

# 5362\_REV3\_DU\_Native Nad Non-Native Listeners Perceptual

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**Submission date:** 12-Feb-2019 01:21PM (UTC+0700)

**Submission ID:** 624024728

**File name:** 5362\_REV3\_DU\_Native\_Nad\_Non-Native\_Listeners\_Perceptual.docx (101.38K)

**Word count:** 4429

**Character count:** 25936

## 2 NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE LISTENERS PERCEPTUAL JUDGEMENT OF ENGLISH ACCENTEDNESS, INTELLIGIBILITY AND ACCEPTABILITY OF INDONESIAN SPEAKERS

**Abstract** - There has been widely exposed research analyzed accentedness and intelligibility foreign language. Yet, a small number of them has found to relate it to listeners' acceptability. The current study aimed at investigating the extent of accentedness and intelligibility as well as acceptability of Indonesian foreign-accented speech apprehended by native and non-native listeners, as well as finding their correlation to each-others. Four listeners, native and non-native listeners rated and transcribed six recorded reading of Indonesian speakers by means of SPIN (speech perception in noise) test. The results showed that native listeners rated the speech almost the same way as non-native listeners did. The speeches with clear and accurate pronunciation were rated highly accepted and fully intelligible, regardless of having a very strong accent. In contrast, less clear and accurate pronunciations, as well as a very strong accent of the speeches, were rated unacceptable and still reasonably intelligible. The result of correlation test between accentedness and intelligibility as well as accentedness and acceptability of the accent found on no account of correlation to each other. Therefore, accentedness and intelligibility plus accentedness and acceptability of the accent were independent, so that strong foreign accent could stay acceptable and intelligible. The factors found to influence the judgment were familiarity of the accent, clarity and accuracy of pronunciation. Aforementioned findings have implication to challenge English teachers in Indonesia to develop meaningful activities to teach English pronunciation accurately to be regarded as fully intelligible and acceptable by listeners, especially native English listeners.

**Keywords:** foreign accent; accentedness; intelligibility; acceptability

### INTRODUCTION

It is a fact that assortment differences between first language (L1) and target language (TL) of the speakers has affected the way non-native speakers speak the target language. They definitely find it difficult to recognize the exact sounds of target language in a correct pronunciation. In consequence, they may produce the sound with some errors, mistakes as well as substitution influenced by their first language. One of the factor has influenced their speaking practice is an accent.

The influence of first language accent to speak a second or foreign language (FL) is so-called foreign accent, non-native speakers' pronunciation, affected by their native language accent, in which different from the pronunciation and phonological norm of the TL in speaking TL (Behravan, Hautamäki, Siniscalchi, Kinnunen, & Lee, 2016; Gallardo del Puerto, García Lecumberri, & Gómez Lacabex, 2015; Natalia, Andrew, & George, 2017; Ryalls & Perkins, 2017; Schroeder, Baade, Coady, Massey, & Wolford, 2016). Non-native speakers possibly produce different degree of the foreign accent compared to the expected pattern of target language pronunciation is known as accentedness (Bergeron & Trofimovich, 2017; Saito & Shintani, 2016). Accentedness implicates the listeners' judgment of the extent to which a speaker is perceived as accented.

A foreign-accented speech is required the non-native speakers to be understood. Since speaking is believed and regarded as the success of language learning measurement (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017), there is another growing issue of one's speaking with foreign accent is intelligible. For that reason, the intelligibility, the degree to which listeners are able to recognize and understand exact words, phrases or sentences articulated by the speakers though the recording's sounds of the accented

speakers is a complementary element of examination (Hopf, McLeod, & McDonagh, 2017; Munro & Derwing, 2015; Van Kuyk, Kleijn, & Hendriks, 2018; Yazan, 2015).

