



Perceptions of Thai Undergraduate Students toward the Asian English Accents on Listening Comprehension

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Abstract

Perceptions in English accents are of paramount importance to understand the use of English language in communication nowadays. Asian English accents recently become a trend of real communicative environment that Thai learners are getting more acquainted for work and socialize. Thus, this study aimed to investigate 152 first-year Thai undergraduate students' perceptions toward the three Asian English accents on listening comprehension, namely Filipino, Singaporean, and Indian. The instruments were a set of questionnaires and a listening comprehension test to reveal the compatibility between the participants' listening comprehension and their perceptions toward the three Asian accents. It was found that the Thai students initially had more positive perception toward Indian accent on account of its clarity and comprehension than the other two accents. However, regardless of familiarity, the test scores of better comprehensions belonged to the Filipino and Singaporean accents respectively. This shows the contradiction of their perceptions and their listening comprehension. This study could help to raise teachers' awareness in highlighting the importance of accent variations among learners of English and preparing for a new instructional paradigm.

INTRODUCTION

Undeniably, English is mainly utilized as the important medium of intercultural communication around the world as the global citizens today have different language and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, English, in this sense, is like a bridge for the world population to connect to each other. However, it does not mean that English has never caused misunderstanding when international users of English use it in communication. The new term World Englishes has extensively been studied by a number of researchers for many years (Kachru, 1990; Yano, 2001; Bamgboe, 2001; Seidlhofer, 2009; Kirkpatrick, 2014). In the 21st century, it is estimated that non-native speakers of English have increasingly outnumbered its native speakers up to 80%

(Crystal, 2003). This fact has truly proved the practical use of English among the world citizens (Baker, 2011). Basically speaking, English has become a primarily lingua franca since it functions as a preferred means of international communication for a wide variety of purposes for both native and non-native speakers alike. Furthermore, the majority of spoken exchanges are among non-native speakers of English, with English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), rather than between native speakers and non-native speakers, with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (MacKay, 2002; Crystal, 2003). For this reason, the new role of English has shifted the ownership of English from the so-called native speakers to the whole world population (Jenkins, 2000; Walker, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2011). As a result, it is time to change the view whether we will learn English in order to communicate with people around the world or only with the native speakers.

In Asian communities, where English has been used as a primary working language, it is very important for scholars in English language teaching and learning to pay more attention to the use of English in this area. This is because the new knowledge constructed according to the real use of English can reflect the sociolinguistic reality which will certainly have a great influence on the creation of a new instructional paradigm including course syllabus, methodologies, material designs, and assessments (MacKay, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2014). This conception based on a new paradigm will finally enable the new generation of English learners to understand the real communicative environment they reside in and to be equipped with the necessary competency to communicate with their Asian fellows with whom they tend to have more chance to work and socialize.

There are recent previous studies concerning attitudes towards varieties of English accents in several regional contexts such as America, China, Japan, South Korea and Malaysia (He & Li, 2009; Kang, 2010; Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011; Bauman, 2013). Not so many have studied Asian accents and they have not focused on the relationship between students' perceptions of Asian English accents and their listening performance. Unlike before where American and British English speakers are outnumbered, international individuals from India, the Philippines, and Singapore have been playing an increasing role in the Thai educational and professional contexts. A huge number of them now have occupations as English teachers, educators, and business persons in several Thai sectors. As a result, they also tend to play a major role as future potential interlocutors of Thais in the new communicative settings.

To understand their status in Thai context as well as to fill the gap of the previous studies, this study thus explored Thai undergraduate students' perceptions towards non-native accents of Asian multilingual speakers regarding to what extent those accents result in their listening comprehension and if their perceptions are congruent with their listening comprehension. The results could enrich the new instructional paradigm and testing of listening comprehension in the era of globalization in the way that they are given a chance to learn what they are supposed to encounter in their future professional settings. This study was then conducted in order to answer the following questions:

1) *What are Thai undergraduate students' perceptions towards the Asian English accents?*

2) *Is the students' listening comprehension congruent with their perceptions toward the three Asian English accents?*



LITERATURE REVIEW

English accents and World Englishes

In sociolinguistics, accents play crucial roles in determining the characteristics and identities of diverse speakers from different regions of the world (Aydemir, 2013). In the world of English communication, accents mark variations in speech communication among a number of users of English. A specific accent could be used to represent power of a particular group of speakers over those of other groups, the native speaker vs. non-native speaker (McKenzie, 2008; Kumagai, 2013). A person's positive or negative perceptions toward accents tend to reflect his or her sociocultural perspectives and pedagogical practices as well as a person's identity to scope ideas to himself and other people (Kumagai, 2013). It is universally true that every language user possesses his/her own unique accent. It is also true that every user of English transfers his own L1 accent to the target English language when they communicate with others (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010).

Regarding the framework of concentric circles provided by Kachru (1990), there are the Inner Circles, the Outer Circles, and the Expanding Circles. Countries found in the Outer Circles and the Expanding Circles have been known as World Englishes or localized varieties of English (Crystal, 2003; Kachru, 1990). In Asia, there are concentric circles which are basically defined as the so-called categories of the Outer and the Expanding Circles. The Outer Circles consist of former British or American colonial countries such as Brunei, Malaysia, India, Singapore and The Philippines. English in this circle is used as a second language. While the Expanding Circles countries like Thailand, China, Japan use English as a foreign language in the way that their national citizens have little opportunities to use English in a daily basis. This is summarized to be a problem in communication by Schneider (2007) who proposed the norm of correctness since English that they use is inherently different from that of the native speakers. In terms of standard in teaching, varieties such as Indian or Singapore Englishes are not accepted in some formal context of education (Pilus, 2013). This leads to the norms of correcting learners' language in the classroom based on the standard in teaching or speaking English. However, if putting the conventional belief aside, the orientation of English language teaching pedagogy based on EFL paradigm may need to be re-examined in order to raise learners' awareness of the importance of international intelligibility and English identities among global users of English rather than aiming to assimilate to the language use based on the native speakers' standard (Boriboon, 2011).

