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„/ˈwɔːtə/ and /ˈwɒtər/ versus /ˈvotɑ/: Austrian upper secondary EFL students' perception of native and non-native accents."

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To my mother. Thank you for your unfailing support. I appreciate you so much!

Abstract

In educational institutions, EFL learners are mainly presented with a native speaker model in pronunciation, which is usually a prestige variety of British and American English. Considering that English is spoken and learned by people of various countries and numerous L1s, the question arises how students perceive the accents presented in EFL lessons as opposed to those they encounter in their everyday life. For this reason, this thesis answers the following research questions: (1) How do Austrian upper secondary students perceive standard native English accents and non-native, Austrian English, and Spanish English accents? (2) What accent do Austrian students of upper secondary classes aspire to have? (3) Why do they aspire to have this kind of accent? (4) Where may a possible wish for a native speaker-like accent stem from?

These questions are answered by 128 students of three different upper secondary professionally oriented schools via a questionnaire featuring audio samples of different native and non-native English speakers. Results suggests that the participants' most preferred English accent is the British English RP accent. Furthermore, more than 80% of participants voiced their desire to speak with a native-like accent. The reasons for this include a want of belonging to a community, recognition of the perceived advantages of sounding like a native speaker, a desire to be seen as competent and easily understood, and internalized positive attitudes towards the accent. The wish for a native like-accent originates from both external and internal factors, among them sociocultural reasons and cultural media.

Zusammenfassung

In Bildungseinrichtungen wird EFL-Lernenden hauptsächlich ein Modell von Aussprache von Personen mit Englisch als Erstsprache präsentiert, welche grundsätzlich eine prestigeträchtige Variante des britischen und amerikanischen Englisch ist. Angesichts dessen, dass Englisch von Menschen verschiedener Länder und zahlreicher L1s gesprochen und erlernt wird, stellt sich die Frage, wie Schülerinnen und Schüler die in Englischunterrichtsstunden angebotenen standardenglischen Akzente im Vergleich zu denen wahrnehmen, auf die sie in ihrem täglichen Leben stoßen. Aus diesem Grund beantwortet diese Arbeit die folgenden Forschungsfragen: (1) Wie nehmen österreichische Schülerinnen und Schüler der BHS-Oberstufe standardisierte englische L1-Akzente sowie nicht L1-Akzente aus Österreich und Spanien wahr? (2) Welchen englischen Akzent streben österreichische Lernende in den untersuchten BHS-Oberstufen an? (3) Warum streben sie diesen Akzent an? (4) Woher könnte der Wunsch nach einem L1 ähnlichen Akzent stammen? Diese Fragen beantworten 128 Wiener BHS-Schülerinnen und Schüler anhand eines Fragebogens, der Audio-Samples von verschiedenen L1- und nicht L1-Englischsprecherinnen und Sprechern enthält. Die Ergebnisse legen nahe, dass der bevorzugte englische Akzent der Teilnehmenden der britische RP-Akzent ist. Darüber hinaus äußerten mehr als 80% der Teilnehmenden den Wunsch, mit einem L1 ähnlichen Akzent zu sprechen. Die Gründe hierfür sind ein Bestreben nach Zugehörigkeit zu einer Gemeinschaft, die Anerkennung der Vorteile eines L1 ähnlichen Akzentes, der Wunsch, als kompetent und leicht verständlich wahrgenommen zu werden, sowie internalisierte positive Einstellungen gegenüber dem Akzent. Das Streben der Studienteilnehmenden, wie eine Person mit Englisch als Erstsprache zu sprechen, hat sowohl interne als auch externe Ursachen, wie beispielsweise soziokulturelle Gründe und die Beeinflussung durch kulturelle Medien.

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1. Introduction

For many years now, English has been the dominating language around the world and has even been dubbed a global language (Crystal 2012: 1-3). There are approximately 1.45 billion English speakers worldwide out of which 373.000 million speak it as their mother tongue, or L1. The remaining 1.08 billion, and, therefore, the vast majority of English speakers use English as a second or foreign language as a means of communication (Ethnologue 2022). Consequently, this signifies that the predominant part of worldwide communication involving the English language is carried out by speakers who do not speak English as their L1. Considering the fact that nowadays English is spoken by people of various different countries and numerous L1s, it can be expected that every English speaker will encounter a wide range of foreign accents in English communication.

Everyone speaks with an accent. An accent is "more or less a combination of prosodic/phonetic features" (Boudreau & Gasquet-Cyrus 2021: 253) and highly individual as it is shaped by a person's background and environment (Kidd, Kemp, Kashima, Quinn 2016: 713). Moreover, accents are adaptable depending on the interlocuter (Moyers 2013: 10). Each accent carries a distinct reputation with it. The so-called standard norms, British English Received Pronunciation (henceforth RP) and the North American General American English (GA), are considered to be the most prestigious forms of the English language, which means that they are usually the forms present in literature, learning and teaching materials, television, politics, court and used by the educated middle and upper classes (Kortmann 2020: 204.). Native speakers who do not speak with a standard accent may face stigmatisation and disapproval for their accent (Giles & Rakic 2014: 14). Naturally, English as a foreign language (EFL) speakers also pertain to the non-standard speakers but feature additional pronunciation deviations from the native speaker norm (Bloem, Wieling & Nerbonne 2016: 169). These differences from the native speaker model often derive from interferences of the L1, such as in the production of consonants and vowels but also in intonation, words stress and rhythm, inter alia (Swan & Smith 2005: xi.).

In oral communication, the social component is essential. As Moyer (2013:9-10) affirms, in spoken communication, it is inevitable that a person will be judged based on their speech. The individual speech patterns may, for example, reveal the age and gender of a speaker as well as their country of origin and social status. Consequently, interlocuters draw conclusions about a person's character based on their speech patterns. A foreign accent, or L2 accent, is frequently linked to discrimination and unfavourable perception

not only by native speakers (Tsurutani 2012: 589) but also by non-native speakers (Lindemann, Litzenberg & Subtirelu 2014: 178).

To name some studies, Vargas Barona (2008) observed that US American native speakers rated non-native speakers as less competent and socially attractive and also as having less strong moral principles than native speakers. A study by Lev-Ari and Keysar (2010) revealed that the stronger a person's non-native accent, the less credible their statements are to native speakers. Non-native speakers, as well, judge EFL speakers negatively based on their accent as was shown in a study by Lindeman et al. (2014) who discovered that even among speakers who speak with a non-native accent, the presence of a foreign accent in an interlocutor, especially one that is less nativelike than their own, is interpreted as indicating inferior intelligence. What is more, van Gelder's (2019) study revealed that the presence of an L2 accent influences the students' assessment of their English teachers' abilities and is linked to them believing this person to be a competent language teacher, or not. These studies display that an individual's impression on listeners is undoubtedly greatly influenced by their accent.

In Austrian schools, English is, by far, the most widely taught foreign language (Crystal 2012: 5). Whereas the majority of English teachers do not have a native speaker background and thus usually speak English with a foreign accent, pupils are routinely exposed to native speaker models in teaching materials (Martín Tevar 2014: 45). It is typically anticipated that EFL students in formal educational setting, this includes teaching materials, are taught either American English or British English due to the aforementioned high status of the varieties (Farrell 2020: 36). Some scholars (Jenkins 2006; Seidlhofer 2018) emphasise the value of training pupils to speak English understandably instead of encouraging students to talk with a native-like accent. However, pupils themselves would rather learn and speak a conventional native speaker model, such as British English or American English (Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck, & Smit 1997; Timmis 2002; Bayard & Green 2005; Wong 2018). It is believed that sociocultural factors, such as early language learning history, educational materials, cultural and mass media, all of which are often heavily influenced by North American and British productions, account for students wanting to mimic these types of accents (Wong 2018; Kung & Wang 2019). However, students not only want to achieve a native speaker like accent themselves, they also judge others negatively who speak with a foreign accent.

This study aims to follow up on previous studies in this field. Its purpose is to discover how students of three different upper secondary professionally oriented schools perceive different – native and non-native - accents, which accent they aspire to have and possible reasons for their preference of accent.

The first part of the thesis comprises of a literature review that establishes the theoretical framework for this particular study, consisting of 4 chapters. In chapter 2 the features of accents will be investigated. This includes defining accent, displaying how accent is related to intelligibility and comprehensibility and what influences an accent. This chapter will be concluded by an overview of the role of accents in teaching. Chapter 3 will then investigate accent perception. Here, I will go into detail on how accent influences the perception of a person, how inextricably linked accent and identity are, as well as what influences the attitudes one has towards a specific accent. Additionally, the perception of accented speech by native and non-native speakers will be explored. Subsequently, the different models of the English that the present study is concerned with will be introduced in chapter 4. An overview of the differences between established and non-established models of the English language will be given and the four accents, namely RP, GA, Austrian English and Spanish English will be presented. To conclude the theoretical part of this thesis, chapter 5 will explore the concept of English as a lingua franca (ELF), which is concerned with English as a medium of communication between non-native English speakers.

The second part of this thesis, the empirical study, commences with chapter 6 that provides an explanation of the purpose of this study and a display of the research questions. This chapter also includes a comprehensive description of the study's methodology, informing the reader of important aspects of the questionnaire which was used to gather information, such as the study's participants, speakers, and design. Then, in chapter 7 the collected data will be presented. After displaying the outcome of the empirical investigation, these results will be examined in the following discussion in chapter 8. The discussion will focus on answering the research questions, as well as addressing the limitations of the study and suggesting further research topics.

2. Features of (non)-native accents

When people think of a competent speaker, they often have someone in mind whose pronunciation resembles that of a native speaker (Dincer 2017: 104). According to Moyer (2013), even listeners who are not familiar with a specific language can detect when someone is a native speaker or a non-native speaker due to minor aspects in language production such as "vowel quality, aspiration, and voice onset time [as well as] speech rate, pause pattern, [and] rhythm" (Moyer 2013: 50). The fact that non-native accents are identifiable even by interlocuters that do not have any knowledge of the language leads to the assumption, that any non-native accent comes with special and noticeable features such as those mentioned above.

2.1. Definition of accent

Accents are characteristically variable. Therefore, it is not easy to present a clear definition of what an accent is comprised of. As briefly touched upon in chapter 2.1., an accent features many aspects of the phonetics of a language, such as word stress, pitch, and intonation.

Even though some use the two terms interchangeably, accent and dialect are inherently different. As Hughes, Trudgill and Watt (2013: 3) point out, accents are mostly concerned with the differences in pronunciation of the speakers, whereas a dialect also encompasses differences in grammar and vocabulary and can be classified as a variety of the specific language. For example, in Great Britain different regions have differing dialects: Whereas a person from the South is more likely to call the last meal of the day dinner, Northerners, such as people from the Greater Manchester area, would rather call it tea, which in turn is used to refer to an afternoon tea and snacks in the South. Equally, in the German context, people from Germany and Austria speak with different dialects, as a distinction in word use and the use of tenses can be made. However, people can speak with the same dialect while applying different accents. For example, people from different federal counties of Austria, for example Styria and Vienna, usually speak with different accents but have the same or a very similar dialect. Generally, it can be said that every person speaks with an accent, just like every person also speaks with a dialect. Nevertheless, even though everyone speaks with a certain accent - and a standard accent, such as GA or RP, is just one of the many language variations – speakers of GA or RP are often referred to as having a

neutral accent or are even said to be free of an accent (Giles & Rakic 2014: 11). This is untrue, as non-accented or accent-free speech does not exist.

Due to its widespread use, the English language, as well as all other languages, "is subject to variation" (Välimaa - Blum 2011: 31) and offers many different accents and dialects, native and non-native ones. One of the ensuing challenges of this is when students from a non-English speaking country start learning the language in an instructional context, they are mostly exposed to a native speaker norm, which generally is not what they will be exposed to in future encounters with other English speakers. Typically, language learning material focuses on a standard native speaker norm such as General American, GA, or Received Pronunciation, RP (Martín Tevar 2014: 45).[1] There is a significant difference between the language they are learning at school and the language that is used in their everyday lives. At school, students are mostly presented with standard native speaker norms, especially RP from England and GA from the United States of America. Additionally, other English-speaking speakers such as Ireland, Australia, Canada, or Scotland will be referred to as well. However, this only accounts for a small part of the world's population that is frequently using English. In countries such as India, the people that speak English constitute of more speakers than the population of Great Britain and the United States combined. Additionally, at present, English is the most widely taught foreign language worldwide, with more than 100 countries teaching it at school, making English a global language (Lee & Spolsky 2020: i).

To better understand the complexity of English as a global language Kachru (1985) diagrams three concentric circles that address the dispersion of English:

- the Inner Circle,
- the Outer Circle, and
- the Expanding Circle.

The Inner Circle comprises of those nations where English is the prevailing L1, including, inter alia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Ireland. The Outer Circle encompasses those nations where English spread due to colonization, such as in India. In these countries, numerous speakers are bi-or multilingual and English is frequently utilized as a lingua franca, or 'common language', and also as an official language (Crystal 2012: 11).

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[1] For more information on GA and RP, see chapters 4.1.1. Received Pronunciation and 4.1.2. General American

The Expanding Circle consists of those nations without a widespread use of English. Nonetheless, numerous people of more than 100 nations in the Expanding Circle, as stated above, have learned English at school or in other instructive settings and may likewise be bi-or multilingual in English and another language (Lindemann et al. 2014: 176). In the 21st century, the use of English has not only become global but also digital. Through vast possibilities of digital communication the "distinctions of circles of English speakers are becoming less defined and perhaps less important" (Kang Shin 2020: 3) as English speakers come from a variety of nations, rather than being from a few specific countries.

When someone is learning a new language, their L1 and other factors, which will be discussed in chapter 3.3., influence their pronunciation in that language, causing a foreign accent when speaking. McAllister (2000: 50) defines foreign accents as "the inability of non-native language users to produce the target language with the phonetic accuracy required by native listeners for acceptance as native speech". Derwing and Munro (2005: 385) focus more on the listeners and define foreign accents as how the listeners perceived the difference of the speaker compared to the accent of a native speaker of that language. The way of how native speakers pronounce English words, especially regarding standard language, such as RP or GA, is commonly referred to as the native speaker norm, so "consciously articulated prescriptive views about language" (Sewell 2014: 435). The differences from the native speaker norm in the realisation of words mostly stem from interferences of the L1 (Bloem, Wieling & Nerbonne 2016: 169). For more information on what influences a non-native accent see chapter 2.3.

2.2. Accent, Intelligibility and Comprehensibility

Learners of a second language are faced with a demanding challenge if they wish to speak like members of a particular speech community: If they want to be accepted as a part of said community, they often feel they must speak understandably and according to a certain linguistic norm (MacKenzie 2014: 99), a historically established set of frequently applied linguistic rules (Mortensen & Kraft 2022: 3). A significant aspect in this endeavour is achieving intelligibility, which is concerned with the perception of speech. Accordingly, when someone speaks intelligibly, the interlocutor can recognise the words "or another sentence-level element of an utterance" (Kachru & Smith 2008: 61). Thus, second language learners have to perceive fine phonetic differences and establish a new system of phonological rules; produce sounds and sound sequences that often contradict the rules

of their native languages; and replicate the patterns of stress, rhythm, and intonation that carry implicit as well as explicit meaning (Moyer 2013: 1). According to Moyer (2013: 11) the accent of a speaker can be seen as the basis of their intelligibility. Intelligibility does not only connote that someone is understood, but it is also a target of L2 teaching. Considering the messages, a speaker consciously and subconsciously conveys through the way they are talking, intelligibility can also be considered as important in social and psychological relations (Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994: 9). Some English teachers and students worry that a non-native accent may interfere with message conveyance due to possible intelligibility difficulties. This, however, is not necessarily the case. On the contrary, an empirical study conducted by Smith and Nelson (2006) revealed that some non-native speakers consider other non-native speakers' accents to be more intelligible than those of native speakers. Adding to that, Crystal (2001: 54), points out, that it is not only the non-native variants that lead to intelligibility problems but rather that some native-speaker accents, such as Cockney, Geordie, Scouse, and Glaswegian are quite challenging to understand, as well; Not only for non-native speakers of English, but also for L1 speakers of English with a different regional pronunciation variant.

Concerning understanding, the aforementioned study by Smith and Nelson (2006: 441) not only revealed that native speakers were not the easiest to understand for non-native speakers; the authors also showed that native speakers were not the best in understanding native nor non-native accents. What is of greater importance is being fluent in the language and being knowledgeable about different varieties of the language. Smith suggests that familiarising students with different varieties of English should be embraced, as "the increasing number of varieties of English need not increase the problems of understanding across cultures" (2006: 441). For this approach, students should be presented with more Outer and Expanding Circle varieties to familiarise them with more diverse accents for better understanding and, also, because they reflect the status quo of English speakers worldwide.

Adding to that notion, almost 30 years ago Munro and Derwing (1995: 302-303) stated that while some serious deviations from the native speaker norm can result in unintelligible speech, foreign accents per se do not directly influence understanding. They suggested that when achieving better communicative competence is one of the main objec-

tives of language teaching, those elements that mostly influence intelligibility and comprehensibility in foreign speech should be concentrated on instead of aiming for general accent reduction. Those elements will be stated in the following section.

2.3. Influencing factors on accent

Whenever someone is learning a foreign language, their L1 usually affects the pronunciation of the target language quite considerably (Richter 2019:130). As the English language also forms part of the Germanic languages, Austrian learners whose L1 is German usually do not consider learning English as extremely difficult, as both German and English share syntactical and phonological features as well as some vocabulary (Swan & Smith 1987: 73, cited in Richter 2015: 111).

Following Piske et al. (2001: 195-204) there are seven additional aspects which influence the prominence of a foreign accent in L2 learning:

- Age of learning
- Length of residence in a country of the target language
- Gender
- Formal instruction
- Motivation
- Language learning aptitude
- Language use

Nevertheless, the degree of influence these factors impose varies in differing studies, as Piske et al. point out (2001: 196-204). Some linguists (Lenneberg 1967, Scovel 2000) argue that acquiring a native-speaker-like accent is linked to acquiring the phonetic and phonological system of a foreign language within a certain critical period and that adult learners are very unlikely to achieve an accent that is close to that of L1 speakers. However, this has been refuted by other scholars such as Coppetiers (1987) and Moyer (2014) who stated that some adult learners are very well able to sound native-like, whereas some younger learners failed to achieve a pronunciation which is close to those of natives.

Additionally, Bongaerts, Van Summeren, Planken and Schils (1997) pointed out that the adoption of a native-speaker-like accent may be linked to how closely related the speaker's own L1 is to the English language. Even though achieving an accent which is close to that of a native speaker, in most cases, is a challenging task, many learners still wish and aim for this goal. However, focusing on acquiring a native-like level, not only in

grammatical, semantical, and syntactical aspects but also in phonetics and phonology, is also quite dependent on the learner's L1. As mentioned above, the more similar a foreign language is to one's own L1, the easier it is to acquire the target language (Corder 1992: 21).

A German native-speaker will consider it less difficult to learn Dutch or English, which are both Germanic languages than, for example, a Slavonic language such as Czech (Monk & Burak 2005: 145) or a Semitic language such as Arabic (Smith 2005: 195). Additionally, Escudero (2007) and Strange (1995) advocate that the L1 of a speaker contributes to a lot of restraints when learning how to pronounce words in a new language. Swan and Smith (1987) previously stated that the involuntary and erroneous deviations in pronunciation made by foreign language learners stem from reflections of the sound system of their respective L1s rather than showcase random efforts of correctly pronouncing the foreign word. The L1 essentially sets a framework with which, and around which, one has to work if they want to learn the pronunciation of a new language. This framework helps or hinders with certain sounds and aspects of other languages (Moyer 2013: 15).

Generally, the languages a speaker has already learned potentially build interferences with a new language, as language systems from one language are falsely transferred to the other. Those transfers are more likely to appear with languages that are related and rather similar in their systems. Speakers whose L1 differs substantially from English, such as Arabic, for example, will not face as many transfers but rather struggle with the inherent structure of the English language (Swan & Smith 2005: xi). For instance, learners, whose L1 omits articles, such as in Japanese or Russian, usually find it more challenging to work with the English article system than those who already apply them in their first language, such as German native speakers.