Foreign-accented speech of speakers with different first language accent may result different accentedness. The geographic distance undeniably affected the amount of effort to understand the foreign accented speech of non-native speakers. Indonesia has a distant separation to English speaking country. Commonly, the Indonesian people communicate with their first language instead of Indonesian language as their second language (L2). Approximately, 366 ethnic groups in Indonesia are fluent in 669 languages and dialects (Suyanto, Setyowati, & Pramono, 2017). Their L1 accent almost persists when they speak L2 or FL (Beinhoff, 2014) like speaking Indonesian, Arabic and English. The foreign accented speech has also been undergone in adult age, including Indonesian people. It is argued that the phenomenon of foreign accented English speech is caused by L1 background and failure production of TL sounds and intonation in the appropriate manner.

A number of previous studies concerning accentedness and intelligibility have been sought by many linguist researchers. They proposed that accentedness and intelligibility are autonomous, that a strong accent of a foreign speech is insignificant sign of the lower intelligibility (Hayes-Harb & Hacking, 2015; Munro & Derwing, 2015). Among previous research on accentedness of foreign-accented speech, there is foremost issue about how the listeners perceived the acceptability of accented speech in relation to its accentedness. The investigation of the acceptability of foreign-accented speech in accordance with its accentedness as well as its intelligibility has been observed in Hongkong and Japan. It is concluded that there is a moderate acceptance possibility of foreign accents in English speaking when there is no noticeable phonological features of L1 (Setter, Sewell, & Ryder, 2014; Sugimoto & Uchida, 2018).

Based on above-mentioned background, this study investigated native

and non-native listeners' perceptual judgment of English accentedness, intelligibility and acceptability of Indonesian speakers. The research further examined the correlation between the judgment of accentedness and intelligibility analysis as well as the accentedness and acceptability of the accent judgment. The factors influenced how the judgment has made was an additional issue studied.

## METHODS

The current study was a qualitative research aimed to gain a pilot basis of native and non-native listeners' perception of foreign-accented English speech by Indonesian people. The case study included phenomenon of foreign accent in English speech by Indonesian people. The accents examined were based on the most peculiar regional accents in Indonesia perceived in a preliminary study. The regional accents are; Banjarese, Sundanese and Madurese. Due to variety of accents investigated, a collective case study was applied to get a depth depiction of the multiple cases (Adams, Jones, Lefmann, & Sheppard, 2014). Therefore, this study had a collective case characteristic in applied linguistic.

The participant of the study was selected by means of purposeful sampling. The participants were divided into speakers and listeners. There were six speakers and four listeners selected. The speakers provided speech samples which sentences were taken from Speech Perception in Noise (SPIN) test. The selected sentence lists were a concern on some phonological aspect for each sentence. The participant's selection was made on the basis of some criteria to decide those who is able to provide a thoughtful data of the phenomenon being studied (Gentles, Charles, Nicholas, Ploeg, & McKibbin, 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015).

The criteria of speakers' sampling were: have Indonesia nationality and have particular regional language as mother tongue, have an experience in speaking English with L1 accent, attain 25 to 30 aged and attend English educational background more than 5 years. To avoid gender bias, the



balanced gender was selected for each of the subjects from the certain regional area.

Furthermore, the listeners were English native listeners (NL) and non-native listeners (NNL). Both NL and NNL were selected because more non-native speakers have spoken English than its native speaker. Consequently, there is a growing interaction between NNL and NNL. On account of the limitation to discover eligible native speakers from different nationalities, two American speaker selected as NL. Meanwhile, the criteria of NNL are: Indonesian people major in English and an EFL instructor or teacher for more than five years.

The verbal data in the form of the speech sample was collected through recording each speakers reading 20 lists of SPIN sentences with the sum of 150 sentence adapted from Kalikow et al. (1977) and Bada (2001). The obtained recording was then given in the judgment task to rate or judge by the listeners relating to accentedness and acceptability of accented speech on 6 points Likert Scale (1932). To analyze the numeral data attained from the judgment, rating scales were applied for two elements; accentedness adapted from Allen (2006) and acceptability adapted from Palacios (2009).

Additionally, the intelligibility assessment was made by replicating previous researchers through a dictation task. NL and NNL were asked to transcribe in a standard orthography of word by word listened from audio-recording (Julkowska & Cebrian, 2015; Munro & Derwing, 2015). A comparison between the listeners' transcription and original SPIN sentences was formerly done to find out the amount of listeners' transcription correctness compared to the original to determine the level of intelligibility by 6 points Guttman scaling (1944).