Asian English accents

It has been estimated that only in Asian countries alone, the majority of the world population using English to interact with each other is now over 1,000 billion. In recent decades, one of the interesting phenomena in today's international communication is the emergence of varieties of English, specially the most noticeable regional accents. In Asian regions, such varieties of accents are now universally accepted as the key element which, in reality, reflects their identities in communication among non-native users of English who have outnumbered those who speak English as a native language (ENL) (Crystal, 2003; Kachru & Nelson, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2014).

English accents can very much represent speakers' identities originated from their different ethnic and L1 backgrounds. Like any other accents, Indian, Filipino, and Singaporean accents, which are the focus of this study, have naturally reflected their own phonological characteristics in different ways although their modern linguistic history is greatly influenced by the British and American colonization.

Singaporean accent is perceived through the use of English in highly multilingual contexts where the dominance of native Chinese dialect and Bazaar Malay play a vital role. It is now part of a stable indigenized English today (Platt, 1980). A verbal repertoire showing typical Singaporean accent is in its prosody. That is, it displays great emphasis on loudness, length, high pitch on final syllables of each word within utterance. Additionally, in level tones, Singaporeans tend to use a high pitch (Tay & Gupta, 1983; Deterding, 2000, 2007).

The transferring factor of indigenous L1 that notably influences the English accent of Indians is typically in the area of a syllable-timed rhythm noticeably realized via all stressed and unstressed syllables (Sailaja, 2012). In terms of consonant production, Indians normally have a tendency to replace the dental fricatives /th/ sound with the alveolar /t/ or /d/ ones (Mukherjee, 2010). Their production of final consonant clusters also markedly shows the L1 transfer when the final cluster ending in /-s/ is usually omitted like other Asian speakers of English.

As one of the countries situated in the Outer Circle, Filipino English demonstrated its characteristics. The main features marking its accents include no contrasting between tense and lax vowel sounds. Together, vowels in unstressed syllables are not clearly reduced like those of the native speaker. It is clear that the stop consonant sounds /p/, /t/, /k/ are not aspirated in the beginning of a word and also not audibly released at the end of a syllable. Filipino English has a stress-timed rhythm as well as its speakers usually use raising intonation in phrases, clauses and even Wh-questions alike (Low & Hashim, 2012).

In consequence, researchers in linguistics currently hold a similar belief that English spoken by the speakers of these nationalities should be uniquely described on their separate identities from those of other countries in the world. All in all, it is impossible to assume that people using English as a means of communication should sound like the native speaker to be able to achieve listening ability and finally result in effective communication (Kachru & Nelson, 2006). Importantly, as Crystal (2003) stated, World Englishes has a great impact on listening comprehension. The development of learners' listening comprehension should not only be focused on the understanding of the native speakers' pronunciation and accents because this will deprive learners' opportunity to learn other kinds of phonological features they are most likely to encounter in their real-life communication.

Language perceptions and listening comprehension

As McKenzie (2010) stated, language perceptions are vital indicators of language preference. Perceptions can lead to judgment and evaluation of the people who are speaking English. Perceptions could be a learned opinion to think, feel and behave of a person in a particular way. In terms of language, Cooper & Fishman (1997) asserted that everyone has an opinion



of how language is used. It means that people hold perceptions towards language at all its levels such as grammar, pronunciation as well as accents which are strongly influenced by dialects of language users in different regions. This may cause acceptance and prestige or denial for some particular accents over others. In addition, people tend to recognize accents and distinguish who the speaker is from such indicated accents (Matsuura, Chiba & Yamamoto, 1994).

By the aforementioned reality, effective listening comprehension in diverse accents is an essential part the language learners in the English-speaking world have to initially master if they want to be successful in international communicative exchanges. However, in the English mainstream classroom, the still-widely-used models for developing students' listening comprehension are mostly drawn from those of the native speaker as a previous research conducted by Phusit & Suksiripakonchai (2018) found that Thai students highly prefer the standard accents and pronunciation of British and American English, but rather have a negative attitude toward other non-native accents of English as a lingua franca. This study corresponds with Sykes (2011) who conducted it on direct and indirect approaches in language attitude. The findings show the predominantly negative attitudes to eight expanding circle accents of English but slightly had positive attitudes to three. Similarly, Episcopo, (2009)'s study indicated non-native speaker negative attitudes toward other non-native English accents when listening to other non-native English speakers. Their positive judgement, on the other hand, was closely more associated with a native-like accent rather than with intelligibility. They also have negative perceptions of their own non-native accents as they negatively rated other non-native accents.

Clearly, from the above mentioned, it is the fact that teaching practice in the traditional classroom does not practically promote the use of English by non-native speakers and this has a major conflict with the sociolinguistic reality, which students have to confront with all kinds of varieties of English accents in their daily life (Matsuda, 2003; Jenkins, 2006, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2010). Therefore, there is a need for researching students' perceptions of listening skills based on the World Englishes (WEs) paradigm in order to shed a light on diagnosing and designing some other pedagogical options for developing Thai students' listening skills both inside and outside the classroom.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this study were 152 first-year undergraduate students at Thai university of whom there are 70 females and 82 males, aged between 18-20. They are studying in different departments including electrical engineering, electronic and telecommunication engineering, environmental engineering, chemical engineering, production engineering, information technology, physics and chemistry. The target participants were at intermediate level of English proficiency whose Ordinary National Education Test (O-NET) scores are more than 40% and so they were exempt from the first compulsory English course offered by the university.

All participants have studied English for approximately 12 years and most of them (80%) have not had any experience living abroad but studied English as a foreign language in Thailand. From the very first questions from the questionnaire, their general goal in studying English is mainly for education (78%), entertainment (65%), and future profession (24%), respectively. Most of them rarely got a chance to practice listening to and speaking English. It was mainly done in classroom (once a week, approximately 3 hours). In addition, they are basically familiar with the native speaker's accents of English, either British's or American's as 100% of them responded. This means that the English language education in Thailand has always promoted the norms of the native speaker in the mainstream classroom.