The most prominent transfers can be heard in the pronunciation of the English words and phrases. The learner's articulation and pronunciation reflect L1 patterns. Therefore, it is often difficult to master the correct placement of the articulators, such as tongue, lips, and jaw, in a new language. This is, inter alia, what induces a foreign accent when speaking on the segmental level (Swan & Smith 2005: xi). Apart from the segmental level that encompasses consonants and vowels, another factor that leads to a non-native sound is deviations on the suprasegmental level. Modifications on the suprasegmental level, which includes intonation, stress, rhythm, and syllable structure, also often find their origin in the L1. Zsiga (2013: 459) summarises that "when the patterns from the L1 and L2 do not match, and a learner uses an L1 pattern to pronounce an L2 sentence, the difference is

heard as an accent". Adding to this notion, this is why speakers of the same L1 produce similar deviations from a standard English pronunciation of certain sounds.

However, not only the L1 affects the degree of foreign accent. A study conducted by Moyer (2004) revealed that the positive attitude of a person regarding the L2 is essential to develop a near native accent. She studied the approaches to a new language of two Turkish men who both immigrated to Germany aged 4 but only one of the two developed a native-like accent. In this case, the apparent difference between the two of them was their desire to assimilate and adjust to Germany, the language, and the culture. The man who opted against integrating, even going as far as rejecting any socialisation with Germans, had a far stronger accent than the one who wanted to assimilate (Moyer 2013: 50).

In conclusion, there are several factors which affect the phonological performance of an L2 learner. Austrian learners, due to their L1, often show specific peculiarities which will be discussed in chapter 4.2.1.

2.4. Accents and teaching

English is the most widely taught foreign language in classrooms worldwide (Crystal 2012: 5). Learners who are studying English often declare being able to hold a conversation and being understood by native speakers as one of their main goals when learning the language (Munro & Derwing 1999: 285). According to Ur (2006: 120), speaking is intuitively perceived as the most significant one of the four competencies – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – in foreign language learning. At least in Europe, a person who has a good command of a language is usually understood to be very confident in verbally expressing themselves in that language. Often times it is assumed that a person who speaks competently, is proficient in the other language skills – listening, reading and writing – as well. Therefore, many language learners are primarily interested in being able to speak well (Ur 2006: 120). In speaking, a great number of language learners aims to speak with a near-native accent (Timmis 2002; Simon 2005; Wong 2018; Brabcová & Skarnitzl 2018). Due to the high status of specific variants, it can generally be expected that learners who acquire knowledge about the English language in formal educational settings are taught either American English or British English. Which of these two varieties is chosen as target English in instructional settings is usually dependent on governmental and institutional decisions according to "geographic proximity and historical, cultural and socio-political links with either the UK or US" (Farrell 2020: 36).

Due to English being taught all over the world by speakers of L1s, English naturally comes with a wide variety of accents. Whereas most English teachers do not have a native speaker background and, therefore, often speak English with a foreign accent, students are typically confronted with a native speaker model in teaching materials, (Cook 1999: 199, Martín Tevar 2014: 45). This model is usually of the standard British English RP or the North American GA variety, with very few exceptions.

Even though scholars such as Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991: 158) state that achieving an accent that is similar to that of a native speaker of RP or GA is unlikely for most learners, unless they have been exposed to that accent at a very young age, many students wish for a native speaker like accent (Tokumoto & Shibata 2001; Derwing 2003; Scales et al. 2006). Furthermore, schoolbooks, such as the in Austria widely used *MORE!* (Gerngross et al. 2019) support a standard accent by teaching pronunciation through symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), such as the voiced dental fricative /ð/ in *MORE! 1* (2019: 74) and sounds that can be categorised as standard RP.

Interestingly, students' preferences of (native) accents also impact on their perception of their teachers and peers (Kung & Wang 2019: 404). A study conducted by van Gelder (2019: 50) revealed that students' accent preference even affects their judgement of their English teachers' competences. Van Gelder states that "the attitude someone has to an accent, is directly related to thinking this person would be a good language teacher, whether it is true or not" (van Gelder 2019: 50). It is not only students who view non-native English teachers as having lower competence than native speaker teachers. This is also the case in teacher hiring processes as Clark and Paran (2007: 407) point out. They show that native speakers hold a powerful status in English language instruction, as they are serving as both the model teacher and speaker. English language teachers whose L1 is not English frequently experience discrimination while seeking for teaching positions since they are seen as less competent than their native-speaking counterparts (Clark & Paran 2007: 408). The suggestion that a native English speaker is the most suitable English teacher has been coined as the *native speaker fallacy* by Phillipson (1992: 185)

As English has become a global language, with many more people speaking English as a second or foreign language than as L1, scholars such as Jenkins (2000, 2006), and Seidlhofer (2018) have highlighted the importance of teaching intelligible English rather than aiming for students to speak in a rather unattainable native speaker like accent. However, studies conducted by, inter alia, Chiba, Matsuura, & Yamamoto (1995); Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck, & Smit, (1997); Timmis (2002), Bayard & Green (2005), and more recently

Wong (2018) have displayed that learners prefer a standard model of pronunciation, meaning they would rather learn and speak a standard native speaker model, such as British English or American English. These contrasting views correlate with Levis' (2005: 370) two opposing approaches to pronunciation teaching: the nativeness principle and the intelligibility principle. Whereas the nativeness principle postulates that achieving a native speaker-like accent in a foreign language is possible and should be desired, such as many learners of English as a foreign language are wishing for; the intelligibility principle, on the contrary, maintains that the accent of a language learner should merely be comprehensible, which is in accordance with the point of view of many English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) scholars.

It is interesting that even though native speaker standard accents are intimidating learners of English as a foreign language (Wong 2018: 177), a majority of students still aims to achieve a standard English accent rather than focus on intelligibility in their own foreign-accented speech. Nevertheless, it shall not be forgotten that there are also some other learners who do not see the need of expressing themselves by using the pronunciation of an inner-circle model. As Modiano (2001: 340) points out:

> For learners who primarily want to acquire the language because it is a useful cross-cultural communicative tool, pressure to attain near-native proficiency may result in establishing them as auxiliary members of the culture which is represented by the prescriptive educational standard, something not in harmony with their own self-image

Regardless of the fact that attaining a native-like accent seems to be quite a challenge when not exposed to Inner Circle variants quite early in childhood (Dollmann, Kogan & Weißmann 2020), some foreign language students do not feel the need to sound like a native speaker due to their wish to retain their L1 identity even when speaking in a foreign language. As pointed out in chapter 3.2., one's own identity and accent are inextricably linked and the kind of accent someone has reveals much about that person (Moyer 2013: 9). Moreover, using a native speaker-like accent is not necessarily needed for understanding when talking to other English speakers, especially those whose L1 is not English either. As stated in chapter 2.2., it has been shown that non-native speakers often understand other non-native speakers better than native speakers (Smith & Nelson 2006). Additionally, speaking with a native-like accent is also not necessary for interactions with native speakers. A study conducted by Derwing and Munro (1997) revealed that native speakers, as well, do not experience difficulties understanding foreign-accented speech. In their study, native speakers transcribed foreign-accented speech and thereby showed

that it was clearly intelligibly, because otherwise the native speakers would not have been able to transcribe the audio file. This study led Munro (2003: 40) to believe that a negative stance towards foreign accent varieties often does not stem from a believe that these accents are incomprehensible but rather reflects a refusal to adapt to and tolerate accent varieties.

When striving for a native speaker-like accent, EFL students in general target a standard British English or American English variety (Kung & Wang 2019: 404). Kung and Wang (2019: 398-401) believe this to be a result of sociocultural factors, such as early language learning history, the accent used by teaching materials, teachers and cultural media. Additionally, since many adolescent learners are quite affected by mass media, such as films, TV shows and online applications that are often heavily influenced by North American and British productions, it is unsurprising that these are the accents the learners are hoping to achieve (Wong 2018: 177). Their own accent, on the contrary, is viewed rather negatively as they fear that it may inhibit straightforward and easy communication (Tokumoto & Shibata 2011: 393, 401) or may even seem illegitimate (Jenkins 2005: 141-142).

Timmis (2002: 249) cautions that to enforce native-speaker norms on students who do not want nor need them is certainly inappropriate. However, offering students a target that clearly does not satisfy their ambitions is even less so. This leads to the suggestion that EFL learners should be provided with a broader variety of accents to work with and that those, who are interested in native speaker-like accents could be offered a deepening of their knowledge about native speaker pronunciation.

Scholars such as Timmis (2002), Prodromou (2003), and O'Keeffe and Farr (2012) have emphasized the necessity for EFL teachers to act as mediators and advocates to promote the inclusion of a wider variety of accents, both non-standard and non-native in English language classes. Hughes and Trudgill (1996: 1) point out that EFL learners may be quite confused when coming to Great Britain, only to discover that most people do not speak at all like the textbook audios they are used to. Even more so, they might feel discouraged when they only understand very little due to the speed of the British native speakers and also due to accent variation. Matsuda (2003: 726) suggests adding more varieties of spoken English to EFL classrooms and curricula in general. Crystal (2001: 60) adds that teachers "[s]omehow, […] need to expose them [the students] to as many varieties as possible, especially those which they are most likely to encounter in their locale". Pennycook

(2000: 92 cited in Farrell 2020: 48), proposes that learners should be exposed to many more alternatives to the standard British English and American accents in order for them to "become truly inter-nationally minded speakers who are conscious of the role of English in the world and the world in English". Yet, Farrell (2020: 10) notes that many of the current English teachers lack the linguistic knowledge and strategic expertise to teach the complex varieties of English to language learners worldwide. This begs the question of how English instructors – at various phases in their teaching career – can effectively be equipped for this even more demanding objective in an educational environment that is already challenging and complex. As a starting point, Matsuda (2003: 724) suggested including different versions of English accents to instructional course books and teaching material in forms of more diverse dialogues, characters, and topics.

3. Accent perception

In social settings people tend to notice fellow human beings' differences. The degree of importance those differences are assigned to vary and often seem particularly essential if they belong to a certain criterion, such as pronunciation. Thus, individuals tend to make assumptions about the character of a person due to their speech patterns. The speech of a person is heavily tinted by the accent which cannot only disclose the age, gender, and place of origin of the speaker but also their educational background, and social status (Moyer 2013: 9-10). When speaking, much more than just the words and phrases uttered are conveyed – the speaker is also consciously and unconsciously revealing personal information with their individual accent According to Moyer (2013: 9), while it is not easy to define what exactly characterises accents, it can be said that they encompass "the sounds, rhythms, and melodies of speech" and are comprised of various phonetic and phonological features of speech on a segmental and suprasegmental level. This means that accent does not only include sounds, but also, inter alia, intonation, pitch, tempo, and loudness (Moyer 2013: 10). For a more detailed definition of accent, see chapter 2.1.

3.1. Accent and perception

Richards and Schmid (2013: 427) define perception as the "recognition and understanding of [...] stimuli through the use of senses (sight, hearing, touch, etc.)". This means that the human body has numerous forms of perception available, one of them is the auditory

perception which occurs through auditive stimuli. "Auditory perception requires a listener to detect different kinds of acoustic signals, and to judge differences between them according to differences in such acoustic characteristics as their frequency, amplitude, duration, order of occurrence, and rate of presentation" (Richards & Schmid 2013: 427). Hence, human beings perceive different accents differently, and hold differing beliefs regarding the various accents. This means that "[w]e do not react to the world on the basis of sensory input alone but, rather, in terms of what we perceive that input to mean" (Edwards 1999: 101). In other words, through perception we filter information. This filter, however, is comprised of cultural, social, and individual experiences which is why every person has different interpretations on their perception. When a number of individuals collectively have the same or a very similar interpretation of a perception of something, they create a stereotype. This signifies that rather than merely reacting to the sensory input that we hear in a certain situation, we react depending on our interpretation of what we are hearing. based on our experiences and our background. (Edwards 1999: 101). Honey (1989: 97), states that we perceive a speaker based on three elements:

1. intelligibility,
2. distraction, and
3. prejudice.

First of all, words can be spoken in an accent so unfamiliar to what we are used to that intelligibility may be compromised. Second, even though understanding might be possible, the interlocutor may be distracted due to the unfamiliarity of the accent of the speaker, and, therefore, not focus on the actual message. Lastly, the interlocuter is affected by prejudice, i.e., the stereotypical assumptions of someone dependent on somebody's speech (Honey 1989: 97). Pickens (2005: 63) points out that it is crucial to be conscious that our behaviour towards a person or a group of people may very well be influenced by our perceptions and that stereotypical interpretations of speech perceptions can lead to discriminating attitudes. These attitudes are considered to impact language usage and variation in several significant manners, such as:

- helping explain the motivations for certain changes in language (Labov 1984)
- assisting in establishing the identity of language groups and how their social and economic status is perceived (Cheshire 1984: 548)
- affecting opportunities in the field of education and in the workplace (Cheshire 1984: 548, 556; Harrison 2014: 255)

- deciding which language variety is offered in foreign language classes based on their perceived status (Timmis 2002)

A vast amount of research (Trudgill 1984; Cheshire 1984; Lippi-Green 1997; Migge and Ni Chiosáin 2012) has revealed that unfavourable attitudes still prevail against non-standard, regional, and working-class accents. Additionally, people who speak with such an accent are often judged negatively and are linked to unfavourable connotations such as low class, lacking financial stability, and being uneducated (Milroy 2001: 239). More on the perception of accented speech can be found in chapter 3.4.

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3.2. Accent and identity (self vs. others)

Identity refers to the characteristics that describe who or what an individual is (Cheek 1989: 275). According to Llamas and Watt (2010: 1) the core of a person's identity is founded by three distinct aspects, namely a person's physical features, their way of speaking, as well as how this person behaves in social settings. Additionally, the term identity refers to one's personal beliefs about oneself with respect to social groups such as race, age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and others (Torres; Jones; Renn 2009: 577). This chapter mainly focuses on the connection between speech and identity. As the relationship between the language someone speaks, and their identity is a central element not only of how a person perceives themselves but also of how they are perceived by others; language is a salient component of how humans distinguish themselves from one another (Moyer 2013: 9). Accent and identity are closely linked together. The accent of a person is shaped by their background and surroundings and is therefore highly individual. Furthermore, accents also demonstrate our affiliation with certain groups as individuals show group membership via speech, as well (Kidd, Kemp, Kashima, Quinn 2016: 713). Moreover, accents are quite adaptable and depending on who the recipient is, the speaker may alter their own accent. This is sometimes done to highlight certain parts of the conversation, to better explain certain aspects or to indicate a degree of affinity. Thus, accents can carry "social, communicative, linguistic and psychological" (Moyers 2013: 10) information. The more standard sounding the accent is, the greater the access to "political, economic, and educational forums and opportunities" (Giles & Rakic 2014: 14), native speak-

ers who speak with a non-standard accent, especially a less prestigious one, at times experience stigmatisation and a decrease in the perception of their competence[2]. Non-native speakers face an even greater disapproval for their way of speaking. This notion of the competent standard-accent speaker and the incompetent non-standard speaker has also been adapted by mass media, where it can be seen that the heroes in films often speak with a standard accent whereas the villains do not (Giles & Rakic 2014: 15).

Considering that a new-born's hearing is the first of the senses that is completely developed, it comes as little surprise that humans rely heavily on the speech and language we hear when trying to read and perceive others (Giles & Rakic 2014: 13). It has been shown that children aged 5 prefer to have friends that speak with the same accent they have (Kinzler, Shutts, Dejesus, & Spelke 2009). Additionally, they trust people less who do not speak with a native accent. This preference is also not contingent on the ability to understand the foreign accent perfectly well but rather seems to be an inclination towards the own way of speaking (Kinzler, Corriveau, & Harris: 2011: 107), creating a 'self' versus 'others' or 'us' versus 'them' dynamic, which further emphasises that language is crucial for group identity. This preference for the own accent is persistent and is also present in adulthood. A study conducted by Lev-Ari and Keysar (2010) further asserted that native speakers rate the statements of a person as less credible the heavier their non-native accent is. Giles and Rakic (2014: 13) agree, that "the differentiation between native and foreign remains highly persistent throughout the lifetime". This othering can take on extreme views as can be seen in a study conducted by Shuck (2004) who highlighted an interview with two white female middle-class university students who expressed quite unfavourably views on foreign-accented speakers. One of the women told the interviewer that she was afraid of a man, supposedly of Saudi-Arabian origin, sitting next to her on a flight as she "couldn't understand a word he said" (Shuck 2004: 196-197). This can be seen as a clear example of an *us versus them* mentality. Lindemann, Litzenberg and Subtirelu (2014: 172) explain that these negative attitudes display underlying deep-rooted beliefs against people with differing L1s which essentially showcases that ultimately it is not about language proficiency but rather about prioritising one's own language and culture over those of others.

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[2] for more information on non-standard and low-prestige accents see chapters *4.1. Established models* and 3.4.2. *Native speakers' perception of accented speech*

3.3. Influences on attitude towards accents

In contrast to the accent perception, where the sensory information is evaluated, an attitude describes "[e]xpressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language […] [and] may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language." (Richards & Schmid 2013: 314). Thus, to have an attitude about an object, one must first have perceived said object. Or in other words, every attitude includes the perception of something while a perception does not inherently need an attitude.

As is now clear, every human being, native or non-native, speaks with an accent. It depends on what a listener associates with an accent and how they evaluate the character of a person with a distinct accent, which prompts them to possibly form stereotypes about specific groups. This also means that contingent upon the listeners, their social and cultural background, the same accent might evoke differing reactions. Those attitudes are influenced by linguistic and sociolinguistic factors (Bryla-Cruz 2016 :29).

Linguistic determinants deal with the linguistic background of the listener, such as their L1 and any other languages they are competent in. Research (Johansson 1975; Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck & Smit 1997; Young 2003; van den Doel 2006; Kirkova-Naskova 2010) supports the idea that a listener's judgement of what is correct English and what is not is quite subjective and is heavily influenced by their own linguistic background. Consequently, elements of non-native speech that are also present in a listener's own linguistic background are assessed more leniently. This notion acts in accordance with the familiarity principle by which individuals foster more positive views about things – in this case language – they can relate to (Bryla-Cruz 2016: 31). As an example, Johansson (1975) conducted a study regarding the perception of Swedish-accented speech by English and Scottish listeners. His findings conclude that Swedish-accented vowels that have a similar quality to Scottish vowels were not determined as foreign by the Scottish listeners because they sound familiar to the Scots.

Sociolinguistic factors that influence the attitude a listener has on a foreign-accented speaker include, inter alia, their own cultural background, awareness of the accent, gender, age, and education. As an example, the cultural environment of a person influences the judgement of non-native accents. According to Bryla-Cruz (2016: 34) "immigration patterns constantly mould accent discrimination on national grounds.". In the USA, for instance, a study conducted by Nelson (2011) disclosed a substantial discrimination regarding certain foreign accents. US Americans tend to negatively judge people whose accents may indicate Asian, Indian, Middle Eastern and Spanish nationalities but, in turn,

rate other foreign accents, especially those of European origin, such as Swedish, German, or French, positively. In Canada, on the contrary, students have developed a more positive stance regarding immigrant students of Italian heritage the more they grew in numbers possibly to prevent social isolation of the immigrants and to ensure that both groups can coexist equally (Bourhis & Sachdev 1984).

Next to the background of a person, another factor that affects the attitude towards foreign-accented speech is the familiarity of the listener with this accent. When a listener is more acquainted with people of a specific non-L1 speech community, their judgement of said accent is based on personal experience. However, do they not have prior knowledge of those ethnic groups, their assessments will be affected by stereotypes regarding the accent. Again, the consequences of such social stereotypes, which rely on simplistic depictions, can be addressed via familiarity, which typically leads to the complexification of our biased views of foreign-accented people (Bryla-Cruz 2016: 38). Nevertheless, familiarity does not always lead to a more accepting view of people who speak with a certain accent. A study conducted by Eisenstein and Verdi (1985) showed that regardless of extensive interaction with Afro-American English speakers, English learners of various L1s described intelligibility problems regarding the accent of their Afro-American interlocuters. It was suggested that this stance stemmed from the low status of the accent variety. The English learners' attitudes towards their interlocuters' speech hindered them in their understanding of Afro-Americans.

