

Perception Versus Reality: How Important is it that Korean Elementary School Teachers Speak "Good English?"

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The present study examined Korean elementary school students' attitudes towards teachers with American-accented English and Korean-accented English. It also examined the effects of teachers' accents on their students' listening comprehension. A matched-guise technique was employed. A Korean American individual recorded three stories in both American-accented English and Korean-accented English. Three hundred and twelve 6th grade Korean students were first randomly assigned to listen to one of these two versions of each of the three stories and their comprehension was examined. Next, all of the students listened to both accented-English tapes and their attitudes towards the two guises were examined. The results indicate that the Korean children thought that the American-accented English speaker was relatively more confident in her use of English, would focus more on fluency than on accuracy, had better pronunciation, and would use less Korean in the English class. They also expressed a preference to have the American-accented English speaker as their English teacher. However, the listening comprehension tests showed that the students who listened to the Korean-accented English tape performed better when the text difficulty was at their grade level. When the texts were either easier or more difficult than texts appropriate for their grade level, there were no differences in listening scores between the two accented-English conditions.

With the spread of globalization and information technology, the goals of English education in many East Asian countries have recently undergone drastic change. Many East Asian countries, including China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan, which have been classified as members in "the Expanding Circle" (Kachru 1992), have started introducing English language instruction at the elementary school level in various forms. The traditional approach of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in these countries has been criticized for putting too much emphasis on grammar, reading and writing. The governments of these countries have thus set the acquisition of good oral communication

skills as one of the primary goals of their elementary English language education (e.g., [Korean] Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development, referred to hereafter as Ministry of Education 1997). Not surprisingly, teachers' oral communicative skills in English (including pronunciation) have become a major concern in those countries.

How important is it that foreign teachers of English speak "good" English when they are trying to teach elementary school children? And what effect do the oral capabilities of foreign English teachers have on the ability of such young learners to learn English? These two questions have taken on increasing significance in Asia as English language education has been expanded to the elementary school level in recent years. This study tries to answer these questions in the case of Korea, where teachers who typically lack good communicative capabilities are now charged with introducing English language education (Lee 2002).

In examining elementary school teachers' English proficiencies, it is important to note that the Korean government is planning to increase the number of native English speaking teachers (NESTs) in their English classes (Yang 2002). Although the number of NESTs working in public elementary schools in Korea remains very limited, there has been an influx of NESTs hired to work at various private language institutes. While official statistics are not available, it is believed that many elementary school students take such English private lessons after school (Sang-Jae Kim, Ministry of Education, personal communication, November 12, 2003). Moreover, a report recently released by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) indicated that Korean students were least confident among students in OECD countries in their school teachers' teaching (note, however, that this survey included students at all grade levels and focused on students' attitudes on all subjects, rather than singling out English education at the elementary school level) (OECD 2003).

This study specifically examines Korean elementary school students' attitudes towards teachers with North American- and Korean-accented English. It also examines the effects of teachers' accents on students' listening comprehension. The paper begins with a brief review of the literature on this topic and follows with a short introduction of the current status of English language education at the elementary school level in Korea. Note that "accent" in the present study refers to "the pronunciation features of any spoken variety" (Finegan 1999: 585) including pitch, duration, loudness, and other auditory features of a person's speech.

Attitudes Towards Accents

The literature on the topic of how listeners evaluate the accents of their English teachers as well as the influence (if any) that this has on their ability to learn English raises a number of interesting questions.

What, for instance, do we define as "accented" English and what counts as "non-accented" or "standard" English? If students feel that a teacher's English is accented, does this have an effect on their perception of the teacher's overall capabilities? The literature on this topic is fairly wide-ranging and reflects the pockets of knowledge that have accumulated across disciplines. Broadly speaking, research indicates that students in general do indeed react to what they perceive to be ideal or non-ideal accents among their teachers. English language students in particular often view British or American varieties of English as the ideal standard. Notably, there appear to be few if any relevant studies in English which directly address the interaction in countries where English is taught as a foreign language between teachers' accents, students' evaluations of such accents, and the effect this has on teachers' ability/inability to teach English effectively to children. This remains true despite the fact that a growing number of countries have begun introducing English at younger and younger ages.

As one may expect, a number of studies have found that accents and dialects do indeed influence listeners' perceptions towards speakers (e.g., Fishman 1977; Giles & Sassoon 1983; Giles, Williams, Mackie, & Rosselli 1995; McKirnan & Hamayan 1984; Oller, Baca, & Vigil 1978). The matched-guised technique, which was developed by Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, and Fillenbaum (1960), has often been used to measure attitudes towards languages, dialects, and accents. In this technique, the participants listen to various tape-recorded speeches and are asked to judge a number of social and psychological traits of the speakers (such as their perceived level of intelligence). The participants are not told that the speech samples actually come from the same speaker. The basic assumption of this technique is that listeners construct speakers' social and psychological traits based on linguistic features of speech such as accents and the rate of speech delivery. The construction of such traits is based on the listeners' existing perceptions or dispositions towards certain groups of people and certain variations of languages, or what one may call their "attitudes." While researchers have not agreed upon the definitions and factors that underlie attitudes (Baker 1992), the matched-guise technique has been widely used in studies examining listeners' attitudes towards a variety of languages in various contexts (for a recent review of studies employing matched-guised techniques, see Hamers and Blanc 2000).

