Student’s Self-perceived English Accent and Its Impact on Their Communicative Competence and Speaking Confidence

An Empirical Study Among Students Taking English 6 in Upper Secondary School

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2017

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Abstract

The English language plays an important role as a lingua franca in Sweden as well as in many countries across the European Union (EU). The ability to communicate well in English is highly valued and as a response to this, communicative competence has had an increasingly major part in the English language education and curriculums all over Europe, including the Swedish curriculum for English language education. (Rindal & Piercy, 2013; Swedish National Agency for Education, 1995; Tornberg, 2015). With communication as a primary goal of the Swedish curriculum for English, the importance of acquiring an inner-circle accent, an accent spoken by native speakers of English, has had to take a step back, without thoroughly studying the effect it has on the communicative competence and speaking confidence of the students.

The aim of this study is to investigate, with an empirical approach, if student’s self-perceived English accent impacts positively or negatively on their speaking confidence and communicative competence. The study was conducted using an empirical and descriptive approach, with a quantitative data analysis. The investigation was conducted in an upper-secondary school, using a web-based survey with 80 respondents from the second and third grade. The students took English 6, a course the students must pass to be eligible for further academic studies. The school and the respondents were chosen using a convenience sample.

The results were analysed, and the data was shown using figures to explain the results further. The results of the study concluded that students seem to think that having a native-like accent is overvalued and that communication is to favour over their perceived English accent. It is somewhat conclusive that most of the students value communication over perceived accent, and many of them say that they do not care how they sound as long as what they say is conveyed.

Keywords: Perceived accent, Communicative competence, English, Upper-secondary school, Students, Impact, Sweden
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Introduction

In today’s globalised world, the English language has an important role as a lingua franca. English is used to communicate when doing business, diplomacy, teaching, and conveying news and information (Modiano, 2009). The language reaches us at work and in our private lives, through TV, movies and social media (Modiano, 2009). As a response to the value of communicating in English, communicative competence has had an increasingly central role in English language education and curriculums in Europe, and the Swedish curriculum is not an exception to this fact (Rindal & Piercy, 2013; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011; Tornberg, 2015). With communication as a primary goal of the Swedish English language education, the importance of students acquiring an inner-circle accent (see definition in section 3.1.1) have had to take a step back, even without thoroughly studying the effect this has on the communicative competence and speaking confidence of the students.

The multi-purpose usage that English provides, and its function as a global lingua franca, makes most people who use English as a communication tool, non-native speakers (Rindal & Piercy, 2013; Modiano, 2009). This, together with the possibility of creating an identity with accents (Beinhoff, 2013), affect the way English develops regarding pronunciation and style (Rindal & Piercy, 2013). Even if non-native accents are more accepted than they were before, due to non-native speakers outnumbering the native speakers (Dröschel, 2011), the inner-circle accents (see definition in section 3.1.1) tend to be a role model when it comes to pronunciation in educational circumstances (Swedish National Agency for Education, 1995). Historically, accents have been mentioned in the Swedish curriculum for English, ever since English was made a mandatory subject in Swedish schools in the 1960s (Modiano, 2009). Adapting to an inner-circle accent was, until 2011, a part of the English education in Swedish schools (Modiano, 2009; Swedish National Agency for Education, 1995; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). In today’s school, students do not have to adapt to a specific inner-circle accent when speaking English and every student can choose their accent more freely than before (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011; Swedish National Agency for Education, 1995).
The growing status and importance of English in Sweden, both as a language in the community and as a subject in Swedish schools, render it relevant to investigate the importance, or lack of importance, of adapting to a specific inner-circle accent. With the aim of the curriculum for English in mind, where communicative competence and speaking confidence are more important than adapting to a specific inner-circle accent, it is interesting to investigate the student’s feelings and perceptions regarding whether their self-identified accent, or self-perceived accents, communicative competence, and speaking confidence is correlated. Are self-perceived accents affecting communicative competence and speaking confidence among students?

2 Aim

The aim of this essay is to investigate, with an empirical approach, if student’s self-perceived English accent impacts positively or negatively on their speaking confidence and communicative competence. The study will investigate this in the second and third year of upper-secondary school, among Swedish students taking English 6, a course the students must pass to be eligible for further academic studies. In order to achieve this, the following research questions are addressed: What accent do the students aim for when speaking English and why? Is having a native-like English accent important to acquire according to the students? Do the students feel that their self-perceived English accent impacts positively or negatively on their confidence when speaking their L2 and does it impact on their communicative competence?

3 Background

The remainder of this section will provide definitions of terms and concepts used in this study, English education in Swedish schools, and some previous research related to this study.

3.1 Definitions

The accents this study will mention are the two inner-circle accents British English (BrE) and American English (AmE). The definitions of the two accents concerning this study are in compliance with the definitions made in English – One Tongue, Many Voices by Geoffrey Leech & Jan Svartvik (2006). This study will also mention the unofficial accent called Mid-Atlantic English (MaE), and its definition is as follows: “A
usage in which decidedly British or American pronunciation is avoided” (Modiano, 2009, p. 106). The remainder of this section will provide definitions regarding concepts with ties to this study.

3.1.1 The Three Circles of English

As a lingua franca, English is important to a lot of people all over the world. More than one billion people speak English, although only between 375 to 400 million use English as their primary and native language, and the vast majority of them reside in the UK, USA, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This group of people belong to the so-called inner-circle of English speakers (Crystal, 2003; Modiano, 2009). The rest of the English-speaking community have English as their second language, for example, the former British colonies and other countries affected by the early spread of English. They belong to the outer-circle of English speakers (Crystal, 2003; Modiano, 2009).

The remaining and expanding community that use English recognise the importance of the language and have a widespread and profound foreign language education and use of English (Crystal, 2003). This group is called the expanding circle (Crystal, 2003; Modiano, 2009), and this is where Sweden has its place in the English speaking community. With this kind of spread of the English language, both as a second and foreign language, it is bound to affect the different varieties of English. The accents are formed and made by those who speak the language, and there is an increasing diversification of English due to the number of non-native speakers that use the language as a lingua franca (Dröschel, 2011).

3.1.2 Accents and Dialects

Yule (2014) defines Standard English as the idealised variety of English. The standard variety is commonly associated with mass media and education, printed books and news, and the variety of English that is taught as a second or foreign language. There can be different kinds of standard variation of a language depending on where it is spoken, such as Standard American English (SAmE) and Standard British English (SBrE) (Yule, 2014). Speaking with an accent is, according to Yule (2014), “the description of aspects of pronunciation that identify where an individual speaker is from, regionally or socially” (Yule, 2014, p. 243). With that definition, everyone would have an accent, marking belonging regionally or socially. Speaking with a dialect, on
the other hand, is defined by Yule (2014) as “features of grammar and vocabulary as well as aspects of pronunciation” (Yule, 2014, p. 243). In the UK, some linguists insist that dialect is not an aspect of pronunciation, and are therefore not accepting this definition (Modiano, 2009), although this study will use Yule’s definitions in its further use of the terminologies.

3.1.3 Communicative Competence

The concept of communicative competence developed from Chomsky’s idea of competence and performance. It revolves around the native speaker’s ability to understand and formulate grammatically correct clauses, and how to use language in concrete situations (Tornberg, 2015). Chomsky’s idea of competence was quite strict, and Dell Hymes protested the use of this term and its strictness. He added three more factors of competence to the already existing grammatical factor that Chomsky coined. These three factors were the feasible factor, appropriate factor and the accepted usage factor. They all involve communication and its socially conditional usage and knowing whether something can be said a certain way, if it is suitable to say it and if it is accepted to use it (Tornberg, 2015). These thoughts and theories were the basis for the understanding of communicative competence as the concept is used in Swedish schools today.