Racial bias, in general, seems to be of important influence on the attitude towards an accent. Interestingly, when listeners see a person of whom they are expecting a foreign accent from, they will likely perceive their speech to be foreign-accented or less comprehensible, even if this is not the case (Moyer 2013: 14). This racial bias has also been observed in a study conducted by Kang and Rubin (2009) where the same speaker was judged to have different degrees of foreign accent, depending on if the listeners identified her in a picture as either Caucasian or Asian. Much earlier, Jaworski (1987) observed that his Polish survey participants judged the same speaker differently, depending on which background information they were given. The listeners believed to hear a man that was from either Arabic, Black African or American background speaking their L1, Polish. The listeners judged the 'American' recording significantly higher, especially in terms of intelligence than the other two guises, so the 'Arabic' and the 'Black African' speaker which were, in fact, the same person. It seems to be that informing the listeners about the speakers' national background at all is already influencing their judgement of the person speaking; in

particular when the background of the speaker is positively or negatively connotated within the environment of the listener and in tune with the bias of the listener (Yook & Lindemann: 2013).

Another factor which influences the perception of an accent is the gender of a person. Men and women have differing relationships to language as, generally speaking, men experience easier access to languages due to monetary, familial and gender factors. This means, that, globally, more often than not it is easier for men to gain an education and to be emerged in a learning environment than it is for women (Valentine 2006: 571). Interestingly, in some places such as rural parts of India, women are the driving force behind the progression and promotion of foreign languages, such as English, by reason of them being teachers and advocates for the education of Western languages and societies (Valentine 2006: 571).

Nevertheless, even though women are often substantial for the progression of foreign languages, they are judged differently than men are when speaking with a foreign accent. Studies conducted in the United States and in the Netherlands (Ko, Judd, & Blair: 2006; Ko, Judd, & Stapel: 2009) showed an apparently international occurrence: the more feminine a voice is, the less the speaker is deemed to be competent, when applying for a job. On the contrary to that: More masculine voices in those studies triggered stereotypical associations such as dominance, high status, superiority, assertiveness, and independence (Nelson, Signorella, Botti 2016: 168). Adding to that, a study conducted by Steinmayer and Spinath (2009) pointed out that male German high school students overrate their own cognitive skills, whereas their female colleagues tended to underrate their own abilities. This bias extends also to the judgement of others. The results of the aforementioned studies propose possible negative consequences for female speakers in contrast to their male counterparts, as women thus tend to be perceived less competent judged solely by their voice (Nelson, Signorella, Botti 2016: 168). In other words, accents have an influence on the perception of character features.

The effect of age on the attitude towards an accent has only been scarcely researched, so far. Van den Doel's (2006: 106) findings reveal that the age of a listener affects the perception of the severity of an error. Whereas older listeners are more lenient, younger participants in his study judged foreign-accented speech errors significantly more severely. This follows a study from Nikolov's (2000: 118) which informs us that children and adults focus on different aspects of speech when judging whether or not a person Is a foreign

language speaker. While children "considered the lack of fluency, false starts, paraphrasing and hesitation as the most important indicators of non-native speakers [...] adult groups also paid attention to grammar". A more recent study by Bryla-Cruz (2016: 229-230) reinforces these findings, as she came to a similar conclusion regarding listener age and the perception of foreign-accented speech. The younger group, whose participants were aged 18-35, judged speakers as more foreign-accented than the older group, whose participants were older than 35. The findings of these studies suggest that younger interlocuters tend to judge non-native speech less leniently than adults. A reason for this harsher judgement might lead back to the familiarity principle (Johansson 1975; Nikolov 2000; Bryla-Crz 2016) as children do not have as much life experience and knowledge about different foreign accents and instances of interaction with non-native speakers than adults do.

Another area which greatly influences our perception of and attitude towards accents is mass media. According to Gluszek and Hansen (2013: 33) the media often uses standard and non-standard accents to stereotypically depict certain characters. Foreign accents can be seen as inherently non-standard. Often, the antagonists speak with a less intelligible and foreign accent, while the protagonists have a more standard British or American English pronunciation. This can be seen in the original English version of the children's movie *Aladdin* where the main characters speak with an American accent and the villains feature an Arabic accent (Precker 1993 in Lippi-Green 2012: 107). Dragojevic, Mastro and Giles (2016: 79) further concur that in North America, media depictions of accents are skewed, reflecting widespread prejudices about accents. Additionally, the researchers state that media features a disproportionally large number of speakers of standard American English and other Anglo-accents, and an insufficient representation of non-standard American English and foreign-accented speech, going as far as to call those speakers "silenced" (Dragojevic, Mastro & Giles 2016: 79) due to their under-representation on televised programmes. Adding to that, when these underrepresented groups are displayed in the media, it is often in unfavourable terms; depicting people who speak non-standard accents as less intelligent, less beautiful, and less successful than speakers of a standard accent. This unequal representation of differing language groups can have a significant impact on the perception of certain accents and the attitude towards people who speak those accents.

The considerable impact the media's portrayal of accents and languages can have on how people react to others who speak in a non-standard manner is further highlighted in

Gluszek and Hansen (2013: 34). They explain that the frequent and widespread use of mass media has raised awareness for standard pronunciation and therefore, fosters the believe that the accents spoken on TV and in films are the ones people should aim for (Gluszek & Hansen 2013: 35). Carvalho (2004), for example, states that mass media exposure prompted Uruguayan Portuguese speakers to adopt certain features of Brazilian Portuguese. However, media does not always only foster the adaption of standard accents. Di Martino (2019: 59-60) explains how an English singer from Newcastle upon Tyne named Cheryl influenced the image of the Geordie accent, one that is usually seen as working class and rather unfavourably. The singer, who appeared as a judge on the American talent show *X factor*, soon became very popular among the viewers of the show and increased the popularity of the typical accent from Newcastle upon Tyne.

However, it is not only visual entertainment media that influences the accent attitude of its viewers. The role of video and computer games, as well as other media-related entertainment, in moulding people's perceptions of languages and accents should not be overlooked (Gluszek & Hansen 2013: 35).

Sociocultural factors in educational settings, as well, influence the attitude towards accents. A study by Kung and Wang (2018) revealed that their participants' – Chinese EFL learners from an international university in southeast China – wish for native speaker-like accents is heavily influenced by the use of learning 'materials', such as teachers, textbooks, popular media etc. Additionally, those participants who stated that they want to achieve a native speaker standard accent even expressed their intention to acquire their preferred accent through English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) communication. Naturally, it has to be mentioned that such expectations seem unrealistic and suggest the participants' inexperience in the field of foreign language learning, especially in accent acquisition.

3.4. Perception of accented speech

It has been proven by studies on intercultural experiences (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani 2011; Moyers 2013) that a huge number of interlocuters and listeners assess speakers more by how they are saying something, rather than what they are saying. In other words, for many people the non-content part of speech is more important for their judgement about the speaker than the content part (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani 2011: 216-217). A person's accent is one of the most prominent parts in their speech. As an illustration: When a person is a speaker with a foreign accent that is considered unfavourable, this can have extensive consequences. Moyer (2013: 15) labels accents as "gatekeepers" which can open

and close doors in society. Depending on the interlocutor, foreign accents can decrease the chances of being heard, understood, and even wanted in certain surroundings. Native speakers, as well as non-native speakers have distinct perceptions of and attitudes towards people who speak foreign-accented English.

3.4.1. Non-native speakers' perception of accented speech

Human beings compare each other continuously according to their similarities and differences. This also applies to comparing accents, whether they are L1 accents or L2 accents. Non-native accents that are different from one's own foreign accent are usually viewed more negatively, whereas one's own non-native accents tend to be rated a bit more highly (Moyer 2013: 14). At the same time, there are also foreign accents that are typically rated more highly than others, mostly because of reasons of prestige. Consequently, Asian and European accents, for example, are seen as conveying status and intelligence. Studies (Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck & Smit: 1997; Timmis: 2002; Park: 2009; Bayard & Green 2005; Vargas Barona 2008; Wong. 2018) have shown, that L2 speakers generally rate foreign English speakers, including those of their own non-native accent, as less intelligible and as having lower social status features than L1 speakers. Vargas Barona (2008: np), states that non-native speakers in his study reacted negatively to other non-native speakers, as they judged their personalities worse in terms of "[c]ompetence, [i]ntegrity and [s]ocial [a]ttractiveness" (Vargas Barona 2008: np). This could indicate that even though many non-native speakers interact much more with other non-native speakers of English, their apparently more positive attitude towards native speech can be linked to them ascribing more favourable qualities to native speakers. This could be the case due to non-native speakers judging a native speaker accent to be more appropriate to follow when speaking English.

A study conducted by Timmis, (2002) who asked 400 participants of 14 different nations if they would rather speak with the accent of a native speaker or with the foreign English accent of their own country, supports this notion. Timmis' findings show that learners in the Expanding Circle[3], along with those studying or residing in the Inner Circle, strongly favour a nativelike accent. A worldwide study by Bayard and Green (2005) added to these findings of native-speaker preference. Bayard and Green discovered that European, South

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[3] For an explanation of the three Circle model of Kachru see chapter 2.1.

American, and Asian participants primarily favoured a General American accent while European participants also described the British accents of conveying high status (2005: 24-25). Adding to that, according to Lindemann et. al. (2014: 176) L2 users have internalised the favoured status associated with L1, the Inner Circle forms of English, as well as the stigma that is linked to L2 variations, which includes their own non-native accent, when speaking English.

Even by speakers who themselves speak with an L2 English accent, the presence of an L2 accent in an interlocutor, particularly one that is less nativelike than their own, is seen as suggesting inferior intellect (Lindemann et al. 2014: 178). Park (2009) presents a rather extreme form of this internalised inferiority of one's own foreign accent in Korean television shows. There, some characters even over-exaggerate their Korean accents in English in order to ridicule themselves for not speaking English well. An example of a desperate attempt of receiving a more native pronunciation, especially in South Korea, is that of some parents who have their children undergo scientifically questionable and unsubstantiated surgery in an endeavour to enhance the child's pronunciation of the American English /r/ sound (Choe 2004).

Nevertheless, it is not only nativeness in speaking per se that is favoured. Studies like Cargile, Takai and Rodríguez (2006) or Niedzielski and Preston (2003) have shown that some native English accents are also rated negatively by the listeners. This seems to partly depend on the "political and socioeconomic power" (Lindemann 2014:180) of the accents in question. Yet, some accents just seem to be preferred over others. A study of English accent preference of Spanish EFL students (Martín Tevar 2014) revealed a preference for RP, which his participants considered to be the "best" accent (Martín Tevar 2014: 59) and further rated RP speakers as possessing university degrees. In contrast, the Scottish accent scored the lowest with some students even linking this accent with illiteracy (2014: 70). Moreover, they regarded Scottish and Estuary English as "not appropriate" for EFL teachers, whereas Cockney and RP were considered to be "appropriate" (Cockney) and "absolutely appropriate" (RP) (Martín Tevar 2014: 64). To sum up, RP obtained the highest results in all dimensions under Martín Tevar's study: intelligence, status, language quality, and success. Van Gelder (2019) received slightly different results in her study of Dutch participants' attitudes towards GA and RP. The results show that the Dutch participants overall favoured an American accent over an English one. However, the participants that judged RP higher than GA displayed a stronger preference for this accent than those who preferred GA. In general, van Gelder's participants rated RP speakers to be of

higher status that GA speakers. Nevertheless, GA received better judgement in the overall attitude score as the participants marked the American standard accent speakers more favourably in terms of solidarity and social dimension traits (van Gelder 2019: 46).

Even though many studies show a strong preference for a nativelike accent, particularly among English students in the Inner and Expanding circles, there are also some studies which challenge the previous statement. A study conducted at the University of Vienna (Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck & Smit 1997) showed a different result as one of the Austrian English speakers was ranked at a similar level to the native speakers of English by the mostly Austrian native speaking participants. However, the listeners in that case presumed that said Austrian speaker was a native speaker of English, as well. Moreover, the worst judged person was also an Austrian native speaker. This leads to the assumption that the more native speaker-like the accent, the more positively it is perceived by listeners. Yet, there are also a few studies that have given evidence that some "men [...], non-English majors, non-urban dwellers, and self-described non-perfectionists and non-traditionalists" (Lindemann et al. 2014: 179) show more acceptance for L2 accents and local varieties of the English language, especially if they are adolescent. This seems to be especially true for Asian countries such as China (He & Zhang 2010; Xu et al. 2010) and South Korea (Shim 2002). Nevertheless, the majority of students, also in China appears to aim for a native speaker accent. In Kung and Wang's (2019: 398, 402) study, out of all participants 76% wanted to achieve a native speaker-like accent. In contrast, 24% of participants preferred to focus "on improving the content and fluency of their speech instead of struggling for a native-like accent" (Kung & Wang 2019: 402) as long as their accents are intelligible. Additionally, all of the learners who wanted to pursue a native-like accent hoped to attain a British English or American English accent – no other variety was mentioned, which highlights the need to expose students to more English varieties than is currently the case.

In order for students to become more accustomed to and, consequently, more accepting of alternative accents, some scholars, such as Smith and Nelson (2006), have suggested exposing students to a broader variety of accents opposed to just presenting them with native speaker norms. Sung (2014) has followed this approach in a recently conducted research and explored students' perception of alternative pronunciation varieties. He discovered that learners had mixed beliefs regarding the benefits of including different accents in their English lessons. In theory, they were open to being exposed to a variety of

accents. In practice, however, they showed reservations against the implementation of non-native and non-standard accents. These beliefs seem to stem from negative attitudes towards some varieties, the disbelief of the actual usefulness for their acquisition, as well as the concern that said non-standard and non-native varieties could have negative consequences for their goal of acquiring a native-like accent. Naturally, the question arises where such a wish to sound native-like comes from. MacKenzie (2014: 99) notes that some learners desire to be part of a certain speech community and speech forms an important aspect of a community's identity. In order to be part of said community, one typically has to adapt to the community's way of speaking.

 In a follow-up article, Sung (2015: 199-200) suggests that before implementing multiple accents in the classroom, such as the careful selection of alternative accents and the listening materials, dependent on which varieties the students are expected to be confronted with in their lives, as well as acquainting the learners with the "sociolinguistic reality of English use around the world" (Sung 2015: 2000) to challenge their negative generalisations about non-native and non-standard varieties of the English language and, in turn, provoke a broader acceptance of the many varieties of English spoken worldwide.

3.4.2. Native speakers' perception of accented speech

Numerous studies (Shuck 2004; Hill 2008; Lindemann 2005; Vargas Barona 2008 etc.) have demonstrated that native speakers of English judge people who speak English with a foreign accent negatively. These judgements range from complaining about the speaker, to mocking them, and / or avoiding interaction with them (Shuck 2004). According to Tsurutani (2012: 589) foreign-accented speakers are not only confronted with cultural stereotypes related to their home country but are also often considered to be "less educated, less reliable and less interesting than native speakers".

This is no recent phenomenon. Already in 1978, Edwards (Edwards 1978 cited in Cheshire 1984: 546) conducted a study in which he found out that English middle- and working-class participants judged children more favourably in terms of "intellectual competence, and also as better behaved, more helpful, and as having greater academic potential" than other children who spoke with a non-standard accent (Cheshire 1984: 546). In the US Heaton and Nygaard (2011: 204) explored how listeners judged Southern and Standard American accents based on two differing message topics which were either quite usual for Southerners, such as hunting and cooking, or not as typical, as for example medicine

and investment. The results of the study revealed that accent and content were both in-fluential on the listeners' evaluation. The Southern content, as well as the Southern accent, were rated lower in status than the standard accent but were also judged higher in soci-ality attributes (Heaton & Nygaard 2011: 208).

So-called prestige varieties "tend to be more geographically neutral than non-prestige ones" (Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994: 6). Accents of English that are considered to be very prestigious are thought to be generally more accepted than non-prestige form, as the lat-ter are often considered as "'odd' and idiosyncratic" (Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994: 7). An accent is considered prestigious when its speakers are members of high-prestige groups or in high-prestige positions. Of course, this is also applicable for low-prestige varieties. These prestige systems, however, do not function internationally, as hearers are mostly unaware of the systems of prestige of countries other than their own (Fraser Gupta 2006: 97).

Hudson (1980) found out that people associate many character traits with RP that are linked to socio-economic success such as "intelligence, professional competence, persua-sive power, diligence, social privilege etc." but also some negative connotations, for in-stance "distant, unfriendly, arrogant, and even dishonest" (Hudson 1980: chapter 6). Var-gas Barona (2008: np) discovered that US American English native speakers rated non-native speakers more negatively than other native speakers in terms of competence, in-tegrity, and social attractiveness. Furthermore, the listeners of his study also differenti-ated between the different non-native accents. The speaker who spoke with an Arabic ac-cent was rated lower than the Spanish and Korean native speakers. Vargas Barona (2008: np) speculated that the connection between the Arabic accent and the at that time ongoing war in the Middle East was to blame for a racial bias of the listeners. Lindemann's (2005) research showed similar results when in his studies US undergraduate students were asked to imagine how other students from their university with differing language back-grounds spoke English. Lindemann (2005: 195) concluded, that the perceived friendliness and pleasantness as well as the perceived accuracy of the imagined speakers' English cor-related with the socio-political relationships of the US with the fictional speakers' country of origin. Furthermore, in Lindemann's study (2005: 194), speakers from the Middle East, Eastern Europe and some Asian countries were rated lowest, whereas speech from West-ern European countries was judged more positively (2005: 207).

These findings of socio-politically induced attitudes in native speakers led Lippi-Green (2012: 253) to comment that "it is not all foreign accents, but only accent linked to skin

that isn't white, or which signals a third-world homeland, which evokes such negative re-actions". In general, however, it can be said that foreign-accented speakers from all over the world are almost always rated lower in status and competence by English native speakers due to their accents.

4. Models of the English language

This part of the thesis focuses on four models of the English language, already established- and non-established ones. Additionally, the concept of English as a Lingua Franca will also be considered as the English language - as a tool for communication between two or more people whose L1 differs – is what English as a foreign language students will most likely encounter in real life English interactions.

4.1. Established Models

The first two English accent varieties that will be addressed belong to the Inner Circle (Kachru 1985) and are the established versions of English pronunciation that foreign language learners will encounter: The British English *Received Pronunciation* (RP) and the American English *General American* (GA) variation. As stated above, General American and its British English equivalent, Received Pronunciation, are considered to be the 'standard norms' of English.

The different types of accents are commonly divided into standard English and non-standard – or non-established – English accents (Kortmann 2020: 203-204). Standard varieties are much more present internationally and in the everyday world than the non-standard variants of English. Nonetheless, in all languages, the standard norm is only spoken by a minority of speakers, who are usually well educated and belonging to the middle and upper classes (Kortmann 2020: 205). Therefore, the standard norms are considered to be the most prestigious form of the language, even for non-standard speakers, and can often be found:

- "in written language, especially in literature and print media
- in television and radio broadcasts
- as official language in politics, administration, court, etc.

- as the language of instruction in schools and higher education institutions (HEIs) of all English-speaking countries (and, at least for HEIs, increasingly also in countries where English has the status of a foreign language)
- as the teaching target of learners of English in schools and HEIs all over the world
- by the educated middle and upper classes" (Kortmann 2020: 204).

Following, the two established models RP and GA will be presented.