Studies have shown that attitudes towards speakers and their accents can differ depending on context (Cargile 1997; Gallois & Callan 1985). A growing number of studies on language attitudes have examined students' attitudes towards the non-native accents of foreign-born teachers and instructors in light of the increasing number of such instructors at American universities (Nyquist, Abbott, Wulff, & Sprague 1991). These studies have shown that teachers with foreign accents are perceived by parents and students to be less intelligent compared to teachers without

foreign accents (Nelson 1991; Solomon 1991). Rubin (1992) prepared two sets of video-taped lectures; one was delivered by an Asian lecturer and the other was delivered by a Caucasian lecturer. Using a voice-over, the lectures were, in fact, delivered by a "standard English" speaker. Rubin found that even though instructors spoke the same "standard English," undergraduates perceived their instructors' accents differently and, most importantly, this influenced the students' comprehension of their lectures. Edwards (1982) also found that students' evaluations of their teachers' teaching performance were influenced by their accents. Even after controlling for the effects of visual perception (i.e., using photographs to "introduce" the speakers of recorded lectures) and work performance, the effects of the teachers' accents did not disappear.

Teachers' accents are of particular concern in second and foreign language classrooms, especially in foreign language contexts where students usually have only limited exposure to the targeted language. Which variation of the language should be the model for language learning? In the case of the English language, the types of language that are spoken by "native speakers" in countries in the Center (Phillipson 1992), such as in the U.S. and Britain, are usually considered to be the "model." If the instructor's speech does not match this "model," learners and their parents as well as the teachers themselves often express concern over the possible effects of the teachers' accents on the students' acquisition of the language. Phillipson labeled the belief that the ideal English teachers is a native speaker of English from the Center as the "native speaker fallacy" and argued that it is one of the influential "tenets" of English teaching.

It is important to note in our discussion of accented versus non-accented English that even the dichotomous notion of native versus non-native speakers has drawn some criticism (see for example, Davies 1991, 2003; Kachru & Nelson 1996). Some researchers have suggested that success in second language acquisition can be considered as the degree to which a learner has progressed along a continual interlanguage (Selinker 1972), with "native speakers" being located at one end of this continuum (Edge 1998; Paikeday 1985) as opposed to treating native speakers as a separate and distinct type of speaker. However, according to Medgyes (1992), the native versus non-native distinction has not only been employed in ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, but also for practical purposes this distinction is meaningful because it "plays a key role in determining the teaching practice of all teachers" (p. 343). Current practice among researchers would seem to bear out this more practical line of thinking. Second language acquisition (SLA) theory, for its part, has widely employed the notion of "native speakers" and "non-native speakers," with "native speakers" being considered as the ultimate model of language acquisition.

Although much of the empirical research on language attitudes has

been focused on native speakers' attitudes towards various types of non-native speakers, some researchers have investigated the relationship between teachers' accents and students' evaluation of such accents in countries where English is taught as a foreign language. Three studies in particular serve to illustrate the degree to which this concern is common across various geographies. In Chiba, Matsuura, & Yamamoto (1995), a group of Japanese college students were asked to listen to six speech samples created by speakers with a variety of accents (namely, with Japanese, Cantonese (Hong Kong), Sri Lankan, Malaysian, British and American English accents). The authors found that the students showed more positive responses towards American and British English, followed by Japanese-accented English and other varieties of English. They also found a weak positive correlation between the students' instrumental motivation and acceptance of non-native accents. In Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck, and Smit (1997), a group of Austrian college students were found to have negative attitudes towards Austrian-accented English (which they perceived to be a foreign accent) and showed a distinct preference for "native" accents. Among "native" accents, the most favored accent was the accent with which they were the most familiar, namely, British English. Finally, Ladegaard (1998) examined the relationship among high school students' attitudes towards different countries and the varieties of English spoken in those countries. High-school students in Denmark considered British English as their language learning model, while they showed positive attitudes towards American English due to their interest in American culture (particularly with regards to certain modes of cultural expression such as movies and music).

Whereas the scope of studies of teachers' accents and students' perceptions in EFL contexts is still limited in general, this is even more true when it comes to studies involving children who have just entered the formal educational system for the first time. The attitudes that elementary school children form towards English accents in EFL contexts have rarely been studied. This comes despite the fact that teachers' foreign accents are of particular concern among both elementary school teachers themselves as well as among students and parents at the elementary school level in EFL contexts. Forde (1995) examined Hong Kong students' attitudes towards variations of English and found that British and American English were evaluated favorably when compared with Hong-Kong English. (Note, however, that the Hong Kong context may need to be considered as an ESL rather than an EFL context.) This was true even when the students were asked a question concerning their teachers' abilities to teach. Okumura (2002) compared students' attitudes towards various types of English (touching on such factors as the perceived "coolness," "smartness," "honesty," and "sincerity" of the speakers) between elementary school children and college students in Japan. He found that both groups showed more positive attitudes towards American English

than towards Indian English. This result implies that learners' attitudes may indeed be developed at an early age.

It is thus important to understand how learners feel about teachers who do not speak with a "model" accent as well as how this affects the perceived quality of their teaching. Medgyes (1994: 58) proposed a list of "self-reported" classroom behavioral differences between native English-speaking teachers and non-native English-speaking teachers in his survey of English teachers at different grade levels in eleven countries¹. The differences in behaviors between native teachers and non-native teachers were classified into four categories: their individual use of English; their general attitudes towards teaching; their attitudes towards teaching the language; and their attitudes towards teaching culture. This list includes the quality of their pronunciation, their degree of confidence in using English, their casualness, the degree to which they show empathy towards students' problems with learning English, and so on. It would be very informative to see whether or not young children show different attitudes towards these factors based on their teachers' accents in English.