Research instruments

The instruments that were used as the tools in collecting data included a questionnaire on language perceptions and a designed academic listening comprehension test. Regarding the questionnaire (See Appendix A), it was used to examine common perception of those three Asian English accents and was developed based on Episcopo's (2009) framework that provides a descriptive model through perceptual judgement in investigating the relationship between perceived accents and listener attitudes. To clarify, the closed-ended questions in the questionnaire were aimed to elicit the participants' fundamental perceptions about English accents. It consisted of three parts: 1) demographic information, 2) general perceptions toward the English accents regarding native and non-native speakers of English using Likert scale (a five point of Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly disagree, and 3) specific perceptions toward the three Asian accents namely Filipino, Singaporean, and Indian. With the questionnaire, three short passages, 100-160 words in length, were recorded in the three accents, which were Student's Life, Egg Allergy and Music. Each passage was recorded in Filipino, another in Singaporean, and the last in Indian accents. They were used to trigger their previous perceptions on the accents. The questionnaire was translated into Thai in order to avoid misunderstanding. Importantly, before the questionnaire was distributed to the participants, it was re-checked by an instrumentation expert for its validation whether it could effectively elicit the participants' perception.

For the listening comprehension test (See Appendix B), focusing on the Asian English accents, three longer passages with 300-350 words in length with the True/False format, were used. The validation process for the test was also designated to an expert in language testing to give comments on statements and questions based on clarity, appropriateness of distractors, then it was revised according to comments and piloted with 20 students. Each topic would be true or false test type which included 10 questions. According to Heaton (1975), the true or false test is one of the most widely used tests for both listening and reading comprehension. Each question would measure comprehension and specific information. The topics were Facebook, Selfie and Homeschool. The participants took around five minutes for each topic to complete the test. The test was used with the purpose to examine whether or not the participants' perceptions and comprehensibility toward the three Asian English accents correspond in the same way. The test was proved to be high reliability as Cronbach's alpha for its whole test was 0.806.



To elaborate more on the main scripts used along with the two instruments, they were created based on passages from the Internet (See Appendix C) which is equivalent to CEFR B2 level measured by <https://readability-score.com/text>. The passages were chosen in different topics so that the listeners would not hear the same passage but rather more or less the same text difficulty level. The difficulty of text is 60–70 average standards using Reading ease index. The scripts were recorded by the speakers of the Outer Circle Countries (Kachru, 1996) which were Indian, Filipino, and Singaporean using English as a second language. Before reading all the scripts, the participants were informed to read all passages in their normal speed so that this could ensure their own way of communication in English.

The informants of each accent were selected under the following criteria. First, they have never lived in any native English-speaking countries so that this could reduce their chance to adopt any English-speaking countries' accents. Second, they had lived in their own country and communicated in English within their own communities for at least 25 years. This could also ensure that they tend to naturally establish their own authentic accents of Englishes. Third, the fact that all informants have lived in Thailand for not more than 3 years makes them appropriate for this study because their accent would be least affected by a few years of residing in the country. Lastly, they have held at least a bachelor degree in any fields of study so they are considered as educated speakers of their own language and of English. For Singaporean and Filipino speakers, they are teachers of English in international schools. Thus, as teachers, they are aware of the clear and correct pronunciation, while the Indian speaker who is working in an international company focuses on pronouncing intelligibly in his international environment.

Data collection

To collect data for this study, the three key steps were carefully implemented. Firstly, participants were asked to give their personal information and general perceptions in the first and second parts in the questionnaire. Secondly, they listened to short passages read by three Asian accents, one time for each accent. Immediately after the listening, they were asked to reflect their views on the three different accents in the third part of the questionnaire. Finally, they listened to longer passages by the same three Asian accents, once for each. After this listening, they were asked to complete the true or false listening comprehension test.

Data analysis

To answer the research question one, the data obtained from the questionnaire was analysed using different methods. To clarify, the first and the third parts of the questionnaire were analyzed by using percentages. The quantitative data in the second part were analyzed to identify the averages (mean scores) and standard deviation (SD) of each statement. All statements presented in the second part are interpreted by using the following criterion.

Table 1
Weighted mean scores (Five-point Likert Scale) in question items 1-10

Mean	Interpretation				
	Items 1-2	Items 3-4	Items 5-6	Items 7-8	Items 9-10
4.21-5.00	Very important	Important	Neutral	Somewhat important	Not important
3.41-4.20	Very important	Proud	Often	Often	Agree
2.61-3.40	Neutral	Neutral	Sometimes	Sometimes	Neither
1.81-2.60	Sometimes important	Lack of confidence	Rarely	Rarely	Disagree
1.0-1.80	Not important	Embarrassed	Never	Never	Strongly disagree

To answer the research question two, the test scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, and percentages of correct responses for overall and each listening passage/ accent. In order to see if the students’ perceptions toward the three Asian English accents are compatible with their listening test scores, the ranking of percentages of correct responses was compared with those in perceptions especially for the comprehensibility of the three Asian English accents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section reveals the results concerning the research questions 1) What are Thai undergraduate students’ perceptions towards the Asian English accents? and 2) Is the students’ listening comprehension congruent with their perceptions toward the three Asian English accents? With the total number of 152 participants answering the questionnaire and conducting the listening comprehension test, the main results could be reported and discussed as follows.

1. General perceptions toward English accents

To answer research question one, Thai undergraduate students’ perceptions towards English accent in general regarding native and non-native English speakers are presented in Table 2. Its focus is on the importance of accents, the accent production, the attention and understanding toward a particular accent.



Table 2
Perceptions toward English accents in general

No	Attitude on English accent	Average	SD	Interpretation
1	How important is it for you to sound like a native English speaker?	3.55	1.41	very important
2	When you are speaking to another non-native speaker, how important is it to you that he or she has a native-like accent?	2.64	0.71	neutral
3	How do you feel about your accent when you speak to a native speaker?	2.75	1.41	neutral
4	How do you feel about your accent when you speak to another non-native speaker?	3.09	0.71	neutral
5	When you are speaking to a native speaker, how often do you completely understand?	3.08	0.00	sometimes
6	When you are speaking to a non-native speaker, how often do you completely understand?	3.09	0.00	sometimes
7	When you are listening to a native speaker, how often you pay attention to his or her English accent?	3.52	2.12	often
8	When are you listening to a non-native speaker how often you pay attention to his or her English accent?	3.06	2.12	sometimes
9	Do you think accent can affect listening comprehension more than pronouncing correctly?	3.82	0.71	agree
10	Do you think that a native speaker's accent is easier to understand than that of a non-native speaker?	3.53	1.41	agree

As illustrated in the Table 2, the first key point is the participants had more positive attitude toward the native speakers' English accent. Most of them cast their vote that it is very important for them to sound like a native speaker (Q.1, \bar{x} = 3.55). To support this preference, it was found that their answers in questions 7 and 10 correspond to question 1 as they often pay attention to a native speaker's English accent while listening (\bar{x} = 3.52) and they mostly agree that a native speaker's accent is easier to understand than that of a non-native speaker (\bar{x} = 3.53) which in turn affects their listening comprehension as is voiced by their opinion in question 9 (\bar{x} = 3.82). This result is similar in line with other previous studies indicating that learners of English in expanding circle countries including Thailand tend to have a highly positive perception toward English models used by an English native speaker (e.g. Phusit and Suksiripakonchai, 2018; Jindapitak, 2013; Jindapitak, and Teo, 2013; Kang,2010).