4.1.1. Received Pronunciation

Received Pronunciation is the language variety which is usually aimed to be taught at schools in Europe and is featured in most English textbooks. The term Received Pronunciation is used to describe the prestigious variety "English English" (Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994: 6). Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994: 6) describe it as a social variety that indicates the supposedly sophisticated social status of the speaker. The naming originates from the nineteenth century, when 'received' signified "accepted in the best society" (Hughes & Trudgill 1996: 3). The RP accent is not tied to a particular region but is rather attached to a specific group of mostly affluent and influential people. It is primarily spoken by a small minority – less than 5% of England's population – of Great Britain's upper class, advocated in the most prestigious public schools, used by politicians, the aristocracy and some newsreaders of the British public service broadcaster *BBC* (Hughes, Trudgill & Watts 2013: 3). Moreover, RP English is spoken by the British Royal Family, which is also why the accent is sometimes called The Queen's English or BBC English (Clayton & Drummond 2018: 14). Some may question why an accent spoken by so few people is taught in English classes all over the world but, as already mentioned, the prestigious character of the accent makes people more susceptible to learning it as it is only natural to want to learn what has been deemed the 'best' or 'most accurate' of the English accents. Additionally, due to it being spoken in television and on radio, it is, in general, well understood within Great Britain and therefore, a foreign learner who speaks with an RP accent is more likely to be widely understood by English native speakers. However, speaking with a RP accent "can be a handicap nowadays, since it may be taken as a mark of affectation or desire to emphasize social superiority" (Cruttenden 2008: 77). In instructional settings, RP is most of the time used as the standard model of English in teaching materials in Europe, Africa, India, and parts of Asia and South America (Cruttenden 2008: 79).

Additionally, no other British accent has been described as thoroughly as the Received Pronunciation (Hughes, Trudgill & Watts 2013: 4).

As can be seen in figure 1 below, there are 24 consonant phonemes in RP English (Upton 2008: 240, 248).

	Bilabial		Labio-dental		Dental		Alveolar		Palato-alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Glottal	
Plosive	p	b					t	d					k	g		
Fricative			f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ					h	
Affricate									tʃ	dʒ						
Nasal		m						n						ŋ		
Lateral								l								
Approxi-mant		w						r				j				

Figure 1: International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols for English consonants (Roach 2006: 65)

The consonant symbols of RP are identical to those of GA. However, it has to be mentioned that some consonants are pronounced differently, which will be addressed in 4.1.2.

Figure 2 features a vowel chart, which "roughly represents the space in the oral cavity in which the tongue moves for the production of different vowels" (Plag Arndt-Lippe, Braun & Schramm 2015: 19). As figure 2 shows, RP's vowel inventory contains 12 vowels (Plag et al., 2015: 20).
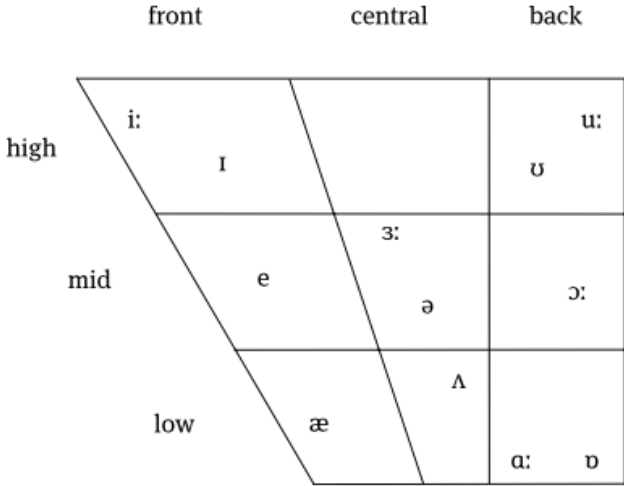

Figure 2: IPA vowel chart of RP (Plag, Arndt-Lappe, Braun, Schramm, 2015: 20)

Some of the characteristics of the RP accent are the use of the open back vowel /ɑ:/ in words such as bath or start (Upton 2015: 254), as well as the limited realisation of the /r/, which is only pronounced pre-vocalically (Cruttenden 2008: 83). Another feature of the RP accent is the occurrence of /j/ before /u:/ in words such as news, /njuːz/, or duke,

/dju:k/, as opposed to many other accents which have progressed to omitting the /j/ sound in a process called yod-dropping (Hughes, Trudgill & Watts 2010: 123).

4.1.2. General American

General American (or GA) can be seen as the American English equivalent to the British English RP and is used as the standard accent of North America. Just as in the RP accent, the GA also cannot directly be placed at any part of the United States and does not show notable regional characteristics. Due to the USA's history of colonisation, settlement and influences of the many different cultures and original languages of the settlers, the United States encompasses a multitude of differing accents. As Wells (1996: 470) points out, GA "comprises that majority of American accents which do not show marked eastern or southern characteristics" and same as the Received Pronunciation in Great Britain, General American, as well, is used as the preferred variety of speech on TV and other mass media in the United States (Wells 1996: 467-472). Much like RP in Europe, GA is the standard English model used in educational situations in parts of Asia and Latin America (Cruttenden 2008: 84).

In terms of the phonological system, RP and GA are quite similar and the same phonemic symbols that are used in RP can be used for GA as well, therefore an IPA table for the consonant will not be listed below. As already mentioned in 4.1.1., there are quite a few pronunciation differences between the two standard variations, RP and GA, when it comes to the realisation of consonants. The most notable perhaps is the use of the rhotic /r/ in GA, for example worker is pronounced /ˈwɜrkər/ in GA and /ˈwɜːkə/ in RP. Moreover, the rhotic r can also serve as a syllabic consonant /ˈwɜrkr/ which, due to the lack of a rhotic r, is not existent in RP. Another typical feature of the American English voice system is the t-voicing, an effect in which the distinction between the two consonant sounds /t/ - /d/ is neutralised, hence words such as *heating* and *heeding* sound the same. Additionally, word-final /t/ is often not audibly released at all and medial /nt/ is usually shortened to /n/ as words such as *splinter* are pronounced as / ˈsplɪnr/ (Collins & Mees 2013: 158). Cruttenden (2008: 85) also mentions that the consonant /l/, in GA is usually released as a dark [ɫ], whereas in RP the [l] is clear in front of vowels. and dark [ɫ] elsewhere.

When it comes to vowel sounds, the GA and the RP sound system are not as similar, compared to the consonants. Figure 3 below presents an overview of the vowel inventory of GA.
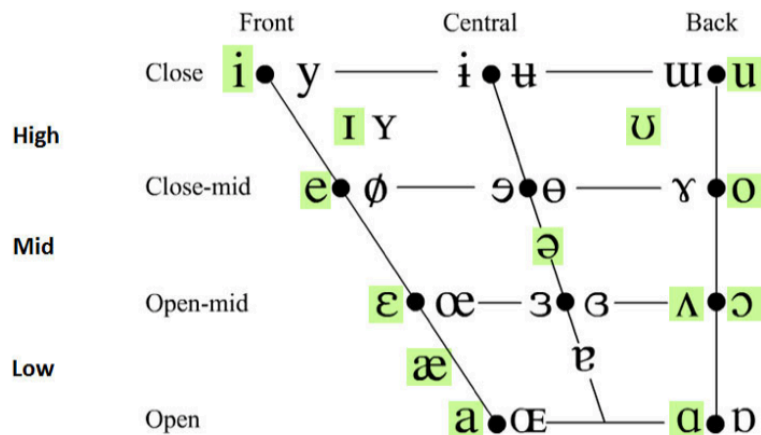
Figure 3: IPA vowel chart, GA vowels are highlighted (The University of British Columbia n.d.)

One major distinction between RP and GA can be found in words which contain a /ɑː/ in RP which changes into the open front vowel /æ/ in GA, for instance in words such as *after.* Moreover, the GA vowel system does not contain the /ɒ/ vowel and replaces it by using /ɑː/ and /ɔː/ (Cruttenden 2008: 84). Another noticeable difference is the so-called r-colouring of vowels. The immediately following /r/ modifies the sound quality of a preceding vowel, for example in words such as *bird* or *start*. Another distinction in vowel sounds that includes an /r/ sound between GA and RP is the adaption of vowel sounds preceding the /r/. As an example, merry, marry, and Mary all feature the same pronunciation of the vowels /e/, /æ/, and /ɛ/. Furthermore, the ᴛʀᴀᴘ vowel is often released to sound more like the /ɛ/ sound – similar to the British English RP pronunciation of ꜱǫᴜᴀʀᴇ (Collins & Mees 2013: 159-160). Additionally, GA also lacks the RP diphthongs / ɪə /, / eə/, and / ʊə/. (Cruttenden 2008: 84).

4.2.   Non-established models

Even though the terms non-standard and non-established, may have a negative ring to them and standard and established varieties are seen as more prestigious, their structural characteristics are of "no higher value, greater inherent logic or better quality than other varieties […]" (Kortmann 2020: 203-204). In the following chapters, two non-standard and therefore non-established models of English will be presented.

4.2.1. Austrian English

It has to be mentioned that research on the Austrian English accent, as well as the differences between the sound systems of Austrian English and English has proven to be scarce

but some research focuses on the contrasts between Austrian English and the British English Received Pronunciation.

Usually, it can be considered fairly easy to hear when an English speakers' L1 is German. There are several similar pronunciation peculiarities for German German and Austrian German speakers when speaking English. Additionally, Austrian German EFL learners produce some typical features that are not present in German German EFL speakers. In the following, these peculiarities will be presented.

As already mentioned in chapter 2.3., the own L1 provides the speaker with a framework which can help or hinder the pronunciation of a foreign language (Moyer 2013: 15). In general, the phonological systems of the English and German language are largely congruent (Swan 2005: 37). Nevertheless, there are some differences which can potentially cause articulation differences. For instance, Austrian speakers when speaking their L1 tend to produce closer vowels than those created by English native speakers. For this reason, they experience troubles correctly pronouncing the more open vowel sounds that native English speakers create (Richter 2019: 138). Wieden and Nemser (1991: 56-57) attributed this problem to the general difference in vowel length between English and Austrian German, especially regarding the high categories of the IPA vowel chart such as /iː/, /ɪ/, /uː/ and /ʊ/. Moreover, they also state that the Austrian German L1 interferes with the native-like pronunciation as in Austrian German, high vowels are usually raised more as the native Austrian German pronunciation of these vowels is higher than in British English speech (Richter 2019: 138). However, these pronunciation differences can be considered as minor and are not primarily responsible for the distinct pronunciation differences of Austrian EFL speakers. Generally speaking, many deviations from the standard pronunciation norm of RP English stem from the differences in the phonemes of the languages. For an overview of the consonant and vowel inventory of Austrian German, see figures 4 (consonants) and 5 (vowels) below.

	Bilabial		Labio-dental		Alveolar		Palato-alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Uvular		Glottal	
Plosive	p	b			t	d					k	g				
Fricative			f	v	s		∫		ç		x				h	
Affricate			pf		ts		t∫				ks					
Nasal		m				n						ŋ				
Trill						r								ʀ		
Lateral-Aproximant						l										
Approximant								j								

Figure 4: International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols for German consonants (Moosmüller, Schmid & Brandstätter 2015: 340)
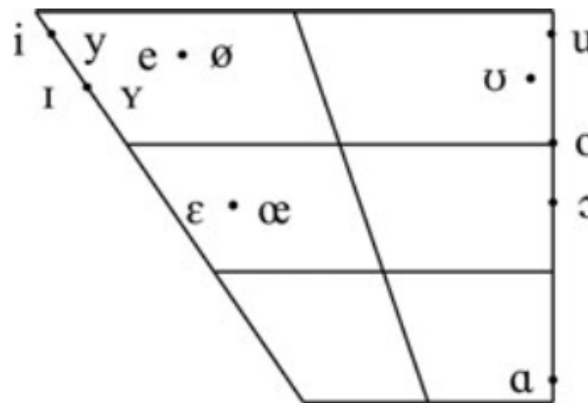
Figure 5: The vowel chart of Standard Austrian German (Moosmüller, Schmid, Brandstätter 2015: 344)

Austrian German speakers usually have more problems pronouncing phonemes that are not part of the Austrian repertoire. These phonemes can be seen when examining the IPA charts of the respective languages (compare figures 1 and 4 for consonants and 2/3 and 5 for vowels). Standard Austrian German, which represents "educated speakers with an academic background […] located in the urban centres, especially Salzburg and Vienna." (Moosmüller, Schmid & Brandstätter 2015: 339) contains 13 vowels and 24 consonants, as can be seen in table 2 and figure 3 below (Moosmüller, Schmid & Brandstätter 2015: 340, 344). As can be seen when comparing the vowel charts, which "roughly represents the space in the oral cavity in which the tongue moves for the production of different vowels" (Plag et al. 2015: 19), below, the same sounds are partly produced in different parts

of the mouth in British English and Austrian English. These subtle differences in tongue position may be one of the reasons for differences in sound production.

Additionally, Richter (2019: 138) shows that accented speech when pronouncing the low central vowels /ɜː/, /ʌ/, /ə/ and /ɑː/is also a result of the Austrian German L1 influencing the pronunciation of English. For this case, there seems to be an inclination in general for lowering the vowels for EFL learners whose L1 is Austrian German. For example, the /ʌ/sound may resemble the more open /ɑ/ sound, or the sounds /æ/ and /e/ being confused with one another (Swan 2005: 38). Another prominent mispronunciation is the diphthongisation of the long central vowel /ɜː/ (Richter 2019: 144). However, the Austrian German accent is not only present in the production of vowels but also in consonants. Austrian German EFL speakers especially seem to struggle with consonants that are not included in the sound system of their L1 or ones that are performed in a different manner in the two languages, such as /ʒ/, /v/, /z/ and /dʒ/ (Wieden & Nemser 1991: 54). More concretely, Austrian German EFL speakers tend to replace voiced sounds such as /ʒ/ and /dʒ/with the voiceless /ʃ/ and /tʃ/, therefore often pronouncing the words treasure /trɛʒə/ as / trɛʃə/ and *jug* /dʒʌg/ as /tʃʌg/. Additionally, word final voiced consonants are uncommon in German and are therefore frequently substituted with the unvoiced counterparts of the consonants. An example for this is an Austrian German native speaker saying /liːf/ instead of *leave* /liːv/ and /pʌp/for *pub* /pʌb/ (Swan 2005: 39). Some of the most prominent deviations of pronunciation from the standard norm of RP is the difference between /v/ and /w/ in which Austrian German speakers tend to produce "polar opposites of opening/closing and rounding/unrounding" (Richter 2019: 139). [4] Another interesting mispronunciation of Austrian German EFL speakers is the one of both the voiced and voiceless dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ as both sounds do not exist in the German language. Often times German native speakers tend to substitute the voiceless dental fricative /θ/ with /f/ or /s/, consequently potentially saying *fink* or *sink* instead of *think,* and the voiced dental fricative /ð/ with /d/ (Richter 2019: 144).

Next to differences in the pronunciation of certain words, Swan (2005: 39-40) also notes some dissimilarities when it comes to word and sentence stress, intonation, and juncture. German native speakers, and in this case Austrian German native speakers as well, do not produce many weak forms in connected speech. Therefore, words such as *and* or *have*

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[4] For a more extensive list of sounds that can potentially cause pronunciation problems for Austrian German speakers of English see Richter (2019: 144)

may be overly stressed instead of reduced. Furthermore, according to region, sentence intonation may be different from that of English native speakers. In general, North German intonation is similar to that of English native speakers, whereas South German or Austrian intonation have more dissimilar characteristics and tend to use "long rising glides in mid-sentence" (Swan 2005: 39). Swan (2005: 40) proposes to focus on the correct intonation of *wh*-questions and requests, so that these do not sound unpleasant due to a rising intonation. Lastly, Swan notes that the missing juncture of words that begin with a vowel with the preceding word is what gives the German foreign accent such a staccato-like sound. So instead of bringing the words together in the example *my own apple*, speakers whose L1 is German, tend to pronounce all three words separately by use of a glottal stop (Swan 2005: 40).

4.2.2. Spanish English

Spanish is an Indo-European language, belonging to the family of Romance languages. Since Spanish is spoken not only in Spain but also in parts of South America and Central America among others, there is quite some variation within the language itself, especially when it comes to grammar and vocabulary (Kattán-Ibarra & Connell 2003: 162).

Overall, the consonant systems of English and Spanish are rather similar, as can be seen in figure 6 below.

	Bilabial		Labio-dental		(Inter-)dental		Alveolar		Palato-alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Glottal	
Plosive	p	b					t	d					k	g		
Fricative			f		θ		s						x			
Affricate									ʧ							
Nasal		m						n			ɲ			ŋ		
Lateral								l								
Approximant		w						r			j					
Tap								ɾ								

Figure 6: International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols for Spanish consonants (adapted from Rao 2018: 281-282)

The Spanish consonant sounds are, apart from minor differences such as the alveolar tap sound / ɾ / or the lack of a voiced dental fricative / ð /, very similar to the English consonant sounds, as can be seen in figure 6.

Yet, there are quite substantial differences in the vowel systems of the two languages as the English one is more complex and encompasses between 12 and 24 vowel sounds, depending on the variety (Laver 2002: 62). The Spanish vowel system, however, features only 5 sounds (/i/, /e/, /a/, /u/, and /o/) as can be seen in figure 7.
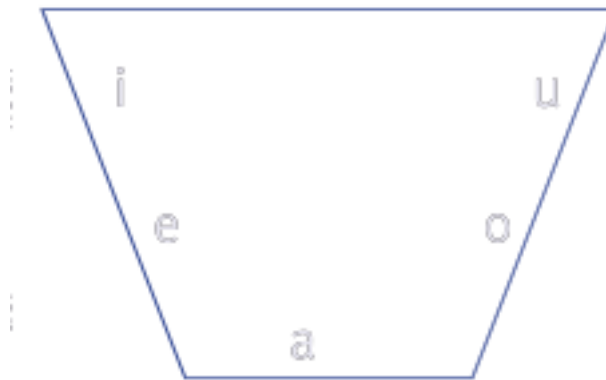
Figure 7: The vowel chart of Spanish (Kabatek & Pusch 2011: 60)

Due to the limited amount of vowel sounds in Spanish, similar phonemes in English may be realised differently phonetically (MacDonald 1989: 216). This adoption of a comparable Spanish sound instead of the English phoneme is quite usual, and called acoustic phonetic level transfer (You, Alwan, Kazemzadeh, Narayanan 2005: np).

When it comes to deviations of pronunciation for Spanish learners of English, Coe (2005: 91) notes the following as the most profound ones:

- "Difficulty in recognising and using English vowels.
- Strong devoicing of final voiced consonants.
- Even sentence rhythm, without the typical prominences of English, making understanding difficult for English listeners.
- Narrower range of pitch (in European speakers), producing a bored effect."

As mentioned before, Spanish native speakers especially struggle with the vowel system of the English language as their own one does not feature distinct differences in vowel length, for example. Spanish only has five pure vowels and five diphthongs. Frequently, there are two English vowels which are produced in a similar area as one Spanish vowel. This leads to an unusual vowel length and to possible miscommunication as, for incidence, the words *seat* and *sit*, or *pull* and *pool* are pronounced the same (Coe 2005: 91).

