EFL Learners Attitudes Towards Various English Accents

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Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2016

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:142:045378

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-03-29**

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Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

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Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti – nastavnički smjer i njemačkog jezika i književnosti – nastavnički smjer

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Stavovi učenika engleskog kao stranog jezika prema različitim engleskim naglascima

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Mentor: prof. dr. sc. Višnja Pavičić Takač

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Znanstveno područje: humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: filologija

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

Mentor: prof. dr. sc. Višnja Pavičić Takač

Osijek, 2016.

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Teaching English as a Foreign Language, MA Programme and

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Scientific discipline: Humanities

Scientific field: Philology

Scientific branch: English Studies

Supervisor: Professor Višnja Pavičić Takač

Osijek, 2016

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Abstract

This study focuses on EFL learners' attitudes towards various English accents because of its importance not just for foreign language learning but also foreign language teaching. The participants are university students, high school students and elementary school students. The results present four important aspects regarding the learners' attitudes – their attitudes towards speaking with a non-native English accent, pronunciation improvement, teachers' accents and also towards some easily recognizable non-native English accents. The results have shown that the learners' attitudes towards slight non-native English accents are very tolerant, but that they still want to sound as native-like as possible. It can also be concluded that they would prefer a native speaker of English as a teacher, but generally they are not strongly prejudiced against non-native speakers with slight accents.

Keywords: English accents, non-native accents, pronunciation, teachers' accents

Sažetak

Ovo se istraživanje bavi stavovima učenika engleskog kao stranog jezika prema različitim engleskim naglascima jer je ono važno ne samo za učenje nego i za nastavu stranih jezika. Ispitanici su studenti, srednjoškolci i osnovnoškolci. Rezultati predstavljaju četiri važna aspekta stavova učenika – njihove stavove prema stranim naglascima, poboljšanju izgovora, naglascima njihovih nastavnika i prema različitim lako prepoznatljivim stranim engleskim naglascima. Rezultati su pokazali da su ispitanici veoma tolerantni prema stranim engleskim naglascima, no i dalje žele govoriti kao izvorni govornici engleskoga jezika. Također se može zaključiti da bi za nastavnika engleskoga jezika radije htjeli imati izvornoga govornika, no i po tom pitanju ispitanici nemaju predrasuda prema nastavnicima s blagim stranim naglaskom.

Ključne riječi: engleski naglasci, strani naglasci, izgovor, naglasci nastavnika

1. Introduction

The topic of this research is EFL Learners' Attitudes towards Various English Accents. Studies, like the one done by Josipović-Smojver and Stanojević (2013), have shown that many people think about their foreign accent and some of them even strive to achieve the 'perfect' one. The questions which, therefore, arise are, which is the 'ideal' accent for most non-native English speakers and what do they think about the accents of their teachers and also certain non-native accents.

According to Jenkins (2009), the version of English which should be taught should not be an idealized 'textbook' version, but a version which is actually being used for communication in everyday life. One of the problems some people might have are connected to anxiety of speaking a foreign language because they want their accent to be as native-like as possible and because they might think that they might seem less intelligent if they have a slight or strong foreign accent.

"The fastest-growing function of English in the world is as a Lingua Franca (ELF), i.e., as the common language in the interaction among non-native speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds." (cf. Görlach; Mauranen and Rante, as cited in Josipović-Smojver and Stanojević, 2013:192) The fact that ELF is fast-growing shows the importance of raising all non-native English speakers' awareness about the various varieties of that language and that having a certain accent does not equal being a bad communicator or less intelligent. English as a Lingua Franca, or international English, has the most speakers and it can and should be considered the most 'real English'. (Jenkins, 2009)

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. English as a Lingua Franca

Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2003) defines lingua franca or 'common' language as "a language which is used for communication between groups of people who speak different languages but which is not used between members of the same group." Because of phenomena such as globalization or the spread of internet, people all over the world became more connected and, thus, a need for a common language was created.

As Jenkins (2009) describes it, more and more people from different first languages started using English as a contact language which, in the end, made it a lingua franca. Such a social and linguistic phenomenon created a need for new terms. The most commonly used one is English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), but the term English as an International Language (EIL) is also frequently mentioned in texts regarding this research field. Since English became a language widely used by non-native speakers in the whole world, the term English as a Foreign Language (EFL) also gained importance.

As Crystal (2003) further explains, a language does not simply become a lingua franca by just being widely spread and therefore, having many people using it. The main factor is actually who those people are.

In the sixteenth century, English was spoken by a relatively small group of people (Jenkins, 2009). Those speakers were primarily part of the upper class and were associated with wealth and power, which was exactly what was needed in order to make that language attractive enough and desirable for the masses so that it would spread into the world (Crystal, 2003).

Another important factor is England's colonial past. Through colonialism, English quickly spread from England to various other countries, where it gained an official status, in most cases, even becoming the second language for the natives. The number of English speakers quickly grew "from a mere five to seven million to possibly up to two billion" (Jenkins, 2009:2). It came to such quick growth because it also began spreading to those countries, where it did not gain any official status, but it was used by foreigners to make it possible for them to communicate with other non-native English speakers.

Because of their "economic and political supremacity" (Mauranen, 2003, as cited in Jenkins, 2006:75), the United States can also be blamed for turning English into a lingua franca. Most of the things we are surrounded by have something to do with the U.S., because it represents

the leading power not just when it comes to various products but also when it comes to entertainment. It comes as no surprise that since products, even in the form of music and movies, from English-speaking countries are nowadays easily accessible, it became easily possible for a foreigner to even acquire English, whether they are aware of their acquisition or not.

The fact that non-native speakers started using English on a somewhat regular basis, it automatically came to the creation of new varieties of English, whose characteristics can be primarily heard in the speech, i.e. the accent. Thus, it became clear that we can no longer speak of the English language, but instead, as Jenkins suggests, we should use the plural form Englishes (Jenkins, 2009).

The new way non-native speakers communicated with each other, but also with native speakers, became an interesting research field for scholars. After realizing what an impact English as a lingua franca had on the world, scholars within the field of second language acquisition started calling for a reorientation of English language teaching (Meierkord, 2012).

2.2. Groups of English Speakers

The rapid increase in the number of English speakers has created a need to divide them into groups (Carter and Nunan, 2001). Nowadays we can divide them into three groups depending on if they use English as a native language (ENL), commonly known as English as a mother tongue, English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) (Jenkins, 2009).

English as a native language is used by those who are native to a country where English is the official language and, thus, the speaker's first language (Jenkins, 2009).

English as a second language is used by those living in countries which are former British colonies, in which English is one of the official languages (Jenkins, 2009) and where it is regularly used as a tool for communicating with other natives within the country (Carter and Nunan, 2001).

English as a foreign language is used by so-called 'non-native' speakers for whom that language is not an official language, nor does it represent a necessity for communication within their country (Jenkins, 2009). Those speakers normally do not even have that many

opportunities to use English, because it is only needed when communicating with people from other countries (Carter and Nunan, 2001).

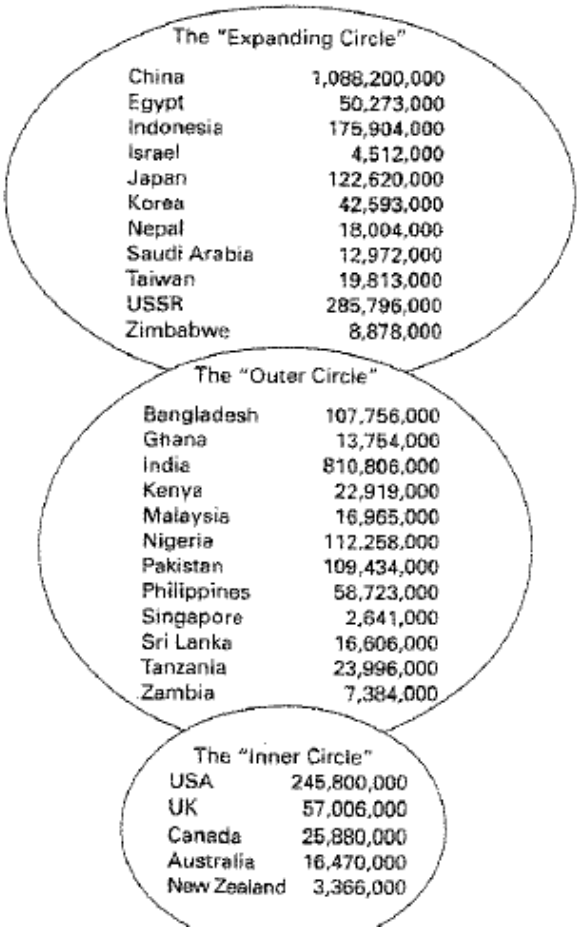


Figure 1: Kachru's three-circle model of World Englishes (Kachru 1992, as cited in Jenkins, 2009)

A model which perfectly shows the division of those English speakers, i.e. their countries, is Kachru's three-circle model of World Englishes, where he divides them into the Inner, Outer and Expanding Circle (see Figure 1). The Inner Circle consists of countries, where English is the (main) official language. The Outer Circle consists of countries, where English is used as a Second language, primarily, because those countries were former British colonies. The Expanding Circle are countries, where English serves no official purpose and it is used as a foreign Language (cf. Meierkord, 2012, Jenkins, 2009).