When asked about their own English accent production with other international speakers regardless of whether they are native or non-native English speakers (Q. 3 and Q. 4), their degree of self-evaluation is neutral with mean score of 2.75 and 3.09 respectively. In other words, they do not either lose confidence or are proud of their English accent when talking to other foreigners. This may probably indicate that they do not care much about using a particular English accent other than speaking English with their Thai accents in real communication. This result corresponds to the study of Prakaiborisuth and Trakulkasemsuk (2015) in the way that Thai students' attitude toward other non-native English speakers in ASEAN region is neutral. As we can see, it is common under the World Englishes notion that global citizens embrace their English accents as part of their identity. Having accents is one feature of existing English varieties. In sociolinguistics context, accents determine the status of an individual as member of a specific speech community (Aydemir, 2013). Therefore, the production of different English accents is a natural phenomenon which is accepted and adopted in communication. As supported by the perceptions in questions 2 and 8, the participants marked their feeling as neutral since it is not important that a non-native speaker should have a native-like accent ($\bar{x} = 2.64$). Also, when listening to another non-native speaker, they sometimes pay attention to his or her English accent ($\bar{x} = 3.06$). This shows a good tendency that they at least do not negatively reject the use of English accents either of others' or of their own.

With regards to their comprehension when communicating with both native and non-native speakers of English (Q. 5 and 6), it was found that their answers are almost exactly the same with the mean scores of 3.08 and 3.09, interpreted as they sometimes understand their foreigner interlocutors. This may actually not be as a result of accents but it may probably occur largely due to their language proficiency and subject matters as well as contents of conversation. In addition, the majority of the participants agree in question 9 that accent can affect listening comprehension more than pronouncing correctly ($\bar{x} = 3.82$). To prove this perception, the test of listening comprehension with different accents was used as an evidential justification and the results of the listening test scores will be presented in the later section.

2. Perceptions toward the three Asian English accents

To identify the results to support research question 1, the recorded short stories of the three Asian English accents including Filipino, Singaporean, and Indian were presented to the participants. They revealed their perceptions in terms of percentages as shown in the following table.

The result shows that Indian accent received the most favorable points of view as it was



Table 3
Percentages of Perceptions toward the three Asian English accents

No	Questions	Filipino	Singaporean	Indian
1	Which accent do you think you can understand best?	26.97	25.66	47.37
2	Which accent do you think is the most difficult to understand?	35.1	36.42	28.48
3	Which accent do you think you are most familiar with?	67.76	18.42	13.82
4	Which accent sounds like an English native speaker?	43.71	26.49	29.8
5	Which accent is the clearest?	31.13	23.18	45.7
6	Which accent is the fastest?	45.39	26.97	27.63
7	Which accent have you never heard?	13.57	60.00	26.43
8	Which accent do you like the most?	31.58	22.37	46.05

perceived as the most understandable accent (Q.1) with the majority of 47.37%, the clearest accent (Q.5) with 45.7%, and the most favorite accent (Q.8) with 46.05% when compared to the other accents which received only around 20-30% in the same questions. Additionally, it was found that Singaporean accent is the least familiar one with a mere 18.42%, and it is also most difficult to understand as 36.42% was indicated by the participants. By contrast, the Filipino accent received the highest 67.76% as being the most familiar accent. Together, this accent is considered as the most native-like with 43.71% and the fastest with 45.39% compared to those of Indian and Singaporean.

From the results, it is clear that the participants are obviously sensitive and highlight the importance of the native speaker accent in their memory as nearly 43.71% of them instantly agree to entitle the Filipino accent is near-native accent (Q.4), and majority of the participants (67.76%) perceived that they are most familiar with this accent in their everyday life (Q.3) when comparing with the other two accents. This corresponds to the answer in question 7 in the Table 2 because it points out that they frequently pay attention to the native speaker accent when they are listening to them.

However, at the same time, it shows the perceptual complexity and contradiction of the participants' perceptions towards the non-native English speakers' accents and their initial perceptions toward the native speaker's accent. That is, after listening to the three accents from the short passages, in question 10 from the previous section, "Do you think that a native speaker's accent is easier to understand than that of a non-native speaker?", they agree to this. Yet, it was surprisingly found that, in this section, they like the Indian accent and

understand it much better than the Filipino accent. This finding may be explained by the study of Watson Todd and Pojanapunya (2009), which suggests that the language learners' attitudes of preference toward native and non-native speakers tend to be implicit based on their subconsciousness. What they initially expressed may not be the same or compatible with what they really think. To illustrate, from Watson Todd and Pojanapunya's study, when elicited through a questionnaire, the learners obviously demonstrated their preference to the native speaker, but when they were tested by the Implicit Association Test, which used representative examples for a pair of concepts (NESTs vs. non-NESTs) with names instead of faces and a pair of attributes (positive vs. negative teaching) such as active, enjoyable, rule-bound, and cheerless, it turned out that there was no explicit preference and warmer explicit feelings towards the native speaker.

3. Listening comprehension and perceptions toward the three Asian English accents

In this section, the answer to second research question is reported by the participants' scores on the listening comprehension test that their listening comprehension is incongruent with their perceptions toward the three Asian English accents. The information to prove this was additionally drawn from the table below.

