or General American (Karla & Thanavisuth, 2018).

Speech evaluations and biases are not strictly visible in the educational arena by language learners or teachers. These biases can have negative consequences on individuals' options in life as in the legal system, medical encounters, or social services. In a study of a more legal nature, the matched guise method was implemented by comparing biases towards two guises that Wood described as a "broad Yorkshire English" and a "standard Southern British English". Her findings revealed participants' favorable attitudes towards SSBE believing it to be "normal", "neutral", or "non-accent" (2019). It is interesting to notice how the author described the southern accent as "standard" in the first place while calling the Yorkshire English accent "broad" confirming the participants' biases. Non-standard varieties,

however, are found related to subordinate ethnic (e.g. AAVE), social, economic groups or even certain regional dialects or accents (Dragojevic et al., 2017). Speakers' accents and identities impact whether listeners find their statements true and believable (Jiang et al., 2020), which is a delicate matter especially in courtrooms or any legal meetings.

Other researchers looked at speech evaluations from the opposite direction asking speakers of the inner circle about another variety in the inner circle, different from theirs, versus an outer circle variety of English. Kutlu & Wiltshire (2020) researched American English speakers' attitudes towards British English versus their attitudes towards Indian English and found a preference for inner circle English varieties or as labelled by the the researchers "white speakers" varieties, turning this linguistic discussion into a more racial controversy. Sa'd (2018) hypothesizes that some NNEs believe that English belongs to NESs viewing themselves as incompetent causing them anxiety and affecting their identities, since language is an essential means to express oneself. He thinks the reliance on inner circle varieties in language teaching methodology and materials is both "questionable" and "unnecessary", since the expanding circle speakers surpass the number of inner circle native speakers (Sa'd, 2018).

In another study conducted in a Saudi college students recognized American and British accents as standard, prestigious, and should be taught by their teachers. The Saudi students added that the variety of English spoken in Saudi Arabia is non-prestigious and obscure (Al-Ahdal, 2020). In a recent study conducted at Kuwait University, female speakers displayed a high regard towards "standard" American English as a prestige accent (Al-Gharaballi et al., 2018).

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The sample of population consists of English major college students both male and female in the two public colleges in Kuwait: The College of Basic Education at PAAET and Kuwait University. Most participants come from The English Department at The College of Basic Education at PAAET. In general, there are 1141 students at The English Department at CBE by Fall 2021-2022 from which 250 are male students. The matched guise methodology originated by Lambert (1960) is implemented.

3.2 The Voice Stimuli

The study is conducted in Kuwait exploring two accents: American English accent and Kuwaiti accented English. Certainly, there are varieties of these accents. Two recordings by one female speaker (Kuwaiti English professor) are used to control for voice quality and extra paralinguistic qualities. The independent variable consists of two recorded messages of the same content but with two varieties: a version in an American English accent and the other one in the Kuwaiti accented English. It is a message about national history and social make up designed by the researchers that carries both true and false information about Kuwait that lasts for 2 to 3 minutes (see appendix A-B) the idea was adopted from Zahn and Hopper (1985). Whereas, in reality, the goal is measuring the effect of the linguistic medium on listeners' perceptions of speakers' personal traits and seeing how manipulating the linguistic form may or can affect the listeners' judgments of the speaker's identity. Therefore, the dependent variable being measured here is the language attitude towards the two accents being under investigation.

The two recordings could be electronically manipulated to male voices as well in order to test speaker gender as another independent variable. However, it's been decided that the use of natural voice would be more authentic and to simplify the research design and data analysis later, we will test the gender of the listeners in relation to the gender of the speaker (female) as an independent variable besides the accent variable. However, the gender of the speaker is controlled. We assume the gender of the speaker could very likely influence the results. In many sociolinguistic studies as early as Labov, female speakers tend to seek power or prestige through linguistic means like prestigious dialects or accents. Besides accent (of the speaker) and gender (of listeners), a third independent variable will be examined that is education (listeners' high school education: public or private). The assumption is that accent matters more to private high school graduates since they have been exposed to either an American or a British accent during their school years. Private schools in Kuwait are mainly American or British. The other English varieties are not common in Kuwait not in the educational arena nor in the media.