2.3. English and New Englishes

As Trudgill (2004) explains, English, like all other languages, also comes in many different forms, and such forms can be particularly distinguished based on the sound, i.e. the accent. People, therefore, realized that new varieties of English were emerging because they could hear that they sounded differently than the standard language, which they were used to hearing.

Standard language is a variety of a certain language, which is considered a prestige dialect, used by those who have social power (Adger et al., 2007, as cited in Grill, 2010) and it became known as the 'standard' version because it has undergone standardization, i.e. "it has been subjected to a process through which it has been selected, codified and stabilized, in a way that other varieties have not" (Trudgill and Hannah, 2008:1). Since the standardized version of a language is also considered a marker of the level of education of a person, it is also the variety formally taught in schools. (Jenkins, 2009).

All other varieties, especially those used by non-native speakers, are, therefore, categorized as Non-standard English. Since people could easily differentiate between those varieties, many developed prejudices against the non-standardized varieties and started considering them as less-prestigious and as spoken by less-educated people, thus also inferior to all other varieties. (Jenkins, 2009).

What is important to accentuate, is that the speakers of the new varieties of English normally have no need to learn the standard versions because, for them, the sole purpose of English is communication, so that it is only important that they can be understood by others and using a prestigious variety or wanting to sound smarter are of no or little importance for them (Carter and Nunan, 2001).

As Trudgill (2004) explains, the varieties of English, which are not considered the standard versions, should not be considered mistakes or even inferior to the Standard English versions, because most of those, who use the standard version, speak with a certain regional accent, normally in order to show their conversational partners where they are from.

2.4. Attitudes Towards Different Englishes

Since nowadays, English has more non-native than native speakers (Trudgill and Hannah, 2008), it comes as no surprise that, through the contact of English with native languages, new

vocabulary was acquired and the original variety of English was automatically changed. Like most bigger changes, this also triggered certain negative attitudes and prejudices (Jenkins, 2009).

According to Jenkins (2009), many within the Inner Circle, both laypeople and linguists, consider that the new varieties are a result of fossilization. They think that the language learning-ability of those, for whom English is a foreign language, has ceased and that that is the reason that they cannot achieve full potential and sound more native-like. As she continues to explain, the main problem is that many people think that foreigners have a certain variety like, e.g. Standard British or Standard American English, as their target varieties and that they want to sound as native-like as possible.

Some speakers, even when speaking a foreign language, might wish to preserve their accent and they wish to be associated with their national speech community. (Jenkins, 2009). They might want to mark their speech in order to show that they too have a variety of English, which is theirs and not the property of others (Carter and Nunan, 2001).

There are people, who might feel proud that their mother language is so widely spread and used, but some might not be satisfied with the way people from other countries are using 'their' language. Since so many people are using English, it is important to be aware of the fact that English is shared by many, i.e. it belongs to everyone who uses it and everybody has the right to make it their own and use it as they please (Crystal, 2003).

As Jenkins concluded (2009), just because a certain variety of English does not sound exactly the same as the one spoken within the Inner Circle, it cannot be automatically considered wrong. Interestingly enough, even though the varieties of English used within the Outer Circle have become nativized, i.e. they have developed their own standardized version of English, they are still considered non-native, which definitely should not be the case.

Crystal (2003) sees the future of English positively. He expects that a new variety of English might arise, the 'World Standard Spoken English' (WSSE), which would be a mixture of all Englishes and which would enable an easy communication between its users, regardless where they are coming from. He goes on to explain that most people are already "multidialectal" and that they will be able to use a local variety of English when speaking with their family and friends, but when using it for, e.g. business, they will be able to switch to 'World Standard Spoken English'.

2.5. English as a Foreign Language in Education

"TESOL is an acronym which stands for Teaching English to speakers of other languages and is a 'blanket' term covering situations in which English is taught as an L2, as well as those in which it is taught as a foreign language" (Carter and Nunan, 2001:1).

Today even within the educational system, the desired outcome of learning English as a second or foreign language is to achieve an as native-like as possible accent, particularly the Standard British or Standard American variety of English. Even the tests measure the learner's competence in relation to native-speaker norms. It is also, for some reason, considered better to be taught by a native-speaker of a certain language. Students, for whom English is a foreign language, are still being tested against the native speaker norms, therefore, what is being tested is not the student's competence, but the students' ability to achieve a native-like status (Jenkins, 2009).

Some countries might choose to teach Standard American English because the British variety was used by their colonizers, some, on the other hand, might use a certain variety because of the geographical proximity of the country where that variety is used and some individuals might have their own personal reasons for choosing a certain variety (Carter and Nunan, 2001). In schools and universities in Europe, the Standard English version was taught because it was used by educated speakers in England, but it came to a shift because some students studied abroad, even in the United States, so that it made no sense anymore to force a certain standardized variety on them, because those who studied abroad had already acquired a certain variety of English (Trudgill and Hannah, 2008).

A new problem arose, especially for the teachers of English as a Second or Foreign language. Since they regularly have to deal with varieties of language, which are a mixture of the local language and a certain or multiple standardized version(s) of English, they have to decide how much they will allow to be used in the classroom and generally if they will force a purely standardized variety of English as the target for their learners. (Crystal, 2003).

It is important for foreign language learning and teaching that not just the teachers but also their students learn not about the English language, but about Englishes in general, together with the differences between the varieties. As Jenkins (2009:173) mentions, the main reasons for that is that a non-native speaker of English would be able to "reflect his or her own sociolinguistic reality, rather than that of a usually distant native speaker", but also that the learners have to be aware of different varieties, so that, when speaking with a certain non-

native speaker of English, they can adjust their speech in order to make the communication a success.

2.6. Teaching English Pronunciation

In teaching pronunciation, the teachers' role is as important as the learners'. Teachers should help learners become more aware of their pronunciation, i.e. help them trully hear the sounds they are producing, as well as give them feedback. The learners' main role is to put enough effort into the learning process so that he or she would be able to achieve their goal. Even if the teacher were highly skilled and would do everything possible to help the learners, it would not be possible for learners to improve their pronunciation if they are not aware of the sounds they are producing or if they are simply not interested in improving it (Kenworthy, 1987).

As Kenworthy (1987) further explains, once learners become more aware of the way they pronounce words in English, they will automatically become more aware of the fact that their pronunciation differs from the one produced by a native speaker and in such a case it is of utmost importance that the teachers explain to their learners that their main goal should not be an as native-like as possible pronunciation, but intelligibility, i.e. 'understandability'.

In order to do that, it is important to make the learners familiar with the fact that there are many native and non-native English accents in the world and that, just because something sounds unfamiliar, it is not necessarily wrong in any way. Another important thing is, to explain that intelligibility simply means that the speaker is easily understandable and that that is not necessarily linked to a certain familiar accent (Kenworthy, 1987).

Kenworthy (1987) also names some important factors that can affect pronunciation learning:

- The native language – The more differences there are between the L1 and L2, the more difficult it will be for the learner to acquire a native-like pronunciation.
- The age factor – It is still commonly believed that a learner can only achieve a native-like accent if he or she started acquiring a foreign language at the early stages in life.
- Amount of exposure – The amount of exposure to L2 is also considered an important factor.

- Phonetic ability – It is also believed that there are certain people who are simply better at acquiring foreign languages than others.

- Attitude and identitiy - A learner might wish keep his foreign accent, even if it is strong, just in order to show the listeners where he is coming from.

- The learner's motivation and concern for good pronunciation.

As she concludes, a speaker's accent only becomes a problem if it leads to misunderstanding, i.e. difficulties in communication. Most teachers nowadays, are aware of that and they already put emphasis on intelligibility and not on achieving a certain native-like accent. Even though pronunciation does play an important role in Foreign language teaching, the way the learners' produce sounds is considered less important than the learners' ability to explain themselves clearly and to interpret another speakers' message. Such a way of teaching already enables non-native learners of becoming successful users of International English, i.e. becoming good communicators whether when speaking with native or non-native speakers of English.

3. Previous Studies

Since the rapid spread of English and thus the emerging of many new varieties of non-native English accents, there were also more and more studies conducted in order to find out what people's attitudes were towards that new linguistic and social phenomenon.

In Croatia, unfortunately, such studies are few and far between. An important study, and also the base of this diploma paper, is the study done by Josipović-Smojver and Stanojević (2013). The participants, in this case university students, secondary school students and employees of a large company in Zagreb, Croatia, were given a questionnaire with questions regarding their attitudes towards non-native English accents, but also their attitudes towards teachers' accents. They came to the conclusion that most participants would, on the one hand, want to sound as native-like as possible, but on the other, the majority would not mind having a slight or even a strong foreign accent while speaking English, whether their conversational partner are non-native or native speakers of English. They also came to the conclusion that most participants slightly prefer having a native teacher, thinking that their accent would, in such a case, sound more native-like.

In another study, also conducted in Croatia, by Josipović-Smojver, Stanojević and Borenić (2012), they came to the same conclusion. The participants were also university students, secondary school students and employees of a large company in Zagreb, Croatia, but the conductors of the research studied their diaries, interviewed their teachers, did a group interview and also a survey. The results again showed that the participants are tolerant towards slight foreign accents. It also shows that regardless of their tolerance towards foreign accents, they still idealized a certain accent and they would want to sound as native-like as possible.