To explain, in the previous section (see Table 3) the majority of the participants noticeably

Table 4
The result of the listening comprehension test

Rank	English accented speech	Percentages of correct answers	Average score	Out of
1 st	Filipino	61.97%	6.20	10
2 nd	Singaporean	60.72 %	6.07	10
3 rd	Indian	55.78%	5.58	10
Total		59.5%	17.85	30

expressed their preference to the Indian accent owing to its representation of being best understood and clear. However, the result of the test turns out to take a different direction. The highest score of accent comprehensibility (61.97%) belongs to the Filipino accent, while the lowest score is found in the test of Indian accent (55.78%). The score of the Singaporean accent is in the second place (60.72%), almost the same percentage as the Filipino accent test. This once again shows contradiction of their earlier perceptions elicited from the first listening to the three accents without a test in part 3 of the questionnaire (see table 2). That is, they state that they can best understand the Indian accent up to 47.37%, while they can understand Filipino and Singaporean accents merely 26.97% and 25.66% respectively. Besides this, although the Singaporean and Filipino accents are almost equally ranked as a more difficult accent to understand (35.1% and 36.42%) than the Indian accent (28.48%), yet; as the result of the test demonstrates, the test of the Indian accent receives the comprehension score below the other two.



This present result could interestingly be discussed in several aspects. Most importantly, a variety of English accents, regardless of being familiar or not, do not negatively affect comprehension between people from different speech communities if such accent is produced by an educated individual who can articulate in a clear and acceptable manner in running connected speech (Walker, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2011; Bauman, 2013). To clarify, the selected speakers representing the three Asian English accents are well-educated with their Master's degree in their own fields. They are also fluent speakers of English who can pronounce intelligently and work professionally in their careers. These would consequently influence the way they have delivered their accent as educated people and make people feel impressive when listening to. Another possibility is that students' language proficiency as in an intermediate level could help overcome the barrier of listening comprehension. The evidence to support this issue is that the huge majority of the participants (60%), for example, noted that they have never heard the Singaporean accent. However, their comprehension for this accent in the test is more or less the same when compared to the most familiar accent like Filipino counterpart (60.72% vs. 61.97%). Thus, the matter of familiarity in accents is not actually the primary or determining factor in listening comprehension in this study especially for proficient students. That is to say, language proficiency has more impact on listening comprehension than other variables i.e. familiarity of accents, and background knowledge. As stated in Schmidt-Rinehart (1994)'s study, the proficiency level tends to directly have a significant influence on listening comprehension than any other variables.

Regarding the contradiction of their perceptions towards the three Asian accents and their listening comprehension it could be due to the reason that they may at first realized the more pleasant, soft voice of the Indian speaker over the others without focusing on the detail of what he read. However, when the participants had to listen again, they needed to focus on detail to complete the test. This shows that their perceptions rely enormously on their personal preference; yet it turned to a different matter when they were tested in comprehension. Thus, listening for indicating preference is not always the same as listening for comprehension. However, the Filipino accent turned out to be the most comprehensible among the three accents based on the test score. This may possibly suggest an issue that students consider Filipino (as they responded in the questionnaire) as close to native speakers that they are more familiar than the other two. Nonetheless, it is possible that different length and topics may have affected students' listening comprehension since the length of texts between the ones in the questionnaire and the others in the test were different, which in turn may have affected listening impression and comprehension as well. Also, some topics might bias or favor some students which result in the contradiction of their perceptions and test scores. This is because familiarity on a particular topic can be one main factor influencing comprehension (Schmidt-Rinehart, 1994).

Besides this, some similarities of the phonological system between Thai and the three Asian accents may help the participants to have a better understanding in the listening test. For instance, the three accents tend to stress on loudness on each syllable of a word, especially on the final syllable. This is also one characteristic of English pronunciation found when Thais speak English.

Last but not least, this study reveals the fact that the participants still have some misconception when most of them, answering question 9 in table 1, agree that accent can affect listening comprehension more than pronouncing correctly. This misconception contradicts their scores of the listening test. To clarify, most of them could actually understand the contents of the passages quite well regardless of the unfamiliar accents to which they were exposed. In other words, if thinking positively, with the current level of the participants' English ability, they can, in fact, sufficiently understand around 60% in the test. If they continue to improve their English, they will be most likely to better understand the three accents in higher percentage.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Through the use of a questionnaire and a listening comprehension test, the objective of this study is to reveal the Thai undergraduate students' perceptions toward the three Asian English accents and also to find out whether such perceptions go hand in hand with their comprehensibility of those Asian English accents. The results show the complexity and contradiction of their perceptions and their listening competency. The accents they at first preferred, Indian accents, due to their perception on its clarity and comprehension, turned out to have the lowest listening scores. In addition, the high or low familiarity with Filipino and Singaporean accents does not have an effect on their listening comprehension owing to their relatively high scores.

From these results, it has implications to promote the English language education in Thailand. All stakeholders including teachers, educators, researchers alike, should realize the importance of promoting students' positive attitudes in learning English in the new era where world Englishes do exist. Their linguistic diversity is the norms, and the mutual intelligibility is the key to successful communication, keeping in mind that students should be given an opportunity to expose themselves to a variety of English accents from people in different parts of the world. This is because as Thai students are becoming global citizens, they are expected not only to have an ability to understand diverse English accents, but they should also have a positive attitude toward other accents different from those of the native speaker's and of their own. As Jenkins (2006) maintains that language and identity are strongly linked to each other. Thus, exposing students to varieties of English should be one important aim in a novel classroom in order to foster their confidence in their own English varieties. This will then help them to have a positive attitude toward their national identity as well as their use of English in real communicative situations. In addition, Asian Englishes play a significant role as actual interlocutors in real communicative situations in Asian context (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Taking this fact into consideration, it is very important to raise Thai students' awareness of these interlocutors as their potential communication partners in the future. Despite the fact that Thai students have more positive attitudes toward native English speakers than non-native ones due to the traditional belief and practices passed on into Thai mainstream classroom (Phusit & Suksiripakonchai, 2018), there is a tendency from the result that Thai students are open to more varieties of English accents.