There is an agreement that the element of communicative competence in language education has had a big influence on how language in Swedish schools is taught (Modiano, 2009; Tornberg, 2015). The concept was introduced in the 2011 version of the national curriculum in Sweden (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). Although, being able to communicate has always been an important feature of language teaching and learning, to be communicatively competent is taking communication one step further (Tornberg, 2015). The requirements for communicative competence are not only to be able to communicate in English. It involves the ability to comprehend spoken and written language, to be able to interact with others and to adapt language based on different recipients and situations both orally and in writing (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). Furthermore, it involves having an understanding of language as a bearer of cultural connection and intercultural appreciation (Modiano, 2009; Tornberg, 2015).
3.1.4 Speaking Confidence and Willingness to Communicate

The Swedish national curriculum talks briefly about making, through teaching, students feel confident and willing to speak English in different situations (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). The ability to feel confident when speaking a foreign language depends on many factors, not only on the amount of knowledge learnt in school. It can depend on personality, social situation, communicative competence, self-confidence, and the desire and willingness to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998). A definition regarding willingness to communicate was formed by MacIntyre et al. (1998). They called willingness to communicate “a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2” (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547). The ability to feel ready to speak a foreign language is essentially what the Swedish schools and the education in English set out to achieve, according to the national curriculum in English (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). MacIntyre et al. (1998) suggested that willingness to communicate is a situational construct, and created a heuristic model that shows both individual and situational variables on willingness to communicate to initiate a conversation in a person’s second language.

The model presented by MacIntyre et al. (1998) is shaped like a multi-layered pyramid and integrates various social-psychological, linguistic and communicative variables, as underlying features of second language communication and conversation. The first three layers from the top represent situation-specific influences on willingness to communicate on a social and individual basis, such as an opportunity to speak, for example, English. They also represent the speaker’s perception of confidence when speaking, lacking anxiety regarding speaking the language, and if they have a desire to speak, for example, with a specific person. The three remaining layers represent stable and enduring influences on willingness to communicate, such as motivation, communicative competence, personality, self-confidence and social situation (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

3.2 English Language Education in Sweden

Acquiring an inner-circle accent, primarily BrE, has been a requirement in the Swedish curriculum since the 1960s (Modiano, 2009). Slowly, during the different renewals of
the Swedish curriculum for English, accents and their importance have faded away (Swedish National Agency for Education, 1995; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). The biggest shift in thinking about teaching accents in Swedish schools took place when BrE no longer was deemed the only preferred accent students ought to use. In the 1995 version of the curriculum for English, students were told they could choose to either speak BrE or AmE and speak with a well-ordered pronunciation (Swedish National Agency for Education, 1995). The curriculum for the present education of English in Swedish schools has no mention of acquiring a specific inner-circle accent, or that any accent is correct. Instead, there has been a shift from accents to the communicative value of English and communicative competence has entered the curriculum for English (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011).

As shifts in educational trends occur, it is reasonable that the education of new teachers should change as well. The purpose teachers fill in the Swedish schools is not only to convey a large amount of knowledge to the students. It is also about being able to strengthen the students’ self-image and self-reliance, to motivate them to learn, and to convey enthusiasm and empathy. (Tornberg, 2015). According to Tornberg (2015), there has been a shift from educational methods to learner centred education, where learner awareness¹, learner autonomy², communication strategies³, communicative competence⁴, cognitive strategies⁵, and learning are central to the education of language, and therefore English. Tornberg (2015) also says that the teacher is nowadays a figure of knowledge, but also a guide to the student and his or her ability to acquire language skills in the Swedish school. The teacher is not central to learning anymore, the student is (Tornberg, 2015). Swedish English education has, in other words, shifted from a methodology focused school to a learner centred school, where the shift from acquiring accents to acquiring communicative competence can be seen as a logical step in that progress.

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¹ Awareness of the native and target language’s linguistic rules and cultural differences. (Tornberg, 2015)
² The student’s responsibility of its own learning, the aims and content of learning. (Tornberg, 2015)
³ The ability to overcome linguistic obstacles by using other strategies to communicate, such as rephrasing and using body language to communicate. (Tornberg, 2015)
⁴ See section 3.1.3
⁵ The ability to process information in order to solve learning problems, analyse them and apply them to already existing knowledge. (Tornberg, 2015)
3.2.1 Media and Society’s Influence on English Education and accent

It is no surprise that the media and information era characterise today’s society and that it has had an impact on the formulation of the curriculum. In the 1995 curriculum for English, this was recognised and featured as a reason why English education in secondary school was important (Swedish National Agency for Education, 1995). The students watch movies, TV-shows, YouTube and various social media long before reaching the proper age for school (Swedish National Agency for Education, 1995). With this kind of media, targeted at young people, emerging mainly from USA (Modiano, 2009; Rindal, 2010; Rindal & Piercy, 2013), there is an understanding as to why AmE was featured as an acceptable accent in this curriculum as well as the already educationally recognised BrE. American pop-culture, or media, are rarely dubbed, and they are instead subtitled, exposing children to spoken AmE at an early age (Rindal & Piercy, 2013).

Even if TV and movies continue to play a major role in the lives of Swedish adolescents, the use of Internet and gaming provides a lot of contact with the outside world (Swedish Media Council, 2015). For example, according to the Swedish Media Council (2015), 98% of 13-18-year-olds in Sweden had a smartphone, and they use it almost exclusively to browse the Internet and use social media. Just in a few years, this kind of accessibility has escalated (Swedish Media Council, 2015) and offers contact with more than just the inner-circle varieties of English (Lantz-Andersson, 2016). In fact, the use of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube encourage communication between both non-native speakers and native speakers of English, as well as the lingua franca communication in English between non-native speakers (Lantz-Andersson, 2016).

3.2.2 Identity

In the general curriculum for the upper-secondary school that the Swedish National Agency for Education establishes, the norms and values of the Swedish educational system are stated. Every student should learn and feel a sense of integrity, know every man and woman’s equal value, solidarity and equality. (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). In other words, students in the Swedish school learn that they matter and have a value, no matter how they speak, look like and think (Swedish National
Agency for Education, 2011). The Swedish schools aim to strengthen every individual student’s feeling of self, what characterises them, makes them an individual with a strong feeling of worth and an identity that they can portray in every way they feel appropriate (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011).

With this in mind, an accent is a great identity marker (Beinhoff, 2013). Accents enable the speaker to express for example regional, cultural and national identity, with factors such as age, social class, group belonging (Beinhoff, 2013). In fact, an accent is in one way a method and tool to decide how the speaker wishes to present themselves to others.

3.3 Previous Research

A study made by Zarrinabadi & Khodarahmi (2017) presented the views and feelings of 20 Iranian students with a language learning experience varying between 18 months and seven years, in a private language teaching institute. Using interviews, Zarrinabadi & Khodarahmi (2017) compared the students’ willingness to communicate in their second language (henceforth known as L2 in the text), English, with non-native speakers. They concluded in their study, that accent strength is important when speaking an L2. Subjects with an accented speech were dismissed as less talented and less intelligent than other participants with a less pronounced Iranian accent of English. Furthermore, students that used a native-like accent became less popular to talk to, since students with an accented speech were more self-conscious, anxious and less willing to communicate with students that had a more native-like accent of English than themselves (Khodarahmib & Zarrinabadia, 2017). Lastly, the study shows that when the participants perceived their English accent as native-like or beautiful, confidence and competence increased and endorsed their willingness to communicate in their L2, English. Also, the subjects with a perceived native-like accent came across as intelligent and classy among the other participants, due to the sound of their speech (Khodarahmib & Zarrinabadia, 2017).

Also, Ulrikke Rindal & Caroline Piercy (2013) conducted a study where they investigated the pronunciation among Norwegian teens in a second language setting. Although the main aim of their study is similar to the aim of this study, some of their conclusions are rather interesting in comparison to this study. Rindal & Piercy (2013)
concluded that the participants of their study abandoned the restrictions of a traditional native-like accent, and aimed for a more neutral way of speaking English. Their attitude was that fluidity is more important than a particular English accent (Rindal & Piercy, 2013). Furthermore, they concluded that the societal climate in Norway, having two official varieties of their native language, might affect the participants when speaking their L2. They suggest that the diversity in their native language encourages diversity in their L2. (Rindal & Piercy, 2013). Since the Norwegian and Swedish curriculum for English is rather similar (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011), this study is relevant to the present study.

4 Method and Material

This study was conducted using an empirical and descriptive approach, with a quantitative data analysis (Denscombe, 2014). The investigation was conducted in an upper-secondary school, with 80 respondents from the second grade and third grade, taking English 6, a course the students must pass to be eligible for further academic studies. The school and the respondents were chosen using a convenience sample, which is a non-probability sampling method, choosing participants due to their convenient accessibility. The data was collected using a web-based survey that the students got access to after getting information about the background and aim of the study. A survey was chosen as a method of data collection due to the empirical approach of this study. Surveys are a sensible method when research on a specific topic is done, and when the aim is to investigate opinions regarding a specific topic among a specific group of people (Denscombe, 2014). After the collection of the data, it was analysed, and the data was further analysed to answer the research questions and aim of the study. Due to the small research group and the limited time there was to conduct this study, the data collected were not suitable for any broad conclusions, they cannot be considered relevant in more general terms.