Unlike in Croatia, similar studies are done more frequently in North America. In a study conducted in the United States, a group of 37 English language learners and 10 American undergraduate students, were given a one-minute passage, read by four speakers with different accents of English, to listen to. The participants had to attempt to identify whether the accent they heard was General American, British English, Chinese English or Mexican English and state their preferences and opinions about each. The results show that, even though, the learners do prefer a native accent, only a few were able to truly differentiate between the accents they heard (Scales et al., 2006).

Another interesting research done in the United States, used a text presented as an outgoing answering-machine message for a doctor's office. The text was read by seven native speakers of a north Midwestern variety of U.S. English and ten native speakers of Korean. The recordings were presented to thirty-nine native speakers of English, i.e. university students and the results show that it was difficult for them to identify the accents they heard. Interestingly enough, even though they were not able to identify the ethnicity of the Korean speakers, those speakers were still evaluated more negatively than the native speakers (Lindemann, 2003).

A study done in Canada, was conducted to examine the relationship between accentedness and perceived comprehensibility and intelligibility. Eighteen native speakers of English were given recordings of speech produced by ten Mandarin native speakers and two English native speakers to listen to and transcribe. The results show that the participants had no problems understanding the speech produced by the non-native speakers because they were able to easily transcribe what they heard, but they still rated such accents as heavily accented. It comes to show that a heavy accent and intelligibility and comprehensibility are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Munro and Derwing, 1995).

There are also studies which focus on students' attitudes toward native- and non-native teachers. Such a study, done in the United states, had university students listen to audio recordings read by three native English speakers and three non-native English speakers and afterwards complete an attitude survey on each variety. The majority of the participants were unable to identify whether the accents were native or non-native. The teachers, who were taught to be native speakers of English but not necessarily were native speakers, were rated more positively (Kelch and Santana-Williamson, 2002).

A very similar research, also conducted in the United states, showed similar results. The participants had to identify specific native and non-native accents and rate them. The results show that native speakers of English did manage to differentiate between most of the native and non-native accents, but not all of them, unlike non-native speakers of English, who were not as successful. However, generally, the participants were unable to identify the accents. Futher results also show that comprehensibility and acceptability as a teacher correlate with the familiarity of the accent, i.e. if an accent, whether it is a native or a non-native accent is more familiar to a person, he or she will consider it to be easily understood and be more tolerant towards that speaker (Ballard, 2013).

4. Croatian EFL Learners' Attitudes Towards Various English Accents

4.1. Aim and Purpose

The aim of this research is to find out if Croatian students are aware of their accent, what kind of accent they expect their teacher to have, what they think of various non-native English accents, but also if there is an accent that they idealize. In order to make people more comfortable while speaking a certain foreign language, even if they have a slight or strong foreign accent, it is very important to find out if they prefer a certain accent and in which situations they might feel more or less comfortable using it. The results of such studies are also important for EFL teachers because by implementing such awareness in schools we might be able to make children more comfortable while speaking a foreign language and, therefore, make them achieve more.

4.2. Sample

The participants of this research are university students, high school students and elementary school students from Osijek and Đakovo, Croatia, who willingly took part in the research by answering a questionnaire, which was uploaded in the form of an online questionnaire for the university and the high school students and distributed in written form for the elementary school students.

There were 255 participants, of which 173 (67%) are female and 82 (32%) male. 107 (42%) of the participants are university students, 73 (28%) are high school students and 75 (29%) are elementary school students. Since at the end of the questionnaire they also had to give some background information about themselves, the analysis shows that 106 (41%) of the participants come from a small town, 95 (37%) from a big city and 54 (21%) from a village. Another important way of grouping the participants was according to how often they speak English. The majority, i.e. 193 (75%) speak English every week, 24 (9%) do it once a month, 23 (9%) do it a few times a year and 15 (5%) of the participants hardly ever speak English.

4.3. Instruments and Procedure

The instrument used in this research is an anonymous questionnaire, which was, for the university and high school students, posted on the internet, primarily on various pages on Facebook. For the elementary students, who, because of their age, might not have access to a computer or the internet, the questionnaire was distributed in written form in their classrooms, with the permission of their teacher and the school principal. The questionnaire is a modified version of the questionnaire by Josipović-Smojver and Stanojević (2013) and written in Croatian. The participants had to agree or disagree with the given statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) in all questions, but two. One of the questions was a yes/no question and the other had a 5-point Likert scale, but the participants had to rate various non-native English accents according to their attractiveness (1 = least attractive; 5 = most attractive). The results were analyzed using SPSS. In addition to descriptive statistics, One-way ANOVA analysis together with Scheffe's post hoc test and the independent-samples t-test were used. The English and the Croatian version of the questionnaire can be found in the Appendix.

4.4. Results

4.4.1. Attitudes Towards English Pronunciation

The questions in the first section of the questionnaire should reveal the participants' general attitude toward English pronunciation, i.e. if pronunciation is of any importance to them and if they are aware of their own accent.

The descriptive analysis of the research shows that the majority of participants considers pronunciation to be important. When speaking English, 169 (66%) of the participants find it important to sound fluent, 176 (69%) want their pronunciation to be correct and 135 (52%) want their grammar to be correct (see Table 1). This comes to show that they not only care about the way they pronounce words in English, but also that they think about pronunciation in general.

Table 1: What the participants consider important while speaking English

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St.D.
a. that I am fluent	255	1,00	5,00	4,52	,78
b. that my pronunciation is correct	255	1,00	5,00	4,60	,68
c. that my grammar is correct	255	1,00	5,00	4,29	,91

When asked if they would mind having a strong accent while speaking with native English speakers, 64 (25%) of the participants neither agree nor disagree, but 63 (24%) strongly agree and 57 (22%) partially agree (see Table 2). It can be concluded that the participants' attitudes lean towards agree but, because of the high number of them who neither agree nor disagree, it could be that they are unsure or never thought about such a situation so that the result is unclear. The participants also had to rate if they would generally mind having a foreign accent while speaking with native English speakers and 82 (32%) strongly disagree, but 69 (27%) neither agree nor disagree (see Table 2). We can say that most participants do not mind having a non-native accent while speaking with native speakers of English, but since many of them were unable to give a specific answer, it could come to show that this is not something most people have a formed opinion about. It could be due to the fact that they never had the opportunity to speak to native speakers of English so that they never had to think about their accent while doing so.

Table 2: Accented speaking while speaking with native speakers of English

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St.D.
a. I do not mind having a strong foreign accent	255	1,00	5,00	3,31	1,32
b. I do not want to speak with a foreign accent	255	1,00	5,00	2,67	1,44

They also had to express their attitudes toward their accent while speaking to non-native speakers of English and 78 (30%) stated that they do not mind having a strong foreign accent, but 65 (25%) neither agree nor disagree (see Table 3). When asked if they would mind generally having a foreign accent while speaking with non-native speakers of English 77 (30%) strongly disagree and 65 (25%) again neither agree nor disagree (see Table 3). This generally comes to show that they are not as prejudiced against non-native accents as some might expect. Most of them do not mind having a non-native accent at all, but still because

many of them neither agree nor disagree, it could be that they simply never had the opportunity to form a clear opinion about such a topic.

Table 3: Accented speaking while speaking with non-native speakers of English

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St.D.
a. I do not mind having a strong foreign accent	255	1,00	5,00	3,44	1,33
b. I do not want to speak with a foreign accent	255	1,00	5,00	2,74	1,44

They were also given the opportunity to express their opinion on whether it is easier for them to understand non-native speakers of English and 82 (32%) once again neither agree nor disagree, but 53 (20%) strongly agree and 50 (19%) partially agree (see Table 4). Those results come to show that of those participants, who do have an opinion about this particular item, the majority actually agrees with the statement. Even the result for the next item, where they had to state if they prefer communicating with non-native speakers of English, 70 (27%) neither agree nor disagree, 53 (20%) strongly disagree, but 47 (18%) strongly agree and 47 (18%) partially agree (see Table 4). The results are unclear, but still a high number of the participants does prefer speaking with non-native speakers of English. The reason behind it could be that they had more opportunities to speak with other non-native speakers, even with their colleagues and classmates, so that they are used to it and because of those opportunities, they also had the time to somewhat form an opinion about this topic.

Table 4: The participants' preference regarding their conversational partners

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St.D.
4. I find it easier to understand non-native speakers	255	1,00	5,00	3,20	1,28
5. I prefer speaking with non-native speakers	255	1,00	5,00	2,98	1,38

The One-Way ANOVA analysis and Scheffe's post hoc test was done in order to find out if there were any significant differences between the answers of specific groups, which were formed based on their educational level, place they are coming from, how often they speak English and their gender.