Enhancing this tendency is important since Thailand now fully participates in international and regional organizations with other Asian and ASEAN members whose cooperation is progressing



in economic, trade, banking, political, and cultural matters. Provided that the traditionally EFL paradigm to uphold the so called 'standard variety, British or American's is still persistent, this will may make them miss an opportunity to develop their listening skills towards some other non-standardized English accents which tends to be necessary for them to take part in the real communicative situations (Boriboon, 2011). Thai students should, therefore, be encouraged to be aware of other English accents. They should be informed how they should learn English and live in the world using English as an international language for communication. In other words, they cannot avoid communicating with people having countless English accents, especially the Asian ones in the region. Therefore, a variety of Englishes should also be highlighted and included in their lessons, starting from improving their listening comprehension. As Crystal (2003) and Graddol (2006) asserted the notion world Englishes will dramatically change the realm of English language teaching and learning in terms of listening comprehension between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

To fulfil this goal, more concrete pedagogical implications on teaching and testing listening based on the notion of world Englishes (WEs) should be implemented including course design, teaching materials and testing. For example, students should explicitly be taught about way of pronouncing including awareness of lexical, syntactical and phonological features for some accents in outer-circle and expanding circle that Thai students are more likely to encounter in their real life such as Filipino, Singaporean and Indian. Together, the teaching could go hand in hand with authentic language use, topics, or situations which are meaningful and help promote their use of English in real communication.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Further recommendations could be done in several ways. For instance, a new study may include an English accent of the native speaker to compare participants' perceptions and their listening comprehension with other non-native speakers of English. This can further prove if the high agreement of question 10 in Table 2 that 'native speaker's accent is easier to understand than a non-native speaker's is true. Together, the additional instrumentation such as a semi-structured interview should be included in a study to strengthen the findings. It is also interesting to compare the perceptions of different groups of participants between English teachers and students. Last but not least, a study could be carried on in other aspects of perceptions towards Asian English accents (i.e. intelligibility and acceptability) such as observing while participants are communicating in a classroom or business setting.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

With the employment of a set of questionnaires, this study may only be able to generalize to a certain extent, but it could be improved with the use of other instrumentations to consolidate the findings such as using a semi-structured interview. The other important limitation is that, in the process of data collection, the participants may not have been fully prepared for the test when they were asked to do it in length after they had been studying in their regular

courses. That is, although students paid good attention when completing the questionnaire and the tests (after they finish their 3-hour- English class), there could be some factors that cannot be controlled during data collection (i.e. students' exhaustion). This may, as a result, have affected their comprehension when doing the test. Lastly, since this study only focuses on a single aspect of the listening comprehension, it could in turn limit the use of statistical tool for data analysis and end up with using solely ranking comparison between test scores and the perceptions regarding comprehensibility of the three varieties.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire: Perceptions of Thai Undergraduate Students toward the Asian English Accents on Listening Comprehension

แบบสอบถาม

ทัศนคติที่มีต่อภาษาอังกฤษสำเนียงเอเชีย ของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี
มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีพระจอมเกล้าธนบุรี

คำชี้แจง

1. แบบสอบถามชุดนี้จัดทำขึ้นเพื่อศึกษาว่านักศึกษาระดับบัณฑิตศึกษา มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีพระจอมเกล้าธนบุรี มีทัศนคติต่อภาษาอังกฤษสำเนียงเอเชียอย่างไร เพื่อที่จะได้เตรียมพร้อมสู่การเปลี่ยนแปลงของบทบาทภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษาสากลของโลก
2. แบบสอบถามชุดนี้ แบ่งออกเป็น 3 ส่วน คือ
 - ส่วนที่ 1 ข้อมูลส่วนตัว
 - ส่วนที่ 2 ทัศนคติที่มีต่อสำเนียงภาษาอังกฤษโดยทั่วไป
 - ส่วนที่ 3 ทัศนคติที่มีต่อภาษาอังกฤษ 3 สำเนียงได้แก่ ฟิลิปปินส์ สิงคโปร์ และ อินเดีย
3. การตอบแบบสอบถามในครั้งนี้เป็นเพียงการศึกษาเพื่อนำข้อมูลไปใช้ในการวิจัย และไม่มีคำตอบใดถูกหรือผิด สิ่งที่สำคัญที่สุด คือ ขอให้นักศึกษาตอบให้ตรงกับความเป็นจริงที่สุดและตอบให้ครบทุกข้อ
4. คำตอบที่ได้มิได้มีผลต่อการให้คะแนน หรือส่งผลกระทบต่อผลการเรียนในรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษที่นักศึกษาเรียนอยู่แต่อย่างใดและข้อมูลที่ได้จะถูกเก็บเป็นความลับ

ส่วนที่ 1: ข้อมูลส่วนตัว**วิธีการตอบแบบสอบถาม**

ให้นักศึกษากรอกข้อความ และทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ ลงในกล่องข้อความแต่ละข้อ ตามความเป็นจริง

ชื่อ-นามสกุล _____ รหัสนักศึกษา _____

- 1.1 เพศ ชาย หญิง
- 1.2 อายุ 20-30 ปี 31-40 ปี 41-50 ปี มากกว่า 50 ปี
- 1.3 คณะ/สาขาวิชา โปรรุ่น.....
- 1.4 รวมจำนวนปีที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษทั้งหมดปี
- 1.5 ท่านเคยมีประสบการณ์ในการใช้ชีวิตอยู่ต่างประเทศหรือไม่

- เคย โปรรุ่นประเทศ และระยะเวลา.....
- ไม่เคย

- 1.6 โดยส่วนใหญ่ท่านใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อวัตถุประสงค์อะไร

- เพื่อการศึกษา
- เพื่อการทำงาน
- เพื่อความบันเทิง (ดูหนัง / ฟังเพลง / แชนท ออนไลน์)
- อื่นๆ โปรรุ่น.....