After discussing the independent variables, accent, gender, and education it is time to turn to the dependent variable: language attitudes and reactions to the speaker's accent. Students will evaluate the speakers' personal traits based on five dimensions: appearance, competence, intelligence, character, and dynamism. Overall, the goal is to investigate whether listeners would react to the accent of the speaker, and how that would influence their evaluative judgments of her personally and professionally. The challenging task was choosing the text content, finding a speaker, and

maintaining the same voice quality consistent across the recordings. It was also important to keep the recordings sound like a spontaneous discussion not a recitation or reading of a text. The task of breaking down the dependent variable of the listener's stereotypes of the speaker into measurable constituents was the most difficult task.

3.3 The Semantic Differential Scale

The current investigation adapted the semantic differential questions and scale by Osgood (1952) alongside Lambert's matched guise method designing a survey of four sections (see appendix C). As Macedo (1981) highlights the significance of studies applying the matched guise method "numerous studies have demonstrated that many linguistic features correlate with social stratification of speakers and that these features often serve as social identifiers which trigger language stereotypes" (p.2). The first part of the survey includes demographic information about the participants alongside an open-ended question about their opinions of the speaker in general, because it is very likely that respondents will arrive at a different set of personality items than the ones assumed by the researchers. This general open-ended question was inspired by Shah's survey aiming to elicit more qualitative input about listeners' stereotypes and biases (2019). The second section covers the semantic differential questions starting with: "how does this speaker sound to you?" including 15 sets of questions of 15 bipolar adjectives as used in many language-variation studies. In this section, participants have six options (e.g., 1. extremely hardworking, 2. hardworking, 3. slightly hard working, 4. slightly lazy, 5. lazy, 6. extremely lazy). Section three is similar to the previous one. It is just a different way of asking more questions about the speaker on the same five dimensions. Here, the participants can choose one of two answers: likely or unlikely in response to ten statements (e.g., this person is successful).

There are five axes where the two accents are evaluated. The five axes are: appearance (attractive/unattractive, old/young, modern/old fashioned), competence (hardworking/lazy, organized/disorganized, reliable/unreliable), intelligence (intelligent/unintelligent, ambitious/unambitious, sophisticated/simple), character (decent/indecent, loyal/disloyal, modest/vain), and dynamism (friendly/unfriendly, confident/insecure, happy/sad). Last, there are four open ended questions about native speakers and English accents giving participants more room to express their opinions freely about English varieties, their preferences, and their linguistic stereotypes.

The hypothesis here is that students will evaluate the American accent recording more favorably than the Kuwaiti accented English recording and might even mention British variety as more prestigious or preferred in the open questions section of the survey. When comparing American and RP accents to "nonstandard" ones, the American accent was rated higher and more positively than RP against the original hypothesis of the researchers (Fuertes et al., 2012). It will be interesting to see what students in this educational and social setting think about American versus British accents given the fact that most of the Kuwaiti educational system is influenced by UK English.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Quantitative Data

The following study took place during the academic year 2021/22. The participants are 202 male and female students studying at the College of Basic Education and Kuwait University all of whom major in English. The recording consisted of the same fictitious historical event about Kuwait recorded by the same speaker once in American English and once in Kuwaiti English. 89 participants listened to the recording of the native speaker, while 113 listened to the non-native recording. Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of the participants.