Table 5: Differences between the answers to questions 1-5 within the group regarding the participants' educational level

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	F	Sig.
1. Importance: a. fluency	university	4.63	.58	1.81	.165
	high school	4.45	.89		
	elementary school	4.44	.90		
1. Importance: b. correct pronunciation	university	4.71	.56	3.03	.050
	high school	4.47	.81		
	elementary school	4.45	.68		
1. Importance: c. correct grammar	university	4.45	.75	4.01	.019
	high school	4.06	.94		
	elementary school	4.29	1.04		
2. Speaking with natives: a. having a strong Croatian accent	university	2.74	1.28	21.02	.000
	high school	3.56	1.17		
	elementary school	3.89	1.21		
2. Speaking with natives: b. not wanting a foreign accent	university	2.76	1.45	.80	.447
	high school	2.49	1.27		
	elementary school	2.70	1.59		
3. Speaking with non-natives: a. having a strong Croatian accent	university	3.08	1.35	7.17	.001
	high school	3.71	1.24		
	elementary school	3.70	1.28		
3. Speaking with non-natives: b. not wanting a foreign accent	university	2.76	1.43	.10	.902
	high school	2.68	1.37		
	elementary school	2.78	1.56		
4. Easier understanding non-native than native speakers	university	2.81	1.19	13.93	.000
	high school	3.19	1.13		
	elementary school	3.78	1.34		
5. Prefering to speak with other non-natives	university	2.63	1.25	12.49	.000
	high school	2.86	1.42		
	elementary school	3.61	1.31		

Depending on their level of education, high school students scored lowest (M=4.06; SD=0.94) and university students highest (M=4.45; SD=0.75) on the importance of grammar while speaking English (see Table 5). The one-way ANOVA analysis and Scheffe's post hoc test show that the difference between the groups university students and high school students is significant ($F(2, 252) = 4.01$, $p < .01$) (see Table 6). On the question whether they would mind having a strong foreign accent while speaking with native speakers of English, university students scored lowest (M=2.74; SD=1.28) and elementary school students highest (M=3.89; SD=1.21) (see Table 5). The analysis shows that there is a significant difference between the university students and high school students and between the university students and elementary school students ($F(2,252) = 21.02$, $p < .001$) (see Table 6). As for the question whether or not they would mind having a strong foreign accent while speaking with non-

native English speakers, university students scored lowest (M=3.08; SD=1.35) and high school students highest (M=3.71; SD=1.24) (see Table 5). A statistically significant difference was found between university students and elementary school students ($F(2,252) = 7.17$, $p < .001$) (see Table 6). Participants that had the highest score on the geustion whether it is easier for them to understand non-native English speakers were, elementary school students (M=3.78; SD=1.34), whereas university students had the lowest score (M=2.81; SD=1.19) (see Table 5). A significant difference was found between the university students and elementary school students, as well as between the answers given by the high school students and elementary students ($F(2,252) = 13.93$, $p < .001$) (see Table 6). Finally, there was also a significant difference between the elementary school students and university students on the question if they would prefer speaking to non-native speakers of English ($F(2,252) = 12.49$, $p < .001$) (see Table 6) on which the elementary school students scored highest (M=3.61; SD=1.31) and the university students lowest (M=2.63; SD=1.25) (see Table 5).

Table 6: Scheffe's post hoc test for questions 1-5 within the group regarding the participants' educational level

Dependent variable	(I) Level of education	(J) Level of education	Sig.
1. Importance: c. correct grammar	university students	high school students	.019
2. Speaking with natives: a. having a strong Croatian accent	university students	high school students	.000
	university students	elementary school students	.000
3. Speaking with non-natives: a. having a strong Croatian accent	university students	high school students	.007
	university students	elementary school students	.007
4. Easier understanding non-native than native speakers	university students	elementary school students	.000
	high school students	elementary school students	.014
5. Prefering to speak with other non-natives	university students	elementary school students	.000
	high school students	elementary school students	.003

Regarding the fact whether they come from a big city, a small town or a village, a significant difference between their answers can be found only for the item where they had to express their opinion on whether they prefer speaking with non-native speakers of English. Those coming from a big city scored highest (M=3.27; SD=1.40) and those coming from a small town lowest (M=2.66; SD=1.31) (see Table 7), with a significant difference between their answers ($F(2,252) = 5.22$, $p < .010$) (see Table 8).

Table 7: Differences between the answers to questions 1-5 within the group regarding the place the participants are coming from

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	F	Sig.
1. Importance: a. fluency	village	4.46	.74	.41	.662
	small town	4.57	.76		
	big city	4.50	.83		
1. Importance: b. correct pronunciation	village	4.50	.66	1.65	.194
	small town	4.68	.66		
	big city	4.55	.71		
1. Importance: c. correct grammar	village	4.31	.79	.06	.938
	small town	4.27	.91		
	big city	4.31	.99		
2. Speaking with natives: a. having a strong Croatian accent	village	3.09	1.08	1.69	.187
	small town	3.27	1.39		
	big city	3.49	1.35		
2. Speaking with natives: b. not wanting a foreign accent	village	2.57	1.46	.55	.576
	small town	2.78	1.33		
	big city	2.60	1.55		
3. Speaking with non-natives: a. having a strong Croatian accent	village	3.33	1.35	.28	.756
	small town	3.50	1.33		
	big city	3.45	1.32		
3. Speaking with non-natives: b. not wanting a foreign accent	village	2.66	1.56	.19	.823
	small town	2.81	1.32		
	big city	2.72	1.52		
4. Easier understanding non-native than native speakers	village	3.12	1.18	.53	.585
	small town	3.15	1.15		
	big city	3.31	1.47		
5. Prefering to speak with other non-natives	village	3.11	1.36	5.22	.006
	small town	2.66	1.31		
	big city	3.27	1.40		

Table 8: Scheffe's post hoc test for questions 1-5 within the group regarding the place the participants are coming from

Dependent variable	(I) Level of education	(J) Level of education	Sig.
5. Prefering to speak with other non-natives	small town	big city	.008

The participants were also grouped regarding how often they speak English – hardly ever, several times a year, once a month or every week. As for the importance of fluency when speaking English, the participants who speak English every week scored highest (M=4.63;

SD=0.67) and the participants who hardly ever do it scored lowest (M=4.06; SD=1.03), with a significant difference between their answers ($F(2,252) = 5.77$, $p \leq .001$) (see Table 10). Similar results were found regarding the importance of correct pronunciation. Those participants who speak English every week again scored highest (M=4.69; SD=0.58) and those who hardly ever do it scored lowest (M=4.20; SD=0.77), with a significant difference between their answers ($F(2,252) = 5.49$, $p \leq .001$) (see Table 10). On the question if they prefer speaking to non-native English speakers, the participants who hardly ever speak English scored highest (M=4.00; SD=1.06). After them come those who speak English several times a year (M=3.13; SD=1.42), then those who do it every week (M=2.91; SD=1.36) and those who speak English once a month scored lowest (M=2.79; SD=1.44) (see Table 9). A significant difference was found in the answers given by those who hardly ever speak English and those who do it every week ($F(3,251) = 3.17$, $p < .05$) (see Table 10).

Table 9: Differences between the answers to questions 1-5 within the group regarding how often the participants speak English

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	F	Sig.
1. Importance: a. fluency	hardly ever	4.06	1.03	5.77	.001
	a few times a year	4.21	.79		
	once a month	4.20	1.14		
	every week	4.63	.67		
1. Importance: b. correct pronunciation	hardly ever	4.20	.77	5.49	.001
	a few times a year	4.30	.82		
	once a month	4.37	1.01		
	every week	4.69	.58		
1. Importance: c. correct grammar	hardly ever	3.93	1.22	3.35	.020
	a few times a year	3.95	1.26		
	once a month	4.04	1.12		
	every week	4.39	.79		
2. Speaking with natives: a. having a strong Croatian accent	hardly ever	3.93	1.16	2.54	.057
	a few times a year	3.69	1.29		
	once a month	2.91	1.24		
	every week	3.27	1.33		
2. Speaking with natives: b. not wanting a foreign accent	hardly ever	3.26	1.48	1.42	.237
	a few times a year	2.95	1.46		
	once a month	2.45	1.53		
	every week	2.61	1.42		
3. Speaking with non-natives: a. having a strong Croatian accent	hardly ever	4.06	1.03	1.16	.324
	a few times a year	3.39	1.23		
	once a month	3.45	1.31		
	every week	3.40	1.36		
3. Speaking with non-natives: b. not	hardly ever	3.20	1.56	2.15	.094
	a few times a year	3.34	1.33		

wanting a foreign accent	once a month	2.58	1.58		
	every week	2.66	1.42		
4. Easier understanding non-native than native speakers	hardly ever	3.60	1.18	.56	.637
	a few times a year	3.26	1.38		
	once a month	3.08	1.24		
	every week	3.18	1.28		
5. Prefering to speak with other non-natives	hardly ever	4.00	1.06	3.17	.025
	a few times a year	3.13	1.42		
	once a month	2.79	1.44		
	every week	2.91	1.36		

Table 10: Scheffe's post hoc test for questions 1-5 within the group regarding how often the participants speak English

Dependent variable	(I) Level of education	(J) Level of education	Sig.
1. Importance: a. fluency	hardly ever	every week	.055
1. Importance: b. correct pronunciation	hardly ever	every week	.057
5. Prefering to speak with other non-natives	hardly ever	every week	.035

No significant differences could be found for the items in this section with regard to the participants' gender (see Table 11).