Additionally, the Spanish vowel system does not feature the British English long central vowel /ɜː / nor the schwa sound /ə/, which are replaced by /i/ or /e/ when it comes to the long central vowel, or by an unreduced pronunciation of the vowel for the schwa sound, such as /abaut/ for the word *about*. The diphthongs, however, are not as difficult

to realise as the vowels for Spanish native speakers. Four diphthongs are produced quite similarly and only the British diphthong /əʊ/ seems to present a challenge for speakers with Spanish as their L1 and is mostly released as a /ɔː/ so words such as *coat*, *caught*, and *cot* can all sound very similar (Coe 2005: 91-93). When it comes to consonants, the Spanish and English language do have quite a few equivalents or near equivalents, again: see figure 6 below. Nevertheless, there are still some consonants within the English language, that Spanish native speakers deem difficult to pronounce. Among these are initial voiceless plosives such as /p/, /t/, and /k/, which are often released as the voiceless /b/, /d/, and /g/. The same devoicing applies to the pronunciation of voiced word-final consonants. Moreover, in the Spanish language, the sounds for the letters *b* and *v* are the same, which can lead to misunderstanding when saying word pairs such as *very* and *berry*. Adding to that, most Spanish native speakers are usually only familiar with the affricate /tʃ/ of the postalveolar obstruents /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /ʒ/, and /dʒ/, and therefore, often experience troubles pronouncing words such as treasure /trɛʒə/ which can potentially sound like /trefer/ or /tretfer/. Nevertheless, in some parts of Latin America, the voiced postalveolar obstruents /ʒ/ and /dʒ/ can also be found and, consequently, should not be troublesome for speakers of those particular regions. Another sound which has proven to be difficult for Spanish native speakers is the English voiceless glottal fricative /h/ as the Spanish language does not have a similar sound at its disposal. A Spanish sound which to some extent comes close to the aforementioned and is often used to replace it is the voiceless velar fricative /x/ which can be found in Spanish words such as *reloj* (clock) or *jamón* (ham) and which furthermore is present in the Scottish *ch* in *loch* (Coe 2005: 92-93). MacDonald (1989: 230) added to the list of dominant variation in Spanish English pronunciation the pronunciation variations in the realisation of the dental fricatives /ð/and /θ/, which tend to be pronounced as [d], and [t], and [s], and [f] respectively. Another deviance from the English native norm is the pronunciation of the sound /j/. Spanish speakers may pronounce the word initial sound in words such as *young* or *yellow* as /dʒ/. Consonant clusters are also more common in English than in Spanish. This presents a possible reason for Spanish speakers' hardship to hear and speak a sequence of consonants with no intervening vowel. According to Coe (2005: 94) Spanish speakers may possibly say /isten/ instead of instant /ˈɪnstənt/ or /brefas/ rather than breakfast /ˈbrɛkfəst/, when simplifying these consonant clusters. Another aspect which leads to the typical foreign pronunciation of English is that there is no schwa sound in the Spanish language. Accordingly, people

whose L1 is Spanish may often also produce unstressed syllables and, for example, pronounce *interested* as /interestet/ (Coe 2005: 94).

5. English as a Lingua Franca

For many years now, English as a foreign language (EFL) has been taught using mainly the 'standard' English varieties – especially RP – due to their omnipresence in didactic material (Trudgill 2000: 5-6). Crystal (2010), however points out that students who are primarily exposed to the standard varieties can feel overwhelmed when they encounter all the other standard and non-standard, native, and non-native accents of the English language. In point of fact, those non-standard accents are more likely to be encountered by English learners than the actual standard variants of English. Already in 1991 Beneke (1991: 54) estimated that approximately 80% of communication in English occurs between speakers who are foreign language speakers of English. It is more than likely that this number has risen even further in the past 3 decades. Farrell and Martin (2009: 3) concur with Crystal's viewpoint, that English learners can feel stressed when encountering the wide variety of accents they are unfamiliar with by further stating that students are being limited to only being acquainted with a very small number of mostly standard and native English accents. Adding to that, the British Council (2011) gives to think that solely teaching and presenting, for example, the standard English variety RP only promotes awareness for this variety and, subsequently, demotes other varieties of the English language. These reasons, inter alia, gave rise to the introduction of ELF, English as a Lingua Franca, which Jenkins (2006b: 140) defines as a "world language whose speakers communicate mainly with other non-native speakers, often from different L1s than their own". In other words, ELF is used when speakers of differing L1s use English as a tool for communication. This also includes speakers from Kachru's Inner and Outer Circles, as Seidlhofer (2011: 7) affirms.

Scholars such as Jenkins (2000), Seidlhofer (2011), and Walker (2010) have been advocating for a new model of pronunciation for English language teaching, which is not entirely based on the native speaker norms: the English as a Lingua Franca core. In ELF in general, as well as in the lingua franca core, the point of interest lies in what is necessary for verbal exchange in preference to prescribing fixed rules which have to be taught and learnt (Jenkins 2007:22). Jenkins, a leading proponent of English as a Lingua Franca,

(2000) uncovered phonological characteristics which were used and understood in communicative contexts between speakers of differing languages, using English as a tool to communicate, but which are not common in native speaker settings. These characteristics were discovered by analysing communicative situations between non-native speakers without the presence of a native speaker model (Jenkins 2000: 1-2). In her model of pronunciation, some phonemes that are challenging for EFL learners, but which are characteristic for a native speaker pronunciation, are replaced by similar ones which are easier to realise for the non-native speakers, without any deterioration in comprehension in actual speech. As an example, Jenkins (2000: 137-138) points out that the dental fricatives, /θ/ and /ð/, which non-natives often find difficult to pronounce, may be replaced by /f/ and /v/ without loss of intelligibility. Likewise, the dark /l/ sound may be replaced, for example, by a clear /l/ as the latter is usually fairly easy to produce for English learners. Additionally, Jenkins proposes the use of the rhotic /r/, as well as always pronouncing the [t], which are omitted in RP (rhotic /r/) and GA (intervocalic [t]) in order to reduce the discrepancy between the spelling and the actual pronunciation of a word and thus facilitate the production of words for English learners. Furthermore, she suggests the consonants /p/, /t/, and /k/ to be aspirated in word-initial position when the syllable is stressed, to alleviate chances of the consonants being understood as /b/, /d/, and /g/ respectively (Jenkins 2000: 139-140). Considering vowels, Jenkins (2000: 144-145) asserts that the vowel length must be preserved in order to differentiate between words such as *still* and *steel.* However, she also maintains that the quality of the vowels is not as important as the quantity –the length of the spoken sound – as long as there is consistency. In the same way, when producing diphthongs, the length must be sustained, whereas the quality can fluctuate, providing there is consistency. For Modiano (2006: 230), this new perspective of English learners no longer having to replicate the standardised and idealised native speaker model is a "landmark event in the evolution of European ELT pedagogies and practices". Nevertheless, this ELF pronunciation model of Jenkins (2000) can be seen as a suggestion as ELF communication, due to its fluidity, intrinsically is not expected to set fixed rules and guidelines for pronunciation or grammar (Vettorei & Franceschi 2016: 304; Jarosz 2019: 19). The variability in spoken ELF is also highlighted by MacKenzie (2014: 2) who regards the "huge amount of linguistic variation and non-standard forms" (MacKenzie 2014:2) as a key difference to the English spoken by native speakers. Another aspect which separates ELF from English used by native speakers is described by Grazzi (2017: 210) who points out that at this time, "ELF research is descriptive

rather than prescriptive". He, therefore, concurs with Jenkin's (2007: 22) proposal that in an ELF context the focus should lie on the essentials for communication rather than prescribing what should be taught. In other words, in ELF communication making oneself understood is more important than linguistic accuracy. Through ELF, English learners from different L1s may use the foreign English language while still preserving the culture and identity of their L1, using their own linguistic background in a creative manner for successful communication. As a result, a speaker with, for example, Spanish as an L1 might use ELF in a completely different way than a Chinese native speaker (Klimczak-Pawlak 2014: 28). Therefore ELF, "is not an encoded variety of English that could be taught as such, but rather a variable way of using it [English] by [non-native speakers] in diverse multilingual and multicultural communicative contexts" (Grazzi 2017: 210). Ferguson (2018: 37) considers ELF as a form of English which is not constrained by norms and concepts of accuracy. Instead, Grazzi (2017: 2010) regards ELF to be inextricably linked to at least one native speaker model of the English language, from which it usually deviates.

This deviation from the native speaker model, however, seems to negatively affect the perception of EFL in English learners. The attitudes of learners and other scholars towards ELF is quite often a negative one. As can be seen in chapter 3.4., English language learners most of the time strongly favour a native speaker model. Learners consider native speaker norms as standard and most easily understandable in comparison with non-native accents, as these often trigger rather negative responses such as "robot-like, flat, drawly, tongue twister, weird, confusing". (Kaur 2014: 11). It can be assumed that there is some connection between this apparent distaste of some English learners for non-standard and non-native accents and the lack of learners' exposure to them, which Crystal (2010) called attention to. Kaur (2014: 4) points out that students of English as a foreign language often do not reflect on the discrepancy between the English they are taught in institutional settings, and the one they are actually using in their day to day lives. She concludes that this preference for the native standard derives from a "deeply entrenched attachment to NS English accents as most textbooks and materials […] are NS-centric" (Kaur 2014: 11). Moreover, since there still is a debate on which deviations from the native-speaker norm are differences (from the native speaker model) or actual deficiencies (for example interlanguage). As ELF intrinsically does not categorise alternations from the native speaker norm as language errors, scholars not in favour of the ELF model believe that

through ELF, errors in the use of the language will just be accepted as "anything goes" (Jenkins 2009: 203).

For advocates of ELF, the non-native speaker norms are of the same value than the native-speaker ones, and deviations from the standard norm shall not be seen as errors per se (Jenkins 2009: 202). Vettorei and Franceschi (2016: 304) describe ELF communication as "fluid and ever-changing […] where meaning is constantly negotiated on-line, and the language tweaked and adapted according to the context of the interaction, as well as to the needs and goals of its speakers". It is important to note, as Björkman (2008: 36) underlines that ELF users are not necessarily seen as learners of English, but speakers of English who use English as a means for communication. They do not need to adhere to norms set by native speakers but rather use English to communicate effectively with others. "Only in contexts where English is the object of study can they be referred as 'learners', which is when one could talk about 'form' being the focus", proposes Björkman (2008: 36), which indicates why ELF is not part of most English teachers' classes as there, the focus lies on the acquisition of a standard form of the English language, which ELF, due to its fluidity (Vettorei & Franceschi 2016: 304) cannot offer. However, as the majority of English language speakers are part of the Outer and Expanding Circle (Kachru 1985) and, therefore, mainly non-native speakers, it gives room for thought of expanding the importance of ELF by including it in English language education.

6. Research Methodology

After having reviewed literature concerning the features of native and non-native accents, accent perception, different models of the English language, as well as English as a Lingua France, the second part of this thesis is devoted to the study. The following chapter presents the aim and the research questions of the study, together with the selection of participants and speakers, and the study design before moving on to present the results of the data obtained in chapter 7.

The main aim of the present study is to gain greater understanding of how upper secondary students in Austria perceive English native and non-native accents and how this perception of different accents influences the mental image of the characteristics of a speaker. In order to achieve this objective, the following research questions have been established:

1. How do Austrian upper secondary students perceive standard native English accents and non-native, Austrian English, and Spanish English accents?
2. What accent do Austrian students of upper secondary classes aspire to have?
3. Why do they aspire to have this kind of accent?
4. Where may a possible wish for a native speaker like accent stem from?

The motivation behind this project was twofold. First, I was interested in discovering if students have different opinions on the character of a person based on their native or non-native speech. Second, I chose the two standard pronunciation models, RP and GA, to see if there is a difference in preference and understanding as this seems highly interesting to me especially considering pronunciation teaching practises. Possible issues in understanding one, or more, of the studied accents may be important to regard in future teaching endeavours. Additionally, students' awareness for different accents can still be shaped in school to tackle stereotypes and avoid hasty judgements of a person based on their accent. Therefore, teachers must know if and where unfavourable attitudes based on accent perception occur. These are some of the aspects why this topic deserves attention.

6.1. Participants

The study was conducted in Vienna, Austria, which falls under the category of the Expanding Circle (Kachru 1985) where English is taught in educational settings. English in Austria is the most frequently acquired foreign language at primary, lower and upper secondary schools (Statistik Austria 2022: 323). The basic research format was carried out in

three different professionally oriented schools in three districts in Vienna to increase diversity in the participants and their answers in order to obtain a more realistic cross-section of the opinion of young people of the age group in Vienna.

A total of 128 students aged between 14 and 20 (average age of 16,43 years) participated in the study. The participation in the study was voluntary, data treated confidentially and students were asked to sign a consent form prior to participating in the study (see Appendix 11.1.). Of the 128 students, 44,5% or 57 participants were female, and 53,1 % or 68 male. 3 students, or 2,3% of the participants identified as gender diverse. The stated L1s of the participants were quite diverse with 18 different languages. The three most frequently mentioned languages were German, Turkish and Serbian. In accordance with their age group and level of education, most of the students' level of language proficiency should be around the B1 mark according to the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR). Those participants who completed their previous educational career in Austria, have had at least 8 to 9 years of English classes in school, since teaching a foreign language was already made mandatory for primary schools in 2003/2004 (de Cillia & Krumm 2010: 155). While it is possible that this first foreign language the students are learning is another one but English, such as Italian, Croatian, French, or Hungarian, according to *Statistik Austria* (2021) in the school year of 2018/2019, 99,65% of primary school pupils were taught English as a foreign language. Additionally, in the same year 99,78% of students were taught English in lower secondary grade, when combining the data from the lower secondary school forms *AHS-Unterstufe* and *Mittelschule* (Statistik Austria 2021). Therefore, it can be assumed that the majority of students who have completed their previous school career in Austria, already have a sound knowledge of the English language. Adding to that, it is expected that some students have a higher level than B1 whereas others' capabilities in the English language may be closer to an A2 level. As the focus of this study lies on young adults' accent perception, these participants were chosen due to them being an interesting local example of educated teenagers and, additionally, belong to an age group which has been part of the globalization movement like no other generation before and thus are likely to encounter manifold speakers of diverse backgrounds, speaking an innumerable number of different types of accents within their lives. The study was conducted in June of 2021 over the course of two weeks.

6.2.   Speakers

As there were no audio samples available that fit the objectives of this thesis, the decision was made to commission the recording of the audio stimuli myself in order to produce

recordings that are adjusted to the aims of the thesis. Since there is interest in finding out whether or not students prefer native or non-native English accents, the four speakers had to either be from English-speaking countries, speaking with a prestige-variety, or non-native speakers whose foreign English accent was congruent with the accent features discussed in chapter 4. The selection of the speakers was done carefully and ensured that all speakers were female adults, speaking in a similar relaxed tone. Additionally, all of the speakers had an academic background, having completed at least a bachelor's degree. Recording 1 featured a woman speaking with a Spanish accent. The second recording presented the RP speaker, a woman from Oxford, England. The GA audio sample was recorded by an American English native speaker who is also a professor of the University of Vienna, teaching American English pronunciation. The last recording featured the Austrian English accent and was recorded by a woman from Lower Austria. All of the speakers recorded the same text and were given a time frame of 1 minute to 1 minute 30 seconds for the recording. Participants of the study were not presented with any information on the speakers, other than their voices.

6.3. Study design

Even though students at this age group are supposed to comprise of an intermediate to advanced level of English according to the curriculum of professionally oriented schools, the questionnaire was still conducted in German to alleviate any possible misunderstandings and to assure accurate results. Prior to conducting the study, each student had to sign a consent form which detailed the study's process, explained the objectives, and guaranteed confidentiality and voluntary participation.

The questionnaire which was used for data collection was divided into two parts. In part A, students gave information on how they perceived the speakers of the audio stimuli, whereas in part B, personal information on the students was gathered, such as demographic data and additional information about their English learning practices. In total, the participants have had to respond to 62 questions. When compiling the questionnaire, the survey of Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck and Smit (1997) has been used as a model and adapted to fit the objectives of this study. The survey itself has been composed roughly based on the suggestions of Dörnyei (2010: 127-130) and Burn (2010: 87-89). The study was mostly online based and at the beginning of the study students were sent an online link to the questionnaire by their main teachers. The participants were asked to either use their smart phones or laptops to access the web-based survey administration software

Google Forms, where they filled in the questionnaire. Students who did not have internet access, a phone or a laptop at hand were given a printed version of the questionnaire. The answers of those questionnaires were later transferred to the online survey software. In all of the three schools, it took students between 15 – 20 minutes to listen to the recordings and complete the questionnaire.

Part A features four sections of the same 13 questions, with each individual section being concerned with the perception of one of the four speakers. The native and non-native accented speakers were split, with section 1 featuring the Spanish-accented speaker, section 2 the RP speaker, in section 3 the GA speaker was evaluated, and in section 4 the speaker with an Austrian accent was assessed. The participants collectively listened to the individual recordings twice while simultaneously answering the questions of part A. They were asked to respond to 12 close-ended questions in form of a Likert-scale per speaker. Here, the traditional Likert-scale version of five responses was adapted to a four-response option to avoid students choosing the neutral option and to offer a more accurate picture of the students' perception of the respective accents (Dörnyei 2010: 27-28; Garrett 2010: 55). The Likert scales were anchored at, I do not agree at all, to 4, I agree very much, with 2 meaning "I do not agree" and 3 "I agree", this was explicitly pointed out to the participants verbally.

The use of scales for answer options is beneficial for this type of evaluation, as the responses of the partakers can directly be converted into a numeric score. As a result, the research conducted is quantitatively oriented (Soukup 2012: 214). Another question of part A asks the students for the possible nationalities of the speakers and, therefore, belongs to the category of semi-closed question with several possible answers provided, as well as an open-ended answer option.

To assess the perception on the different native and non-native accents, a standard model for speaker evaluation was used. For the purpose of accent perception, matched guise or verbal guise techniques are most commonly applied. These approaches enable participants to rate various audio samples only on the basis of what they hear. Researchers employ this method, to assess the gut reactions towards an accent, without the interference of visual cues (Soukup 2012: 213-214). In most conversations happening every day, listeners can usually see the person they are speaking to and can judge their appearance as well as their facial expressions. Consequently, next to vocal features, also physical qualities, such as facial characteristics can influence the perception of a person. For example, a

person who is physically appealing is usually judged as having more favourable personality characteristics such as intellect or likeability (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster: 1972). Therefore, to not exert influence on the actual perception of just the accent of the speakers, students in this study were only presented with the audio stimuli and not given any other information, such as pictures or demographic data, about the speakers.

As mentioned before, accent perception studies usually apply either matched guise or verbal guise techniques. In matched guise technique studies, participants listen to several recordings, where a single person reads the same text several times, with alternating accents. Other aspects of speaking, such as the rate of speech and pauses in between words and sentences should be as consistent as possible within the different recordings. The respondents, however, will believe they are listening to several different speakers, instead of just one person speaking in different accents. This way, it is believed, the actual perception of the accent will be evaluated without the interference of other factors such as age, likeability, or quality of speech of the speaker (Garrett 2010: 41). For this study, however, a matched guise technique could not have been applied, as it would have been hardly possible to find a speaker who authentically produces the four different kinds of accents evaluated in the study. Therefore, the verbal guise technique was employed. Within the verbal guise technique, the audio samples are recorded by different speakers, all reading the same text (Garrett 2010: 42). According to Entwisle (1970) it takes 10-15 seconds of speech to make assessments about the person speaking. Since the recordings are all between 1:03 and 1:27 minutes of length, participants have had an ample amount of time to perceive the speakers and to be able to judge their accents and form hypotheses about their personae.
Since the participating students were made aware of the purpose of the study - the evaluation of different kinds of accents - a direct approach was applied (Garrett 2010: 42).

The audio samples in part A were recorded using a text written by the researcher (see Appendix 11.2.) which represented a story to make it easier to follow for the participants. Within the text, words and sounds were used that are thought to be released differently in the four accents of interest, such as words that are pronounced differently in GA or RP. To give an example, the researcher included words containing a rhotic r (*served, wonder*), t-voicing (*invited, city*), or non-released word-final /t/ (*Pat, pet*) (Collins & Mees 2013:

158). Further, words were included where in RP an /ɑ:/ sound is released but in GA an open front vowel /æ/ is used (*after, last)* (Cruttenden 2008: 84).

Regarding the non-established versions of the audio samples, typical pronunciation alterations were included in the text such as the Austrian-accent typical mix up of /æ/ and /e/, which can be heard in *Pat* and *pet* (Swan 2005: 38), the use of /d/ instead of the voiceless dental fricative /ð/ (*brother, then*) or the replacement of the voiced /dʒ/ with the voiceless /tʃ/ (*Germany, James*). In order to trigger sound-deviations of the Spanish-accented speaker from the English native-speaker norm, words such as those containing the voiceless glottal fricative /h/ (*house, her*) and others that feature many vowel sounds, were included in the text (*vanilla, spectacular*). The vowel sounds were incorporated, as the Spanish and the English language, differ quite vastly in their vowel-sound repertoire. While the Spanish vowel system only contains 5 sounds, the English vowel system encompasses between 12 and 24 sounds (MacDonald 1989: 216, Laver 2002: 62, Coe 2005: 92-93, Kabatek & Pusch 2011: 60) (for more information see chapter 4).

