THE INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES TOWARD THEIR L1-ACCENTED ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT
In an international communication context, English becomes an International language, commonly known as English as an International Language (EIL). EIL sees various English accents equally because intelligibility, being able to deliver message clearly to listeners, is the main goal in a communication. Therefore, Indonesian EFL (English as a foreign language) students need to focus their English mastery on intelligibility over native-likeness accent when learning English. However, whether or not the students concentrate their English learning more on intelligibility is still unknown yet. To identify which aspects EFL students focus on, the research examined Indonesian EFL students’ attitudes toward their L1-accented English. The main aim is to enhance their awareness that intelligibility is the key component in an English communication. Also, English teachers hopefully discuss the intelligibility in their teaching. Thus, the targeted learning results, particularly related to speaking skills development, are more reachable so the students are more encouraged to develop their English. The study involved 46 students (14 males and 32 females) from University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM), East Java. The implemented instrument as a data collection is a questionnaire. The collected data were organized and then analyzed to find out EFL students’ attitudes perceiving their Indonesian-accented English. The researcher figured out that EFL students had less positive attitude towards their own English accent. That perception might be caused by their low linguistic awareness, excessive exposure to the Internet (YouTube, International news) made by native speakers of English. The result of data analysis will be elaborated to interweave the investigation outcomes with classroom context so the outcomes could be implemented in classroom instruction.

KEYWORDS
Accent, Intelligibility, Attitude

INTRODUCTION
EFL learners have different styles or accent of speaking English, which is usually influenced by his origin or cultural background. According to Montgomery (2008), an accent is as a whole pronunciation patterns owned by a certain community (or country). It has been believed that having an English accent highly affected by a mother tongue (L1-accented English) may hamper communication. However, some research proved otherwise (see Crismore, Ngeow, & Soo, 1996). It was found that intelligibility is far more important in making a more natural conversation. That is, having native-like English by imitating British or American accents does not necessarily make a successful communication. Intelligibility can be achieved when the listener is able to comprehend the utterances by the speaker (McKay, 2002).
Most universities in Indonesia are aware of the importance of English in the globalization era, and therefore encouraging their students to hone their English skills by including English subjects during the first year. Despite the long year of studying English during school (starting from elementary school), tertiary institutions still provide the students with English trainings to prepare them for the globalized world and information era.

However, most of the EFL teachings focus more on the theoretical and grammatical rather than communicative aspects. In other words, the instructions and the materials do not necessarily reflect communications in the real world. In this case, Indonesians talking about business with Singaporeans or going to China to present and market some local products would be more practical to EFL learners, especially university students.

Due to high exposure of British and American English, university students in Indonesia mostly believe that having British and American accents is the overarching goal of learning English. The majority of EFL learners holding this fallacy may not be aware that intelligibility is indeed the key to a successful communication.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**English in the Global World**
Besides being spoken by its native speakers, English is used by non-native speakers to communicate with other people from different language background. In this case, English can be spoken as either a second language (L2) or foreign language (EFL). With the advancement of technology, English is used even more in different parts of the world and has achieved its status as an international language (EIL). In fact, two major factors promoting English as EIL include economic and ICT development.

**Economic development and English**
English and transnational economic developments are closely intertwined. That is, non-native speakers who wish to expand their business and market internationally are expected to speak fluent English. Otherwise, international business expansion may be hard to achieve. Warschauer (2000) mentioned that in the past few decades, English has played a key role and acted as a bridge for global communication in the science and economic aspects. Clearly, English can be used as a key to access international markets. Likewise, economic development play a pivotal role in the global spread of English.

**ICT development and English**
Baker & Jones (1998) stated that online information on the Internet is mostly in English. Admittedly, our lives heavily depend on the Internet, from communication (Email and WA) accessing information through social medias (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), reading (online news), shopping (online shop) and entertainment (YouTube). Even without deliberate effort of transferring English or spread it globally, the Internet certainly makes people greatly exposed to English. Wu, L., & Ben-Canaan (2006) claimed English has already been dominating the Internet in the field of politics, economics and science. Because of its dominant role in these
three crucial fields, it becomes realistic why English is widely used by people in different countries as an international language.

Nowadays, more and more people learn English because they want to get as much as information on the Internet. It seems that the Internet has played a role in making lives easier (Wu & Ben-Canaan, 2006). For instance, the learning English has been much easier with the availability of easily accessed materials (either pedagogical or authentic) on the Internet. Undoubtedly, English hegemony is reinforced through ICT.