Table 11: Independent-sample t-test showing the difference between genders for questions 1-5

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	t	Sig.
1. Importance: a. fluency	male	4.57	.75	.66	.429
	female	4.50	.80		
1. Importance: b. correct pronunciation	male	4.50	.70	-1.61	.079
	female	4.64	.67		
1. Importance: c. correct grammar	male	4.15	.99	-1.67	.355
	female	4.364	.86		
2. Speaking with natives: a. having a strong Croatian accent	male	3.41	1.24	.80	.266
	female	3.27	1.36		
2. Speaking with natives: b. not wanting a foreign accent	male	2.59	1.43	-.55	.939
	female	2.70	1.45		

3. Speaking with non-natives: a. having a strong Croatian accent	male	3.50	1.36	.43	.527
	female	3.42	1.32		
3. Speaking with non-natives: b. not wanting a foreign accent	male	2.82	1.47	.60	.774
	female	2.71	1.44		
4. Easier understanding non-native than native speakers	male	3.68	1.25	4.19	.226
	female	2.98	1.24		
5. Prefering to speak with other non-natives	male	3.01	1.38	.19	.890
	female	2.97	1.38		

4.4.2. Attitudes Towards Pronunciation Improvement

In the second section, the participants were given questions regarding the improvement of their pronunciation, together with potential reasons behind it.

On the question if they would, if possible, perfect their English pronunciation so as to pass for a native speaker 202 (79%) stated that they would, which comes to show that they are aware of their accent or accents in general and that they would want to work towards a certain goal which in this case would be their interpretation of the 'ideal accent'.

Those, who stated that they would want to improve their pronunciation, had to then rate various potential reasons. The most agreed upon reasons behind it are that a better or more native sounding accent improves the general impression of the speaker, to which 134 (52%) of the participants strongly agree, and because it is important for (future) employment, to which 113 (44%) of the participants strongly agree. When it comes to improving their accent in order to impress their conversational partners, 54 (21%) of the participants neither agree nor disagree, but 52 (20%) strongly agree and 42 (16%) strongly disagree. Such a result comes to show that when it comes to the motivation to impress your conversational partners, it is a subjective matter and it depends on the individual. Most of them (22%, n=52) also state that they neither agree nor disagree to the statement that they would improve their pronunciation because they are simply perfectionists, but since 50 (19%) strongly agree and 46 (18%) partially agree, it can be concluded that most consider that reason a valid one.

Table 12: Reasons for wanting to improve their pronunciation

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St.D.
a. it improves the general impression of me	204	1,00	5,00	4,52	,79
b. I like to impress my conversational partners	204	1,00	5,00	3,06	1,45
c. it is important for my (future) employment	204	1,00	5,00	4,16	1,17
d. I am generally a perfectionist	204	1,00	5,00	3,30	1,34

Those, who stated that they would not want to improve their pronunciation, were also given various reasons to rate. Many of those participants partially agree that native speakers dislike foreigners who try too hard to sound like them (27%, n=14) and that pronunciation improvement is a waste of time (29%, n=15). When rating the reason that they want to preserve their national identity through their accent even when speaking a foreign language, 17 (33%) of the participants strongly agree, but 11 (21%) also strongly disagree with the statement. Even for the last item, which states that they would not want to improve their pronunciation in order to show off, the opinions are divided, 19 (37%) of the participants strongly disagree and 11 (21%) strongly agree.

Table 13: Reasons for not wanting to improve their pronunciation

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St.D.
a. native speakers dislike foreigners who try too hard to sound like them	51	1,00	5,00	3,00	1,41
b. I want to preserve my national identity	51	1,00	5,00	3,29	1,56
c. it is a waste of time	51	1,00	5,00	3,43	1,34
d. people will think that I am putting on airs	51	1,00	5,00	2,72	1,60

The analysis showed that there were some significant differences in the answers regarding the educational level of the participants for the items regarding why they would not want to improve their English pronunciation. The elementary school students were the ones who agreed more (M=4.00; SD=1.47) with wanting to preserve their national identity even while speaking a foreign language, and the university students agreed less (M=2.60; SD=1.60) (see Table 14). The significant difference was found in the answers between the university students and elementary school students and university students and high school students ($F(2,48) = 5.74$, $p < .010$) (see Table 15). The elementary school students also had the highest

score (M=3.83; SD=1.33) when expressing their opinion on whether or not they would want to show off with their accent and the university students were the ones with the lowest score (M=2.32; SD=1.54) (see Table 14), with a significant difference between their answers ($F(2,48) = 4.32$, $p < .050$) (see Table 15).

Table 14: Differences between the answers to questions 6-7 within the group regarding the participants' educational level

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	F	Sig.
6. Wanting to improve their pronunciation	university	.75	.43	.92	.400
	high school	.79	.40		
	elementary school	.84	.36		
7. A YES: improves the general impression	university	4.45	.87	.74	.478
	high school	4.61	.71		
	elementary school	4.55	.73		
7. A YES: wanting to impress	university	2.95	1.45	1.91	.150
	high school	2.91	1.35		
	elementary school	3.36	1.52		
7. A YES: important for job	university	4.09	1.21	.38	.678
	high school	4.15	1.11		
	elementary school	4.26	1.18		
7. A YES: being a perfectionist	university	3.54	1.29	2.30	.102
	high school	3.15	1.37		
	elementary school	3.12	1.34		
7.B NO: natives dislike foreigners who try too hard to sound like them	university	2.68	1.37	1.72	.189
	high school	3.07	1.26		
	elementary school	3.58	1.56		
7.B NO: wanting to preserve their national identity	university	2.60	1.60	5.74	.006
	high school	3.92	.99		
	elementary school	4.00	1.47		
7.B NO: it is a waste of time	university	3.24	1.26	3.06	.056
	high school	4.14	.94		
	elementary school	3.00	1.65		
7.B NO: not wanting to put on airs	university	2.32	1.54	4.32	.019
	high school	2.50	1.55		
	elementary school	3.83	1.33		

Table 15: Scheffe's post hoc test for questions 6-7 within the group regarding the participants' educational level

Dependent variable	(I) Level of education	(J) Level of education	Sig.
7.B NO: wanting to	university students	high school students	.028

preserve their national identity	university students	elementary school students	.028
7.B NO: not wanting to put on airs	university students	elementary school students	.023

An independent-samples t-test was conducted in order to find out if there were significant differences in the answers between male and female participants. On the question, whether they would want to improve their English pronunciation, 28 (24%) males and 23 (15%) females stated that they would not want to, and according to the independent-samples t-test, there is a significant difference between their answers ($t(253) = 45.56$, $p = 0.000$). There is also a significant difference in the answers on the item that they would not want to improve their accent because it is a waste of time. The males agree more with the statement (M=3.85; SD=1.00) than the females (M=2.91; SD=1.53), and the t-test shows that the difference is of significance ($t(49) = 8.13$, $p < .010$) (see Table 16).

Table 16: Independent-sample t-test showing the difference between genders for questions 6-7

Question	**Group**	**M**	**Std. D.**	**t**	**Sig.**
6. Wanting to improve their pronunciation	male	.65	.47	-3.33	.000
	female	.85	.35		
7. A YES: improves the general impression	male	4.46	.96	-.72	.088
	female	4.55	.71		
7. A YES: wanting to impress	male	3.00	1.59	-.40	.095
	female	3.09	1.41		
7. A YES: important for job	male	4.22	1.28	.40	.482
	female	4.14	1.13		
7. A YES: being a perfectionist	male	3.27	1.29	-.16	.399
	female	3.31	1.36		
7.B NO: natives dislike foreigners who try too hard to sound like them	male	2.89	1.39	-.59	.959
	female	3.13	1.45		
7.B NO: wanting to preserve their national identity	male	3.39	1.47	.49	.113
	female	3.17	1.69		
7.B NO: it is a waste of time	male	3.85	1.00	2.5	.006
	female	2.91	1.53		

7.B NO: not wanting to put on airs	male	2.78	1.52	.29	.355
	female	2.65	1.72		

With regard to the place they are coming from (see Table 17) and how often they speak English (see Table 18), there were no significant differences to be found between the answers to the questions within this section of the questionnaire.