The analysis of the data of both accentedness and intelligibility as well as accentedness and acceptability of the accent was further examined through correlation test to picture whether there is a correlation between accentedness and intelligibility as

well as accentedness and acceptability of the accent.

All the obtained data is required to be established to create a sense and reduce partiality as well as confirm the conclusions (Amankwaa, 2016; Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Lather, 2017; Thomas, 2017). Therefore, a member checking by interviewing the English native speakers (NS) who were required to provide feedback about the study's findings getting additional insight avoiding something missed (Birt et al., 2016; Thomas, 2017) was a way attempted to gain the accurateness or reliability of the findings. As a final point, triangulation is applied to confirm the findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The displayed figures in this section are the result of the judgment for accentedness, intelligibility and acceptability of Banjarese, Sundanese and Madurese accents. The coding method (B, S and M) was used as a representation of the speakers' accent (B stands for Banjarese, S stands for Sundanese and M stands for Madurese). While NL and NNL were the listeners from native English and non-native English as what has been described in research method section.

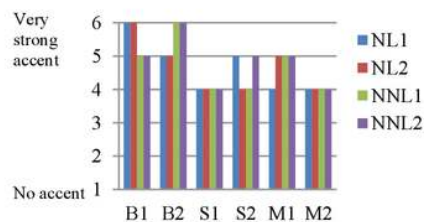


Figure 1 The Distribution of Perceived Accentedness Judgment

Above Figure 1 shows that the most accented speakers are B1 and B2. Non-native listeners rated B1 speaker less accented than those of native listeners, while native listener rated the B2 speaker less accented than those of non-native listeners. The factors to affect the judgment are clarity

of the speech and the quality of the voice because some recordings have a poor quality of voice. The poorest pronunciation competency is considered to be the cause of the native listeners rating. They also consider that those very strong accented speakers must do less English speaking practice so that some strange sounds were found.

In addition, all the listeners agreed to rate the S1 and M2 speaker as having slightly accented speech since they were familiar with the Sundanese and Madurese language. Besides, some listeners perceived the S2 speaker as having a strong accent and the others perceived them as a slightly accented. One NL and two NNL perceived the M1 speaker to have a strong accent but another NL rated it as slightly accented. In summary, the accentedness of Indonesian speakers was slightly accented, strong accented and very strong accented in which are categorized as accented speech.

Above results implies that different speakers may have different level of foreign accented speech even though they have the identical local accented speech. First and foremost, all listeners agreed that all the speech were accented with different degree.

Amongst the three accents under study, Banjarese accent was observed as having the highest level of foreign accented speech of all. In accordance with abovementioned result, the interview generated that Banjarese accent was also considered as the strangest accent compared to Sundanese and Madurese accent. Also, the interviewees suggested that there are two issues influenced their judgment; clarity and accuracy of the speakers' pronunciation and listeners' exposure to the local accent.

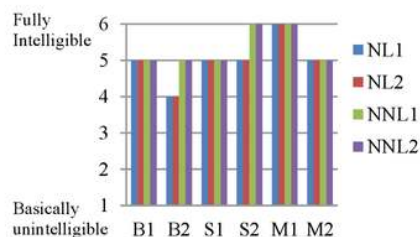


Figure 2 The Distribution of Perceived Intelligibility Level

Above figure demonstrates that there are three levels of perceived intelligibility of Indonesian speakers. The levels are in 4 (reasonably intelligible), 5 (largely intelligible) and 6 (fully intelligible) indicating the intelligible speech. Impressionistically, among those six speakers, only one speaker was regarded as having full intelligible speech is M1, while four others B1, S1, S2, M2 were graded as having a largely intelligible speech whereas B2 was perceived to have a reasonably intelligible speech

As a matter of fact, the high level of intelligibility of Indonesian speakers was not consistent with the result of accentedness judgment which suggested the high level of perceived accent. This entails that strong foreign accented speeches may possibly be intelligible for the high amount of correctness in NL and NNL's transcription.