**The use of English as EIL**

One of the concerns of EIL is speaking variations. That is, different EFL speakers have different English accents, which are highly influenced by their L1 accent (see section 1 on the accent definition). Accent “refers to not only to the articulation of individual sounds, or *segmental*, but to *suprasegmental* features as well: intonation, rhythm, pitch, segmental length, tempo, and loudness” (Moyer, 2013, p. 10)

Actually, our mother-tongue-accented English represents our true identity, cultural background and country of origin, thus keeping our accent means keeping our identity. Besides, people can easily recognize where we come from through our accent. For example, by listening someone speaking with an Indian accent, we can easily identify that he is from India. It is truly unique that English not only serves as a means of global communication but also reveals the speaker' origin. As Norton (1997) said, when someone speaks in English, he is able to deliver the message to the listeners and allow them to recognize who he is and how he is engaged in the global community. In the EIL context, every single different accent, such as Indian, Singaporean, Chinese and Indonesian accents, is embraced and treated as a part of the English speaking variety.

Nevertheless, some people argue that different accents can create confusion in a conversation. In fact, it will not occur as long as the key requirement, namely intelligibility, is achieved in the conversation. In other words, intelligibility should be the primary focus of the communication among EFL speakers. McKay (2002) underlined that intelligibility covers important parts required in a conversation, namely comprehensibility (being capable of understanding the point of a particular utterance) and interpretability (being capable of recognizing the implicit meaning of a particular utterance within sociocultural area).

Timmis’ (2002) found English teachers’ attitudes were more positive toward distinctive English accents when they had a good understanding of intelligibility. The importance of attitude and its urgency for EFL learners is discussed below.

**The importance of having positive language attitudes in EFL instructions**

Attitude is an important factor that affects the way people respond to a particular condition, as it will be “a summary evaluation of an object of thought” (Bohner& Wänke, 2002, p.5). Therefore, people’s behavior when perceiving a particular condition reflects their attitudes toward that condition. Bohner& Wänke (2002) said attitudes are gained through someone’s social encounters and are likely to change through his social interactions. In other words, someone’s attitudes, either positive or negative, in perceiving a particular situation are highly affected by
external factors (friends, parents, environment and teachers) and is dynamic based on his social interaction.

In the context of language attitudes context, a particular attitude towards a language is commonly learned and built through social encounters (such as listening to a certain group of speakers, either native or non-native speakers, including the aspects of their language), exposure to language varieties, as well as formal classroom learning activities (Tokumoto, M., & Shibata, 2011). It is no doubt that pedagogical instructions play a vital role in building EFL learners’ attitudes toward English.

With regard to accents, EFL teachers are expected to introduce and teach different accents, both native and non-native accents, to their students to help them become more open to accept different L1-accented English. Also, the teachers should be a role model for their students. If the teachers have positive attitudes toward various L1-accented English, their students tend to follow their lead by showing similarly positive attitudes. Indeed, having positive attitudes toward various English accents is essential in EFL pedagogical context as they “may influence their learning behaviours, including motivation, language practices, and successful attainment of the language” (Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011, p. 392).

**Previous studies on people’s attitudes perceiving various accents**

Visiting previous studies on EFL students’ attitudes toward their mother-tongue accents or English native speakers’ accents will give us a better understanding on the importance of EFL learners’ attitudes in developing their English skills.

Tokumoto’s and Shibata’s (2011) study on the attitudes of English learners from three different countries (Malaysia, South Korea, and Japan) toward their own English accents. The study revealed that native-speakers’ accents were considered better and more prestigious than the EFL learners’ English accents.

Another study was carried out by (Crismore, Ngeow, & Soo 1996) in Malaysian educational context. The investigation showed although the students seemed happy communicating with their own accents, but they still tried to achieve native-like English, which sounded like British or Americans in both pedagogical and social contexts.