The participants listened to each of the recordings twice and the recordings were always played in the same order. While listening to the recordings, the students were asked to judge the speakers on the following features: *easily understandable, intelligent, likeable, rude, educated, successful, modern, popular, professional,* and *rich*, as well as *general appeal of the accent* and *if they would like to sound like the speaker when speaking English themselves*.

Part B diverts the focus of the questionnaire from the speakers to the participants of the study and assesses their demographic characteristics, as well as further information about their usage of English and the frequency of interaction with people whose L1 is English. This second part of the survey features a total of ten questions which are mostly divided into semi-closed items of a yes/no type with a following clarification question, as well as open-ended questions where participants were asked to give a "personal, free-ranging kind of response" (Burns 2010: 86). One of the questions is a specific open question and asks students to explain why or why not they want to sound like a native speaker when speaking English. Another question can be categorised as a behavioural question and asks students where they usually hear the English language in their everyday lives (Dörnyei 2010: 37).

Before the study was conducted at schools, the questionnaire was piloted in a trial run with 18 participants of all age groups and genders to check for errors in the handling of the online-survey or other mistakes within the questionnaire. The trial run proved to be successful, and no changes had to be made between the piloted and the final version of the questionnaire.

7. Results

In this chapter, the findings of the data obtained via the questionnaire will be given. The provided results are presented in a similar order to the one used within the questionnaire. However, the results of the study's first items of part B, the factual questions about the participants, will be described first as the reader may want to consider these data when assessing the results regarding the perception of the accents.

After this first part of demographic data, the findings regarding the perception of the accents of the five speakers will be displayed. The last section focuses on the results of the remaining questions of part B: participants answers concerning their attitudes and preferences towards accents and frequency of contact with native speakers.

As stated in chapter 5.1. the 128 students dispose of a variety of differing L1s. 80,5 %, or 103 of the 128 students, stated, that their goal is to sound like a native speaker when speaking English. For less than one fifth – 19,5% of participants, or 25 students – having a native speaker-like pronunciation is not a target. The reasons for their objectives in the acquisition of a native speaker like accent are manifold and can be grouped into different categories. The students' answers concerning a positive attitude towards achieving a native speaker accent have been categorised as follows

- acoustic preferences
- reasons concerning competency
- social reasons
- emotional reasons
- importance of English
- miscellaneous

21 students cited <u>acoustic preferences</u> for their desire for speaking with a native like accent, such as stating that they think the native accent is "beautiful" and reason that a native

accent sounds more pleasing. Another 19 participants cited reasons concerning competency as a motivation for their wish to speak like a native speaker by, for example, stating that they think having a native speaker-like accent is considered professional or expressing their wish to speak a language "perfectly", as repeatedly stated in the questionnaire. 2 of the students surveyed declared that not speaking with a foreign accent would be beneficial for their future lives and professions. 17 students have given answers that were classified as social reasons for the acquisition of a native speaker-like accent, such as the want to communicate with native speakers and other people, using English as a tool for communication, often disclosing the wish to be understood by others. 9 participants expressed emotional reasons, such as improving their self-confidence by speaking like a native speaker or feeling more at ease when not having a noticeable foreign accent. The global importance of English and its status as a world language was a reason for 9 other participants to adopt a native speaker accent. Some of the answers have been assigned to two groups.

Those students who do not desire to sound like a native speaker mainly stated that acquiring a native speaker accent was either too much effort, not essential when learning English, or voiced a fear of disremembering the German language when concentrating on English instead. The latter answer was given by students whose L1 is not German. Additionally, a total of 31 participants gave nonsensical answers, which leads to believe that the German wording of the question ("*Wieso möchtest du / möchtest du nicht klingen, wie ein/e Muttersprachler/in?*" whis is a follow-up question to "*Mein Ziel ist es, so zu sprechen als wäre Englisch meine Muttersprache*") might not have been understood by some of the participants whose L1 is not German.

The following question asked students which country they would prefer to sound like based on the accent ("*Wenn ich es mir aussuchen könnte, würde ich gerne so klingen als wäre ich aus folgendem Land:*"). Most of the students stated to either want to sound like they were from England or the USA, with 42 votes for England and 38 for the United States of America. Additionally, 5 participants specifically stated they want to sound as if they were from the UK, another 2 as if they were from Scotland and an additional 5 preferring to sound as if they were British. Furthermore, 2 participants cited there wish to sound like they were from America, and it can be assumed they were referring to the United States. Another 2 participants wanted to sound like Australians and 2 more stating Canada to be their preferred country of accent origin. 1 student specifically stated they wanted to sound

"like speaker 3" – who spoke with a GA accent. Next to the 99 participants who stated a specific English-speaking country, 18 participants cited they would like to have an accent from a non-English speaking country, such as Russia or Spain. The other 11 participants did not answer the question in a useable manner for this thesis.

When questioned whether they are in contact with native speakers of English, 37,5% or 48 out of 128 students answered with yes, whereas the other students, or 62,5% of the participants, stated that they are not in touch with native speakers. Those students who answered with yes, detailed that the native speakers they are acquainted with are mostly from the US or England. Some also stated they are in touch with people from Canada, Nigeria or Ireland. The participants further specified that some of their teachers at school are native speakers and, therefore, they converse with them several times each week. Others labelled the native speakers they are familiar with their friends, most of whom are either from England or the US, but also from Nigeria or Canada. Four participants further explained that they were acquainted with native speakers of English through online gaming or social media on a daily or weekly basis. Two participants reported being in touch with English native speaker family members or a former host family weekly.

The following multiple choice behavioural question asked students where they usually hear English in their everyday lives. Interestingly, the answer which has been chosen the most from students is social media, with 107 votes or 83,6% of students stating that they are in contact with the English language in spoken form the most via Instagram, Facebook, and others. The second most popular choice was school, which accumulated 102 votes or was chosen by 79,7% of participants. This is followed by films and series with 97 votes, or 75,8% of students. 79 students or 61,7% of participants stated that they usually hear English in video- or computer games. Hearing English through songs or the radio is also quite popular among the participants with 59,4% or 76 students choosing this answer option. Celebrities and influencers as sources of spoken English were chosen by 57 participants, which comprises 44,5% of all students. 48 students, or 37,5% of participants also chose the answer option friends. Learning apps, family, and leisure clubs were the least frequently chosen options with 11,7%, 8,6%, and 8,6% respectively. 7 students chose to give a short answer. 2 of those stated music as a source for hearing English, 1 listed that they hear English in Vienna and another one specified their computer as a

source of spoken English. 3 further answers were not applicable for this question as they stated written texts in various forms for hearing spoken English.

With the background information on the students in mind, now their answers regarding the individual speakers will be presented. All of the 4 recorded speakers were judged by the participants of the study on a Likert-scale according to how easily understandable (*leicht verständlich*), intelligent (*intelligent*), likeable (*sympathisch*), rude (*unhöflich*), educated (*gebildet*), successful (*erfolgreich*), modern (*modern*), popular (*beliebt*), professional (*professionell*), and affluent (*wohlhabend*) the study participants deemed the speakers to be. Additionally, the participants were asked if the way the speaker spoke sounds appealing to them (*Wie die Person spricht klingt generell gut für mich*), and if they desire their own accent to resemble the accent of the respective speaker (*Wenn ich Englisch spreche, würde ich gerne so eine Aussprache haben wie die Sprecherin*). The figure below shows the participants' votes in percent regarding their wish for sounding like one of the respective speakers.
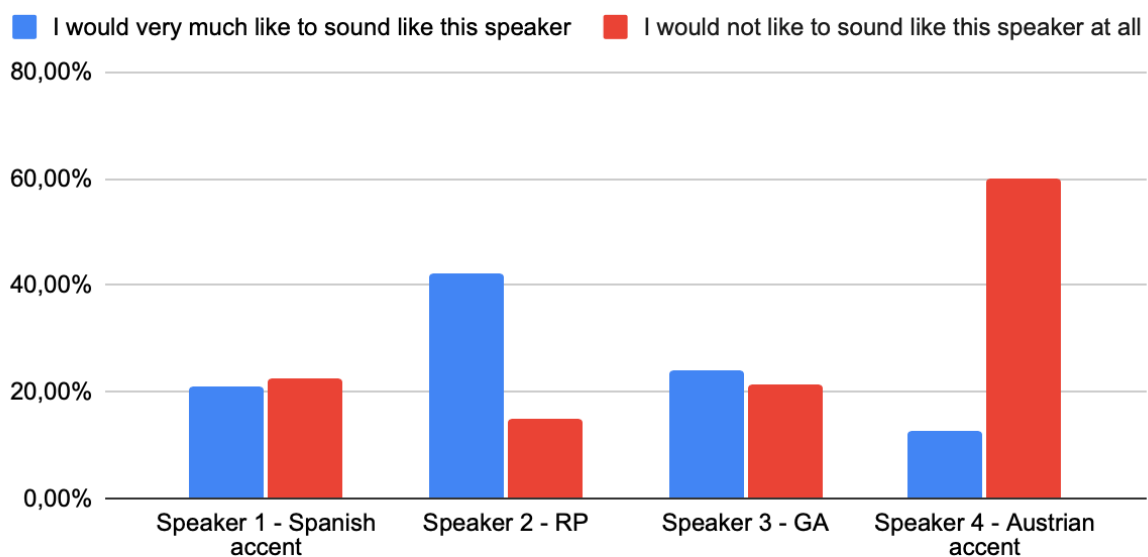
Figure 8: The chart shows the participants' preferences for the respective speakers.

Out of the four answer options of the Likert scale, the first two were negative ("I do not agree at all", "I do not agree"), and answer option 3 and 4 were positive ("I agree", "I very much agree!"). For the sake of comprehension and intelligibility, the two positive answer options and the two negative answer options have been combined when discussing the

individual characteristics that were considered in the study. For a full listing of the four answer options, see appendix 11. 2..

When counting together the positive votes for each speaker and each item, it was found out that speaker 2, who spoke with a RP accent scored the most favourable in 11 out of 12 items, namely easily understandable, intelligent, likeable, educated, successful, modern, popular, professional, affluent, as well as most appealing-sounding and desired resemblance of the accent. In contrast, the Austrian-accented speaker received the least benevolent votes and was judged the least favourable in 11 out of 12 questions. In the following, the students' judgement of the four speakers will be presented.

Speaker 1, who spoke with a non-native Spanish accent in English, scored favourably in terms of understandability of her speech, with 39,8% of participants saying they agree with the statement and 46,1% stating they agree very much. Adding to that, 74,2% of the participants (50,0% agreed, 24,2% agreed very much) judged the speaker to be intelligent, based on her way of speaking. Moreover, speaker 1 received the most votes of "I do not agree at all" when asked whether the participants deem the speaker to be rude. The study participants also considered the speaker to be educated, as 47,7% agreed and 25,0% agreed very much to the question if the speaker sounds educated. Almost as many people voted for speaker 1 to be successful as well, whereas 25,0 % did not agree. Two categories in which participants selected "I very much agree" less often were *popular* (17,2%) and *affluent* (18,8%). The speaker scored especially high on the statement "The way speaker 1 is speaking sounds appealing to me" with 42,2% agreeing and 36,7% very much agreeing; this in total means that almost 4/5 of the questioned students found her speech to be appealing. Another aspect of the evaluation of the questionnaire that attracts attention is that the votes are quite evenly balanced in the desire to resemble the speaker as can be seen in figure 9 below.

Wenn ich Englisch spreche würde ich gerne so eine Aussprache haben wie die Sprecherin

128 Antworten
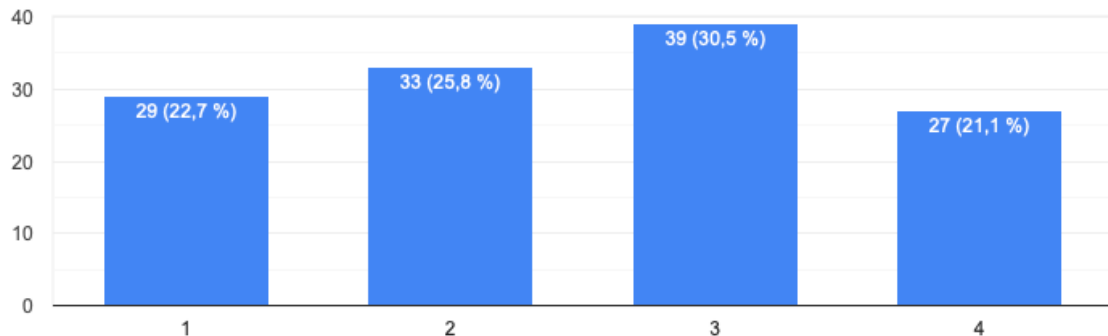
**Figure 9**: I want my English to sound like speaker 1

Figure 9 shows that 22,7% of participants chose the answer option "I do not agree at all", 25,8% "I do not agree", 30,5% "I agree", and 21,1% opted for "I very much agree". This is interesting, as even though the speaker received very favourable votes on all of the items, 22,7% do not agree at all and 25,8% do not agree to the statement "I want my English to sound like speaker 1".

Speaker 2 from England, in general, received the most positive votes on almost all of the items. She was also the only speaker to have scored less than 1% on the answer option of "I do not agree at all" when asked if she sounds like a likable person. In general, students, per their votes, understood speaker 2 most easily, and only 2 participants voted for her to not be easily understandable at all. 109 students deemed speaker 2 to be intelligent based on her accent. 81,2% of the study participants agreed or very much agreed that the speaker seemed likeable and 83,6% did not agree or did not agree at all to her sounding rude. Again, more than 80% of the students chose the answer option of "I agree" and "I agree very much" for speaker 2 giving the impression of being successful. A similar percentage of agreement was given for her seeming professional, modern, affluent, and generally sounding appealing. As can be seen in the table below, students agreed with

(19,5%) or agreed very much with (42,2%) wanting to sound like speaker 2 when speak-

ing   English.

Wenn ich Englisch spreche würde ich gerne so eine Aussprache haben wie die
Sprecherin

128 Antworten
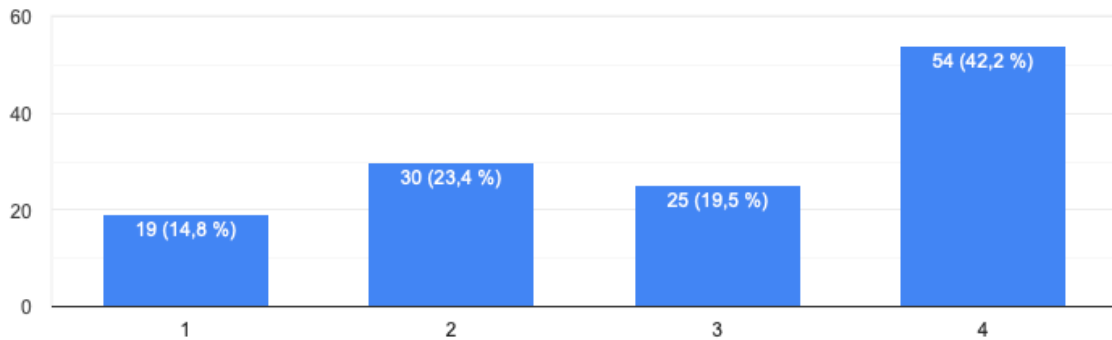
Figure 10: I want to sound like speaker 2

This also represents the highest percentage of wish of accent resemblance out of all the speakers. Interestingly, for the participants of this study, speaker 2 was most easily iden-tifiable, as more than half of them, 53,9%, correctly identified the speaker's nationality in the questionnaire, which can be seen in figure 11:

Ich denke die Person kommt aus....

128 Antworten

den USA
England
Österreich
Australien
Frankreich
Spanien
afrika
Deutschland

▲ 1/2 ▼
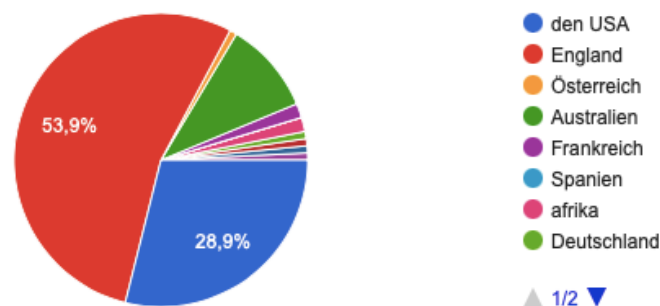
Figure 11: I think speaker 2 is from...

Figure 11 shows that more than half of the participants accurately placed speaker 2. Some of the other answers students have given when asked for the speaker's country of origin are Austria, the US, Australia, France, and Spain among others.

The GA-accented person, speaker 3, scored quite high on understandability, 79,7% with only 4 students, or 3,1% of participants, deeming her to be not easily understandable at

all. Adding to that, students also judged her quite high on intelligence, 71,9%, and generally sounding appealing, 72,7% when counting together the votes for agreeing and agreeing very much. Additionally, 73,4% of the students judged her to not be rude or not be rude at all based on her voice. In comparison with the RP speaker, the GA speaker scored 10-19% less benevolently on seeming likeable (62,5%), successful (65,6%), modern (64%), professional (68%), and affluent (64,8%). The question if students desire their own accent to resemble the accent of speaker 3 has been answered relatively evenly distributed, as can be seen in figure 12 below.

Wenn ich Englisch spreche würde ich gerne so eine Aussprache haben wie die Sprecherin

128 Antworten
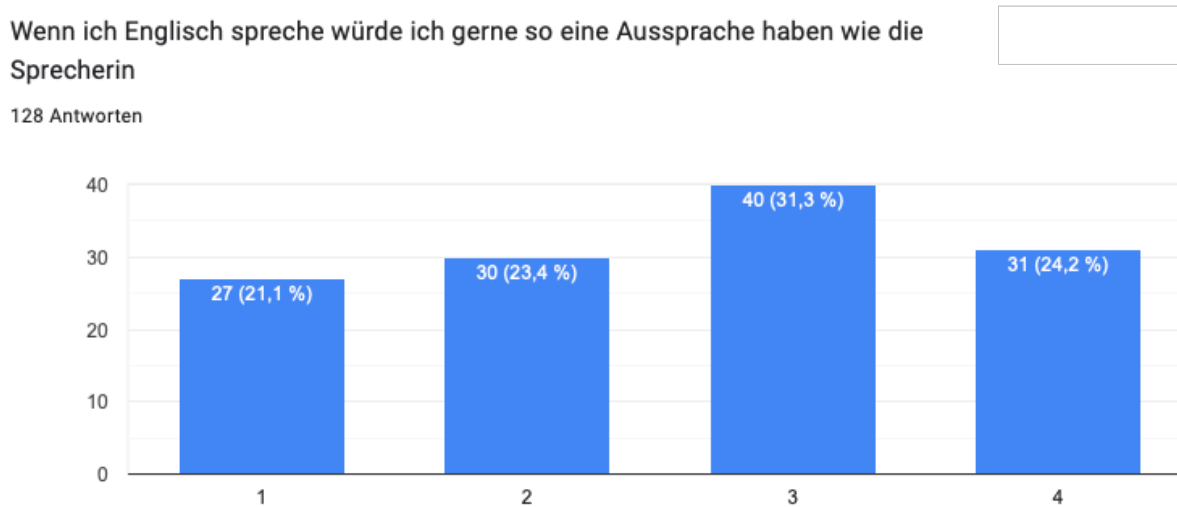
Figure 12: I want to sound like speaker 3

When counting together the answer options for "I strongly disagree" and "I disagree", as well as for "I agree" and "I very much agree", 44,5% of the participants would rather not speak like the GA speaker, whereas 55,5% of the students would like their accent to resemble that of speaker 3. Also, more than one third of the questioned students, namely 39,1%, identified her accent to be from the USA.