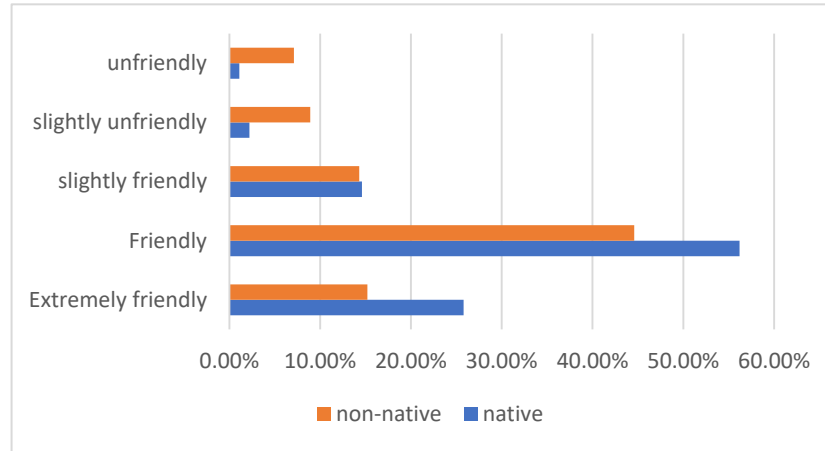
Table 1. Demographic information

Gender	Male 48			Female 154	
Nationality	Kuwaiti 160			Non-Kuwaiti 41	
Ages	(18-22) 152			23+ 50	
Years in college	1 st 63	2 nd 57	3 rd 56	4 th 19	5+ 7
High school	Public 174			Private 28	

The data obtained was analyzed through SPSS for frequency, one-way and two-way ANOVA, and mean. Further qualitative data which was obtained from open-ended questions was analyzed in light of social statistical analysis. The analysis of the data shows that the listeners were highly biased toward the native speaker. For example, when the participants were asked whether they feel like the speaker is hard working or lazy, the majority of the participants felt that the native speaker was hard working 44.9% as opposed to 38.4% who felt that the non-native speaker was slightly hard working. In addition, 28% of the participants believed the native speaker was attractive as opposed to

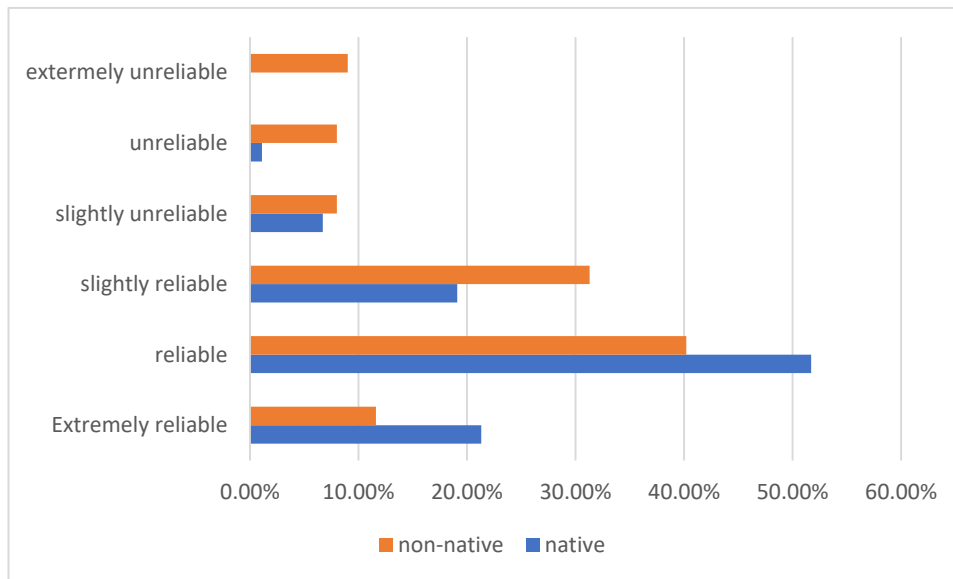
10.7% who felt the non-native speaker was attractive. While 46% of the listeners stated that they felt that the native speaker was intelligent, around the same percentage believed that the non-native speaker was slightly intelligent. Significance was found by nativity by friendliness to be $f \geq 0.00$ (where significance is calculated at $f \leq 0.05$). Chart 1 reflects the percentages of friendliness.