In addition, Fraser (2006) found high school students in Japan admired American accent and perceived it as the most prestigious one compared to the other six accents (British, Scottish, Japanese, Taiwanese, Zimbabwe and Australian). Furthermore, the research participants admitted their English accent was intelligible, but they perceived it negatively and were not willing to develop it. Similarly, a huge investigation by Timmis (2002) revealed student and teacher perception. On the one hand, most students perceived the pronunciation of native speakers positively and they were so motivated to imitate their accents. On the other hand, the teachers were openly accepting different L1-accented English. These two studies clearly show students put native-accentedness as their ultimate goal of learning English. It may happen because they may not be fully aware of the idea of intelligibility, so they overlooked the essence of conversation, which is comprehensibility, and instead focusing on less important aspect of a conversation, that is native-speakerness.
The studies discussed above indicate that many ESL/EFL learners have more positive perception toward British and American accents, thus and their learning goal is to imitate their accents. This native-speaker fallacy may be influenced by classroom instruction, the Internet, and Hollywood movies (Cargile, Takai, & Rodríguez, 2006). This perception and attitude can be strengthened, as mentioned by McKenzie (2008), who stated that community's ideologies, believing the 'correct and proper' accents are the ones spoken by native speakers, may contribute to EFL students' negative attitudes toward their L1-accented English.

**Indonesian EFL speakers’ attitudes toward different English accents**
The Indonesian government has designed a strategic education policy regarding EFL learning (see section one for a more thorough discussion). It brings a strong message for education institutions to improve their teaching for better quality EFL instructions. This should include intelligibility as a part of English classroom instruction. However, there are limited evidences of how EFL teachers discussed intelligibility as a part of their teaching activity. In fact, outside of the classroom, EFL students often watch Hollywood movies, listening English songs, and watching YouTube channels presented by nativespeakers. This exposure led to negative perception of the learners toward their own accent (Cargile et al., 2006).

In the Indonesian context, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, there was only one empirical research investigating the issue, which is Dharma’s & Rudianto’s MA Thesis (2013). Dharma & Rudianto (2013) investigated 100 University students’ attitudes toward different L1 English accents and their own English accent. The study found EFL students were aware of the importance of intelligibility in a real English conversation. Besides, the participants had positive attitude toward their own English accent. However, they appreciated native accents far more positively than non-native accents.

The study above clearly indicated native speaker accent as an Indonesian EFL learners’ goal in their English learning, particularly when learning English speaking. This finding encourages the researchers to dig deeper in this area to see how Indonesian EFL learners perceive their own accent. This study is expected to fill the research gap in this topic. Also, and perhaps more importantly, this study may be used as a reference by EFL teachers to incorporate EIL and intelligibility in their teaching. By doing so, Indonesian EFL learners will be more tolerant and able to perceive various L1-accented English and later use their L1-accented English proudly in the international context.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

This study applied quantitative approach. There were around 50 English education program students of University of Muhamadiyah Malang (UMM) as the participants in this research. They were at their 5th semester with the age between 19 and 22. They were 34 females and 16 males. More females were participating than males because they are the majority. The participants’ L1 is Bahasa Indonesia and they were randomly selected from two different classes. Consequently, they had different English proficiency level. However, it did not affect the research results because this research investigated the learners’ attitudes, not their English proficiency level.
The questionnaire questions were adapted from Tokumoto and Shibata’s (2011) questionnaire with some modification. This study questionnaire had 12 items, divided into:

a. Cognitive- the participants’ view of the world (item number 3, 6, 7, 10, 11 and 12).

b. Affective- the participants’ feelings about English and a particular group of English users (item number 1 and 4).

c. Behavioral- the participants’ judgment in response to a particular group, whether to accept or avoid (item number 2, 5, 8 and 9).

In this questionnaire, there is a specific section asking the participants’ age and gender to guarantee the reliability and suitability of the participants involved in this study. The questionnaire applied a 6-point Likert scales (1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3= moderately disagree, 4= moderately agree, 5= agree, 6 =strongly agree). All 12 items were designed as closed questions to avoid participants’ confusion and redundancy when completing it (Hall & Cook, 2015). Refer to the (attachment 1) to see the questionnaire form.

The questionnaire was distributed to the participants. They had 15 minutes to answer all questionnaire questions. Those answered questionnaires were used as the data. Due to personal reasons, only 46 out of 50 students filled the questionnaire. 46 questionnaires were sufficient data to analyze.

To answer the question (Indonesian EFL learners’ attitude perceiving their Indonesian-accented English), descriptive statistics was applied to identify mean and standard deviation. The identified mean and standard deviation led the researchers to obtain the answer from the research question.

**RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

When reporting the data analysis results about the Indonesian EFL students’ attitude when perceiving their own English accent. The attitude was then classified into different aspect/ category, in which each aspect/ category was broken down into sub categories. These sub-categories are based on statement 3 (accentedness), statements 6 and 7 (intelligibility), and statements 10, 11 and 12 (acceptability). They belong to cognitive category. They would be discussed first. Then, the discussion was followed by affective category (statement 1 and 4), then behavioral category (statements 2, 5, 8 and 9).

**Cognitive aspect of learners’ attitude**

To find the learners’ attitudes of their accented English, their responses to statement 3 was statistically measured. Table 1 below indicates although the mean score is not 4, meaning positive perception towards the statement, but 3.8 is closer to 4, rather than to 3. Thus, it could be said participants are aware that their accent is Indonesian-accented English.

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<th>Statement</th>
<th>EFL learners (N=46)</th>
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<td></td>
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Table 1. Participants’ accentedness
3. I have a non-native English accent. 3.8 1.2

Note: The M score is generated from the Likert scales (1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree) of the questionnaire question.

Next, the learners’ perception regarding the intelligibility of their Indonesian-accented English was analyzed based on their responses to statement 6 and 7. Mean scores displayed in Table 2 indicated that the students have low anxiety feeling level that their L1-accented English could create confusion among listeners both native and non-native listeners. The data outcomes indicate that their English accent is intelligible for different group of listeners.

<table>
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<th>Statement</th>
<th>EFL learners (N=46)</th>
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<tr>
<td>6. American or British people easily comprehend my accented English.</td>
<td>4 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Non-native English speakers easily comprehend my accented English.</td>
<td>4.1 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The M score is generated from the Likert scales (1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree) of the questionnaire questions.

The following Table 3 based on the statement 10 of the mean score indicates the learners' belief that their Indonesian-accented English is acceptable for international communications (international seminars and conferences). Statement 11 shows that the students have positive perception that their English accent is applicable in the teaching and learning context. It can be seen from the mean score below. In light to statement 12, the mean score is typical to statement 10. It means they are quite confidence their English accent is not an issue when having cross-cultural communication with speakers from different countries.

<table>
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<th>Statement</th>
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<tr>
<td>10. My pronunciation is acceptable in transnational business.</td>
<td>4 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. My pronunciation is acceptable for an English teacher.</td>
<td>4.5 0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. My pronunciation is acceptable in personal inter-cultural communication</td>
<td>4.4 0.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The M score is generated from the Likert scales (1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree) of the questionnaire questions.

Affective aspect of learners’ attitude

Statements 1 and 4 belong to affective aspect. Thus, they assess the learners’ affective level towards their L1-accented English. Table 4 below displays positive affective attitude for both statements (1 and 4) with both statements, 4 and 1, having exactly the same point. It clearly indicates they are happy and confident to talk with their own accent or pronunciation when communication with others.

<table>
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<th>Statement</th>
<th>EFL learners (N=46)</th>
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187
1. I am confident with my English pronunciation. 4.3 0.8
4. I am happy with my own English accent. 4.3 1.3

Note: The M score is generated from the Likert scales (1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree) of the questionnaire questions.

Behavioural aspect of learners’ attitude

Table 5 shows the analysis outcomes of the four statements (2, 5, 8, and 9). All of them indicate the students’ behavioural aspect in light of their L1-accented English variety. Statement 2 examines if the learners thought their pronunciation (Indonesian-accented English) was native-like. The mean score shows low point (see Table 5). This indicated their English accent is not like English native speakers. Regarding item 5, in which the students’ hesitation to speak in English (L1-accented English) was assessed, it shows they hesitated to speak using their own English accent.

Similar to statement 5, the mean score of statement 8 presents the students are less motivated to maintain their own Indonesian-affected English accent. This attitude is supported by their answer in statement 9. They expect to be able to speak like native speakers when using English.

Table 5. Participants’ affective perception

<table>
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<td></td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. My English accent is like a native speaker.</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I hesitate to show my accent.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I would like to keep my accent.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I aspire to speak like a native speaker.</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The M score is generated from the Likert scales (1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree) of the questionnaire questions.

In relation to the students’ attitudes towards their Indonesian-accented English, it could be concluded that they realize that their English accent is affected by their L1, and they believe their L1-accented English is acceptable in various local and international occasions. Furthermore, they are confident and happy to use it. However, they expect that they could speak English with native accents (British or American accent). Their reasons why this occurred will be discussed more comprehensively below.

Discussion

Findings from previous section will be discussed and interpreted in regards to two connected factors. Those factors are English exposure and linguistic awareness.