In light of the fact that the acquisition of oral communicative skills has been strongly emphasized in the curricula of many non-English speaking countries (especially at the elementary school level), it is also important to examine the effects of teachers' accents on children's oral skills, as well as understanding children's attitudes towards their teachers' accents in English. However, such studies have rarely been conducted among children in EFL contexts thus far. Eisentein and Berkowitz (1981) found that adult ESL learners could comprehend "standard" native speakers' English better than non-standard English, including foreign-accented English. Among foreign accented varieties of English, a number of studies have indicated that familiar accents of English are easier for learners to comprehend than unfamiliar accents of English (Wilcox 1978; Tauroza & Luk 1997). However, it is still unclear whether or not speech delivered by speakers of the same native language is easier for listeners to comprehend. Smith and Bisazza (1982) found that while their Japanese students comprehended Japanese-accented English better than U.S. speakers' English, Indian students comprehended U.S. speakers' English better than Indian speakers' English. A more recent study conducted by Major, Fitzmaurice, Bunta, and Balasubramanian (2002) yielded mixed results. By examining adult listeners with different native language backgrounds (Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and standard American English), they found that Spanish speakers did better when listening to Spanish-accented

¹ The listed behaviors were self-reported behaviors and they were not necessarily the same as the subjects' actual behavior, as Medgyes (1994) has acknowledged. Also see Medgyes (2000) wherein he addresses certain discrepancies between teachers' self-reported behaviors and their actual practice.

English speech (even better than when listening to American standard English), whereas Chinese listeners did worse when listening to Chinese-accented English speech. The reasons for the inconsistent results among different language groups are not yet clear.

The present study examined Korean elementary school children's attitudes towards teachers with "standard" American English (referred to herein as American-accented English) and Korean-accented English. The subjects that are the focus of this study were therefore still beginning to learn English, unlike many of the adult learners who have been the primary subjects of interest in studies on this topic to date. I also examine in this study the effect of accents on children's listening comprehension skills as well as how this relates to listening task difficulty. Task difficulty has not been explored very much in previous studies, even though this variable may have substantial pedagogical implications. The specific research questions examined in the present study are as follows:

(1) How do teachers' accents in their English affect elementary school students' English listening comprehension performance in a given EFL context, and how does this vary depending on the difficulty of the materials being used?

(2) Do elementary school students respond differently to various attitudinal questions regarding American-accented English and Korean-accented English? If so, do their responses differ based on their (a) listening comprehension level, (b) experience of having direct contact with native speakers of English, or (c) region (namely, do their responses differ between students studying in the capital city versus those studying in a regional city)?

This study is particularly focused on understanding whether or not students form different attitudes towards the overall quality of their teachers' English teaching abilities based on the two accented-English conditions tested herein.

Before moving on to the methodology section, I would like to briefly summarize some of the key aspects of English language education at the elementary school level in Korea in order to place the study described below in the appropriate context.

English Language Education at the Elementary School Level in Korea

In Korea, English language instruction was officially introduced at public elementary schools as an academic subject in 1997 as part of the

²For more detailed information on language planning in Korea, see Jung and Norton (2002) and Park (2002).

seventh revision of the national curriculum². English language instruction was introduced in 1997 at the 3rd grade level, and since the year 2000, all students in grade levels 3 to 6 have been receiving English language instruction. Grades 3 and 4 receive a 40-minute lesson per week (34 lessons per year) and Grades 5 and 6 receive two 40-minute lessons per week (68 lessons per year) in 2003. Currently, there is only one textbook used in elementary schools across the nation, and it has either audio-tapes or CD-ROMs for students; CD-ROMs and a teaching guidebook are available for teachers. English language classes are being taught by native Korean teachers: although some teachers have specialized in teaching English, including some who have previously obtained certification to teach English at the secondary school level, the majority of them are regular classroom teachers. Native speakers of English have rarely been used in traditional Korean public elementary schools under the present system, although the government has planned to hire some in the future. In order to prepare Korean teachers to teach English in their classrooms, the government requires all elementary school teachers to participate in a minimum of 120 hours of an in-service teachers' training program wherein teachers take a uniform series of courses on English conversation and English language pedagogy. The training is organized by the Ministry of Education.

In sum, the preparations for English language education at public elementary schools in Korea has been relatively uniform across the country, and one could roughly assume that the students in the present study had received very similar types of English language instruction (at least as far as their formal schooling is concerned). It is important to note, however, that many students receive some form of additional English instruction outside of school. Thus, background questionnaires were distributed in the present study as described below. These questionnaires addressed, among other things, English language learning outside of school, particularly with regards to students' experience with taking English lessons from native speakers of English.