The interview in the result of member checking indicated that the NS repeatedly contextualized the transcription of vague and strange pronunciation made by the speakers. They put emphasis on speakers' clarity of pronunciation much more affected how the transcription was made. Therefore, clarity of pronunciation was suggested as a must component to make the speech intelligible and understandable. This showed that some of Indonesian speakers' pronunciation in English is still perceived as weird for NS. In brief, the result of intelligibility level of foreign accent of Indonesian speakers was regarded in a positive way that the speech was intelligible (reasonably intelligible, largely intelligible and fully intelligible).

To relate the result of accentedness judgment and intelligibility level, the correlation test was conducted to both variables. It was found that both variables had very poor correlation where a strong accent is not always unintelligible. Thus, accentedness is not the sign of unintelligibility. This finding reinforced the earlier result by Munro & Derwing (2015) that there was weak correlation between accentedness and intelligibility.



They were rationally an independent element so that a strong accented speech possibly will be intelligible as well.

To further examine the correlation of accentedness and acceptability of the accent, it needs to describe the acceptability of the accent which depicted as in Figure 3.

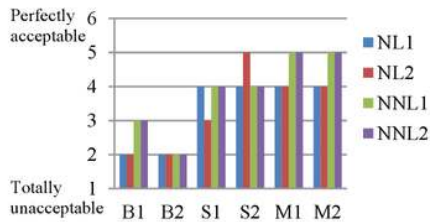


Figure 3 The Distribution of Perceived Acceptability of the Accent

Figure 3 demonstrates that the foreign accent of Indonesian speakers was in the level of 2 (unacceptable), 3 (slightly unacceptable), 4 (slightly acceptable) and 5 (acceptable). The M1 and M2 speakers were judged by NNL possessing an acceptable accent and rated by NL owning a slightly acceptable accent. Moreover, S2 speaker's accent was perceived as acceptable accent by one NL but regarded as a slightly acceptable accent by other listeners in which was corresponding to the result of acceptability of S1 speaker's accent by three listeners. On the other hand, another NL regarded S1 speaker's accent as slightly unacceptable accent. Unfortunately, B1 and B2 speakers were mostly perceived having unacceptable accent, except for NNL who rated B1 as having slightly unacceptable accent. This showed that B1 speaker was perceived more positively by NNL rather than NL. Among the result of the acceptability judgment, B2 speaker gained the lowest result of the acceptability of the accent judgment by considering him as having an unacceptable accent by all the listeners.

By basing on the result of the acceptability of the accent, it indicated that it was inconsistent to the result of accentedness. Speakers with a very strong accent were perceived both as unacceptable

and acceptable. Meanwhile, speakers with a strong accent were regarded as either as slightly acceptable or acceptable accent.

In addition, to reveal the correlation between accentedness and acceptability of the accent, a correlation test was conducted. The result of correlation test showed that there is a very weak relation between accentedness and acceptability of the accent. It was found that accentedness and acceptability of the accent were independent where a very strong accent might be acceptable by both native and non-native listeners.

A further investigation done by interview examined to explore the factor affecting the judgment as discovered by previous researchers (2014; Fuse, Navichkova, & Alloggio, 2018; Huang, Alegre, & Eisenberg, 2016; Kang, Thomson, & Moran, 2018). The result yielded there are three factors affected on how a judgment is made; familiarity of the accent, clarity and accuracy of pronunciation.

The first factor affecting the judgment is familiarity of the accent. The Native listeners had less or even no familiarity with a Banjarese accent but fully familiar with a Sundanese accent and Madurese accent since they expose more time to interact with Bandung and Surabaya people. Such unfamiliarity may possibly influence the Banjarese accent judgment, whereas the Sundanese and Madurese speech were familiar for the listeners.

As a result, the listeners' familiarity to the accents offered a contributing element to the judgment of both the accentedness and acceptability of the accent. This is consistent with Fuse et al., (2018) Huang et al., (2016) and Kang et al., (2018) who suggested listeners' familiarity is one of factors affected the evaluation of non-native English speech. However, this finding was not synonymous with a study by Stocker (2017) who found there is no familiarity influence on the judgment of accent.