Table 17: Differences between the answers to questions 6-7 within the group regarding the place the participants are coming from

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	F	Sig.
6. Wanting to improve their pronunciation	village	.79	.40	.49	.612
	small town	.76	.42		
	big city	.82	.38		
7. A YES: improves the general impression	village	4.46	.70	.44	.644
	small town	4.59	.79		
	big city	4.50	.83		
7. A YES: wanting to impress	village	3.32	1.40	1.43	.240
	small town	2.87	1.41		
	big city	3.12	1.51		
7. A YES: important for job	village	4.18	1.05	.37	.686
	small town	4.08	1.21		
	big city	4.24	1.19		
7. A YES: being a perfectionist	village	3.53	1.43	.80	.447
	small town	3.25	1.31		
	big city	3.23	1.32		
7.B NO: natives dislike foreigners who try too hard to sound like them	village	2.90	1.44	.19	.826
	small town	2.91	1.23		
	big city	3.17	1.66		
7.B NO: wanting to preserve their national identity	village	3.36	1.36	.02	.978
	small town	3.30	1.49		
	big city	3.23	1.85		
7.B NO: it is a waste of time	village	4.27	.64	2.96	.061
	small town	3.17	1.33		
	big city	3.23	1.52		
7.B NO: not wanting to put on airs	village	3.18	1.72	3.14	.052
	small town	2.13	1.39		
	big city	3.23	1.60		

Table 18: Differences between the answers to questions 6-7 within the group regarding how often the participants speak English

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	F	Sig.
6. Wanting to improve their pronunciation	hardly ever	.60	.50	1.75	.157
	a few times a year	.78	.42		
	once a month	.70	.46		
	every week	.81	.38		
7. A YES: improves the general impression	hardly ever	4.55	.72	.57	.634
	a few times a year	4.50	.61		
	once a month	4.29	.98		
	every week	4.55	.79		
7. A YES: wanting to impress	hardly ever	3.77	1.09	1.54	.204
	a few times a year	3.33	1.23		
	once a month	2.58	1.54		
	every week	3.05	1.47		
7. A YES: important for job	hardly ever	4.11	.92	1.97	.119
	a few times a year	3.66	1.37		
	once a month	3.82	1.28		
	every week	4.26	1.13		
7. A YES: being a perfectionist	hardly ever	3.22	1.30	.37	.773
	a few times a year	3.00	1.23		
	once a month	3.41	1.22		
	every week	3.33	1.37		
7.B NO: natives dislike foreigners who try too hard to sound like them	hardly ever	3.50	1.51	.47	.703
	a few times a year	3.40	1.81		
	once a month	2.85	1.21		
	every week	2.87	1.40		
7.B NO: wanting to preserve their national identity	hardly ever	3.33	1.63	.24	.867
	a few times a year	3.60	1.94		
	once a month	2.85	1.46		
	every week	3.33	1.57		
7.B NO: it is a waste of time	hardly ever	2.66	1.63	.80	.498
	a few times a year	3.80	1.30		
	once a month	3.57	1.27		
	every week	3.48	1.32		
7.B NO: not wanting to put on airs	hardly ever	3.50	1.76	1.74	.171
	a few times a year	3.80	1.30		
	once a month	2.14	1.46		
	every week	2.54	1.58		

4.4.3. Attitudes Towards Teachers' Pronunciation

In the third section they had to express their attitudes towards the pronunciation of teachers. Most of the participants think that a teacher has to have a native-like accent, with 107 (42%) who strongly agree and 84 (32%) who partially agree with the statement. Regarding a teacher

with a slight foreign accent, 91 (35%) partially agree that a slight accent would not pose a problem and 62 (24%) strongly agree to the statement, but 67 (26%) neither agree nor disagree. A teacher with a strong foreign accent could, according to the participants' opinion, pose a problem, with 88 (34%) of the participants who strongly disagree with the statement. Sixty of the participants (23%) neither agree nor disagree, which can mean that they do not have an opinion about that topic or that they simply do not know what is exactly meant by a strong foreign accent. Overall, the participants are obviously very tolerant regarding a teachers' accent, with most of them agreeing that, even though a close to native-like accent would be desirable, having a slight foreign accent is not a problem.

Table 19: Attitudes towards teachers' accent

	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**St.D.**
a. should have a native-like accent	255	1,00	5,00	4,01	1,10
b. can have a slight foreign accent	255	1,00	5,00	3,64	1,10
c. can have a strong foreign accent	255	1,00	5,00	2,48	1,37

Thus, unsurprisingly, 107 (42%) of the participants strongly agree and 84 (32%) partially agree to the statement that their accent would be better if they were taught by native speakers of English.

Table 20: Preference regarding teachers

	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**St.D.**
My pronounciation would be better if I were taught by a native English speaker	255	1,00	5,00	3,59	1,41

There were some significant differences in the answers withing the group regarding their level of education. On the item stating that a teacher has to have an accent, which is as native-like as possible, the university students scored highest (M=4.21; SD=0.89) and the high school students lowest (M=3.71; SD=1.20) (see Table 21), with a significant difference between their answers ($F(2,252) = 4.65$, $p \leq 0.01$) (see Table 22). On the statement that the teacher can have a slight foreign accent, the elementary school students had the highest score (M=3.86; SD=1.21) and the university students the lowest (M=3.43; SD=1.10) (see Table 21), with a significant difference between their answers ($F(2,252) = 3.60$, $p < .05$) (see Table 22).

Furthermore, there was also a significant difference between the answers of the university students and high school students and also the university students and elementary school students ($F(2,252) = 23.52$, $p < .001$) on the statement that a teacher can have a strong foreign accent (see Table 22). On that particular item, the elementary school students scored highest (M=3.04; SD=1.30) and the university students lowest (M=1.85; SD=1.15) (see Table 21).

Table 21: Differences between the answers to questions 8-9 within the group regarding the participants' educational level

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	F	Sig.
8. Teacher: should have a native-like accent	university	4.21	.89	4.65	.010
	high school	3.71	1.20		
	elementary school	4.04	1.29		
8. Teacher: can have a slight foreign accent	university	3.43	1.10	3.60	.029
	high school	3.72	.96		
	elementary school	3.86	1.21		
8. Teacher: can have a strong foreign accent	university	1.85	1.15	23.52	.000
	high school	2.83	1.36		
	elementary school	3.04	1.30		
9. My accent would be better if my teacher was a native speaker	university	3.55	1.46	1.08	.340
	high school	3.79	1.37		
	elementary school	3.46	1.38		

Table 22: Scheffe's post hoc test for questions 8-9 within the group regarding the participants' educational level

Dependent variable	(I) Level of education	(J) Level of education	Sig.
8. Teacher: should have a native-like accent	university students	high school students	.011
8. Teacher: can have a slight foreign accent	university students	elementary school students	.037
8. Teacher: can have a strong foreign accent	university students	high school students	.000
	university students	elementary school students	.000

There were no significant differences in the answers on the questionnaire items from this section between the groups regarding the place the participants are coming from (see Table 23) and between male and female participants (see Table 24).

Table 23: Differences between the answers to questions 8-9 within the group regarding the place the participants are from

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	F	Sig.
8. Teacher: should have a native-like accent	village	3.90	1.16	.67	.510
	small town	3.99	1.08		
	big city	4.11	1.09		
8. Teacher: can have a slight foreign accent	village	3.64	1.01	.24	.780
	small town	3.59	1.07		
	big city	3.70	1.20		
8. Teacher: can have a strong foreign accent	village	2.40	1.36	1.03	.356
	small town	2.37	1.36		
	big city	2.64	1.38		
9. My accent would be better if my teacher was a native speaker	village	3.59	1.40	.00	.992
	small town	3.58	1.44		
	big city	3.61	1.40		

Table 24: Differences between the answers to questions 8-9 within the group regarding the participants' gender

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	t	Sig.
8. Teacher: should have a native-like accent	male	3.73	1.13	.83	.920
	female	3.60	1.09		
8. Teacher: can have a slight foreign accent	male	3.98	1.14	-.31	.982
	female	4.03	1.08		
8. Teacher: can have a strong foreign accent	male	2.70	1.38	1.81	.893
	female	2.37	1.35		
9. My accent would be better if my teacher was a native speaker	male	3.73	1.33	1.05	.172
	female	3.53	1.45		

4.4.4. Attitudes Towards Various Non-Native Accents

In the fourth section of the questionnaire, the participants were given a few widely recognizable non-native English accent to rate from 1 (least attractive) to 5 (most attractive).

Unsurprisingly, the French and the Italian accent are considered most attractive. The French accent is considered very attractive by 67 participants (26%), attractive by 63 (24%) and the most attractive accent by 48 (18%) participants. The Italian accent is considered attractive by 68 (26%), the most attractive by 52 (20%) and a very attractive accent by 51 (19%) of the participants.

Another result, which also came as no surprise is that the Indian and the Russian accent are considered least attractive. The Indian accent is considered the least attractive by 95 (37%), somewhat attractive by 72 (28%) and attractive by only 54 (21%) of the participants. Even though the Russian accent is similar to a foreign language a Croat might have while speaking English, 78 (30%) still think it is the least attractive accent. Only 58 participants (22%) think it is an attractive accent and 51 (20%) consider it to be somewhat attractive.

The ambivalence which can be seen in the rating of the German accent is somewhat surprising. The majority did state that they consider German to be the least attractive (31%, n=79) but 48 participants (18%) think that it is an attractive accent, 44 (17%) think it is the most attractive, 42 (16%) think it is very attractive and 42 (16%) think that it is a somewhat attractive accent. Such an ambivalence could be due to the fact that, since German is together with English the most frequently taught foreign languages in schools, many students have a very strong opinion about it. They normally either love it or hate it, regardless of the proficiency in the language.

Table 25: Attitudes towards various non-native English accents

	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**St.D.**
a. French accent	255	1,00	5,00	3,15	1,35
b. Indian accent	255	1,00	5,00	2,15	1,15
c. German accent	255	1,00	5,00	2,72	1,48
d. Russian accent	255	1,00	5,00	2,58	1,39
e. Italian accent	255	1,00	5,00	3,09	1,37

Regarding the level of education, there were some significant differences in the answers within the group. While rating the German accent, elementary school students scored highest (M=3.65; SD=1.35) and university students lowest (M=2.18; SD=1.27) (see Table 26), with a significant difference between the answers of the university students and elementary school students and also between the answers of the high school students and the elementary school students ($F(2,252) = 26.76$, $p < .001$) (see Table 27). Even while rating the Italian accent, the elementary school students had the highest score (M=3.45; SD=1.43) and the university students the lowest (M=2.74; SD=1.31) (see Table 26), with a significant difference between their answers ($F(2,252) = 6.54$, $p < .01$) (see Table 27).