- 1.7 จากประสบการณ์ของท่าน ท่านมีโอกาสได้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ ทั้งทักษะการพูด และ การฟังบ่อยแค่ไหน ในรอบสัปดาห์

- | ทักษะการฟัง | ทักษะการพูด |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ไม่ใช้เลย (0-1 ครั้งสัปดาห์) | <input type="checkbox"/> ไม่ใช้เลย (0-1 ครั้งสัปดาห์) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> นานๆ ที (1-2 ครั้งสัปดาห์) | <input type="checkbox"/> นานๆ ที (1-2 ครั้งสัปดาห์) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ใช้บางครั้ง (3-4 ครั้งสัปดาห์) | <input type="checkbox"/> ใช้บางครั้ง (3-4 ครั้งสัปดาห์) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ใช้บ่อย (5-6 ครั้งสัปดาห์) | <input type="checkbox"/> ใช้บ่อย (5-6 ครั้งสัปดาห์) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ใช้ทุกวัน | <input type="checkbox"/> ใช้ทุกวัน |

- 1.8 ในรอบ 2-3 ปีที่ผ่านมา ท่านเคยมีประสบการณ์ฟังภาษาอังกฤษสำเนียงใดบ้างโปรรุ่น



ส่วนที่ 2: ทัศนคติที่มีต่อสำเนียงภาษาอังกฤษโดยทั่วไป

วิธีการตอบแบบสอบถาม

ให้นักศึกษาทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ ลงในตารางหลังข้อความแต่ละข้อ โดยตอบให้ตรงความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษาให้มากที่สุด

ส่วนที่ 2 : สำเนียงภาษาอังกฤษ ข้อ 1-2	ไม่สำคัญ 1	สำคัญเล็กน้อย 2	สำคัญบ้าง 3	สำคัญมาก 4	สำคัญอย่างยิ่ง 5
1. คุณคิดว่าการพูดภาษาอังกฤษที่มีสำเนียงเหมือนเจ้าของภาษาสำคัญมากน้อยเพียงใด					
2. เวลาคุณสื่อสารภาษาอังกฤษกับบุคคลที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษา คุณคิดว่าสำคัญหรือไม่ที่พวกเขาต้องมีสำเนียงเหมือนเจ้าของภาษา					
ข้อ 3-4	อับอาย 1	ขาดความมั่นใจ 2	เฉยๆ 3	ภูมิใจ 4	ภูมิใจมาก 5
3. คุณรู้สึกอย่างไรต่อภาษาอังกฤษของคุณเวลาที่คุณต้องสื่อสารกับบุคคลที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษา					
4. คุณรู้สึกอย่างไรต่อภาษาอังกฤษของคุณเวลาที่คุณต้องสื่อสารกับบุคคลที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษา					
ข้อ 5-6	ไม่เข้าใจเลย 1	แทบจะไม่เข้าใจ 2	บางครั้ง 3	เกือบทุกครั้ง 4	ทุกครั้ง 5
5. เวลาที่คุณสื่อสารกับเจ้าของภาษาบ่อยแค่ไหนที่คุณเข้าใจพวกเขาพูดทั้งหมด					
6. เวลาที่คุณสื่อสารกับบุคคลที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษาบ่อยแค่ไหนที่คุณเข้าใจที่พวกเขาพูดทั้งหมด					
ข้อ 7-8	ไม่เคย 1	แทบจะไม่ 2	บางครั้ง 3	เกือบทุกครั้ง 4	ทุกครั้ง 5
7. เวลาที่คุณฟังบุคคลที่เป็นเจ้าของภาษาบ่อยแค่ไหนที่คุณใส่ใจกับสำเนียงอังกฤษของพวกเขา					
8. เวลาที่คุณฟังบุคคลที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษา บ่อยแค่ไหนที่คุณใส่ใจกับสำเนียงอังกฤษของพวกเขา					
ข้อ 9-10	ไม่เห็นด้วย อย่างยิ่ง 1	ไม่เห็นด้วย 2	เห็นด้วย บางครั้ง 3	เห็นด้วย 4	เห็นด้วย อย่างยิ่ง 5
9. คุณคิดว่าสำเนียงมีผลต่อการเข้าใจความหมายมากกว่าการออกเสียงที่ถูกต้อง					
10. คุณคิดว่าสำเนียงของเจ้าของภาษาสามารถเข้าใจง่ายกว่าบุคคลที่ไม่ใช่เจ้าของภาษา					

ส่วนที่ 3 : ทักษะที่มีต่อภาษาอังกฤษ 3 ส่วนนี้จะได้แก่ ฟิลิปปีนส์ สิงคโปร์ และ อินเดีย

วิธีการตอบแบบสอบถาม

นักศึกษาจะได้ฟังภาษาอังกฤษ 3 ข้อความ จาก 3 ส่วนนี้คือ ฟิลิปปีนส์ สิงคโปร์ และ อินเดีย หลังจากนั้นให้ตอบแบบสอบถามในส่วนที่ 3 โดยทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ ลงในตารางหลังข้อความแต่ละข้อ โดยตอบให้ตรงความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษาให้มากที่สุด

	ฟิลิปปินส์	สิงคโปร์	อินเดีย
11. ส่วนนี้งไหนที่คุณเข้าใจง่ายที่สุด			
12. ส่วนนี้งไหนที่ฟังแล้วเข้าใจยากที่สุด			
13. ส่วนนี้งไหนที่คุณได้ยินบ่อยที่สุด			
14. ส่วนนี้งไหนที่น่าจะเหมือน <i>เจ้าของภาษา</i> มากที่สุด			
15. ส่วนนี้งไหนที่ออกเสียงได้ชัดที่สุด			
16. ส่วนนี้งไหนที่พูดเร็วที่สุด			
17. ส่วนนี้งไหนที่คุณไม่เคยได้ยินเลย			
18. ส่วนนี้งไหนที่คุณคิดว่าคุณชอบที่สุด			

*****ขอขอบคุณในความร่วมมือ*****



Appendix B Listening Comprehension Test

ชื่อ-นามสกุล _____ รหัสนักเรียน _____
ภาควิชา _____ คณะ _____

Listening Comprehension Test

คำชี้แจง:

- 1) ฟังข้อความยาวในแต่ละหัวข้อต่อไปนี้ แล้วเลือกคำตอบถูกหรือผิด
- 2) เขียน T หน้าข้อความที่ถูกต้อง และเขียน F หน้าข้อความที่ผิด
- 3) แต่ละหัวข้อจะได้ยินเพียง 1 รอบเท่านั้น

หัวข้อที่ 1 เรื่อง “Homeschool”

- _____ 1. In the U.S., all parents send their students to either public or private schools.
- _____ 2. There is a wide range of reasons why parents homeschool their children.
- _____ 3. Bullies and police in school are examples of potential reasons a parent might choose to homeschool.
- _____ 4. The decision to homeschool on the part of parents is sometimes related to their religious or moral beliefs.
- _____ 5. It is likely possible that families that live in city areas would select homeschooling for their children.
- _____ 6. “Unschooling” is a homeschooling technique whereby the child’s natural curiosity is the driving force behind the lesson.
- _____ 7. Parents who are homeschooling sometimes form cooperatives with other homeschooling parents so that their children may have more chances to socialize.
- _____ 8. In most countries local schools will donate textbooks to parents who are homeschooling so that they can give their children the best education possible.
- _____ 9. Students who are homeschooled might not have a chance to play and work with other children.
- _____ 10. The homeschooled students can enter most colleges without submitting their portfolio.