Methodology

Participants

The participants in the present study were 312 6th grade students in Korea. The students were enrolled in two public schools: one in Seoul (the capital) and the other in Daegu, an industrial city in the middle of the Korean Peninsula. Daegu is a relatively old city which has a reputation for being politically and socially conservative. In contrast to Seoul, one sees few foreigners or English signage in the city. The students were recruited from these two schools in order to address the possibility that students' attitudes might differ between those who live in the capital city

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English in certain contexts³. A bi-dialectal speaker has similarly been used in previous studies employing the matched-guised technique such as in Doss and Gross (1992) and Seggia, Fulmizi, and Stewart (1982). The bi-dialectal speaker used in this study recorded each of the stories in both American-accented English and Korean-accented English. Four native speakers of North American English (all of whom were trained in linguistics) were then asked to judge holistically the degree to which the recorded stories were accented in both sets of recordings. These judges scored the degree of foreign accentuation using a 5-point scale (where 1 indicates no perceivable foreign accent and 5 indicates a heavy foreign accent). The mean scores for the Korean-accented version and the American-accented version were 3.5 and 1, respectively⁴. As such the degree of accentuation was clearly different enough to be perceived by the judges employed herein. The speed of speech delivery and voice quality were roughly controlled for in the production of the above mentioned recordings.

In order to avoid having the comprehension test become a de facto memory test, the stories were first read in their entirety and then the stories were read paragraph by paragraph, with one or two comprehension questions between paragraphs. The comprehension questions were in the format of a multiple-choice test. Half of the students in each school were randomly assigned to take the test based on the American-accented English recording (NAE = 159) and the other half were assigned to take the test based on the Korean-accented English recording (NKE = 153).

After the listening comprehension test, all of the students listened to the same stories used in the comprehension test one more time. This time, however, the students listened to both the American-accented English recording and the Korean-accented English recording. The order of the two accented-English recordings was counter-balanced. The students were instructed that the speakers in both cases were teachers. After listening to both versions, the students were then asked to judge various traits of the speakers.

The present study focused on seven specific measures to assess the students' perceptions of the "two teachers" (two guises) they heard in the recordings above. These aspects were chosen based on the self-reported, behavioral differences between native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers cited in Medgyes (1994, 1999a) as described above. Seven items were chosen from among the various behaviors listed in Medgyes because it was hypothesized that they could serve as indicators of some of the leading in-class behavioral differences between native English-speaking teachers and non-native English-speaking teachers. The items were adopted to suit the specific context of the Korean elementary school students in the present study. These traits

⁴ In addition to the two accented versions of the stories prepared for this study, the "judges" also listened to two more recordings created using different speakers as distracters.

were also assumed to be relatively easy to judge for elementary school students. The seven items across which the students were asked to judge the "two teachers" (two guises) were as follows: (1) the strictness/casualness of the teachers; (2) their degree of confidence in their use of English; (3) their degree of empathy towards the problems that Korean students have in learning English; (4) the degree of focus on "fluency" versus "accuracy" in their teaching; (5) the perceived "goodness" of their pronunciation; (6) the degree of use of Korean in their classrooms; and (7) their ability to explain the similarities and differences between the English and Korean languages. In addition to the seven items listed above, the students were asked to judge the extent to which they wished to have these teachers as their English teachers. Thus, the students were asked to judge eight attitudinal questions in total using a 7-point scale for each question. This attitudinal judgment was conducted in Korean (see the appendix for further details).

Finally, the students were asked to fill out a brief questionnaire. This questionnaire covered three basic areas: (1) whether or not the students had any experience of traveling or staying in an English-speaking country; (2) whether or not the students had ever learned English directly from a native English speaking teacher inside or outside of their school; and (3) the degree to which the students were interested in making friends with people from different nationalities (including Americans, Chinese, British, French, Japanese, Indians, Brazilians, Singaporeans, Australians, and Filipinos), using a 4-point scale (where 1 was a "strong yes," 2 was "yes," 3 was "maybe yes," and 4 was "not sure")⁵. This questionnaire was given in Korean.

All three tasks described above took the students approximately 40 minutes, including time spent instructing the students on how to complete the above procedures.

Results

Listening Comprehension

The results of the listening comprehension test were analyzed by section (recall that the sections varied according to their level of difficulty)

⁵ The results of the last item of the background questionnaire (i.e., the degree to which students wished to make friends with people from different nationalities) were not incorporated in any of the following analyses in the present study. The reason for this decision was that the author was advised by a number of Korean teachers that the results of this question were strongly influenced by the World Cup soccer games then being held in Korea in 2002, and that the students' responses to the question might be very different from that which they would be given during 'normal' times. The mean and standard deviations of the students' judgments (based on a 4-point scale where 1 was "strongly wish") for different nationalities were as follows (in the order of the most popular to the least popular): British (M = 2.06, SD = 1.08); French (M = 2.06, SD = 1.11); Australian (M = 2.16, SD = 1.11); Brazilian (M = 2.22, SD = 1.15); U.S.A. (M = 2.43; SD = 1.21); Chinese (M = 2.53, SD = 1.07); Singaporean (M = 2.60, SD = 1.06); Philippines (M = 2.65, SD = 1.12); Japanese (M = 2.93, SD = 1.15); and Indian (M = 2.96, SD = 1.02).

for both accented groups (American-accented English and Korean-accented English). These results are summarized in Table 1. The means and standard deviations for each section as well as the total scores for the two accented-English versions are provided (including both the raw and standardized scores). A MANOVA was employed to compare the students' performance on each section (using standardized scores) across the two accented English versions. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in listening comprehension performance in Section 2 ($F(1, 310) = 9.07, p < .005$). The students who listened to Korean-accented English had higher comprehension scores than those who listened to American-accented English. However, the ANOVAs failed to find differences in Section 1 ($F(1, 310) = .47, p = .50$) and Section 3 ($F(1, 310) = .07, p = .79$). Namely, when the texts were either relatively easy or relatively difficult for the students to understand, their comprehension did not differ between the two accented versions of English. However, when the comprehension text was at their grade level, those students who listened to Korean-accented English performed better on the comprehension test.