The remainder of this section will provide more information and detail on the method and material on which this study was based, including a report on reliability and validity.
4.1 The Respondents

The respondents of the survey are students in the second and third year of upper-secondary school from a selected school in a small town in Sweden. They all take English 6, a course that students must pass to be eligible for further academic studies. Their previous scholarly backgrounds are diverse, but they all left the mandatory elementary school with a passing grade in English. The respondents do not attend the same educational programme. Some attend study preparatory upper-secondary school programmes, and some attend vocationally-oriented programmes. No consideration was taken to the type of upper-secondary school programme the respondents attended. The reason the selected classes participated, was that the teachers in charge of the course in question ruled that they had time to spare to partake in the survey. In total, 82 students were invited to complete the survey, and 80 chose to participate. When the students responded to the survey, they could provide information on their gender, if they identified with a conventional gender or not. Gender was not a variable in this study.

4.2 Procedure

When the aim and research questions for this study was set and the survey constructed, one teacher at the target school was contacted. The teacher and the author of this study have worked before in educational situations, and the teacher was asked to participate with the classes that took English 6. The teacher was also asked to inform and ask other teachers at the target school that teach English 6 if they had time to participate. This was done to get further participants to this study. Three teachers with five different student groups consented and participated in the study.

Five separate visits were made on three different days, and each of the groups was informed individually. The respondents were informed about the aim of the study, why it was conducted, and they were provided with some information about the study topic. This information was given orally, in Swedish, to ensure that the students fully understood the aim and reason as to why they were asked to partake in the survey. Information about the students’ rights to not participate if they did not want to, that taking the survey guaranteed anonymity and that choosing to either do the survey or not, did not affect their grades were also given orally in Swedish, to ensure full comprehension and to minimise the risks of language misunderstandings. The same
information was also presented as a written introduction to the online survey, this time in English. The students were informed that answers could be provided in both English and Swedish, to make sure the students had the ability to write as long answers as they liked, without language barriers. The students were also informed that by participating and finishing the survey, they gave consent to use their answers in the study.

Information regarding concepts and words were explained orally in Swedish in front of the group, and in written English in the survey. The students were given the web address for the online survey and the information that if they had any questions or insecurities during the survey, they could raise their hand and have the possibility of asking specific questions. The respondents answered the survey and the data were collected digitally.

4.2.1 The Survey

The survey was based on the aim of the study, its research questions and the theoretical background to this study. When creating the survey, *The Good Research Guide: For Small-scale Research Projects* by Martyn Denscombe (2014) was used to ensure that the survey was designed in a way that was scholarly and successful. Matters like advantages, disadvantages, design, distribution, question configuration, and length were decided using this book. The survey can be found in Appendix 2.

4.3 Data Processing

The data from the survey was collected and processed using the tool embedded in the site where the survey was created, [www.freeonlinesurveys.com](http://www.freeonlinesurveys.com). The answers were analysed, compared and quantified to come to a conclusion regarding the respondents’ perceived accent and its effect on the students’ confidence when speaking their L2 and their communicative competence.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

The survey had a mix between different types of questions, some with closed answers and some questions where the students had the choice to specify what they meant by their answer. Having these kind of questions, closed and open, have both advantages and disadvantages (Denscombe, 2014). Closed questions might not give the respondents
the ability to express what they want exactly, and open questions might give the respondents too much freedom in their answer, making them either too extensive or left blank due to lack of motivation to respond to the question (Denscombe, 2014). Questions that are open might also cause misinterpretations, making them difficult to analyse or not analysable at all (Denscombe, 2014). When interpreting the data, the answers to the survey, the latter seem to be the problem. The response rate on the open questions are not as high as the closed questions, but the responses that were feasible were descriptive and distinct and made the answers to the questions reliable. The students were informed that answers could be given in both English and Swedish, to make sure the students had the ability to write as long answers as they liked, without language barriers. Questions with an invalid answer were eliminated and categorised as an unanswered question.

The setting of the survey was in a classroom during several English classes. The teachers of the classes were present the majority of the time when the students completed the survey. Although informing that the survey was voluntary, the classroom setting might have made it hard to see the survey as a non-mandatory element. This could have reduced the motivation for the subject of the survey (Denscombe, 2014). Information regarding the survey and some technical wordings were explained to ensure understanding and to eliminate the risk of misunderstanding the questions. The author of the survey was present at all time during the survey and informed the students that if there were any questions, the students were welcome to pose questions. This was done to eliminate misunderstandings regarding the questions.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

When conducting an empirical study, some ethical aspects have to be considered. The study, including its survey, followed the Swedish Research Council’s code of ethics: *Good Research Practice* (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011), and the ethical recommendations regarding surveys in *The Good Research Guide: For Small-scale Research Projects* by Martyn Denscombe (2014).

The respondents were informed according to section 4.2. It was important that the respondents knew why they were asked to participate, and what their participation meant. The importance of the students’ choice to participate was also stressed, as well
as the information about anonymity. It was also important that the respondents understood what was asked of them, and therefore information regarding their participation was given both orally and in writing, both in Swedish and in English. This was to ensure full comprehension and to minimise the risks of language misunderstandings. The students were also informed that by conducting and finishing the survey, they gave consent to the use of their answers in the study. Since confidentiality and anonymity were important when conducting the survey for this research, access to the answers of the survey was limited to the author of the study.

5 Results

In this section, some of the results of the survey will be presented. The questions of the survey will not be presented in the same order as they appear in the survey, but as they seem relevant to the results of the study. Every question will not be analysed, only the ones that appear the most prominent and have relevance to the study. If the commentary made by the students contain spelling errors or grammatical errors, these were corrected before being put on the results of this paper. The results as a whole can be found in Appendix 3.

5.1 The Perceived English Proficiency and Accent Among Students

Among the students who participated in this study, about half of them, 49%, said that their English is of average proficiency when self-evaluating their language skills, as shown in Figure 1. 34% of them feel that they are good at English and 18% perceive that they are not good.

Figure 1. In your opinion, how good is your English?
Figure 2 shows that 39% of the students imagine that they speak English with a person that does not have Swedish as their native language less than once a month, and 29% feel that they speak English with a non-native speaker of Swedish a few times a week. 33% say that they speak English with a person that does not have Swedish as their native language either once a week, a few times a month, or once a month.

![Figure 2. How often do you speak English with someone that is not a native speaker of Swedish?](image)

In the results that are shown in Figure 3, the students answer a question regarding whether they aim to speak with a certain accent. 49% say that they do not aim to sound a certain way. The students that say that they do aim for an accent, the most popular perceived accent is the American accent. 15% say that their perceived accent is a mix between an American and a British accent, 9% say that their aimed and perceived accent is a Swedish accent, and 4% of the students say that their aimed and perceived accent is a British accent. 3% have given a response categorised as “Other”, and when specifying their answers they write:

“Depends, if I speak to friends I tend to use American or Swedish English, kind of laid-back and not as proper, when I speak formally English I try to bring out a British accent to sound more professional.”

“I try to sound different depending on which topic I talk about, but just a little.”
Even though Figure 3 shows that the majority of the students do not aim to speak with a perceived accent, the most common answer among the students when asked if they think about how they sound or what accent they use when speaking English, is that they do. This is shown in Figure 4. 60% of the students answer that they think a little about how they sound or what accent they use, and 16% think a lot about the same thing. The percentage of students that do not think about how they sound or what accent they use is 24%.

To be able to understand how the students chose to speak with a certain perceived accent or not, they were asked to try and explain their choice. Multiple answers were possible. The results show, in Figure 5, that TV-series and movies affect the students in their choice of accent the most. Social media and identity, the fact that the accent the students speak sounds like them affects students too in almost the same degree. The accent of their teacher affects them the least, and some have chosen to supply a different answer, specified by the student:
“Sounds nicer.”

“I am neither British nor American, I am Swedish, and therefore I speak like a Swedish person, no matter what language I am speaking.”

“Music.”

“I have family and lots of friends in America. I feel like the American accent is in my genes, and I’ve naturally learned it.”

“Some accents sound more professional than others, for example, British sounds better than an American accent.”