The clarity and accuracy of speakers' pronunciation were two other factors influenced the judgment. This is as what has been believed by NL who considered some of the speeches were unclear and had an

inaccurate pronunciation. Therefore, the clarity and accuracy of pronunciation influenced more to the accentedness and acceptability to the accent judgment. If non-native English speakers pronounced English word differently compared to the exact English pronunciation norm, they will possibly be unacceptable accent regardless of possessing a very strong accent. Reverseely, if the non-native English speakers articulated the English word clearly and accurately, they would be regarded as an acceptable accent although they were perceived as having a strong accent. In brief, accentedness and acceptability of accent judgment were mostly made on the basis of two major factors; the speakers' clarity and accuracy of pronunciation.

This issue, clarity of pronunciation is in synonymous with earlier research findings that purposed that easiness of interpretation and hearing of the spoken text in a way that no different pronunciation articulated by speakers' in comparison to those of native speaker of English version. It is one of a foremost factor influenced the judgment making (Munro & Derwing, 2015; Sugimoto & Uchida, 2018). Whereas the influence of speakers' pronunciation accuracy in the judgment of accentedness and acceptability of the accent is a new factor found to affect the listeners' judgment of Indonesian speakers. To this effect, accuracy of pronunciation should get a big attention for English teachers in Indonesia to give more emphasis on teaching accurate English pronunciation in English classes.

Summing up abovementioned discussion, it is found the influence of three factors on listeners' judgment of both accentedness, intelligibility and acceptability of the accent toward Indonesian speakers are listeners' familiarity with the accent, speakers' clarity of pronunciation and their accuracy of pronunciation. The clarity of speakers' pronunciation more significantly gives an influence on how the judgment made by the listeners among those factors.

## CONCLUSIONS

Current research seeks to examine the issue of accentedness, intelligibility and acceptability of the accent among Indonesian speakers ranging from Banjarese, Sundanese and Madurese accent. The final summation is that the perception of both NL and NNL about foreign accented speech of Indonesian speakers mostly the same. The foreign accented speech of Indonesian speakers is regarded as highly accented in the level 6, (very strong accent), 5 (strong accent) and 4 (slightly accented), as well as mostly intelligible in the level 6, (Fully intelligible), 5 (largely intelligible) and 4 (reasonably intelligible). Whereas, the level of acceptability of Indonesian foreign accented speech is perceived as either acceptable or unacceptable in the level of 2 (unacceptable), 3 (slightly unacceptable), 4 (slightly acceptable) and 5 (acceptable).

Moreover, the correlation between accentedness and intelligibility was found very poor and in an autonomous correlation; in which strong accented speech is not always perceived as unintelligible speech. So that accentedness is a poor indication of intelligibility. It reinforced the earlier research by Munro & Derwing (2015) who asserted that no strong evidence of the correlation between accentedness and intelligibility. Thus, they are separate component where a foreign accented speech is possibly intelligible. Furthermore, above inconsistency findings and correlation test of both accentedness and acceptability indicated that accentedness and acceptability were as well independent to each other in which a strong accented speech may conceivably be acceptable.

Three factors were found to affect the way listeners both NL and NNL made the judgment of accentedness, intelligibility and acceptability of the accent, they are; listeners' familiarity and exposure of the local accent, speakers' pronunciation clarity as well as their accuracy. The familiarity of the accent factor was corroborated to some research (Fuse et al., 2018; Huang et al., 2016; Kang et al., 2018). Clarity and

accuracy of pronunciation was a novel factor affected the judgment.

Based on above finding, it is suggested to the Indonesian English teachers to develop meaningful activities to teach English pronunciation accurately in order that Indonesian speech be regarded as fully intelligible and acceptable by listeners, especially native English listeners. To the upcoming research, there is a necessary to consider phonetics or phonological analysis as a technique of data analysis which is expected to have a linguistics concern of the intelligibility of the speech.

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