Chart 1. Answers to the friendliness of the speaker



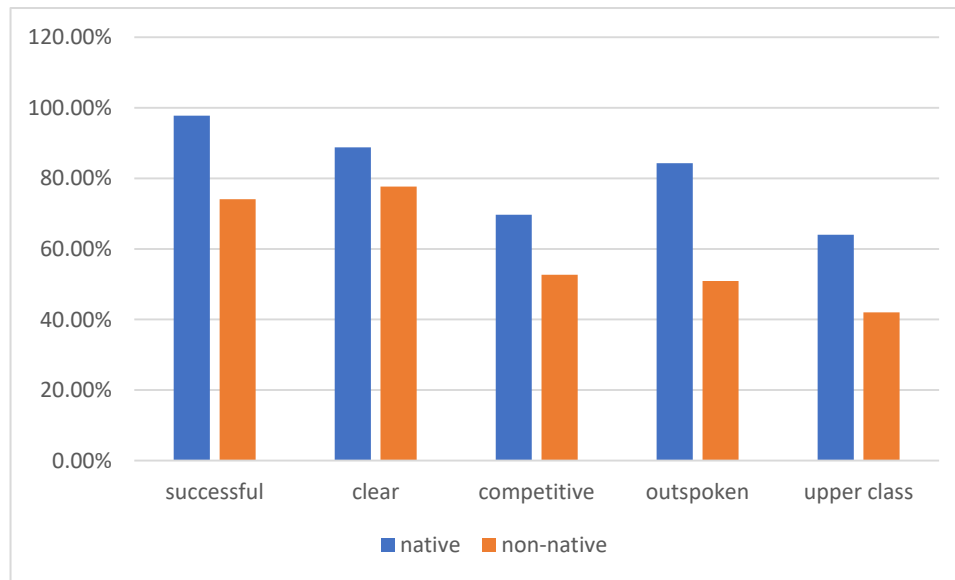
The participants also believed that the native speaker was more ambitious than the non-native one (32.6% and 16.1% consecutively). Confidence was also found to be an item of discrepancy between the native and non-native speakers, as the native speaker was found 73% confident as opposed to 33% for the non-native speaker. 83% of the participants stated that the native speaker was decent while the non-native speaker was found 58.1% decent. The native speaker was also believed to be significantly happier than the non-native speaker ($f=0.041$). 23.6% of the participants felt that the native speaker was extremely modest, and 11.6% felt the non-native speaker was extremely modest. The native speaker was believed to be significantly more organized than the non-native speaker (69.6% and 56.3% successively). The native speaker was also found to be more reliable as shown in Chart 2.

Chart 2. The reliability of the speakers



In the second set of questions, the participants were asked to choose between “likely” and “unlikely.” The majority of the participants found the native speaker more likely to be successful than the native speaker. They also believed that the native speaker is clearer and more competitive. In a one-way ANOVA by high school by the likeliness of being outspoken, significance was found at $f \geq 0.00$ as the graduates of the public schools significantly believed that the native speaker is more likely to be outspoken. The native speaker was also believed to be more likely upper class than the non-native speaker. Chart 3 reflects the percentages of how likely the participants found the speakers to be of certain characteristics.

Chart 3. The speakers are “likely” to be of five characteristics



4.2 Qualitative Data

After analyzing all the quantitative data, it is also crucial to combine it with some detailed qualitative data for a more rounded perspective. It is intriguing to see what the participants came up with to describe and evaluate the speaker’s character. Therefore, first, we will look at the general open-ended question in section 1 of the survey: Listen to the YouTube video below and tell us what you think about the speaker. For both rating sheets (A) and (B) of the survey for the American accent and Kuwaiti accented English respectively, qualitative answers will be organized into groups according to shared themes whether positive or negative. Certain patterns regarding certain topics seemed to form during the analysis of the qualitative data and these themes are about the speaker’s accent, the text content, and the speaker’s character. Table 2 illustrates the percentages of participants who wrote about these three themes: character, accent, and text content.