![Figure 5](image-url)  
*Figure 5. If you feel as if you have chosen an accent when speaking English (American, British, a mix of them both, Swedish, or other), how did you make that choice? Multiple answers are possible. (Numbers=amount of answers).*

5.2 The Importance of a Native-like Accent According to the Students

In general, having a native-like accent seems to be unimportant to the students. When asked if having a native-like accent is important, about 61% felt that it was not important to have a native-like accent, and only about 17% felt that having a native-like accent mattered to them. These results can be seen in Figure 6. When giving an explanation to their answer, some of the most prominent and interesting answers were:

“No, I think that your accent should be the one you feel most comfortable with.”

“I think you shouldn’t think too much about how it sounds, I don’t, and that makes me a bit more confident when I’m not judging myself and thinking too much.”

“No, because you speak in a way that comes naturally to you and if that’s not a native-like accent it’s still okay.”
“Doesn't really matter as long as people can understand you & you feel comfortable when talking.”

“I don't think so because the most important thing is to be able to communicate and convey the meaning of what you are talking about.”

About 20% did not understand the question or did not answer. 1% answered both yes and no to the question, ruling that: “I believe that it can be important because it can make it easier for others to understand my English. But, I also believe that as long as you understand each other and can communicate it does not matter.”

![Figure 6. Is it important to have a native-like accent?](image)

5.3 The Perceived Accent Related to Communicative Competence and Speech Confidence

When the students answered a question in the survey regarding communicative competence, whether they value a native-like accent higher than being able to express what they want to say with ease, 88% said that it is more important for them to communicate easily rather than sounding like a native speaker. This is shown in Figure 7.
Figure 7. What is most important: To sound like a native speaker, but sometimes having trouble expressing what you want to say; or: To be able to express yourself with ease, but not have a native-like accent?

Figure 8 shows that students do not, however marginally, feel awkward or embarrassed about their accent while speaking English. 56% of them say that they do not, but 40% feel a little awkward or embarrassed about their English accent when speaking the language. Only 4% say that they are feeling awkward and embarrassed to a greater extent than the rest of the students.

Out of the students that do not feel awkward or embarrassed about their accent when speaking English, 36% would maybe try to avoid speaking English due to this embarrassment. 56% would not try to avoid it, and 8% would.

Figure 8. Do you feel awkward or embarrassed about your accent when you speak English?

In Figure 9, the results show that when the students were asked if they had been in a situation where they felt that someone spoke to them as if they were less intelligent because of their perceived accent, 50% said that they did not feel that way. 24% stated that they had felt that way, in school and abroad when speaking to a native speaker of English. 26% of the students did not answer the question.
The students were also asked if they had ever thought that they were being judged because of the way they speak English related to their perceived accent. The results in Figure 10 show that 41% do not think that they are being judged, and 36% believe that they have been. 19% did not answer the question or gave an invalid or unclear answer. 4% said that they might have thought it. The students were also given an opportunity to clarify their answers, and some of them said:

“If you care about other people’s judgement you will never be happy, happiness and self-validation must come from within.”

“It doesn't matter how I sound; it’s the message and meaning of my words that are powerful.”

“I think it's more important to talk clearly rather than using an accent when talking. I don't think a person will understand easier if you're using a native-like English accent rather than speaking loudly and clearly, and using correct grammar.”

“No, I do not think that anyone judges me based on my accent. The most important thing is that you understand each other.”

“Because people might have prejudices against a certain type of people and if your accent is associated with a race/nationality reputation people will think different of you.”

“Yes, of course, I do the same.”

“The way you sound is really individual, but people judge everything with you.”
“Sometimes, when I feel that my accent becomes a bit too Swedish, I don't know if people judge, but it's easy to feel ashamed about it.”

In Figure 11, the results show that the majority of the students think that they would be more confident and speak more if they were given a positive comment about their perceived accent. A 25% of the students believe that they would not be affected by such a comment, and 14% would doubt the person that makes the comment. 5% say that they do not need anyone to tell them what they already know.

The last thing the students were asked to do in the survey, was to tell their individual story, if they wanted and had one, about their perceived accent, communication and confidence related to that and different feelings about accents. The most interesting answers are compiled in Appendix 1.
6 Discussion

This study was made to see whether students’ perceived accent impacted positively or negatively on their communicative competence and speaking confidence. In this section, the results presented in section 5 will be discussed related to the aim, research questions and background of this study. Further, the method of this study, presented in section 4, will be discussed separately in section 6.2.

6.1 Results Discussion and Conclusion

When the students were asked if having a native-like accent was important to them, more than half of the responding students said that this did not matter to them. They showed, when asked why they felt this way, confidence in their ability and a speaking confidence that seems to be unaffected by their perceived accent. The majority do not aim to speak with a particular accent, and most of them think that having a good and sufficient communicative competence is more important than having a native-like accent. This is in line with the conclusions that Rindal & Piercy (2013) presented in their study. Fluency and communication skills seem to be the most important part of speaking a second or foreign language (Rindal & Piercy, 2013). Norwegian and Swedish English language education is very similar when it comes to their individual curriculums for English (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2013; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). But, Rindal & Piercy (2013) draw the conclusion that the Norwegian adolescents had this posture on accents since Norway has two official languages. However, this study shows that that conclusion might not be entirely accurate. Swedish students also think, as well as the Norwegian respondents, that individuality and communicative competence is far more important than acquiring an inner-circle accent, showing that it does not matter whether there is a general acceptance to sound natively different or not.

Also, the need to feature accents as a part of the English education in Sweden seem to be redundant, since the educational goals in today’s language education focus more on the learner’s communicative competence (Tornberg, 2015). Together with the feelings of the students regarding the need to acquire a native-like accent and the importance of communicative skills and competence supported by both Tornberg (2015) and the Swedish National Agency for Education (2011), strengthening the feeling of confidence
might be more important than acquiring a native-like accent. Furthermore, the norms and aims of the Swedish school system are to strengthen the students and their identity, teaching them that it is okay to be whoever you are, and not to change just because someone might think that sounding a certain way is ‘better’ (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). With this in mind, it might be argued that the norms, values and aims stated in the curriculum of Swedish schools, and conveyed by teachers and education strengthen students in their belief that they can talk however they like without being judged.

Even though the majority of the students have a liberal attitude towards not having a native-like accent and not adapting to an accent at all, they do think about how they sound when they speak and what accent they use. This might have to do with the students and how they shape their identity with speech, since when answering the question whether they might feel embarrassed or awkward about how they speak, the majority, although marginally, did not feel ashamed of their perceived accent. This might suggest that even though choosing an accent to use when speaking English is not important, the way they sound might affect them nonetheless, but in what way was difficult to say. Although, this effect might not be on their communicative competence and speaking confidence since they did not feel embarrassed or awkward about how they sounded. This somewhat contradicts what Khodarahmib & Zarrinabadia (2017) concluded in their study. They found that accent strength was important to the students in order to achieve willingness to communicate (Khodarahmib & Zarrinabadia, 2017), although this does not seem to be the case with the students participating in this study. Among the students that did feel embarrassed or awkward due to their perceived accent, only 8% would try to avoid speaking English altogether. The rest of the students would maybe try, or not try to avoid speaking English, which yet again speaks for a more liberal way of looking at adapting to inner-circle accents.

The answers throughout the study seem to be pointing to a tolerance in not having an inner-circle accent. The students highlight the importance of being able to communicate sufficiently, in a way that they are comfortable with and that enables understanding. They do not feel judged when speaking English, although comments on their accent would make them even more confident. Few have experienced treatment from more proficient speakers of English where they felt less intelligent because of their perceived
accent. Sadly enough, some said that judgment and implications of non-intelligence occurred while in school. The school is supposed to be a place of empowering, education and tolerance (Tornberg, 2015; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011), and this is where the foundation to communicative competence is made (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). Even if speaking confidence and willingness to communicate is somewhat a personality trait, it is also something that can be strengthened in school (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The fact that most of the students do not concur with assumptions that their perceived accent affects their communicative competence and speaking confidence in a negative way, a lot of them write about feelings of heightened self-confidence and willingness to communicate when receiving nice compliments on their speech, in accordance with Khodarahmib & Zarrinabadia’s study (2017).

But, even though the students that participated in this study seem to find it unnecessary to adapt to an inner-circle accent, saying that they are not feeling judged and embarrassed about their perceived accent, and that diversity is a positive thing, these conclusions might be hard to make. This is due to the students’ lack of experience of talking English on a regular basis. Even if most of them self-evaluate themselves as having an average English proficiency, it is possible to suppose that most of the results are based on assumptions the students make, regarding their feelings when communicating in English.