Students' Attitudes Towards American-accented English and Korean-accented English

The students' attitudes towards the teachers with the two types of accented English were analyzed in five steps. First, all of the students' responses were combined and analyzed. Table 2 shows the results of this exercise. As mentioned in the methodology section, all of the students listened to both the Korean-accented and American-accented English in this part of the study. The attitudes were examined along eight measures

Table 1
Listening Comprehension Test Scores for Tests Conducted in American-accented English and Korean-accented English

	Section 1		Section 2		Section 3		Total		Ave. Z Score
	Raw score	Z score	Raw score	Z score	Raw score	Z score	Raw score	Z score	
American English									
Mean	6.60	.04	2.15	-.17	2.01	-.02	10.75	-.04	-.05
SD	2.04	1.03	1.21	1.01	1.33	1.01	3.46	1.01	.76
Korean English									
Mean	6.44	-.04	2.56	.17	2.05	.01	11.05	.04	.05
SD	1.92	.97	1.16	.97	1.30	.98	3.40	.99	.75

Note. The full scores for each section were as follows: 9 for Section 1, 5 for Section 2, and 6 for Section 3.

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using a 7-point scale for each accented English condition (please refer to the Appendix for further details). Paired sample t-tests were employed in order to examine the differences in attitudes towards both the American-accented English speaker and the Korean-accented English speaker for each of the eight attitudinal variables. Significant differences were found with regards to the following attitudinal variables: the teachers' confidence in their use of English; their focus on fluency/accuracy; the goodness of their pronunciation; their use of Korean in classrooms; and their wish to have them as their English teachers⁶. The Korean elementary school children thought that the American-accented English speaker was (compared with the Korean-accented English speaker) more confident in her use of English, would focus more on fluency, had better pronunciation, and would use less Korean in the English class. The students also expressed a stronger preference to have the American-accented English speaker as their English teacher than the Korean-accented English speaker.

The second step was an examination of whether or not the students' attitudes differed depending on their performance on the listening com-

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations for Eight Traits of Speakers of American-accented English and Korean-accented English (based on a 7-point scale)

	American English	Korean English	Paired t tests	
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
(1) Strictness (1 strict – 7 casual)	3.68 (1.54)	3.74 (1.56)	<i>t</i> (294) =-.51	n.s.
(2) Confidence in their use of English (1 confident – 7 unconfident)	2.91 (1.70)	3.49 (1.77)	<i>t</i> (296) =-4.74	<i>p</i> <.001
(3) Empathy towards students' problems (1 empathetic – 7 not empathetic)	4.01 (1.70)	3.86 (1.74)	<i>t</i> (292) =1.28	n.s.
(4) Focus on fluency vs. accuracy (1 fluency – 7 accuracy)	3.71 (1.67)	4.18 (1.78)	<i>t</i> (293) =-3.12	<i>p</i> <.005
(5) Goodness of pronunciation (1 excellent – 7 poor)	3.02 (1.88)	3.63 (1.83)	<i>t</i> (293) =-4.80	<i>p</i> <.001
(6) Use of Korean in classroom (1 Korean dominant – 7 English dominant)	4.87 (1.58)	4.37 (1.63)	<i>t</i> (285) =4.18	<i>p</i> <.001
(7) Ability to explain the difference between English and Korean (1 excellent – 7 poor)	3.80 (1.68)	3.76 (1.72)	<i>t</i> (290) =.29	n.s.
(8) Wish to have them as their English teacher (1 strongly wish – 7 not wish)	3.67 (2.07)	4.25 (1.97)	<i>t</i> (288) =-3.74	<i>p</i> <.001

⁶ An adjusted alpha was employed (.006) in order to reduce the risk of getting false positives. The same adjusted alpha levels were used in each of the analyses that follow.

prehension test. Using the students' standardized scores (z scores) for each section, average standardized scores were computed. Based on the average standardized scores, the students were divided into two groups: a low comprehension group (NL = 155) and a high comprehension group (NH = 157). The attitudinal responses were then compared between these two groups (see Table 3). A series of ANOVAs with repeated measures were employed for each attitudinal variable, where a within-subjects factor was the type of accented English and a between-subjects factor was the students' listening comprehension level. A between-subjects main effect was found when the analyses were applied to each of the following two variables: teacher confidence ($F(1, 295) = 7.86, p < .005$) and empathy ($F(1, 291) = 16.50, p < .001$). While there was a between-subjects main effect in the case of first variable (i.e., teacher confidence) ($F(1, 291) = 22.08, p < .0001$), for the second variable (i.e., empathy), the analysis did not indicate such an effect. Neither case indicated any interaction effects. In other words, the results shown in Table 3 indicate that while both the high and low comprehension groups thought the American-accented English teacher sounded more confident in her use of English than the Korean-accented English teacher, the students in the high comprehension group thought that both teachers sounded more confident in their use of English than did students in the low comprehension group. Similarly, those students who achieved higher listening comprehension scores thought that both teachers would be more empathetic towards students' problems than students with lower listening comprehension. However, in this case, there were no significant differences in the attitudes towards the American-accented teacher versus the Korean-accented teachers in either comprehension group.