Table 2. Character-Accent-Text

Sheet A	Sheet B
Character 39.3%	Character 54.7%
Accent 22.4%	Accent 46.9%
Text 33.7%	Text 20.4%

After analyzing the traits or adjectives participants chose to describe the speaker in both recordings, 87% of them presented positive character traits in describing the American accent audio while 13% of them included negative traits. In comparison to the American audio recording, the positive character traits chosen for the Kuwaiti accented English constituted 75% of participants while 25% of them displayed negative characteristics. In further detail, the positive character traits were diverse in the American recording (A) ranging from clear, loyal, good, confident, etc. In 87% sample, 38.3% of participants chose “good” as the most recurrent positive adjective to describe the speaker. On the other hand, in a small sample of 13%, 44.4% of them chose non-native as a negative trait for the speaker. In the Kuwaiti accented English recording (B), in a sample of 75%, 51% of participants selected “good” to describe the speaker, while in a small sample of 25%, 41.2% of them chose “boring”.

After analyzing character, it is time to shed light on the themes occurring in accent description. In recording (A) of the American accent, 78% of participants selected positive adjectives to describe their speech as amazing, good, correct, etc. On the other hand, a small sample of 22% of participants chose negative adjectives to describe accent. In recording (B) of the Kuwaiti accented English, 17.5% of participants selected positive adjectives to describe the accent, while 82.5% produced negative adjectives. The American accent was described as amazing or great by 25% of participants and as good language by 24%. In a small sample of 22%, 57.1% of them described the accent as unclear. On the other hand, 33.3% of participants described the Kuwaiti accented English as good English, while 49.1% of them said it has mistakes and it needs improvement and English language practice. Moreover, 22.8%

described it as not good or bad English, while 14% saw it as a heavy accent.

Besides the general qualitative question in the first section of the survey, section four includes four qualitative questions. The answers will be displayed quantitatively in the tables below. The first question is who are the native English speakers? Participants who answered sheet (A) had three main varieties: British, American, and others. The last answer “others” included Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, North Europe, Singapore, Nigeria, India, and Australia. In addition to the English varieties that showed up in the results, there was one more prominent answer to the question regarding native speakers which was a description. 42.6% of participants indicated that the native speaker is someone who is born and raised in an English-speaking country where the speaker’s mother tongue or L1 is English. Table 3 has the quantitative break down of the answers concerned with the native speaker for participants who listened to the American speaker.

Table 3. Sheet A section 4- Question1: Who are the native speakers?

British 48%
American 22%
Other 30%
Born/Raised 42.6%

As for participants’ favorite English variety, answers in sheet (A) also varied between British, American, and others but heavily the first two answers as shown in table 4.

Table 4. Sheet A section 4- Question2: What is your favorite English variety?

British 44.8%
American 46.3%
Other 9%

Interestingly, 48% of participants saw the British speaker as the native speaker while 22% only saw the American speaker as the native speaker. At the same time in answering question two about their favorite English variety, 46.3% chose American English and a close 44.8% chose British. Questions 3 and 4 had more varied answers where participants were asked about their opinions on Kuwaitis speaking English in an American accent versus Kuwaiti accent.

In question 3 “what do you think about Kuwaitis speaking in American accent”, 77% of the participants answered favorably stating all positive attitudes like “ambitious people”, “intelligent speaker”, “the language sounds professional”, “it’s way better than having an Arabic accent”, and so many more positive comments. Negative attitudes towards Kuwaitis speaking in an American accent were not many accounting for 14% of participants, while 9% had mixed feelings and views like “they are doing it well, but I prefer not changing your real accent”, “if it’s natural I see no problem. If it’s put on as a performance, I might roll my eyes”, “if it’s what comes out naturally”, etc. In the last question in section 4 about Kuwaitis speaking English in a Kuwaiti accent, an interesting 55.7% answered favorably while 35.4% answered negatively and a small group of 8.9% had mixed reactions. Some of the positive attitudes were “it’s still correct English”, “they sound clear and understandable”, “it gives a new taste for the language”, “natural accents are extremely attractive”, etc. On the other hand, some of the negative attitudes were “I don’t accept it”, “bad”, “distraction in communication”, and “extremely annoying”. Some of the mixed feelings were expressed as “it’s fine, but it doesn’t sound appealing”, “it’s kinda funny”, “it’s better for them to use, maybe, a British accent or an American”, etc.