In conclusion, students seem to think that having a native-like accent is overvalued and that communication is far more important than their perceived English accent. The majority perceive that they do not adapt to a particular accent when speaking English, but among the ones that do, the majority perceive that they aim for an American accent. The majority say that their biggest influences regarding their perceived accent are TV-series, movies and online games, in accordance with Rindal & Piercy’s (2013) study of Norwegian adolescents. Regarding how the students’ self-perceived accent influences their communicative competence and speaking confidence, it is hard to draw any proper conclusions. It is somewhat conclusive that most of the students value communication over perceived accent, and many of them say that it does not matter how they sound as long as what they say is conveyed. But, even if they have these strong feelings of enforcing diversity and saying that perceived accent does not matter, a majority of the
students would feel more confident and sure of themselves if they got positive feedback on their accent. However, this feeling seems not to correlate with their self-perceived accent per se, but with speaking English in general.

6.2 Method Discussion

The response rate of the survey is good since the survey was done in a way where most of the questions were mandatory, that is, it was impossible for the students to enter an incomplete survey. Unwillingly, some questions were voluntary because of the way the survey tool worked. This caused some questions, mainly writing questions, to have a significantly lower response rate. This has most certainly affected the results of the survey.

It is also very hard to measure feelings, even if a survey is among the best ways of doing this (Denscombe, 2014). Being intelligent can mean one thing to one person, but a completely different thing to another. Some of the definitions in this study might mean different things to different students, making it hard draw any real and convincing conclusions, and thus affecting the results and making them somewhat unreliable.

Assumptions were made that the students had a relatively good idea about different accents, but some of the answers in the survey suggest otherwise. In addition to this, even if the different terms and concepts were presented before the students participated in the survey in spoken Swedish during the survey in English writing, some of the students seem to have misinterpreted questions with these terms regardless. This makes some answers unreliable, mainly the ones where the students had to write their answer in addition to taking a stand on the question.

This study was conducted using a convenience sample, choosing the participating students due to the fact that their teachers had time to partake in the survey. Not knowing the students, their English proficiency, their level of motivation and other contributing factors, the students’ willingness to participate might have been limited. This can affect the results, due to students not taking the survey seriously and not feeling motivated enough to participate. Motivation and willingness are factors which are essential in conducting a successful survey (Denscombe, 2014). If this study were to be made again, it would be suggested that having a more stable contact with the school
and its students, making them more willing, enthusiastic and motivated to give accurate answers to the asked questions. This would also enable students to have more information and understanding about the subject of the survey.
Work Cited


Appendices

Appendix 1

Selected answers to the last question of the survey

“Actually, I don't speak English as much as I wish I would. BUT, when I speak, the thing I am most afraid of, is that I would say things wrong or talk grammatically wrong. I don't think that much of my accent.”

“I felt good about my accent when I was 12/13 when I went to China, the people who lived there asked me if English was my Native language, then I felt really proud. Also, when my classmates compliment me for my pronunciation.”

“Yes, when I was on vacation in Turkey and talked to the Citizens there, I felt more Confident and better about my accent since I felt like there was no one judging me and since they are not that good at pronouncing either.”

“Having an accent that you feel confident about helps you when you speak. And if everyone could speak in the same way we would understand each other better. I sometimes think accents are hard to understand.”

“Different accents are fun! Especially trying to imitate them. An accent isn't something to be ashamed of; they make a language more colourful. But maybe that's just me.”

“When I lived in the USA, people would sometimes compliment me on my accent, that they liked the way I sounded. That made me not as shy and self-conscious in front of native English speakers.”

“I feel good at home, but when I am abroad, I feel bad.”

“Accent matters more than people think.”

“I don't remember a specific moment, but I do remember it has happened that someone has complimented me about how I talk in English and my accent. That really flattered me and made me want never to stop talking in English.”
“I feel good when I speak English with or in front of someone who's worse than me in English, but I feel bad and don't have a big confident when I speak with or in front of someone who's really great in English.”

“Accents are fun.”

“I am not good at English at all, so I just want to avoid speaking English at all because I feel that I get judged all the time.”

“As long as you can be understood, accent plays a little role if you're just abroad. Accent can make you look more professional and more formal, but that's only specific situations when it's needed, and it requires you to be able to speak the accent well.”

“When talking to English-speaking friends just speak your own god damn accent because then no one gives a damn.”

“I have, on occasion, been interviewed after athletic competitions abroad and have therefore been forced to speak English in a microphone. I was really bad, but in retrospect, I mostly laugh about it. Although, this is one of the biggest reasons I want to improve my English and my pronunciation.”

“I speak to a lot of people from America, every day, on the phone. I've been to America before, and I met lots of people that I still have contact with. Mostly girls. I always talk to them, and they all think I sound American, and that convinces me that I actually do. I love talking to Americans with their (& my) American accent!”

“Swedish pronunciation can be very different from English. Some words might be harder to say for a Swedish person than for native speakers.”

“I can say that I am feeling very good when I am speaking with my friends online and in school.”
Appendix 2

The Survey

English Accents: Confidence and Competence

Welcome!

Hi,

My name is Johanna and I am studying to become an English teacher. I am writing my C paper at the moment, and I am investigating if the choice of English accent affects the speaking confidence and communicative competence of Swedish students. I would be very happy if you could take some time to do my survey and help me out with my paper.

The survey won’t take long, around 5-10 minutes, and the questions are multiple-choice questions with some writing once in a while. When answering written questions, you can choose to write in either Swedish or English. The survey is of course not something you have to do although I would be happy if you did, and you can choose to end your participation at any time during the survey. Your answers are anonymous and no one will know how you answered. This survey does not affect your grades in any way.

If you are interested in the results of this survey and the finished paper, just contact me at: lewejohanna@gmail.com

Thank you for your participation!

1. Are you a:
   - [ ] Girl
   - [ ] Boy
   - [ ] Other (Please Specify)

2. How would an ideal English accent sound like to you?
   Feel free to write whatever comes to mind and to also write down names of people you feel have the ideal English accent.
   It can be an actor/actress, a musician, a YouTuber - The sky is the limit!

I do talk a lot about accents being “native” and “native-like” in this survey.

Having a “native” accent means that a person speaks with an accent in a language that is their first language, the language that they were born with. My native language is Swedish, and I am a native speaker of Swedish.

Having a “native-like” accent is having an accent that is very close to sounding like if you were born with that language. I have a native-like accent of English because I practised on my accent and how I sound when I speak English. I did this because I wanted it to sound as if I was a native speaker of English.

3. In your opinion, how good is your English?
   - [ ] Good
   - [ ] Average
   - [ ] Not good
How often do you speak English with someone that is not a native speaker of Swedish?

- [ ] A few times a week
- [ ] Once a week
- [ ] A few times a month
- [ ] Once a month
- [ ] Less than once a month

When you speak English, do you think about how you sound or what accent you use?

- [ ] No
- [ ] A little
- [ ] A lot

When you speak English, do you aim to speak with an accent?

- [ ] Yes, American
- [ ] Yes, British
- [ ] No, I mix American and British English
- [ ] Yes, Swedish
- [ ] No, I do not aim to sound a certain way
- [ ] Other (Please Specify)

If you feel as if you have chosen an accent when speaking English (American, British, a mix of them both, Swedish, or other), how did you make that choice? Multiple answers are possible.

- [ ] I think it sounds like me
- [ ] I hear it a lot in social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube etc.)
- [ ] I hear it a lot in movies, TV-series or online games
- [ ] My teacher sounds like this
- [ ] I haven’t adapted to a certain accent
- [ ] Other (Please Specify)

Is it important to have a native-like accent?

- [ ] Yes (Please Specify)
- [ ] No (Please Specify)

Do you think that a person with English as their first language or a person that you have to speak English with understands you better if you have a native-like English accent?

- [ ] Yes (Please Specify)
- [ ] No (Please Specify)
10* If someone with a native accent of English, a non-Swede, or someone you spoke English with abroad would understand that you do not have English as your first language because of your accent (it could be that you sound Swedish or do not have a native-like accent of English), would you care?

☐ No, I wouldn't care at all
☐ No, I am Swedish and it is not weird to sound different
☐ I would care a little
☐ I would care a lot

11* Please rank the following claims.
Put the claim that is most important to you as number one, the second most important to you as number two etc.

It is most important to...