Even though the majority of students expressed a desire to sound like a native speaker, it is interesting to see that identifying a native accent was challenging for the participants. 46 % of the learners misplaced the RP speaker and almost 60% could not identify the GA speaker. Scholars such as Scales et al. (2006), Rivers (2011) and Fang (2019) reported similar results. Scales et al. (2006: 715) believes that students' difficulty in distinguishing accents may be due to an idealized perception of how a native accent should sound like (Scales et al. 2006: 715). Correspondingly, Fang (2019: 41) suggests that English learners have an ingrained attitude on English accents and a firm belief "that native English accents

are more authentic and more powerful" (Fang 2019: 41) as the learners may not comprehend the complexity of accents. Another reason for their misidentification of native accents may be the lack of familiarity in identifying accents. Correct accent placement is not part of the curriculum (Lehrplan 2015) and may not be taught regularly in Austrian schools. It is quite possible that the participants have never had to place different accents in their English lessons, nor have they been made aware of the differences between the accents. This notion is also supported by Rivers (2011: 384). Therefore, the fairly low percentage of correct accent placement was expected.

The Austrian-accented speaker's audio was played last. Overall, this accent was judged least benevolently out of all the four chosen accents. Less than half of the students, 46,6%, agreed or agreed very much for this accent to be easily understandable. Adding to that, also less than half of the study participants, 48,4%, believed her to be educated based on her accent. 43,8%, or 55 out of 128 students, agreed or agreed very much to her being successful which also comprises the least number of votes in that category. Also, out of all the four speakers, the Austrian accent was voted to make the speaker seem to be intelligent less often, with 51,5% of participants choosing the answer options "I agree" and "I strongly agree" for her to seem intelligent, whereas the Spanish accent scored 74,2%, the RP speaker 85,1%, and the GA-accented person scoring 71,9%. 62,5% of the participants deemed speaker 4 to be likeable. The characteristic of being modern was relatively evenly distributed with 53,1% not agreeing at all or not agreeing and 46,9% agreeing or agreeing very much to her sounding modern. Another balanced attitude of participants can be seen in the question regarding the Austrian-accented speakers alleged popularity with 50% answering in agreement and 50% deeming her not to sound popular. 78,1% of participants chose for her not to sound rude, based on her accent. The fourth speaker also received the least number of votes agreeing and agreeing very much with her sounding professional – 60,1% in total – and affluent – 53,9%. One question that stands out is where participants were asked if they would like for their accent to resemble that of speaker 4. The given answers can be seen in figure 13 below.

Wenn ich Englisch spreche würde ich gerne so eine Aussprache haben wie die Sprecherin

128 Antworten
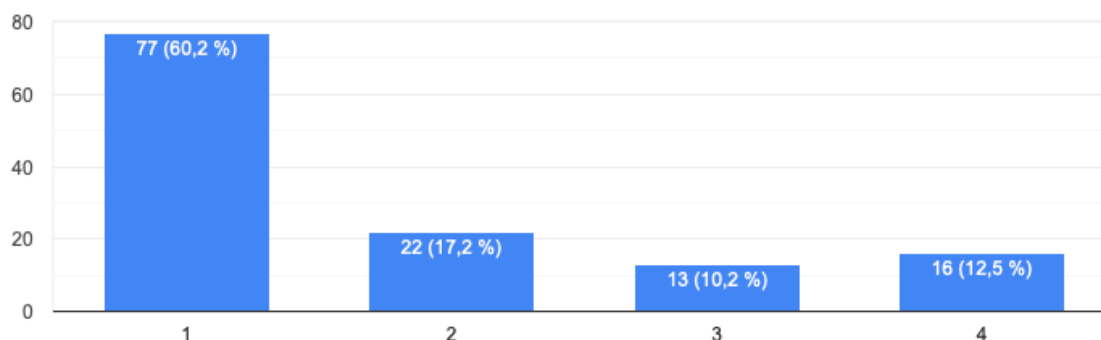
Figure 13: I want to sound like speaker 4

77,4% of students did not agree or did not agree at all wanting their accent to resemble that of the Austrian-accented speaker. 22,4% of participants would like for their accent to sound like that of the Austrian English speaker.

To sum up, the participants evaluated the RP speaker the most positively and the Austrian English speaker the least positively. According to the outcome of the study, the second speaker's RP accent gives the listeners a quite favourable impression of her character, according to the votes of the study. Out of all four speakers, she was judged highest in seeming to be intelligent, likeable, educated, successful, modern, popular, professional, affluent, and intelligent. Additionally, most people voted that they would like for their accent to resemble that of the RP speaker. The study's participants voted for the RP speaker and for the Spanish-accented speaker to be the most easily understandable with a total number of positive votes of 85,9% each. The Spanish-accented speaker scored the most benevolent votes of not sounding rude with a total of 90,7% of the study participants disagreeing and very much disagreeing with her sounding rude. On the other hand, the Austrian-accented speaker was judged least positively in all of the characteristics except for sounding rude, in which speaker 3 with the GA accent received fewer positive votes. For the characteristic of seeming likeable, both speaker 3 and 4, the GA speaker and the Austrian-accented speaker, received the same amount of negative votes, namely 37,5% of students agreeing or agreeing very much that these two speakers sound likeable. The full table of the positive and negative votes of every speaker and characteristic can be found in the appendix (see Appendix 11.2.).

8. Discussion

In the previous chapters I aimed for the reader to gain a greater understanding of the topic of accent perception and also gave information on the study conducted at three different upper secondary professionally oriented schools in Vienna.

The following chapter attempts to answer the research questions of this thesis in detail. Of course, limitations and possible further research topics have also been addressed.

8.1. How do Austrian upper secondary students perceive standard native English accents and non-native, Austrian English, and Spanish English accents?

After having reviewed relevant literature, the hypothesis was formulated that upper secondary students perceive standard native English accents more favourably than non-native accents. It was speculated that the native speakers of English would receive the most favourable scores in the categories of intelligibility, intelligence, professionality, appeal of the accent and wanting their own accent to resemble the one of the native speakers. In turn, it was hypothesised that the non-native accents, especially the Austrian accent, would score rather low on the aforementioned characteristics but higher on likeability and popularity, albeit still not as high as the native speakers. This hypothesis has been mostly disconfirmed by the study. Even though the RP accent scored the most favourably in 11 out of 12 items, the GA accent scored lower than the Spanish accent in intelligibility, intelligence, likeability, success, modernity, affluence, and appeal of the accent. Additionally, the GA accented speaker also scored higher on sounding rude than the other three speakers based on their accents. However, the two standard native accents did score the highest on professionality and on students' wanting their own accent to resemble that of the speakers of RP and GA. Additionally, the Austrian accented speaker was judged lowest on all the above-mentioned characteristics, which includes likeability and popularity. Interestingly, the Austrian accent and the GA accent scored the lowest on likeability with 37,5% of votes judging the two speakers to not be likeable based on their speech.

These findings partially contradict the findings of Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck & Smit (1997), Timmis (2002), Vargas Barona (2008); and others who have explained that EFL speakers are generally rated as less intelligible and of lower social status than native speakers, including when the foreign accent is of their own native accent. In the case of this study, the Spanish accented speaker was overall rated higher than the GA speaker.

However, the own non-native accent was rated the lowest in 11 out of 12 characteristics. Nonetheless, the GA accent also scored low in likeability and was judged as sounding the rudest (26,6% with both answer options – I agree and I strongly agree - combined) out of all four accents.

Timmis' study (2002), as well, affirms that non-native speakers greatly prefer a native-sounding accent. A possible explanation for the Spanish-accented speaker to be judged more favourably than the GA speaker is that her Spanish accent is not as prominent as, for example, the Austrian accent of the fourth speaker. This belief is in accordance with the result of the 1997 study of Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenböck and Smit in which an Austrian English speaker was rated on par with native English speakers. In that instance, however, the listeners assumed that the Austrian speaker also spoke English as a first language. This suggests that listeners will respond more favourably to an accent that is closer to that of a native speaker.

When looking at the results in figure 14 below of the question regarding the possible country of origin of the person, more than 60% of the 128 participants correctly placed her to be from a non-English speaking country. Even though the majority, namely 43% of the 60%, judged her to be from Austria, 10,2% correctly determined her to be from Spain.
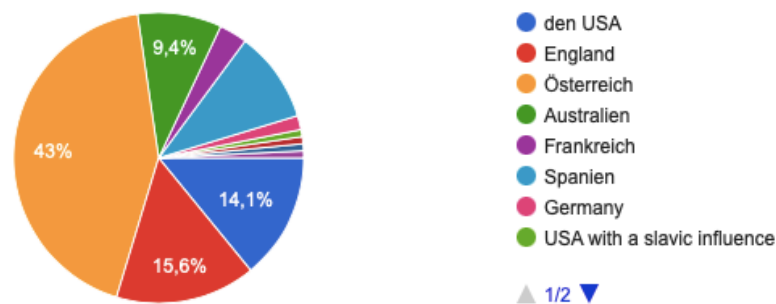
Figure 14: Responses to the presumed country of origin of the Spanish accented speaker.

Figure 14 above shows the students' perception of the speakers' country of origin.

Since Austrian students are not taught to distinguish different accents, it was not expected that many participants would correctly place the speaker, even though the accent is quite common. Moreover, it was also unanticipated that 60% of the participants correctly identified the non-native speaker accent, as the characteristics of native and non-native accents are not part of the curriculum (Lehrplan 2015) and are, therefore, presumably

rarely taught in Austrian EFL classes. For this question, 6 answer options in the form of countries of origin were given to offer some guidance: USA, England, Austria, Australia, France, and Spain. The 7th answer option offered a text field for an open-ended response. Another interesting find of this study is that contrary to the findings of Bayard's and Green's (2005) worldwide study on native speaker preference, whose participants mainly preferred a GA accent, the 128 participants in Vienna predominantly preferred an RP accent. Bayard and Green (2005: 24-25) did mention that European participants of their study also reported an appreciation of RP, describing it as indicating great status. However, this does not offer a sufficient explanation to the predominating preference of the RP accent that can be seen in the present study. One can speculate that this preference stems from the use of RP English in EFL textbooks in the Austrian EFL classroom, in line with the situation in China, reported by Kung and Wang (2018) in their study on Chinese EFL students accent preference.

The outcome of this question partly resembles that of Martín Tevar (2014), whose Spanish EFL students also preferred the RP accent, labelling it as "the best" accent (Martín Tevar 2014: 59).

To sum up, Austrian upper secondary students perceive standard native English accents more favourably in terms of professionality and wanting their own accent to resemble that of RP and GA speakers. Nevertheless, this study does not verify the belief that non-native accents are judged more negatively than native accents as the Spanish-accented person's characteristics, all in all, were judged more positive than those of the GA speaker. The Austrian-accent, however, was rated the least favourable.

8.2. Which accent do Austrian students of upper secondary classes aspire to have?

The results of the study mostly concur with the findings of the literature review of Timmis (2002), Simon (2005), Wong (2018) and Brabcová and Skarnitzl (2018) in so far that more than 80 % of the participants desire for their own accent to resemble that of a native speaker. Most of those students chose the two most commonly used English accents in the Austrian EFL classrooms: the British English and the America English accents. 54, or 42%, out of the 128 learners affirmed their wish to sound like a native speaker from Great Britain, while 41 students, or 32%, preferred to have an American English accent. The other 26% of participants either chose another native or non-native accent or had no accent preference. These results mostly resemble those of Kung and Wang (2019) in their study

about accent perception of Chinese students. In their case, however, the results were even more one-sided as their participants exclusively mentioned British English and American English accent as the ones they would like to pursue. Some of the learners questioned appear to not have a fixed preference of a native speaker accent, as can be seen in the following written statements they have given:

(1) Wenn ich ehrlich bin, würde ich schon gerne wie eine Muttersprachler/in reden, dennoch kann ich mich für keinen Akzent entscheiden und mische oft die Akzente zusammen. Deswegen bleibe ich dabei eher in einer Amerikanischen [sic!] Akzent zu reden, weil das einfach ist.
(2) Ich finde den österreichischen/deutschen Akzent nicht schön und möchte mir lieber den Akzent eines Muttersprachlers antrainieren, anstatt eines anderen.

These examples show that some students seem to desire being able to speak like a native speaker, independent of the country of origin of the accent, while also affirming their distaste for their own EFL accent.

Even though the vast majority of participants aspire to speak English with a native accent, especially one they are quite familiar with, such as the RP or the GA accent, some pupils also expressed being content speaking English with a noticeable foreign accent.

8.3. Why do Austrian upper secondary students aspire to have this kind of accent?

The reasons that the participating students cited for wanting to adopt a native speaker like accent are manifold and are also supported by the literature review.

One of the motives detailed by a student in the study is group identity. As Kinzler, Corriveau and Harris (2011:106-107) stated, the way we speak creates a 'self' versus 'others' dynamic as can be seen in the following examples (3), (4) and:

(3) Ich möchte so klingen, weil man sich dann als Teil einer Gruppe sieht.
(4) Weil fast alle Freunde können sehr gut englisch [sic!] aber auch weil es sehr leicht und cool klingt.
(5) Zum Erlernen einer Sprache gehört auch die Aussprache dazu. Außerdem möchte ich im englisch-sprachigem [sic!] Raum studieren/arbeiten und möchte dort nicht auf meinen Akzent reduziert werden.

An accent shows belonging to a group in various ways, such as revealing gender, approximate age, background, surroundings, as well as displaying our affiliation with particular groups (Kidd, Kemp, Kashima, Quinn 2016: 713). The students who participated in this

study confirm this in the above shown examples (3) and (4). They also seem to be quite aware of the advantages a native speaker like accent can offer for employment and other future endeavors, as already seen in example (5), but also detailed in (6), (7), and (8):

(6) Weil, es sehr von Vorteil ist bei der Jobsuche und im Alltag.
(7) Falls ich einmal in meinem Beruf mit Menschen aus dem Ausland kommunizieren muss, dass ich mir einfach tue und sie mich auch gut verstehen können.
(8) Englisch ist [...] eine Weltsprache und besonders für internationale Tätigkeiten die wichtigste Sprache. Auf Englisch kann man sich mit fast jedem Menschen auf der Welt unterhalten [...].

Giles and Rakic (2014: 14) also confirm that a standard sounding accent - and a foreign accent can never be standard (Gluszek & Hansen 2013: 33) – provides its speakers with improved access to political, economic, and educational forums and opportunities" (Giles & Rakic 2014: 14). This is closely tied together with the often-mentioned wish to sound professional such as in (9) and (10):

(9)   Damit ich in Internationalen Länder Professionell [sic!] klinge.
(10) Damit man mich besser versteht und denkt, dass ich sehr gut English kann.

This theory of a perceived decrease in competence when someone is not speaking with a native speaker accent has also been highlighted by Giles and Rakic (2014: 15) who explained that non-standard English native speakers are judged lower in their competence than standard English native speakers with non-native speakers facing even greater disapproval. Some students also cited a wish to communicate and to be understood for their want to adopt a native speaker like accent, as examples (11) and (12) show:

(11) Weil es für mich dann leichter ist mit Menschen auf Englisch zu kommunizieren.
(12) Damit mich jeder versteht.

However, speaking with a native speaker accent does not guarantee understanding by the interlocuter as a study by Smith and Nelson (2006: 441) revealed. These results are also confirmed by the data obtained in this study as the participants voted for the Spanish-accented speaker and the RP speaker to be the most easily understandable with a total of 85,9% of positive votes each, while the GA speaker scored 79,7% positive votes.

Next to the ambition of being easily understood when speaking English with a native speaker-like accent, personal preferences are also mentioned as reasons for students wishing their own accent to resemble that of a native speaker. They voiced their liking for the sound of the natively spoken English language in (13), and (14) and also their distaste for the Austrian accent in (15):

(13) Weil [ich] den Klang von Britischem English einfach liebe. Vor allem die stimmen von dem The crown Cast [sic!].
(14) Weil es sich richtig schön anhört.
(15) Ich finde den österreichischen/deutschen Akzent nicht schön und möchte mir lieber den Akzent eines Muttersprachlers antrainieren, anstatt eines anderen.

It is possible that these students have internalised the positive attitudes associated with native English accents, as well as the negative ones regarding foreign accent variations, which includes their own Austrian English accent (Lindemann et al. 2014: 176). Interestingly, two students also mentioned that speaking English with a native speaker accent would alleviate their need to learn English, as can be seen in (16) and (17):

(16) Weil ich dann nicht englisch [sic!] lernen muss.
(17) Damit man mich besser versteht und denkt, dass ich sehr gut English kann.

However, some students also stated that they are unwilling to adopt a native speaker accent. Their reasons for their refusal to speak with a native like accent range from fearing to lose the ability to speak German (18) to not seeing the necessity for it (19), (20) and (21):

(18) Ich möchte nicht, weil dann erschwert sich vllt mein Deutsch […] [sic!].
(19) Weil es nicht Notwendig ist, so ein Wissen von Englisch zu haben, wenn man verständliche Sätze sprechen kann [sic!].
(20) Weil es mich nicht stört wenn ich einen Akzent habe.
(21) Wäre zu viel Aufwand.

These notions concur with Modiano's (2001: 340) point of view that for some learners a native like accent is not of importance and may even be damaging to their self-image. This, however, does not mean that they do not regard English as important and useful for intercultural communication.

To summarise, the reasons for the participants' want to speak English with a native speaker accent are manifold and include social reasons, reasons concerning competency, emotional reasons, acoustic preferences, and the importance of English, inter alia. Nevertheless, not all students that participated deem it a necessity to speak English with a foreign-like accent. Those students voiced, among other reasons, not being bothered by their foreign accent, and an unwillingness to make an effort to learn how to speak like a native speaker.

8.4. Where may a possible wish for a native speaker like accent stem from?

Given previous research conducted in this field already highlighted the participants' desire to achieve native speaker like pronunciation (Simon 2005; Šišić 2016; Wong 2018; Brabcová & Skarnitzl 2018), it was not surprising that more than 80% of the participating students of this study, as well, expressed a wish to sound like a native speaker when speaking English. Certainly, however, the question arises where this desire stems from. One of the multiple-choice items students were asked to fill out was questioning them where they can hear English in their everyday lives. This item was introduced to gain understanding of how and where the participants are exposed to the English language. Low (2018: 161) explained that

> [o]ne of the external factors affecting ESL pronunciation proficiency development is the degree of exposure to the target language. [...] it is difficult to give an exact definition of exposure [...]. What matters is the frequency with which learners have the opportunity to listen to or speak the target language. The more frequent the exposure, the more proficient they may become in pronunciation.

Exposure, however, requires more than merely being in a setting or a country where English is spoken. Likewise, students who opt to socialise mostly with people from their own country will also face limited exposure to the target language. A mix of both would be beneficial. However, for some learners it may prove difficult to visit English-speaking countries for various reasons. Alternatively, thanks to technological advantages, the exposure to the English language may extend beyond the classroom via social media platforms, or mass media, such as the internet, movies, and music (Low 2018:161). For the above-mentioned item concerned with everyday exposure to the English language, 83,6% students chose the answer option of social media. This is the highest percentage out of all the answer options and, thus, also stands before school, with 79,7% of students stating that they hear English in their everyday lives at school. At school, students are usually working with teaching materials which mostly feature native speaker models (Martín Tevar 2014:45). This may increase their desire to also achieve a native like accent. Kung and Wong (2019: 398-399) discovered that due to sociocultural factors such as the own teacher's accent and the teaching materials' use of accents schools appear to play a role in the shaping of the wish to acquire a native speaker accent. However, not only schools seem to be vital for a native like pronunciation desire, Kung and Wang (2019: 399) also

mention cultural media as a possible influence. In the present study, 75,8% of the participants stated that films and series are part of their daily exposure to the target language, 61,7% also voted for video and computer games and 59,4% of students selected songs and radio as areas of exposure to English. Wong (2018: 177) believes it can be expected that the accents students want to achieve are mainly the British English and the North American English ones, given that many adolescent students are heavily influenced by mass media, such as films, TV shows, and online applications, which are frequently greatly regulated by North American and British production companies. This also ties back to the notion of heroes in movies speaking with a standard native accent and villains who are often portrayed as speaking (foreign-) non-standard accented English (Giles & Rakic 2014: 15). Dragojevic, Mastro and Giles (2016: 79) agree and further add that non-standard speakers are often portrayed to be not as intelligent, beautiful, and successful as standard speakers. They add that this can have a significant impact on how certain accents are perceived, and also how people who speak those accents are perceived. Since teenagers are influenced by mass media and celebrities it is likely that the movies they are seeing have an influence on their wish to speak with a certain accent. In chapter 8.3., this reason was given by one participant in example (13).