In the second recording (B) of the Kuwaiti accented English similar themes were emphasized and some variations as well were found. In the first question “who are the native speakers” of section 4, 83.8% chose British English which is significantly higher than those found in sheet (A) of the first recording of the American speaker. 25.6% answered American variety and 26.6% chose others including Irish, European, Scottish, New Zealand, and mostly Australian and Canadian. Similar to participants in sheet (A), 43.3% of participants in sheet (B) answered the first question with “born and raised where English is L1”. Table 5 will display these results.

Table 5. Sheet B section 4- Question1: Who are the native speakers?

British 83.3%
American 25.6%
Other 26.6%
Born/Raised 43.3%

In analyzing participants favorite English varieties, British English takes priority again with 50.5% while 37.4% chose American and 10% other varieties as shown in table 6.

Table 6. Sheet B section 4- Question2: What is your favorite English variety?

British 50.5%
American 37.4%
Other 10%

After looking at participants' views on native speakers and favorite varieties of English, it's time to look at their attitudes towards Kuwaitis speaking American versus Kuwaiti accented English. In question 3 of section 4 "what do you think about Kuwaitis speaking in an American accent", 71.7% of them had positive opinions like "they're well educated", "sound much nicer and smarter and authentic", "advanced", "well spoken", etc. At the same time, 13.3% had negative opinions like "I hate it", "disturbing", "slightly annoying because it fits the stereotype of the spoiled", etc. Also, 15% had mixed feelings like "it's fine as long as their English is great", "not all of them speak well", "it's not a necessity", "I'd keep my normal Kuwaiti", etc. In the last question about Kuwaitis speaking English in a Kuwaiti accent, 36.9% answered favorably, 46.6% responded negatively, and 16.5% had mixed feelings. Therefore, the negative attitudes towards Kuwaiti accented English were higher than the positive ones. Some of the negative attitudes included "unattractive and unintelligent", "poor accent", "annoying", "too bad", "very irritating", etc. Some of the positive attitudes included "I love it", "decent", "simple and humble", etc. Lastly, some of the mixed attitudes towards Kuwaiti accent were "it's okay but they have to work on it to be better", "as long as their pronunciation is right and clear", "it's ok around friends....it's not acceptable for academic purposes/teaching methods".

5. Conclusion

This study is significant due to its interdisciplinary nature, as it is an experimental linguistic study in sociolinguistics, specifically researching language attitudes as well as character stereotypes and identity. Many English varieties have been researched as being in the inner, outer, or expanding circles but not much in the Middle East. As assumed in the early stages of this paper, British English was mostly chosen as both the native English speaker variety as well as the favorite English variety. However, when the American accent recording was playing, listeners rated it slightly higher than British English and chose it as their favorite variety. What was not expected however was some of the positive attitudes found towards the local accent, which could suggest a new direction for the future of English language education. It is a study that can be useful for academics and professionals in education, linguistics, health practice, and the legal system when it comes to evaluative judgments of speakers based on their accent which can cause injustice or discrimination based on their spoken variety alone. It is a topic that has been studied for a long time, but not enough in this part of the globe. Some years ago, private colleges in Kuwait would not hire locals to teach English in their departments, only native speakers were hired, but looking at private colleges and schools in Kuwait now suggests the opposite where you find native and non-native instructors equally. Overall, the researchers attempted to cover all the concepts involved in this kind of research on a large scale like language ideology, language ownership, English circles, and globalization. Additionally, it looks more specifically at Middle Eastern or Kuwaiti speakers' attitudes towards their local accent and comparing it to their attitudes towards an inner circle variety, American. Like many other studies of language attitudes, American and British varieties are preferable among other English varieties especially General American variety of the Midwest and RP as the prestigious British variety. At the end, this paper attempted to act as an eye opener for teachers and students alike to accept English varieties that come from the outer circles as well as have the awareness that English does not belong to a single community being the lingua franca. Many non-native speakers teach or learn and speak English globally. As students clarified in this paper locally accented English is acceptable and celebrated as long as it is grammatical and understandable, since comprehension is what matters.