Third, the students' attitudes were compared between those students who had experienced learning English from a native English speaker and those who did not have such experience. The information regarding students' English learning experiences was obtained via the background questionnaire which each student completed. As one can see in Table 4, students in both cities had very similar profiles with regards to their contact with native English speakers. Combining the frequencies of the two cities, the results indicate that less than 10% of the participants in the present study had been to English-speaking countries. The background questionnaires also indicated that approximately 37% of the students had never received English instruction from a native English speaker, whereas approximately 55% of them had learned English from native English speakers; 8% of the students did not give a response. The majority of such students had learned English from native English speakers outside of their school. Since neither of the two schools in the present study had provided the students with English instruction by native speakers of English, those 14 students who indicated that they had received instruction from native English speakers might have been at different schools

Table 3
Students' Attitudes Towards the Two Teachers (Guises) by Comprehension Level

	Comprehension Low (n=155)		Comprehension High (n=157)	
	American English	Korean English	American English	Korean English
(1) Strictness	3.71	3.76	3.65	3.72
(1 strict – 7 casual)	(1.50)	(1.54)	(1.59)	(1.58)
(2) Confidence in their use of English	3.23	3.63	2.61	3.36
(1 confident – 7 unconfident)	(1.77)	(1.75)	(1.58)	(1.78)
(3) Empathy towards students' problems	4.37	4.17	3.68	3.57
(1 empathetic – 7 not empathetic)	(1.69)	(1.74)	(1.65)	(1.68)
(4) Focus on fluency vs. accuracy	3.94	3.91	3.49	4.43
(1 fluency – 7 accuracy)	(1.51)	(1.64)	(1.79)	(1.88)
(5) Goodness of pronunciation	3.26	2.80	2.80	3.44
(1 excellent – 7 poor)	(1.87)	(1.77)	(1.86)	(1.88)
(6) Use of Korean in classroom	4.83	4.22	4.91	4.50
(1 Korean dominant – 7 English dominant)	(1.67)	(1.66)	(1.50)	(1.60)
(7) Ability to explain the difference between English and Korean	4.07	3.91	3.55	3.63
(1 excellent – 7 poor)	(1.75)	(1.78)	(1.60)	(1.67)
(8) Wish to have them as their English teacher	3.96	4.27	3.41	4.23
(1 strongly wish – 7 not wish)	(2.10)	(1.90)	(2.01)	(2.04)

before they enrolled in these two schools. Based on the students' responses to the second question in the questionnaire, the students were again classified into two groups: those who had experienced learning English directly from native speakers of English (N1 = 171) and those who had not (N0 = 116). While this is clearly a gross classification (given that the questionnaires did not address either the quality or quantity of English instruction from native English speakers), it could tell us something about the effect of such experiences on comprehension of the two accented versions of English.

A series of ANOVAs with repeated measures were again employed. There were no between-subjects effects (with regards to the experience of learning English from native English speakers) for any of the attitudinal variables. There likewise were no interaction effects. In other words, the students' attitudes in all eight variables did not indicate any attitudinal differences between those students who had experienced learning English from native English speakers and those who had not. It is quite possible that, for many of the cases covered herein, their experience of learning English from native English speakers was limited; even if this were the case, such differences in experience did not appear to influence their attitudes towards the two accented versions of English employed in

Table 4
Students' Experiences with Native English Speakers (Numbers Given in Both Frequencies and Percentages)

Q1: Have you been to an English-speaking country before?			
	Seoul	Daegu	Total
Yes	20 (11.6%)	8 (5.8%)	28 (9.0%)
No	140 (80.9%)	123 (88.5%)	263 (84.3%)
No response	13 (7.5%)	8 (5.8%)	21 (6.7%)
Q2: Have you had any native English-speaking teachers before?			
	Seoul	Daegu	Total
Yes, at school	10 (5.8%)	4 (2.9%)	14 (4.5%)
Yes, outside of school	84 (48.6%)	73 (52.5%)	157 (50.3%)
No	62 (35.8%)	54 (38.8%)	116 (37.2%)
No response	17 (9.8%)	8 (5.8%)	25 (8.0%)

this study.

Fourth, the students' attitudes towards the two accented English speakers were compared between those students studying in Seoul and those who were studying in Daegu. The results are shown in Table 6. A series of ANOVAs with repeated measures were again employed to compare each of their attitudinal responses. As in the previous analysis, there were no between-subjects effects (i.e., regional differences) for any of the attitudinal variables. There also were no interaction effects. In sum, the students' responses towards the eight attitudinal variables failed to find any significant differences between students in Seoul and Daegu.

Finally, I examined which attitudinal responses were related to students' preferences for having one of the two accented-English speakers as their English teacher. Pearson correlation coefficients were used for this analysis. As can be seen in Table 7, the correlations between desire to have either of the two teachers as their teacher and the seven attitudinal responses tended in general to be similar for both accented conditions. Not surprisingly, moderate positive correlations ($r = .45$ and $.50$) were found between the quality of each teachers' pronunciation and the students' wish to have them as their English teachers under both accented conditions. Interestingly, moderate positive correlations were also found between the students' preferences to have each teacher as their own teacher and the teacher's perceived ability to explain the differences

Table 5
Students' Attitudes Towards the Two Teachers (Guises) Based on Their
Experience of Learning English from Native English Speakers