☐ Speak with a native-like accent
☐ Be fully understood by native speakers
☐ Be grammatically correct
☐ Have a Swedish accent

12* What is most important: To sound like a native speaker, but sometimes having trouble expressing what you want to say; or: To be able to express yourself with ease, but not have a native-like accent?

☐ To sound like a native speaker, but sometimes having trouble expressing what you want to say.
☐ To be able to express yourself with ease, but not have a native-like accent.

13 If you have a certain accent (American, British, a mix of them both, Swedish, or other), do you think you will have any advantages or disadvantages due to your accent when speaking with a native speaker of English, a non-Swede or when speaking English abroad?

Yes, advantages. (Please Specify)

Yes, disadvantages. (Please Specify)

No. (Please Specify)

14 Do you think you are being judged because of the way you speak? For example, if you speak with a certain accent (American, British, a mix of them both, Swedish or other)?

Yes. (Please Specify)

No. (Please Specify)
15. Do you feel awkward or embarrassed about your accent when you speak English?

☐ No
☐ A little
☐ A lot

16. If you answered "A little" or "A lot" on the previous question, would you try to avoid speaking English because of your accent?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Maybe

17. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt that someone spoke as if you were less intelligent because of your accent?

Yes, (Please specify)

No, the opposite (Please Specify)

18. If someone said that your accent was beautiful, no matter what accent you have, what would your reaction be?

☐ I do not need anyone to tell me what I already know
☐ I would feel confident and speak more
☐ I do not think it would affect me at all
☐ I would doubt them, it is not as good as I want it to be

19. This will be the last thing you do before this survey is finished. Great job so far!

Would you like to tell me anything else about how you feel that your accent affects your ability to communicate or if it affects your confidence when you speak English?

I will not know who wrote what, and I will not be able to figure it out. You will be completely anonymous, as with the rest of the survey.

Is there a specific moment (in school, online, on vacation and so on) when you felt especially good or bad about your accent? Please tell me if you remember such a moment.
Appendix 3

The Results of the Survey

Quick Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you a:</th>
<th>Girl</th>
<th>Boy</th>
<th>Other (Please Specify)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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</table>

Text Responses

Determined

How would an ideal English accent sound like to you? Feel free to write whatever comes to mind and to also write down names of people you feel have the ideal English accent. It can be an actor/actress, a musician, a YouTuber - The sky is the limit!

Text Responses

1. I think the ideal English is the American English. Probably because most in shows is from America and I hear that accent more than other English accents.
2. I believe the American accent is more formal and clear.
3. An ideal English accent to me is Barrymore's accent in the movie "Boost".
4. I don't know.
5. I believe the British accent.
6. I think the English is a language like Spanish language.

Actor

determined

An ideal English accent is the accent that everyone understands. It doesn't sound too difficult. Someone that is pronouncing words very clearly.

Jag tycker om att mina tycks förstå vad folk säger, men det har varit hem bland brittisk och amerikansk engelska. Jag vill inte ha kampanjer på någon som har den perfekta accenten men det finns någon många att förstå och elskar, både brittisk och amerikansk.
I think every accent is nice in its own way. I don't value one higher than the other. Though I do think British has a nice ring to it. Who would ever get tired of hearing is Hugh Grant?

My ideal English accent would be a "hybrid" American one. Most people in Hollywood are from Los Angeles or California in general.

Regina and Shane Dessen (youTuber)

I think the English accent is nice in the way it sounds natural.

Some people and some citizens, such as Barack Obama.

Klar och tydligt.

An accent that everyone understands without problem. Like an American accent and not a British accent.

British dialect, som Emma Watson

Jag tycker om den berättar skala och ovanligt dialekt i litteraturen.

An ideal English accent for me is like the actors in Movies and Singers. (Justin Bieber, Selena Gomez)

British

british, denmarkish

The accent that is used in England.

A perfect British accent is by far the best.

I think. It depends on who the person is. It is very common to hear American accent or British accent.

Tydligt.

Well, I'm gonna say Morgan Freeman because he speaks fast english and how he voice

I don't really believe in the existence of an ideal English accent. I only think that someone who speaks English as another tongue would talk more correctly and automatically would sound ideal.

I think that both northern and southern English accents can be considered proper, and one can have an ideal way of speaking one's own type of English.

Stephen Fry, Simon Baker, Rowan Atkinson, Cate Blanchett.

I think an ideal English accent would be some sort of American accent.

An example: Explaining With Justin and Youtube.

American accent.

It should be fast and have a flow.

The first one that comes to mind is a British accent. I personally think that's the ideal English accent.

Amy on Youtube and also the singer Ed Sheeran.

Jag vill ha

Liza Kuhl

Jag lider av ett engelska som jag bara lyssnar till.

The ideal English accent sounds more professional than other types.

Not a Swedish accent, pwede po yon dito man marahil sa ulit do

American

As Hugh Jackman and Carey Reilly.

Anyone who speaks clear coherent English, doesn't have to be British or American English.

The ideal English accent sounds like American actors or Youtubers.

ex: Tom cruise

I don't really have an ideal accent, I just like different American accents alot, but also British accent is quite nice.

Svår att se att man den avslutar ett och ett tal.

I think that American accent is nice. It is easier to understand and it sounds more natural.

British English.

small schwedeberger

I love American English. I always speak American, since I have a bunch of American friends that I talk to on the phone. I like the way they talk, going to America and online chatting it's a bit harder for me to understand other accents.

American accent.

I am audient, it sounds nice when people talk in that accent.

Spike Jon Smith, Kang Youngil på den golfen.

British accent sounds so much different.

Oklahoma.

 Leeds United

FredyUribe

The footballer Steven Gerard.

An American person.

Anyone with a British accent, because English is their language.

I'm speaking in American accent.

I think the British accent just sounds good but I think we swedes have some kind of hybrid British/American English.

British
In your opinion, how good is your English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Not good</th>
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<th>Responses</th>
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How often do you speak English with someone that is not a native speaker of Swedish?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A few times a week</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>A few times a month</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>Less than once a month</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When you speak English, do you think about how you sound or what accent you use?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Data</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When you speak English, do you aim to speak with an accent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, American</th>
<th>Yes, British</th>
<th>No, I mix American and British English</th>
<th>Yes, Swedish</th>
<th>No, I do not aim to sound a certain way</th>
<th>Other (Please Specify)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 (27%)</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>12 (19%)</td>
<td>7 (12%)</td>
<td>28 (45%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>10.96</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Text Responses

- Depends. If I speak to friends I tend to use American or Swedish English, kind of laid back and not as proper. When I speak formally English I try to bring out an British accent to sound more professional.
- I try to sound different depending on which topic I talk about, but just a little.
If you feel as if you have chosen an accent when speaking English (American, British, a mix of them both, Swedish, or other), how did you make that choice? Multiple answers are possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Data</th>
<th>I think it sounds like me</th>
<th>I hear it a lot in social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube etc.)</th>
<th>I hear it a lot in movies, TV-series or online games</th>
<th>My teacher sounds like this</th>
<th>I haven’t adapted to a certain accent</th>
<th>Other (Please Specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 (30%)</td>
<td>25 (35%)</td>
<td>31 (38%)</td>
<td>2 (3%)</td>
<td>20 (26%)</td>
<td>10 (15%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Text Responses**

I think it sounds more sophisticated.
I am not British nor American, I am Swedish, and therefore I speak like a Swedish person, no matter what language I am speaking.
I kind of basically just watch movies and the actors in it speak with British accent.
I think the sounds that I really like and maybe they have a little more muscle.
I have family and lots of friends in America. I feel like the American accent is in my head, and I've naturally learned it.
Some accents sound more professional then others, for example British sounds better than an American accent.

**Is it important to have a native-like accent?**

**Text Responses**

it's that all people understand what I am talking about.

yes.

It sounds better and it can give you better confidence.

Yes, it sounds better and if you are better at english if you speak with a native-like accent.

It's not important because it's still English.

because it shows who you are.

because an accent can tell the other person a lot about yourself and where you're from. If you have an odd accent it can be a fun and easy topic to talk about. Your accent is possibly a reflection of yourself.

As a little yes, I don't believe anyone like extremely Swedish English.
Jag tror det blir chansen för det

To communicate with other Swedes, it’s always more comfortable for them to hear you in their own native accent.

For native English speakers, you get a sort of words accent to your voice.

No I think that your accent should be the one you feel most comfortable with.

Engelska är inte språk. Jag har inte behövt att veta van de bröder för att ha en thesaurus med dig.