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Appendix A: (Speaker A: American Accent Message)

Hi,

My name is Angela. I'm an expat that has been living in Kuwait since 1993. Everyone thinks of Kuwait as a small hot country full of oil... But today, I'm going to tell you why Kuwait is much more than that! Did you know that Ghandi awarded the prince of Kuwait, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem a peace award? Kuwait has strived to keep peace around the world, and its good deeds have been noticed a long time ago. For their own people, Kuwait gave almost \$4000 to every citizen as well as a year's supply of food in 2012! For people around the world, Kuwait has been a major source of funding economic development. Since it has been established in 1961, Kuwait has funded 105 countries worldwide. Kuwait has rebuilt AlQairawan University in Tunisia, and restored artifacts for the Egyptian National Museum. 917 projects were, and are still being funded worldwide, costing the country around 6 billion Kuwaiti dinars.

Moving away from economics, another fact that many might know about Kuwait is the fact that the island of Failka was inhabited before anywhere else in the world! Historical findings reflect evidence of life 2800BC. That's more than 3000 years ago! Many famous people lived in Failka for a while such as Magellan, Ibn Battuta and Christopher Columbus. The place where Failka is situated makes it the destination for traders and businessmen. Failka is where prince Hamad of Qatar got married to Princess Moza. It has been said, however, that Failka island is haunted. Many eyewitnesses witnessed paranormal activities on the island. Ibn Battuta wrote in his journal "the island is truly inhabited, not only by humans I must say, I feel something different around me, as if ghosts are floating all around". Many people believe that Failka is still haunted, and hence could not be turned into a touristic destination.

With all its pros and cons, I love Kuwait.

Appendix B: (Speaker B: Kuwaiti Accent Message)

Hi,

My name is Mariam. I am a Kuwaiti citizen that has been living in Kuwait since 1993. Everyone thinks of Kuwait as a small hot country full of oil... But today, I'm going to tell you why Kuwait is much more than that! Did you know that Ghandi awarded the prince of Kuwait, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem a peace award? Kuwait has always strived to keep peace around the world, and its good deeds have been noticed a long time ago. For their own people, Kuwait gave almost \$4000 to every citizen as well as a year's supply of food in 2012! For people around the world, Kuwait has been a major source of funding economic development. Since it has been established in 1961, Kuwait has funded 105 countries worldwide. Kuwait has rebuilt AlQairawan University in Tunisia, and restored artifacts for the Egyptian National Museum. 917 projects were, and are still being funded worldwide, costing the country around 6 billion Kuwaiti dinars.

Moving away from economics, another fact that many might know about Kuwait is the fact that the island of Failka was inhabited before anywhere else in the middle east! Historical findings reflect evidence of life 2800BC. That is more than 3000 years ago! Many famous people lived in Failka for a while such as Magellan, Ibn Battuta and Christopher Columbus. The place where Failka is situated makes it the destination for traders and businessmen. Failka is where prince Hamad of Qatar got married to Princess Moza. It has been said, however, that Failka island is haunted. Many eyewitnesses witnessed paranormal activities on the island. Ibn Battuta wrote in his journal "the island is truly inhabited, not only by humans I must say, I feel something different around me, as if ghosts are floating all around". Many people believe that Failka is still haunted, and hence could not be turned into a touristic destination.

With all its pros and cons, I love Kuwait.

Appendix C: Rating Sheets

Please listen to the recording below and answer the following questions about the speaker and her message. your participation is highly valuable to us. We thank you for your time and effort.

Section One: Demographics

Age

Gender

Nationality

Years in the English department at CBE

High School

Public

Private

Listen to the youtube video below and tell us what you think about the speaker

Section Two

How does this speaker sound to you?