	Students who had not been taught by native English speakers (n=116)		Students who had been taught by native English speakers (n=171)	
	American English	Korean English	American English	Korean English
(1) Strictness (1 strict – 7 casual)	3.71 (1.65)	3.66 (1.55)	3.73 (1.48)	3.78 (1.57)
(2) Confidence in their use of English (1 confident – 7 unconfident)	2.97 (1.71)	3.39 (1.77)	2.86 (1.69)	3.47 (1.78)
(3) Empathy towards students' problems (1 empathetic – 7 not empathetic)	4.21 (1.63)	3.89 (1.68)	3.85 (1.74)	3.80 (1.76)
(4) Focus on fluency vs. accuracy (1 fluency – 7 accuracy)	3.93 (1.53)	4.31 (1.79)	3.58 (1.70)	4.06 (1.81)
(5) Goodness of pronunciation (1 excellent – 7 poor)	3.02 (1.80)	3.54 (1.70)	3.01 (1.94)	3.67 (1.92)
(6) Use of Korean in classroom (1 Korean dominant – 7 English dominant)	5.05 (1.41)	4.44 (1.60)	4.80 (1.70)	4.32 (1.66)
(7) Ability to explain the difference between English and Korean (1 excellent – 7 poor)	4.01 (1.60)	3.90 (1.80)	3.66 (1.71)	3.66 (1.66)
(8) Wish to have them as their English teacher (1 strongly wish – 7 not wish)	3.79 (1.89)	4.16 (1.99)	3.53 (2.15)	4.27 (2.00)

between English and Korean for both accented conditions. It is not totally clear how best to interpret this result. This might be related to the traditional way in which Korean students have learned English, wherein grammatical and various other types of usage might have been explained by the teacher. However, we probably should not interpret this as a strictly negative sign. It may also imply that the students have a preference for a metalinguistic approach to their English language learning and wish to compare the similarities and differences between the newly introduced language (English) and the language with which they are familiar (Korean). There may be other possible interpretations of this result as well, and it would be interesting to investigate further the role of the students' first language in their English classes and its influence over their attitudes towards both their teachers as well as their English language education in general.

Relatively weak positive correlations were also found between the teachers' confidence in their use of English and their perceived empathy towards students' problems with learning English under both accented conditions. In the American-accented condition, a weak positive correla-

Table 6
Students' Attitudes Towards the Two English Teachers (Guises) by Region

	Seoul (n=172)		Daegu (n=139)	
	American English	Korean English	American English	Korean English
(1) Strictness (1 strict – 7 casual)	3.49 (1.60)	3.84 (1.62)	3.92 (1.45)	3.62 (1.48)
(2) Confidence in their use of English (1 confident – 7 unconfident)	2.93 (1.69)	3.49 (1.81)	2.89 (1.73)	3.84 (1.72)
(3) Empathy towards students' problems (1 empathetic – 7 not empathetic)	3.87 (1.7)	3.87 (1.77)	4.20 (1.60)	3.84 (1.69)
(4) Focus on fluency vs. accuracy (1 fluency – 7 accuracy)	3.62 (1.68)	4.19 (1.82)	3.83 (1.66)	4.17 (1.75)
(5) Goodness of pronunciation (1 excellent – 7 poor)	3.14 (1.94)	3.63 (1.92)	2.87 (1.79)	3.64 (1.72)
(6) Use of Korean in classroom (1 Korean dominant – 7 English dominant)	4.74 (1.61)	4.49 (1.70)	5.04 (1.53)	4.21 (1.53)
(7) Ability to explain the difference between English and Korean (1 excellent – 7 poor)	3.74 (1.80)	3.86 (1.81)	3.87 (1.52)	3.63 (1.59)
(8) Wish to have them as their English teacher (1 strongly wish – 7 not wish)	3.57 (2.13)	4.29 (2.06)	3.80 (1.98)	4.19 (1.86)

Table 7
Correlations of Attitudinal Factors with Students Preferences for Having One or the Other of the Two Teachers as Their English Teacher (Pearson Correlation Coefficients)

	(8) Wish to have them as their English teacher (1 strongly wish – 7 strongly not wish)	
	American English	Korean English
(1) Strictness (1 strict – 7 casual)	-.14*	-.19**
(2) Confidence in their use of English (1 confident – 7 unconfident)	.40**	.39**
(3) Empathy towards students' problems (1 empathetic – 7 not empathetic)	.44**	.37**
(4) Focus on fluency vs. accuracy (1 fluency – 7 accuracy)	.28**	.07
(5) Goodness of pronunciation (1 excellent – 7 poor)	.45**	.50**
(6) Use of Korean in classroom (1 Korean dominant – 7 English dominant)	-.12*	-.02
(7) Ability to explain the difference between English and Korean (1 excellent – 7 poor)	.51**	.57**

Notes.

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

tion was also found between the students' desire to have the teacher as their teacher and the teacher's own perceived focus of fluency. Although the correlations were very weak, the degree to which the teachers were perceived to be either strict in their teaching or the degree to which they used Korean in the classroom were found to be negatively correlated with the students' desire to have them as their English teachers.

Discussion

The present study investigated Korean elementary school students' attitudes towards two types of teachers, one with Korean-accented English and one with American-accented English. It was found that the Korean elementary school students thought that the American-accented speaker was (compared with the Korean-accented speaker) more confident in her use of English, would focus more on fluency (as opposed to accuracy) in her instruction, had better pronunciation, and would use less Korean in her English class. The students also expressed a stronger preference to have the American-accented English speaker as their English teacher than the Korean-accented English speaker. This general preference held even when the analyses employed herein were conducted separately based on the students' listening comprehension levels, their experience of learning English from native speakers of English, and their place of residency. Namely, the preferences for American-accented English as their language model had already developed among even the elementary school students that were the focus of this study, regardless of their comprehension level, their experience (if any) with learning English from a native English speaker, or the region in which they lived.