I just don’t think so.

you can also learn the language

because you can still get understood

It doesn’t affect me because I rarely ever speak to English talking people.

no

It is important to understand them.

not really

why should it

I personally think it’s very important to have a native-like accent, unless you don’t want to make it obvious that you’re from a certain country. I guess... But in general, no.

No, we should aim so that everyone should have the same accent so there is no problem understanding each other.

I think you shouldn’t think too much about how it sounds. I don’t think that makes you feel more confident when I’m not judging myself and feeling too much.

I think the goal is to try to pronounce the words as clearly as possible in the accent with the normative English speakers understanding of what you’re saying.

It helps when someone is speaking to you to know where you’re from as I don’t think it’s important.

det är en märklig förståelse

No, because you speak in a way that comes natural to you and if there’s no native-like accent it still stays.

Jag tror det blir det.

nej, det är inte skäl!

Jag tror det blir det såg så att man kan höra vad de andra säger och förstå vad de säger.

No, I don’t think why you should have to sound like someone else when you’re talking.

It doesn’t help the understanding.

not really

as long as people understand me it is okay.

I don’t believe so, as long as you can understand what he or she says.

not really

No

You can say where you come from.

no

Doesn’t really matter as long as people can understand you. If you feel comfortable when talking.

I don’t think so, because the most important thing is to be able to communicate and convey the meaning of what you are talking about.

It is important unless you are a native.

I just don’t think it’s necessary to speak in a certain way.

It doesn’t matter.

no, it would be boring if everyone sounded the same, our differences are what makes us special.

No because you can sound however you like.

Jag tror ingen rätt enligt mig.

nej, varför

nej, det spelar ingen roll enligt mig

Så länge man förstår att du är bra

because it sounds fake.

nej

det är göra det att man vägar pseudo och gör sig förestånd.

People may not be able to understand you when you in native accent.

nej

It doesn’t mind my accent

As long as you understand how you’re worst is needed.

nej

If it’s not possible to understand it doesn’t matter.

nej

No because if it goes to understand you it is any way or that.

nej

We don’t know.

As long as other people can understand you I don’t see any problem with not having one.

no idea

Do you think that a person with English as their first language or a person that you have to speak English with understands you better if you have a native-like English accent?

Text Responses

because it is not good to what kind of there can understand me

I feel like that. They can more English than me and can figure out what I am meaning.

I think so because he might have the same accent.

Yes they are probably more used to hearing a certain accent.

With a person with English it is easy to understand
Maple

Abs

I do agree to some parts that people will understand me better but that also depends on my vocabulary too. If one does not have a good vocab, it'll be hard to understand the person, regardless of their accent.

Yes, because people are not as experienced with the language or pronounce some words wrong.

It comes more naturally and sounds better possibly. If that's what they mostly hear in social media/life.

Sometimes the pronunciation of words makes it hard to understand that certain words so if a person has an extremely native-like accent, it would be hard to understand that person.

Jo, om det är så att det är mina förhållanden. Det är, att jag, jag tror att det är enklare att förstå ovanligt att "normal" engelska är den engelska man tillsammans i, därför tror jag att det är något av det engelska man tillsammans i.

Yes, because it's easier to understand and sometimes it sounds like you.

I'll like it more if it's like you. Because then you talk like they do and use the same words and maybe vocabulary as they.

Ja, att de de har mit, så tycker jag.

Maple a little bit.

Well, I think it's true, but I can imagine they will understand it better.

If it's what they usually heard.

Yes, I do think they understand you better if you learned British English when talking with a British man.

Because maybe it's easier to understand.

Because it will be more interesting to listen to that person.

Yes. I think that.


Ja, det, men det är uppkopplad.

It is.

I know the accent.

Because it's probably more familiar to them and that makes it easier to understand if you can speak their accent well enough.

Yes, but I don't know why.

Yes, they are more familiar to the more "real" accent sound, so they can put less time in trying to understand me than actually talking to me.

Ja, det är, att de andra andra och förhållandevis.

I think it's very wrong that a language person will understand better, but it depends on if the other person's first language is similar or not.

Yes.

It should be easier and more comfortable for them to understand.

Probably a bit better but I shouldn't be a problem anywhere.

Yes. Maybe. It depends what type of person.

It's easier for them to understand you if you somehow sound more like them than the opposite way around.

Maple -

- -

They might, since some words have different meanings (British and American English), which can cause some misunderstandings.

No, I do not. And I don't think about it too much.

jo er det här förklaras dig på ett förstånds missladd.

- -

No.

Because the accent is not used to your specific accent so as it is going to be a little hard for the person to understand you.

I think it depends on how clearly you speak, not too much about accent. But some words sound very different with an accent and that can be hard to understand.

Jag tror det är det förståndet förklaras att de känner dig på ett förstånds missladd.

Jag tror att det är att det förståndet förklaras att de känner dig på ett förstånds missladd.

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Jag tror att det är att det förståndet förklaras att de känner dig på ett förstånds missladd.

I think it's more important to talk clearly rather than using an accent when talking. I don't think a person will understand easier if you're using a native-like English accent rather than speaking slowly and clearly, and using correct grammar.

If you can be easier if you have a "normal" accent

Jag tror att det är att det förståndet förklaras att de känner dig på ett förstånds missladd.

No, the accent may sound different but I think they would understand me anyway if I explain myself in a clear way.

No, the accent may sound different but I think every accent is understandable.

I would say no. It is easier to talk with someone that has the same level of English as you have.

No.

I don't think it is fundamental, but you have to talk clearly anyway if you want to be understood.

I think I speak perfectly understandable English despite my Swedish accent.

I would definitely help, but I still don't think it's necessary as long as people can hear what you're saying probably but doesn't really matter much. I think most people will understand just the way whether I have an accent or not.

Blake kan väl lika bra engelska.

I can't talk English.

No

English is English.

Mandela brandar in engelska till mig.

I don't think so. I have not adopted my accent at all and I don't find other people hard to understand me due to my accent.

I don't think that it matters very much as long as he understands me.

If you want to spend a lot of time with people that have that language as their native language but sometimes it can be useful for figuring out where the person is from.

Hov en engelska dyg och först on.

Jag tror att det är att det förståndet förklaras att de känner dig på ett förstånds missladd.

It depends on how good you are at speaking. If you can keep a conversation then I think that it doesn't matter.

No.
If someone with a native accent of English, a non-Swede, or someone you spoke English with abroad would understand that you do not have English as your first language because of your accent (it could be that you sound Swedish or do not have a native-like accent of English), would you care?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No, I wouldn't care at all</th>
<th>No, I am Swedish and it is not weird to sound different</th>
<th>I would care a little</th>
<th>I would care a lot</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Data</td>
<td>32 (42%)</td>
<td>39 (51%)</td>
<td>14 (19%)</td>
<td>5 (6%)</td>
<td>12.14</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please rank the following claims. Put the claim that is most important to you as number one, the second most important to you as number two etc. It is most important to...

1. be fully understood by native speakers
2. be grammatically correct
3. speak with a native-like accent
4. have a Swedish accent
What is most important: To sound like a native speaker, but sometimes having trouble expressing what you want to say; or: To be able to express yourself with ease, but not have a native-like accent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To sound like a native speaker, but sometimes having trouble expressing what you want to say.</th>
<th>To be able to express yourself with ease, but not have a native-like accent.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Data</td>
<td>10 (19%)</td>
<td>96 (89%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have a certain accent (American, British, a mix of them both, Swedish, or other), do you think you will have any advantages or disadvantages due to your accent when speaking with a native speaker of English, a non-Swede or when speaking English abroad?

Text Responses:

- If all, microphone is so terrible that I say it with microphone most likely.
- Because you might get more understood.
- Yes.
- No.
- Yes.
- I think that it'll be easier to understand what I'm trying to say if I were to have an English native-like accent.
- Yes. Because you are kind of used to different accents so it may be easier for you to understand.
- Yes, people might think that you are English and therefore treat you in a different way than if you were a native.
- Maybe, someone might understand you even better, depends, speaking with a certain accent can make you feel more in the group.
- Deen fakirrcvir kow. Cc cirim b (If all, the microphone seems better to use and people seem a lot better, it sounds like you don't have as much of a British or American accent.
- Maybe they will take you more seriously and understand what you are saying better. Also, maybe they feel more comfortable talking to you.
- Ja, för de-kultur är viktigt att man inte ser mu. 
- Jag tror att den tendens är att det är den man inte märker och den man inte ser. 
- If you speak with a Swedish accent maybe a native speaker of English will understand if you do some grammar mistakes etc.
- A few, such as flow.
- If I have a British accent maybe the native speaker will think of me as a better "English-speaking" person.
- Yes, if you have an American/British accent I believe that you have some advantages since every thing we see on TV is either British or American.
Do you think you are being judged because of the way you speak? For example, if you speak with a certain accent (American, British, a mix of them both, Swedish or other)?