Table 26: Differences between the rating of for various non-native English accents within the group regarding the participants' educational level

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	F	Sig.
French accent	university	3.00	1.29	1.29	.276
	high school	3.19	1.36		
	elementary school	3.33	1.42		
Indian accent	university	2.24	1.13	.56	.571
	high school	2.09	1.18		
	elementary school	2.08	1.15		
German accent	university	2.18	1.27	26.76	.000
	high school	2.56	1.45		
	elementary school	3.65	1.35		
Russian accent	university	2.42	1.45	2.19	.114
	high school	2.86	1.38		
	elementary school	2.58	1.30		
Italian accent	university	2.74	1.31	6.54	.002
	high school	3.21	1.29		
	elementary school	3.45	1.43		

Table 27: Scheffe's post hoc test for various non-native English accents within the group regarding the participants' educational level

Dependent variable	(I) Level of education	(J) Level of education	Sig.
German accent	university students	elementary school students	.000
	high school students	elementary school students	.000
Italian accent	university students	elementary school students	.003

Within the group divided according by the place they come from, there was also some significant differences in the answers. While rating the German accent, those coming from a big city scored highest (M=3.18; SD=1.50) and those coming from a small town lowest (M=2.43; SD=1.33) (see Table 28), with a significant difference between the answers of those living in a village and those living in a big city and between those living in a small town and those living in a big city ($F(2,252) = 7.85$, $p < .001$) (see Table 29).

Table 28: Differences between the rating of various non-native English accents within the group regarding the place the participants are coming from

Question	Group	M	Std. D.	F	Sig.
French accent	village	3.31	1.25	.48	.619

	small town	3.13	1.31		
	big city	3.09	1.45		
Indian accent	village	2.27	1.23	.92	.400
	small town	2.19	1.17		
	big city	2.03	1.08		
German accent	village	2.48	1.53	7.85	.000
	small town	2.43	1.33		
	big city	3.18	1.50		
Russian accent	village	2.59	1.40	.58	.559
	small town	2.69	1.40		
	big city	2.48	1.39		
Italian accent	village	2.90	1.30	1.22	.296
	small town	3.03	1.27		
	big city	3.25	1.50		

Table 29: Scheffe's post hoc test for various non-native English accents within the group regarding the place the participants are coming from

Dependent variable	**(I) Level of education**	**(J) Level of education**	**Sig.**
German accent	village	big city	.017
	small town	big city	.001

Within the group divided by the participants' gender, there were some significant differences. The females gave the French accent a higher rating (M=3.24; SD=1.24) than the males (M=2.96; SD=1.55), and the difference is significant $t(253) = -1.45$, $p \leq .001$) (see Table 30). The Indian accent, on the other hand, was given a higher rating by the males (M=2.19; SD=1.29) than the females (M=2.13; SD=1.08), with a significant difference $t(253) = .37$, $p < .01$) (see Table 30).

Table 30: Differences between the rating of various non-native English accents between the genders

Question	**Group**	**M**	**Std. D.**	**t**	**Sig.**
French accent	male	2.96	1.55	-1.45	.001
	female	3.24	1.24		
Indian accent	male	2.19	1.29	.37	.009
	female	2.13	1.08		
German accent	male	2.90	1.53	1.31	.575

	female	2.64	1.45		
Russian accent	male	2.80	1.48	1.64	.188
	female	2.49	1.34		
Italian accent	male	2.86	1.45	-1.80	.202
	female	3.19	1.32		

In the group divided with regard to how often the participants speak English, there were no significant differences between the answers to be found (see Table 31).

Table 31: Differences between the rating of various non-native English accents within the group regarding how often the participants speak English

Question	**Group**	**M**	**Std. D.**	**F**	**Sig.**
French accent	hardly ever	3.26	1.38	.14	.931
	a few times a year	3.13	1.45		
	once a month	3.00	1.41		
	every week	3.17	1.34		
Indian accent	hardly ever	1.86	.83	1.04	.374
	a few times a year	1.34	1.22		
	once a month	1.87	1.15		
	every week	2.18	1.16		
German accent	hardly ever	3.13	1.64	1.47	.222
	a few times a year	2.60	1.37		
	once a month	2.20	1.50		
	every week	2.77	1.47		
Russian accent	hardly ever	2.40	1.24	.26	.854
	a few times a year	2.78	1.47		
	once a month	2.66	1.76		
	every week	2.58	1.35		
Italian accent	hardly ever	3.13	1.50	1.55	.202
	a few times a year	2.69	1.36		
	once a month	2.70	1.42		
	every week	3.18	1.35		

5. Discussion

The results of this research show that the students are indeed aware of their accents while speaking English. The analysis of the first item in the questionnaire clearly shows that, for the participants, the most important thing is to be a good communicator. The emphasis for them is obviously not so much on the grammar, but on their fluency and quality of their pronunciation, which shows that they want to be successful, i.e. understood while communicating on English.

According to Kenworthy (1987) the main goal for Foreign language teaching is successful communication and not a certain native-like English accent. The research, therefore, shows that, at least when it comes to these participants, their teachers obviously already made their learners aware of their pronunciation and put enough effort into teaching in order to help them become successful users of International English.

Even though many participants either do not have a formed opinion about accents in general or are just unsure about what is meant by a slight or strong foreign accent, most of them still do not mind having a recognizable foreign accent whether they are speaking with a non-native or native English speaker. It again shows that they do not mind sounding foreign because their aim is to be able to use English as a tool for communicating with other people, regardless where they are coming from.

Regarding their preference when it comes to the speaker they want to communicate with, it seems that many of them do prefer non-native speakers, which could be due to the fact that they are used to communicating with other non-native speakers during classes.

The results of the research also show that pronunciation improvement is of high importance for the majority of the participants. It comes as no surprise that, by improving their pronunciation, they would primarily want to improve the impression their conversational partners might have of them, but also their chance of finding better employment. In Croatia, and probably in most countries where English is not an official language, knowing English is very important for most jobs and it is considered an advantage when in search of one.

Even their attitudes towards teacher's pronunciation is surprisingly positive. The results show that most of them do not mind having a teacher with a slight foreign accent. They obviously think that a native-like accent would be best, but they are very tolerant. On the other hand, the

research also proves that there is still a belief that the students would have a better accent if they were taught by native speakers of English, even though, most of the participants probably never had the opportunity to experience that.

Such an attitude towards teachers' accents can be linked to the concept of native-speakerism. Holliday defines that phenomenon as a "belief that 'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology (Holliday 2005, as cited in Holliday 2006:385). Such stereotypes, can cause most institutions to hire only native teachers of English (Medgyes 2001:433, as cited in Selvi, 2011:187), which could become a huge problem, not just for those seeking employment within the field, but also for the learners, since the emphasis is not on how qualified the teacher is but how their accent sounds.

Students' attitudes towards various non-native English accents were also not really a surprise. Most of them do think that the French and the Italian accents are the most attractive ones, which is an opinion shared by most people because those languages are considered very beautiful and classy. The Indian and the Russian accents were, unsurprisingly, rated as least attractive. It is generally considered that some languages sound harsh or anything but classy and Indian and Russian are frequently classified as such languages.

When it comes to the attitudes towards various non-native accents, the truly surprising result is how the participants rated the German accent. German, together with English, is the most frequently taught foreign language in schools in Croatia, but unlike English, most students either love or hate German. Those strongly opposing opinions can be clearly seen in the results of this research.

The fact that some might consider a language or an accent to be more beautiful can be linked to the 'inherent value hypothesis'. As Giles and Niedzielski define it (85), it is the "claim that some languages (and accents of them) are inherently more attractive than others", which, as they further explain, "has nothing to do with historical preferences or social conditioning, rather, certain ways of being 'nicely spoken' are biologically wired into us." (86). Since someone, who speaks with a certain non-native English accent, which simply does not sound as beautiful as some others, it is impossible for him or her to change that, because it is based on stereotypes. What would be important, especially for the field of Foreign language teaching and learning, is to raise awareness of such issues, so that the learners can focus on becoming better communicators, regardless of their accent.

6. Conclusion

The results of this research show that most people are aware of their accent and that they want to sound as native-like as possible, which also proves that, in a way, they do idealize a certain native accent and they consider their goal to achieve it. Nevertheless, they seem to be more liberal towards slight foreign accents than expected, which comes to show that they might prefer a certain accent and they might want to sound as native-like as possible, but their main goal is successful communication. This also applies to the accents they expect their teachers to have. They would want a teacher to have a native-like accent, but it is obviously not considered a necessity in EFL teaching, which again proves their awareness of differnt varieties of English, but also of the fact that no variety is considered wrong or unintelligable just because it sounds unfamiliar. This research also clearly shows that they do consider certain non-native accents to be more attractive then others. Unsurprisingly, those non-native English accents, which are generally considered to sound more beautifully, were also rated higher by the participants. In the end, the most important conclusion brought by this research, is that the participants are not only aware of the way they speak when speaking English, but they consider the end result, i.e. a successful communication, to be the most important thing. Such a revelation is also of importance for EFL teaching because, as the changes in the world and the emerging of more and more non-native varieties of English show, the awareness of such a phenomenon is the most important thing. A learner must first become aware of the existence of those varieties in order to be able to work on understanding them and. Therefore, to make potential future communications, even with other non-native speakers of English, a success.