• **Hard working** 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 **lazy**

- 1. **Extremely hard working**
- 2. **hardworking**
- 3. **Slightly hard working**
- 4. **Slightly lazy**
- 5. **lazy**
- 6. **Extremely lazy**

• **Old** 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 **Young**

- 7. **Extremely old**
- 8. **Old**
- 9. **Slightly old**
- 10. **Slightly young**
- 11. **Young**
- 12. **Extremely young**

• **Attractive** 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 **unattractive**

- 1. **Extremely attractive**
- 2. **Attractive**
- 3. **Slightly attractive**
- 4. **Slightly unattractive**

- 5. Unattractive
- 6. Extremely unattractive
- Intelligent 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 unintelligent
- 1. Extremely intelligent
- 2. Intelligent
- 3. Slightly intelligent
- 4. Slightly unintelligent
- 5. Unintelligent
- 6. Extremely unintelligent

- Friendly 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 unfriendly
- 1. Extremely friendly
- 2. Friendly
- 3. Slightly friendly
- 4. Slightly unfriendly
- 5. Unfriendly
- 6. Extremely unfriendly

- Ambitious 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 unambitious
- 1. Extremely ambitious
- 2. Ambitious
- 3. Slightly ambitious
- 4. Slightly unambitious
- 5. Unambitious
- 6. Extremely unambitious

- Confident 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 insecure
- 1. Extremely confident
- 2. Confident
- 3. Slightly confident
- 4. Slightly insecure
- 5. Insecure
- 6. Extremely insecure

- Decent 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 indecent
- 1. Extremely decent
- 2. Decent
- 3. Slightly decent
- 4. Slightly indecent
- 5. Indecent
- 6. Extremely indecent

- Loyal 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 disloyal
 1. Extremely loyal
 2. Loyal
 3. Slightly loyal
 4. Slightly disloyal
 5. Disloyal
 6. Extremely disloyal

- Happy 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 sad
 1. Extremely happy
 2. Happy
 3. Slightly happy
 4. Slightly sad
 5. Sad
 6. Extremely sad

- Modest 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 vain
 1. Extremely modest
 2. Modest
 3. Slightly modest
 4. Slightly vain
 5. Vain
 6. Extremely vain

- Organized 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 disorganized
 1. Extremely organized
 2. Organized
 3. Slightly organized
 4. Slightly disorganized
 5. Disorganized
 6. Extremely disorganized

- Modern 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 old fashioned
 1. Extremely modern
 2. Modern
 3. Slightly modern
 4. Slightly old fashioned
 5. Old fashioned
 6. Slightly old fashioned

• **Reliable** _1_: _2_: _3_: _4_: _5_: _6_ **unreliable**

1. **Extremely reliable**
2. **Reliable**
3. **Slightly reliable**
4. **Slightly unreliable**
5. **Unreliable**
6. **Extremely unreliable**

• **Sophisticated** _1_: _2_: _3_: _4_: _5_: _6_ **simple**

1. **Extremely sophisticated**
2. **Sophisticated**
3. **Slightly sophisticated**
4. **Slightly simple**
5. **Simple**
6. **Extremely sophisticated**

Section Three

How much do you agree with the following statements?

1. **This person is successful**

- **Likely**
- **Unlikely**

2. **This person is honest**

- **Likely**
- **Unlikely**

3. **This person is clear**

- **Likely**
- **Unlikely**

4. **This person is healthy and fit**

- **Likely**
- **Unlikely**

5. **This person is competitive**

- **Likely**
- **Unlikely**

6. **This person is outspoken**

- **Likely**

- Unlikely
7. This person is upper class
- Likely
 - Unlikely
8. This person is interesting
- Likely
 - Unlikely
9. This person is easy-going
- Likely
 - Unlikely
10. This person is polite
- Likely
 - Unlikely

Section Four

Answer the following questions

1. Who are the native English speakers?
- _____
- _____
2. What is your favorite English variety?
- _____
- _____
3. What do you think about Kuwaitis speaking in American accent?
- _____
- _____
4. What do you think about Kuwaitis speaking English in Kuwaiti accent?
- _____
- _____

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