It is important to note, however, that as far as the students' listening comprehension performance was concerned, the Korean-accented English teacher's accent did not have a negative effect. Korean elementary school students' listening comprehension did not show any differences between the two accented English conditions when the materials were either too easy or too difficult. Moreover, when the materials were at their grade level, it was easier for the students to listen to and comprehend Korean-accented English than American-accented English.

Previous studies have indicated some of the factors that influence native listeners' abilities to comprehend foreign accented speech (i.e., intelligibility of speech). Such factors include grammar and pronunciation (Varonis & Gass 1982) as well as the listener's familiarity with a particular accent, a particular speaker, the topic of the speech, and familiarity with non-native speakers' speech in general (Gass & Varonis 1984). More recently, specific elements of speech such as prosodic features of pronunciation have been identified as also having some influence (e.g., Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, & Koehler 1992). It is important to note, how-

ever, that it is still unclear which features have the most influence on intelligibility (Munro & Derwing 1995). We also do not know whether such factors are equally detrimental to non-native speakers' ability to comprehend various types of accented speech. We need to examine further the interaction between listening task difficulty and those variables that have been suggested in previous studies. Although the speed of speech delivery was roughly controlled in the present study, non-native teachers of English in reality may often deliver speech more slowly than native English speaking teachers, and the speed of speech delivery may be associated with the task difficulty and thus the listeners' comprehension (especially among beginning learners).

Of course, the present study examined only one aspect of oral skills, namely, the effect of accents on students' listening comprehension. More research is necessary in order to understand the effects of teachers' non-native speech on students' acquisition of oral skills such as production skills, and the underlying mechanism of how this occurs. Moreover, the non-native English speaking teachers in Korea presumably have varying degrees of foreign accents in their English, and thus the degree to which their English was accented can be expected to differ from the level of accent that was used in the present study. However, the results of this study suggest that non-native teachers' speech should not be discouraged in EFL classrooms simply because of their foreign accents. In fact, since the Korean students tested herein performed better on their comprehension tests under the Korean-accented English condition when the test was at their grade level, it is possible that non-native teachers of English might have advantages in providing their students with "comprehensible input" (Krashen 1982). The potential pedagogical benefits of using non-native teachers may not be underestimated.

Currently the majority of English learners in the world are taught by non-native teachers of English (Brutt-Griffler 2002). As Medgyes (1992, 1999b) suggests, non-native English speaking teachers have a number of unique strengths. There is much room for non-native English speaking teachers to maximize their potential strengths so that they can provide their students with learning opportunities that are linguistically and culturally effective. In the present study, in addition to the teachers' quality of pronunciation, factors such as "ability to explain the differences between the English and Korean languages," "confidence in using English," and "empathy towards the students' problems with learning English" were positively related to the elementary school students' desire to have such individuals as their English teachers. The English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies currently in use are often based on the needs and backgrounds of native English speaking teachers who are working in ESL contexts (Holliday 1994). There is an increasingly urgent need to develop ELT methodologies for non-native English speaking teachers, particularly at the elementary school level in EFL contexts.

Lastly, the goal of English language education in EFL contexts needs to be reexamined. There has already been much discussion on the topic of World English (See Brutt-Griffler 2002 for a detailed socio-historical discussion of this topic) and English as a global language (Crystal 1997). The number of English speakers who speak English as their second and foreign language already exceed the number of English speakers who speak English as their first language (Graddol 1997, 1999). Among "native English speakers," there also is substantial regional and social variation. As Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994) have argued, certain types of native English speakers' accents (e.g., native speakers of "standard American English") may still be useful as a reference point for English teaching in order to keep the varieties of English mutually intelligible. However, such types of English should not necessarily be regarded as the norm or the goal of English education (which has been the case in East Asian countries so far). Given that children appear to develop a strong preference towards certain types of English at an early age, perhaps children in EFL contexts should be introduced to the varieties of English at an early age (including at the elementary school level) in pedagogical materials and curricula.

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PERCEPTION VERSUS REALITY

Appendix

1. How "strict" do you think the teachers would be?

Extremely strict

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely causal

2. How "confident" do you think these teachers are in their use of English?

Extremely confident

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely unconfident

3. How "empathetic" do you think these teachers are? (That is, to what extent do you think these teachers can understand the problems and difficulties that you may have as a learner of English?)

Understand you extremely well

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Understand you extremely poorly

4. How much focus do you think these teachers would put on your "fluency" (or "communication") in English as opposed to your "accuracy" of English usage?

Extremely strong focus on fluency

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely strong focus on accuracy

5. How "good" do you think each teacher's pronunciation is?

Excellent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely poorly

6. How much Korean language do you think the teachers would use in their English classes if they were your English teachers?

Use Korean exclusively in class

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Use English exclusively in class

7. To what extent (how well) do you think the teachers would be able to explain the differences and similarities between the English and Korean languages?

Excellent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Extremely poorly

8. How much would you like to have teachers like Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 as your English teacher? Please choose only one number for each teacher.

I very strongly wish to have her

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I very strongly do not wish to have her