7. Further Research

This research does have its limitations. One of them is the number of participants. With a higher number of participants and maybe a more equal ratio between the various groups, the results might be even clearer than those presented in this thesis.

Another possible limitation is the option ‘neither agree nor disagree’ in the questionnaire. The meaning of that is not totally clear. Some participants might choose that option simply because it is in the middle. Others might not have a formed opinion about that topic and, because of the lack of a ‘do not know’ option, they would have to choose ‘neither agree nor disagree’. Another problem might be that the participants simply do not understand a question or certain parts of it. For example, when mentioning slight and strong foreign accents, the participants might not have a clear understanding of what those two accents sound like in real life, which could be due to the fact that, they never had an opportunity to speak or listen to someone with such an accent.

Further studies should, if possible, include questions regarding the rating of different native accents. Most studies with such questions are done in countries where English is an official language and the participants already have certain prejudices towards those accents. Certain accents will be considered stereotypical for less or more educated people, which in the end will be more of a study showing their opinion on people then on their accents. Such a study, done in a country where English serves no official purpose, might show more interesting results because non-native speakers of English would probably be able to rate just the accent based on the way it sounds and how easily understandable it is.

Furthermore, such studies should also include questions regarding how intelligent the speaker sounds based on the accents. As previously mentioned since non-native English speakers should not, at least theoretically speaking, have prejudices towards the speakers based on the geographical region where a particular accent is spoken, they should be able to objectively rate an accent also regarding how intelligent it makes the speaker sound.

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Appendix

English Version of the Questionnaire

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Partially disagree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Partially agree

5 = Strongly agree

1. When I speak English, I believe that it is important:

a. that I am fluent	1	2	3	4	5
b. that my pronunciation is correct	1	2	3	4	5
c. that my grammar is correct	1	2	3	4	5

2. When I speak English with native speakers (e.g. the English or Americans):

a. I do not mind having a strong Croatian accent	1	2	3	4	5
b. I do not want to speak with a foreign accent	1	2	3	4	5

3. When I speak English with non-native speakers (e.g. the French, Italians, Germans):

a. I do not mind having a strong Croatian accent	1	2	3	4	5
b. I do not want to speak with a foreign accent	1	2	3	4	5

4. I find it easier to understand the pronunciation of non-native speakers of English if they are fluent and if their grammar is correct than the pronunciation of native speakers of English.

1 2 3 4 5

5. I prefer speaking English with other non-native speakers of English (e.g. Germans, Italians, the French) than with native speakers of English (e.g. the English, Americans) because when I speak with non-native speakers, I am not worried about them judging my pronunciation.

1 2 3 4 5

6. If I could perfect my English pronunciation so as to pass for a native speaker, I would do it regardless of the time and effort it would take.

YES NO

7. A If you answered YES to quesion 6: Why would you perfect your English pronunciation?

a. because it significantly improves the general impression of me and my knowledge of English	1	2	3	4	5
b. because I like to impress my conversational partners	1	2	3	4	5
c. because it is important for my job	1	2	3	4	5
d. because I am generally a perfectionist	1	2	3	4	5

7. B If you answered NO to quesion 6: Why would you not perfect your English pronunciation?

a. because native speakers dislike foreigners who try too hard to sound like them

1 2 3 4 5

b. because I want to preserve my national identity when I speak a foreign language

1 2 3 4 5

c. because learning the proper pronunciation is a waste of time which can be better spent on other goals such as learning grammar and vocabulary

1 2 3 4 5

d. because people will think that I am putting on airs

1 2 3 4 5

8. I believe an English teacher:

a. should have a native-like accent	1	2	3	4	5
b. can have a slight foreign accent	1	2	3	4	5
c. can have a strong foreign accent	1	2	3	4	5

9. I believe I will learn to pronounce English better if I am taught by an English teacher who is a native speaker than by an English teacher who is Croatian, and who speaks English as a foreign language.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Rate the following accents from 1 (least attractive) to 5 (most attractive):

a. French accent	1	2	3	4	5
b. Indian accent	1	2	3	4	5
c. German accent	1	2	3	4	5
d. Russian accent	1	2	3	4	5
e. Italian accent	1	2	3	4	5

Participant data

Gender: F M

Age: _____

University: _____

Major: _____

Studying year: _____

Where did you spend most of your life?

a. in a village

b. in a small town

c. in a big city

How long have you been learning English? _____

Asses your knowledge of English:

a. very poor

b. poor

c. good

d. very good

e. excellent

How often do you speak English?

a. hardly ever

b. several times a year

c. once a month

d. every week

Have you ever spent more than 6 months in an English speaking country?

YES NO

If so, where? _____

Croatian Version of the Questionnaire

1 – uopće se ne slažem

2 – djelomično se ne slažem

3 – niti se slažem, niti se ne slažem

4 – djelomično se slažem

5 – u potpunosti se slažem

1) Kada govorim na engleskom jeziku, važno mi je:

a. da tečno govorim	1	2	3	4	5
b. da mi je izgovor ispravan	1	2	3	4	5
c. da mi je gramatika točna	1	2	3	4	5

2) Kada govorim ili kada bih govorio/la na engleskom jeziku s izvornim govornicima (npr. s Britancima ili Amerikancima):

a. ne smeta mi/ne bi mi smetao težak hrvatski naglasak	1	2	3	4	5
b. ne želim govoriti sa stranim naglaskom	1	2	3	4	5

3) Kada govorim/ kada bih govorio/la na engleskom jeziku sa stranim govornicima (npr. Francuzima, Talijanima, Nijemcima):

a. ne smeta mi/ne bi mi smetao težak hrvatski naglasak	1	2	3	4	5
b. ne želim govoriti sa stranim naglaskom	1	2	3	4	5

4) Lakše mi je razumjeti izgovor stranih govornika engleskog jezika od izgovora izvornih govornika, pod uvjetom da govore tečno i da im je gramatika točna.

1 2 3 4 5

5) Kada govorim na engleskom jeziku preferiram razgovarati s drugim stranim govornicima (npr. Nijemcima, Talijanima, Francuzima, itd.) nego li s izvornim govornicima (npr. Britancima, Amerikancima) jer tada me ne brine moj izgovor.

1 2 3 4 5

6) Kada bih mogao/la usavršiti svoj engleski izgovor kako bi bio što više nalik onom izvornih govornika, učinio/la bih to bez obzira na potreban trud i vrijeme.

DA NE

6.1. Ako ste odabrali DA: Zašto biste htjeli usavršiti svoj izgovor?

a. zato što znatno poboljšava opći dojam o meni i mom poznavanju engleskog jezika	1	2	3	4	5
b. jer želim zadiviti svoje sugovornike	1	2	3	4	5
c. zato što mi je to važno za posao	1	2	3	4	5
d. zato što sam općenito perfekcionist	1	2	3	4	5

6.2. Ako ste odabrali NE: Zašto ne biste htjeli usavršiti svoj izgovor?

a. zato što izvorni govornici ne vole strance koji pretjeruju u pokušaju da zvuče kao i oni sami

1 2 3 4 5

b. zato što želim sačuvati svoj nacionalni identitet čak i kada govorim na stranom jeziku

1 2 3 4 5

c. zato što je učenje pravilnog izgovora gubljenje vremena koje se može bolje iskoristiti, kao na primjer učenjem gramatike i vokabulara

1 2 3 4 5

d. zato što bi drugi mogli pomisliti da se pokušavam praviti važan/na

1 2 3 4 5

7) Smatram da učitelj engleskoga jezika:

a. mora imati naglasak koji je što sličniji onom izvornih govornika	1	2	3	4	5
b. može imati blagi strani naglasak	1	2	3	4	5
c. može imati teški strani naglasak	1	2	3	4	5

8) Vjerujem da bih imao/la bolji izgovor kada bi me poučavao učitelj koji je izvorni govornik engleskog jezika nego li učitelj iz Hrvatske, kojemu je to strani jezik.

1 2 3 4 5

9) Ocijenite od 1 (najmanje atraktivan) do 5 (najatraktivniji) sljedeće naglaske:

a. Francuski naglasak	1	2	3	4	5
b. Indijski naglasak	1	2	3	4	5
c. Njemački naglasak	1	2	3	4	5
d. Ruski naglasak	1	2	3	4	5
e. Talijanski naglasak	1	2	3	4	5

Podaci o sudioniku

Spol: Muški/ Ženski

Dob: _____

Fakultet: _____

Studijska grupa/smjer: _____

Godina studija: _____

Gdje ste proveli većinu svoga života:

a. na selu

b. u manjem gradu

c. u većem gradu

Koliko dugo učite engleski jezik? _____

Procijenite svoje znanje engleskog jezika:

a. vrlo slabo

b. slabo

c. dobro

d. vrlo dobro

e. odlično

Koliko često govorite na engleskom jeziku?

a. gotovo nikada

b. nekoliko puta godišnje

c. jednom mjesečno

d. svaki tjedan

Jeste li ikada proveli više od 6 mjeseci u zemlji u kojoj je engleski službeni jezik?

DA NE

Ako jeste, gdje? _____