Text Responses

A little bit. But mostly it's the way I pronounce words, not the accent.

Yes, I think so. If I speak with an American/British accent, they might notice it at first, but I try to blend in and sound more natural. Sometimes, when I speak Swedish, the people around me might think I'm a foreigner, but I try to speak clearly and use standard Swedish.

Sometimes, when I speak Swedish, people might think I'm a foreigner, but I try to be open and communicate effectively.

Just be yourself and don't worry about what others think.
People judge you how you express yourself.

If you’re Russian, the text may be interpreted as:

Some people may judge if you sound too much of a screech when you talk.

Yes. Some people may judge if you sound too much of a screech when you talk.

Yes, it is very common that people think it is weird to talk with accents other than American or British, Australian, etc.

I think mainly.

yes. I think mainly.

I am not sure.

because people might have prejudices against certain types of people and if your accent is associated with a raciorensty, people will think differently of you.

I don’t think anyone would care.

No.

I am Swedish so why would I care about that?

No, but this depends on who the person is.

I had never experienced being judged by my accent so I don’t think I’m being judged.

For instance.

No, just the fact that people hear a different accent. Does it matter to you?

Not really, not as long as they understand what you are saying. But maybe they enjoy talking to people with the same accent as they do.

No, not really.

I don’t think so.

Why would I be the person I have most respected the way I talk and not even comment on it.

No.

It doesn’t matter how I sound, the message and meaning of my words are powerful.

No. I think I was never judged for my accent.

Maybe a little, if you speak well, probably not.

I don’t think people care that much in general.

If you care about other people’s judgment you will never be happy, happiness and self-validation must come from within.

I don’t think most people care about it.

Yes.

No, people are kind. Sometimes.

I’m from another country, so I accept that.

I speak good.

Well, Swedish, Dutch four.

No, I have not heard any judges.

No.

Maybe a little.

Not at all.

No.

No, as long as I’m not being understood.

Perhaps if I lived in another country full-time, then people might do it, but otherwise people would probably just see me as a tourist.
Do you feel awkward or embarrassed about your accent when you speak English?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Data</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.56</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered "A little" or "A lot" on the previous question, would you try to avoid speaking English because of your accent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Data</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.51</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Have you ever been in a situation where you felt that someone spoke as if you were less intelligent because of your accent?

Text Responses

In the classroom

they might judge my grammar

yes. It happened a lot

yes

I sometimes feel like someone else is speaking much better English because of the fact that they sound much better.

I have lived in the USA and people would sometimes simplify their language because they thought I wouldn’t understand.

I believe

Ja, jag kan förstå vad de säger på engelska

Yes, when I was in London

Posten, men jag talar blandtalt, spaklet för tak till min bror

I just happened if the other person has a better accent than me

yes. I have

I’m school, yes

yes

they know more words

Yeah, but you can’t do anything about it.

known

...

in school

No thank god

I don’t speak much English with people

I spoke to them that they were less intelligent.

Don’t remember

Never happened.

no

I don’t think I have a special accent

no.

Jag har inte favoriserad mina frånföljare men jag har inte sett någon med några andra språk.

Jag va när jag var små och jag hade mycket mer att säga

no

I feel like I never happened.

Jag har aldrig haft detta, men det är som att ni förstår att ni

Never happened

no. I feel like they try to make me speak more and try to interest me in the conversation.

no

I feel like non-Swedes are more comfortable around me when I have an American accent on.

no.

I think that most of the times, people tend to keep up a conversation even if we have different accents.

no

It’s great in English. I’m not embarrassed.

no, but maybe it has happened that someone has tried to lower their level of English a little so it is easier for me to understand them, but I’m sure that it wasn’t because they thought I was less intelligent.

British people have said it sounded a bit funny, but it wasn’t demeaning.

no. I don’t think so, maybe sometimes when I have trouble expressing what I want to say

no.

no, I have never been in a situation like that.

no. I am usually very good at English.

no.

I think that the accent can tell how good you are at English

If I say something completely wrong, they usually laugh, but I just laugh with them. It’s not always easy to adapt to an accent.

no. I have no such experiences.

Visa ord för andra människor, der är i engelska och det, men när dem är förstående att man är främst ett annat land.

unknown

Never been in that situation.

No really.

...

no. I haven’t, haven’t really gotten a compliment either so.
If someone said that your accent was beautiful, no matter what accent you have, what would your reaction be?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not need anyone to tell me what I already know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would feel confident and speak more</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not think it would affect me at all</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would doubt them, it is not as good as I want it to be</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 80 respondents

Legend:
- Light blue: I do not need anyone to tell me what I already know
- Green: I would feel confident and speak more
- Orange: I do not think it would affect me at all
- Yellow: I would doubt them, it is not as good as I want it to be
This will be the last thing you do before this survey is finished. Great job so far! Would you like to tell me anything else about how you feel that your accent affects your ability to communicate or if it affects your confidence when you speak English? I will not know who wrote what, and I will not be able to figure it out. You will be completely anonymous, as with the rest of the survey. Is there a specific moment (in school, online, on vacation and so on) when you felt especially good or bad about your accent? Please tell me if you remember such a moment.

Text Responses

No sorry i don't remember. Actually I think speak english as much as I wish I would. BUT, when I speak, the thing I am most afraid of, is that I would say things wrong or talk grammatically wrong. I don't think that much of my accent.

I felt good about my accent when I was 12/15, when I went to China. The people who lived there asked me if English was my native language and they felt really proud. Also when my classmates compliments me (for my pronunciation).

I think that if somebody knows that they have a good accent then they will be more confident and talk a bit more then others who think they have a bad accent.

When you feel more confident and better about your accent when I felt like there was no one judging me and some they are not that good at pronouncing either.

Having a accent that you feel confident about helps you when you speak. And if everyone could speak in the same way we would understand each other better. I sometimes think accents are hard to understand.

Different accents are less especially trying to imitate them. An accent softens something to be learnt of, it makes a language more colourful. But maybe that's just me.

When I went to the USA, people would sometimes compliment me on my accent, that they liked the way I sounded. That made me feel as if and self conscious in front of native English speakers.

In school
Can't remember.

Känner mig bra hemma, men då jag är around and känner mig inte då.

No.

Accent matters more than people think.

I'm good at speaking the English language because I've been practicing when I was young, while playing video games. Communicating with other people around the world.

I don't remember a specific moment, but I do remember it has happened that someone has complimented me about how I speak in English and my accent. That really fascinated me and made me want to never stop talking in English.

I don't have much more to say.

I feel good when speaking English at home, because of the accent. I feel that I speak English in a more native-like way.

Overall, I'm pretty confident, not when it comes to pronouncing words though.

I feel good when I speak English with or in front of someone who knows me but doesn't know me.

I usually don't feel confident when I speak with or in front of someone who doesn't know me.

I am not good at English at all so I just wanna avoid speaking English at all because I feel that I get judged all the time.

I want to speak good English, but I can't.

Instead of speaking with other people online, I try to avoid having an accent. I think it's a bad thing.

As long as you can understand accent play a little role if you're just abroad. Accent can make you look more professional and more formal but that's only specific situations when it's needed.

When you're learning to speak English, it's important to speak as much as possible.

I can't remember such a moment.

I'm good at speaking English, but I still make mistakes.

Sometimes embarrassed about sounding like a Swede when I'm speaking with native speakers.

If you are not sure of or not heard of that accent it would be hard to understand. When you visit England, it was hard to understand what they were saying.

First of all, nice to meet you.

I speak to a lot of people from America, every day, on the phone. I've been to America before and I met a lot of people that I still have contact with. Mostly girls. I always talk to them and they all think I sound American, and that convinces me that I actually do. I am talking to Americans with their (my) accent.

Thank you.

Nothing really comes to mind.

I don't really know.

youtube @ Backman & his team

Swedish pronunciation can be very different from English. Some words might be harder to say for a Swedish person than for native speakers.

I can say that I'm feeling very good when I'm speaking in with my friends online and in school.

Almost all people living in english speaking countries think the swedish/english accent sounds good.