The answer given in example (13) highlights the influence mass media has on the wish to acquire a certain accent. Since actors' and actresses' performance is crucial for a positive reception of a movie or a series, such public figures can also act as idols in regard to pronunciation. This may also be true for the 44,5% of students who stated that stars and celebrities are part of their daily exposure to the English language.

Low (2018: 161), however, then suggests that the effect of frequent exposure on the learners' pronunciation abilities differs from student to student due to the learners' individual learning attributes and qualities, such as intrinsic motivation. This means that increased exposure does not always result in improved pronunciation. Previous literature conducted by Moyer (2013) concurs with Low's point of view (2018: 161) and affirms that intrinsic motivation is an important factor that influences students' desire for and ability to achieve native like pronunciation. This aligns with Moyer's (2013: 50) example of the two Turkish men described in chapter 3.3. in which only one developed a native-like accent due to his intrinsic motivation to do so.

Intrinsic motivation can also be seen in the answers to item asking students to explain why they would like to sound like a native speaker. Many students simply stated their

appreciation for a specific accent. Some specified and gave clearer examples such as (23) and (24):

(22)   Ich liebe die Sprache und die Menschen dort.
(23)   Weil ich es cool finde ein bißchen wie die britten zu sprechen [sic!].

These statements also highlight that a sense of community and belonging also pertain to intrinsic motivation (Nichols & Varier 2021: 5). The importance of the sense of community for students can also be seen in chapter 8.3.

Another reason why students may wish to adopt a certain accent may be the age of acquisition as example (25) shows:

(24)   Weil ich Englisch sehr mag und ich lerne es seit dem [sic] ich sehr klein war.

The current literature does not seem to reveal a connection between age of acquisition of the target language and the desire for a native like accent. However, Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991: 158) believe that achieving an accent similar to that of a native speaker is unlikely for most learners unless they were exposed to that accent at a young age. It can be hypothesized that the age of acquisition could correlate with the wish to acquire a native speaker accent as the student above may feel especially motivated if they already speak with a near native speaker like accent. Nevertheless, as of now there seems to be no prove for this assumption so further research would be required to affirm this theory. Summarising, the study revealed that the participating students' wish for a native like accent may stem from various influences, many of which are related to their exposure to the English language, and intrinsic motivation.

8.5.   Limitations and further research

Even though the research questions could be answered in detail within this thesis, naturally limitations also need to be considered and suggestions for further research need to be given.

The questionnaire could have been improved by interviewing some of the participants to gain more understanding of their attitudes towards native and non-native accents and to get a better insight into the importance of native-like pronunciation. Additionally, this data triangulation would have increased the reliability of the results. Therefore, the outcome of this research may be validated in future studies as data triangulation was not in the scope of this thesis.

Furthermore, a larger and more diverse sample improves the significance of the results as all the participants attend professionally oriented schools. It would be interesting to see if a study of upper secondary pupils and in upper secondary schools with emphasis on languages may yield different results. It may be that students at schools with a focus on languages show a different approach to accent diversity and are less concerned with adopting a native-like pronunciation. It is also possible that research with students of language focused schools would show even more one-sided results in terms of native speaker pronunciation acquisition.

Another interesting subject field regards current and prospective teachers' beliefs about the adoption of a native speaker like accent in order to compare their attitudes to those of their students. It seems likely that teachers who firmly believe in the acquisition of a native speaker accent also influence their students to speak in a native-like accent.

Additionally, in the case of this thesis a Spanish native speaker with a more profound accent might have also led to different results because the foreign accent of speaker 1 was not as pronounced as the one of the Austrian-accented English speaker.

9. Conclusion

The aim of the present thesis was to investigate Austrian upper secondary professionally oriented school students' attitude towards different native and non-native English accents, the possible desire for their own accent to resemble that of a native speaker, as well as to see what influences their preference and where their preferences for accent may come from. Therefore, an empirical study was developed as the result of a comprehensive review of the field's literature.

The results of the conducted study revealed some unexpected insights regarding the perception of native and non-native accents by the participating students. The outcome of this study suggests that contrary to previous expectations and research in this field the participating students did not primarily judge the two native speakers' accents the most highly in terms of associated character traits. Students did, as expected, associate one native speech, RP, with the most positive character traits. However, the other native speaker with a GA accent, was not judged as positively as the person who speaks RP. On the contrary, the GA speaker was judged more negatively than the Spanish-accented speaker, which came as a surprise. Additionally, the Spanish accented speaker was judged more favourably on most of the characteristics given in the study than the GA speaker. This opposes other studies (Vargas Barona 2008; Lindeman et al. 2014) which showcased that

their participants generally rated L2 accented speakers as being less intelligent. The heavily accented Austrian English speaker was judged the least benevolently on all traits, except for rudeness. This, however, agrees with Lindeman et al. (2014) findings regarding the negative judgement of a speaker with a heavier foreign accent than that of the listener. Concerning the accent preference of Austrian upper secondary students, the data analysis confirms previous studies conducted by Timmis (2002), Wong (2018), and Brabcová and Skarnitzl (2018) whose study participants also strongly favoured speaking with an accent that resembles that of a native speaker. In the present study, 42% of the participants voiced their desire to speak with a British English accent and 32% would rather their accent resemble that of an American native speaker. These findings, as well, correlate with previous research by and Kung and Wang (2019). While the vast majority, and more than 80%, of the participants of the current study voiced their desire to speak with a near native accent. There were also some students who asserted their wish to keep their current accent or declared their disregard of the acquisition of a native speaker like accent. These attitudes of lack of interest for a native-like accent acquisition were also discovered in Modiano's (2001) study.

The motives behind the wish to adopt a native like accent are manifold and have also been discovered in other studies. These reasons comprise of a sense of community (Kidd, Kemp, Kashima, Quinn 2016), an awareness of the benefits a near-native accent can bring (Giles & Rakic 2014), wishing to sound competent and to be easily understood (Giles & Rakic 2014), and internalized positive attitudes towards an accent variation (Lindemann et al. 2014). What is more, not only the current study's outcome regarding considerations behind the wish to adopt a native like accent can confirm the results of other research, but also not seeing the need to change the own accent has already been discovered in Modiano's (2001) study.

The question for the source of the desire to speak with a native like accent arose early in the research process and has been answered by the data gathered in the questionnaire. It is revealed that the participating students' wish to speak like a native speaker stems from external and internal factors as also affirmed by the study of Low (2018). The participating students stated sociocultural reasons and cultural media as part of the origin of native accent desire. Intrinsic motivation also seems to be vital, the importance of which was previously asserted by Moyer (2013).

As a final remark, I wish that this thesis encourages EFL teachers to include examples of foreign accents into their teaching as this may help students' understanding in future English language conversations all over the world, and also to discourage stereotypes about non-native accents. Furthermore, I hope that EFL teachers may also provide their students with the chance to practise and shape their own accents, in accordance with their preferences, as this study indicates that most students in a classroom are hopeful to adopt a near native like accent, which should also be welcomed.

Last, I would like to end this thesis with a quote by Troutt (1997: np) which, to me, summarises the findings of this paper:

> „Perhaps nothing defines us more than our linguistic skills; nothing determines as much about where we can and cannot go. How we talk may be the first – and last – clue about our intelligence, and whether we're trusted or feared, heard or ignored, admitted or excluded. "

10. Bibliography

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11. Appendix

11.1. Consent form

Einverständniserklärung

Liebe Schülerinnen und Schüler,

mein Name ist Anna Rabitsch und ich bin Studentin an der Universität Wien. Zurzeit schreibe ich an meiner Masterarbeit über verschiedene Aussprachen der englischen Sprache. Hierfür benötige ich Eure Hilfe!

Die Beantwortung dieses Fragebogens wird mir einen Einblick in Euer Empfinden über unterschiedliche Akzente in der englischen Sprache geben, welches das Hauptthema meiner Arbeit darstellt. Die Teilnahme an dieser Studie ist freiwillig und die erhobenen Daten werden auch nur für meine Arbeit verwendet. Natürlich werden die Ergebnisse des Fragebogens anonymisiert und streng vertraulich behandelt. Das heißt, dass niemand Rückschlüsse auf euch herstellen kann. Auch gibt es keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten. Wichtig ist nur, dass ihr die Fragen ehrlich beantwortet!

Solltet ihr Fragen zu meiner Masterarbeit haben, könnt ihr mir diese gerne an meine E-Mail-Adresse annarabitsch@gmx.at senden. Weiters könnt Ihr auch die Betreuerin meiner Masterarbeit, Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Julia Hüttner, MSc, über ihre E-Mail-Adresse julia.huettner@univie.ac.at kontaktieren.

Damit ich Euren ausgefüllten Fragebogen auch verwenden kann, bitte ich Euch diese Einverständniserklärung zu unterschreiben. Solltet Ihr Eure Meinung zur Teilnahme an meinem Projekt ändern, so könnt Ihr jederzeit ohne Konsequenzen aus der Studie aussteigen. Vielen Dank für Eure wichtige Mithilfe!

Anna Rabitsch, BEd BEd

Ich gebe mein Einverständnis, dass der von mir ausgefüllte Fragebogen für die Studie verwendet werden darf:

☐ ja   ☐ nein

Name des Schülers / der Schülerin:

_____

Datum und Unterschrift des Schülers / der Schülerin:

_____

11.2. Audio recordings: Text

Last month, my school friend Bethany invited me to a daytrip to Wismar to meet her family. Her parents live in a huge house close to the sea. There, I also got to know her older brother Joe, his wife Pat, and their pet; a dog named James. Bethany's dad loves baking and served us a vanilla-cream cheesecake when we arrived. It was so good, her brother Joe ate three pieces! Often, I still wonder how he didn't get a tummy ache after that...

Well, I wanted to talk about the spectacular day I had in Germany. First, we went to the sea because her parents also own a small ship there. I think it was the very first time I have ever been on one. Such fun! Then her parents asked us: "We can either go see the city or have lunch here. Which would you prefer?" We chose to have a snack on the ship and later go for a walk in the city. So, Bethany, her brother and Pat brought us some fruit. Then it happened: When I took my fifth bite of a delicious apple, I lost both of my front teeth!

11.3. Positive and negative votes of every speaker in %

	SPEAKER 1 SP				SPEAKER 2 RP				SPEAKER 3 GA				SPEAKER 4 AT			
	--	-	+	++	--	-	+	++	--	-	+	++	--	-	+	++
EASILY UNDERSTANDABLE	2,3%	11,7%	39,8%	46,1%	1,6%	12,5%	28,9%	57%	3,1%	17,2%	16,6%	53,1%	16,4%	36,7%	20,3%	26,6%
INTELLIGENT	3,1%	22,7%	50%	24,2%	1,6%	13,3%	32%	53,1%	3,9%	24,2%	38,3%	33,6%	16,4%	32%	32%	19,5%
LIKEABLE	3,9%	21,9%	39,1%	35,2%	0,8%	18%	40,6%	40,6%	13,3%	24,2%	30,5%	32%	12,5%	25%	35,2%	27,3%
RUDE	68,8%	21,9%	6,3%	3,1%	62,5%	21,1%	8,6%	7,8%	48,4%	25%	18,8%	7,8%	53,9%	24,2%	11,7%	10,2%
EDUCATED	3,9%	23,4%	47,7%	25%	3,1%	10,9%	41,4%	44,5%	7,8%	30,5%	40,6%	21,1%	10,9%	40,6%	32,8%	15,6%
SUCCESSFUL	3,9%	25%	42,2%	28,9%	2,3%	17,2%	40,6%	39,8%	8,6%	25,8%	40,6%	25%	15,6%	40,6%	26,6%	17,2%
MODERN	7,8%	27,3%	38,3%	26,6%	3,1%	17,2%	40,6%	39,1%	10,9%	25%	35,9%	28,1%	23,4%	29,7%	22,7%	24,2%
POPULAR	4,7%	35,2%	43%	17,2%	5,5%	25%	35,2%	34,4%	13,3%	25,8%	39,8%	21,1%	18,8%	31,3%	32%	18%
PROFESSIONAL	8,6%	29,7%	38,3%	23,4%	2,3%	10,2%	31,3%	56,3%	7%	25%	41,4%	26,6%	28,1%	32%	21,1%	18,8%
AFFLUENT	7,8%	26,6%	46,9%	18,8%	3,1%	15,6%	46,1%	35,2%	3,1%	32%	40,6%	24,2%	16,4%	37,5%	29,7%	16,4%
SOUNDS APPEALING	7%	14,1%	42,2%	36,7%	3,1%	17,2%	28,9%	50,8%	11,7%	15,6%	39,1%	33,6%	26,6%	36,7%	21,1%	15,6%
DESIRE TO RESEMBLE	22,7%	25,8%	30,5%	21,1%	14,8%	23,4%	19,5%	42,2%	21,1%	23,4%	31,3%	24,2%	60,2%	17,2%	10,2%	12,5%

11.4. Student Questionnaire

Fragebogen zur englischen Aussprache

Liebe Schülerinnen und Schüler,

Dieser Fragebogen besteht aus zwei Teilen. In Teil 1 werdet ihr die Aufnahme von 4 verschiedenen Sprecherinnen hören. Nachdem ihr die erste Aufnahme gehört habt, bitte ich euch, die Fragen zu Sprecherin 1 zu beantworten - in der Zwischenzeit wird die Aufnahme im Hintergrund nochmal abgespielt. Dafür habt ihr 3 Minuten Zeit. Danach wird Sprecherin 2 vorgespielt, mit derselben Aufgabe für euch. So geht es auch mit den Sprecherinnen 3 und 4. Anschließend folgt Teil 2. Hier sind ein paar demographische Fragen über euch selbst zu beantworten, jedoch kann durch diese Fragen auch niemand wissen, wer ihr genau seid, da zum Beispiel nicht nach euren Namen gefragt wird.
Ich bedanke mich herzlichst für eure Hilfe und freue mich über eure Mitarbeit!
Mit freundlichen Grüßen,
Anna Rabitsch, BEd BEd

Teil 1

Stelle dir vor, dass ein Verlag ein Audiobuch veröffentlichen möchte und dafür noch Sprecherinnen sucht. Du wirst 4 Sprecherinnen hören, die sich für diesen Job beworben haben. Alle werden den folgenden Text vorlesen:

> Last month, my school friend Bethany invited me to a daytrip to Wismar to meet her family. Her parents live in a huge house close to the sea. There, I also got to know her older brother Joe, his wife Pat, and their pet; a dog named James. Bethany's dad loves baking and served us a vanilla-cream cheesecake when we arrived. It was so good, her brother Joe ate three pieces! Often, I still wonder how he didn't get a tummy ache after that... Well, I wanted to talk about the spectacular day I had in Germany. First, we went to the sea because her parents also own a small ship there. I think it was the very first time I have ever been on one. Such fun! Then her parents asked us: "We can either go see the city or have lunch here. Which would you prefer?" We chose to have a snack on the ship and later go for a walk in the city. So, Bethany, her brother and Pat brought us some fruit. Then it happened: When I took my fifth bite of a delicious apple, I lost both of my front teeth!

Sprecherin 1 klingt für mich:

	Ich stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Ich stimme nicht zu	Ich stimme zu	Ich stimme sehr zu
leicht verständlich	☐	☐	☐	☐
intelligent	☐	☐	☐	☐
sympathisch	☐	☐	☐	☐
unhöflich	☐	☐	☐	☐
gebildet	☐	☐	☐	☐
erfolgreich	☐	☐	☐	☐
modern	☐	☐	☐	☐

1

	Ich stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Ich stimme nicht zu	Ich stimme zu	Ich stimme sehr zu
beliebt	☐	☐	☐	☐
professionell	☐	☐	☐	☐
wohlhabend	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wie die Person spricht klingt generell gut für mich:

	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wenn ich Englisch spreche, würde ich gerne so eine Aussprache haben wie die Sprecherin:

	☐	☐	☐	☐

Ich denke die Person kommt aus:

☐ den USA ☐ England ☐ Österreich ☐ Australien
☐ Frankreich ☐ Spanien ☐ Sonstiges: _____

_____

Sprecherin 2 klingt für mich:

	Ich stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Ich stimme nicht zu	Ich stimme zu	Ich stimme sehr zu
leicht verständlich	☐	☐	☐	☐
intelligent	☐	☐	☐	☐
sympathisch	☐	☐	☐	☐
unhöflich	☐	☐	☐	☐
gebildet	☐	☐	☐	☐
erfolgreich	☐	☐	☐	☐
modern	☐	☐	☐	☐
beliebt	☐	☐	☐	☐
professionell	☐	☐	☐	☐
wohlhabend	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wie die Person spricht klingt generell gut für mich:

	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wenn ich Englisch spreche, würde ich gerne so eine Aussprache haben wie die Sprecherin:

	☐	☐	☐	☐

Ich denke die Person kommt aus:

☐ den USA ☐ England ☐ Österreich ☐ Australien
☐ Frankreich ☐ Spanien ☐ Sonstiges: _____

_____

Sprecherin 3 klingt für mich:

	Ich stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Ich stimme nicht zu	Ich stimme zu	Ich stimme sehr zu
leicht verständlich	☐	☐	☐	☐
intelligent	☐	☐	☐	☐
sympathisch	☐	☐	☐	☐
unhöflich	☐	☐	☐	☐
gebildet	☐	☐	☐	☐
erfolgreich	☐	☐	☐	☐
modern	☐	☐	☐	☐
beliebt	☐	☐	☐	☐
professionell	☐	☐	☐	☐
wohlhabend	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wie die Person spricht klingt generell gut für mich:

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Wenn ich Englisch spreche, würde ich gerne so eine Aussprache haben wie die Sprecherin:

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Ich denke die Person kommt aus:

☐ den USA ☐ England ☐ Österreich ☐ Australien
☐ Frankreich ☐ Spanien ☐ Sonstiges:

_____

Sprecherin 4 klingt für mich:

	Ich stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Ich stimme nicht zu	Ich stimme zu	Ich stimme sehr zu
leicht verständlich	☐	☐	☐	☐
intelligent	☐	☐	☐	☐
sympathisch	☐	☐	☐	☐
unhöflich	☐	☐	☐	☐
gebildet	☐	☐	☐	☐
erfolgreich	☐	☐	☐	☐
modern	☐	☐	☐	☐
beliebt	☐	☐	☐	☐
professionell	☐	☐	☐	☐
wohlhabend	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wie die Person spricht klingt generell gut für mich:

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

3

Wenn ich Englisch spreche, würde ich gerne so eine Aussprache haben wie die Sprecherin:

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Ich denke die Person kommt aus:

☐ den USA ☐ England ☐ Österreich ☐ Australien
☐ Frankreich ☐ Spanien ☐ Sonstiges:

_____

Teil 2 – Angaben zu dir!

Geschlecht:		
☐ männlich	☐ weiblich	☐ divers

Alter: _____

Was ist deine Muttersprache: _____

Mein Ziel ist es Englisch so zu sprechen, als wäre es meine Muttersprache:	
☐ ja	☐ nein

Wieso möchtest du / möchtest du klingen, wie ein/e Muttersprachler/in?

Wenn ich es mir aussuchen könnte, würde ich gerne so klingen als wäre ich aus (Land):

Warum?

Bist du in Kontakt mit Menschen, die Englisch als Muttersprache haben?	
☐ ja	☐ nein

Wenn ja: wie oft und mit wem? Weißt du, woher diese Person kommt?

Wo hörst du Englisch im Alltag?			
☐ Video/ Computerspiele	☐ Stars/ Influencer / Prominente	☐ Filme/ Serien / Streaming	☐ Freizeitvereine (z.B. Sport…)
☐ Freunde	☐ Lernapps	☐ Schule	☐ Radio / Songs
☐ Familie	☐ Soziale Medien (Instagram, TikTok…)	☐ Sonstiges: _____	

Vielen Dank für Deine Teilnahme!

4