Data analysis results indicated EFL learners were fully aware their English accent was influenced by their L1 language (Bahasa) and they were highly confident that their own English accent was accepted quite well in various conversation settings. However, they surprisingly consider their L1-accented English negatively. The students commented that they truly expected in order to be able to talk with native speaker accents (the US or the UK).
One of the contributing factors to the EFL learners’ negative attitudes might be intense and frequent encounters to the Internet and YouTube in their daily life. What happen is those two things were dominated by English contents. For instance, they watch English songs, Vlog and English learning materials from YouTube or the Internet. YouTubers of those channels are mostly from English speaking countries. This condition then constructs the students’ perceptions that English language, particularly accent, is ‘correct’ when it is the one, spoken or from native speakers. This incorrect notion is worsened by a situation in which they have less-frequent encounters with different accents in their real life. For instance, they talk in English with Japanese, The Chinese and Chilean outside the classroom. (Santana-Williamson, 2002) stated that providing and familiarizing EFL students with sufficient exposure and distinctive English styles (varieties), including different accents, can lead them to value different accents more.

Another affecting factor causing Indonesian EFL students’ negative attitudes when seeing their own English accent is what Fraser (2006) called as students’ low linguistic awareness. That low linguistic awareness is more likely to be affected by society (EFL learners) improper belief that a native norm, American as well as British accent, is perceived as the “correct” example of English accent regardless the different accents were fine as long as it is comprehensible. Tokumoto & Shibata (2011) stated that kind of justification might be caused by language ideology which believes a native accent (American/ British) is a perfect role model to obtain when studying English. They added that the students’ belief could be caused by environmental influence rather than their experience when speaking the language in a real context. It is clear that their justification has nothing to do with the function of language, which is whether English accent is intelligible for listeners or not.

The students could be unaware of the second language acquisition (SLA) theory stating that “a native-like accent is impossible unless first exposure is quite early, probably around the age six” (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p. 158). The participants of this study were fully aware that their English accent was definitely acceptable both locally and internationally. Nonetheless, their ambitious pursuit of a native accent indicates their low comprehension of language identity. The learners’ Indonesian-accented English indicates where they are from and who they belong to. As Hamied (2012, p. 273) stated an acknowledgement of “an equal status for all varieties of English [including accents] both native and non-native”. In this study context, the students might be unaware that their L1-accented English represents their identity. So, they become a native-accentedness centrist. As a result, the English students value their own non-native accent less positively (Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011).

Scale (2006) added when learning English, students’ main objective is having an English native speaker accent not intelligibility. This is definitely false goal because this aim is both too hard to reach and unnecessary effort. They are better to focus on intelligibility as a part of developing English language proficiency.

To conclude, EFL students are completely aware that their English is fine for various communication contexts. However, they might have less linguistic awareness and very few encounters with various English accents. So, they are so obsessed with native accents. To eliminate that situation, English educator/ teachers as well as curriculum makers are
encouraged to include EIL in students English learning in addition to mastery linguistics aspects (vocabulary, grammar, sentences mastery).

CONCLUSION

This study found Indonesian EFL students have L1-affected English accent, but they are still persistent to be able to talk like a native English speaker as their dream. This condition is caused by low comprehension of the linguistics knowledge and powerful hegemony of the Internet and YouTube, dominated by native speakers contents. Therefore, EFL teachers need to provide more space to talk about topics, like EIL when teaching English in class. Thus, their students will be more confident to talk using their own accent variety.

In addition, talking about pragmatic competence and intelligibility should be prioritized by EFL teachers and curriculum designer. McKey (2002) added the pragmatic discussion in EIL context should not be asking EFL learners to dream of having a native-like competence. Instead, let them have good English speaking skill when communicating with others.

Suggestion
This study outcomes may not be applicable to every single EFL teaching context due to its small number of participants. Therefore, this study is “illustrative rather than generalizable” (Hall & Cook, 2015). Nonetheless, this study outcome is still applicable with some adjustment.

To conclude, this study certainly has some limitations. However, the findings are hopefully useful to encourage EFL teachers to include EIL, intelligibility and pragmatic competence as a part of the classroom formal instruction. Therefore, the EFL learners are going to be more aware that English communication does not care where the speaker come from, they just care about a clear and meaningful communication. In addition, when classroom focuses on intelligibility over native-likeness, it will boost the English students to develop their English more because learning English sounds more reachable.

REFERENCES