หัวข้อที่ 2 เรื่อง “Selfie”

- _____ 1. Before there were cameras, some people would simply paint a picture of themselves in order to create a self-portrait.
- _____ 2. Although it was possible to create self-portraits in the past, the invention of cameras on cell phones has increased the use of selfies nowadays.
- _____ 3. It is acceptable for many people nowadays to share their photographs with strangers on social networking websites.
- _____ 4. From the passage, one of the popular social networking platforms is “Whatsapp”.
- _____ 5. Selfies are usually taken by someone who is on a holiday, and are rarely used for every day experiences such as eating or commuting to work.
- _____ 6. People do not like to show their clothes when they take selfies.



- _____ 7. Taking a picture of someone’s reflection on water is very common nowadays.
- _____ 8. Taking a selfie photo in a bathroom is not a good idea for some people since it ruins privacy of a person.
- _____ 9. One of the criticisms of selfies is that they are encouraging people to become too full of themselves these days.
- _____ 10. It is common that when people take selfies, they are trying to show what they really look like no matter whether they would look good or bad.

หัวข้อที่ 3 เรื่อง **“Facebook”**

- _____ 1. A new development in the world is social networking.
- _____ 2. Social working takes place in the United States and exists for more than 150 years.
- _____ 3. Facebook was the first major social networking website in the United States.
- _____ 4. In the past, social networking was done among those people who share the same interest gathering together.
- _____ 5. People can choose either to exchange messages or share pictures on social networking site.
- _____ 6. “MySpace” is the area that people came together to to network with one another before the invention of the World Wide Web.
- _____ 7. “MySpace” allowed people who didn't go out much could stay connected with others from their own home.
- _____ 8. Before Facebook expanded into an international company, it was used on a more local level by Harvard students.
- _____ 9. Facebook is so popular now that it rarely has to bother with adding new features.
- _____ 10. The way Facebook works is proved to be user-friendly.

*****This is the end of the Test*****



Appendix C

Passages for a questionnaire and a listening comprehension test

Short Passages for the Questionnaire

Passage 1: Student Life

Student Life” refers to the life of students who receives systematic education in an educational organization. Student life is neither full of joy nor full of sorrow. It is a mixture of both. It is a blessing that parents come forward to bear all the expenses incurred by a student. This indicates that they place much hope on him and that he must make himself worthy of their hope. In other words he will have to build up his life in such a way that he can fulfill his own dreams and meet the expectations of those who love him. It has been rightly said that student life is the seed time of life. (114 words)

Passage 2: Music

Music plays an essential role in our lives. There are many types of music that we can enjoy depending on our preferences and needs. For example, classical music, pop music and jazz. Some of us like to listen to music while studying, driving, playing games and during exercise. We listen to music in our spare time to get enjoyment and to relieve stress. Listening to slow music can help to relieve stress and improve our mental and spiritual health. Listening to fast music can give us energy and motivate us to exercise or clean. I love music and listen to it throughout my day. (104 words)

Passage 3: Egg Allergy

Do you like eggs? Perhaps you enjoy scrambled eggs or eggs sunny side up every once in a while. Perhaps you would never even think of requesting one for breakfast. Whether you enjoy them or not, eggs are in many foods, from cookies to the meatloaf on your dinner table. For most people, enjoying eggs is a matter of taste and enjoyment. For someone with an egg allergy, though, eating eggs on their own or hidden in other foods can cause problems. What is an egg allergy? As with any other allergy, the body responds to something as a danger. Normally, the immune system is responding to germs. However, with an egg allergy, the immune system decides an egg is a danger. It fights the egg, or harmful invader, by using antibodies. Chemicals are released, including histamine, which acts on different parts of the body, including the eyes, nose, throat, lungs, skin, or gastrointestinal tract. (155 words)

Long Passages for the Listening Comprehension Test

Passage 1: Homeschool

Not every parent looks forward to the day when their child goes off to school. In fact some parents are not sending their students to school at all. Instead they are choosing to teach their children at home. This is called homeschooling. Parents, caregivers, or private tutors educate children individually at home instead of sending them off to be formally educated in public or private schools. In the U.S. only about three percent of children are homeschooled.



There are many reasons why some parents choose to homeschool. One reason is that some parents do not feel their children are safe in school because of bullying and a growing trend of police in school. Other parents want their child's education to be based on their religion or moral beliefs. Yet other parents feel like the education in school is not good enough. Homeschooling is also seen as a choice for families that live in rural areas, and families that travel, like actors.

There are many different ways to homeschool, and homeschooling allows parents to customize lessons based on their children's needs. Families can purchase textbooks to use or create their own materials. Some parents follow a philosophy called unschooling, which allows a child to determine when, and how they want to learn based on their natural curiosity. Some worry that homeschooling means students won't have opportunities to socialize. To answer this concern, some families have created cooperatives, where a group of homeschooled students will learn and play together and participate in activities that would normally happen in school like field trips and prom.

Being homeschooled does not mean a student cannot go to college. Most colleges accept homeschooled students. It is important, however, for parents and students to create a portfolio or proof of what has been learned as evidence of learning. (301 words)

Passage 2: Selfie

The self-portrait is nothing new. Painters and photographers have always used themselves as subjects. Today, however, almost everyone walks around with a camera in his or her pocket. This is because most cell phones have cameras on them. The fact that most people have cell phone cameras with them all the time has led to the rise of the selfie. A selfie is a self-portrait usually taken with a cell phone.

Since the pictures are usually taken on a cell phone, many people tend to share these photographs with friends and even strangers on different social networking websites. Some of the popular social networking platforms people use to share selfies include Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook.

People usually take selfies when they are engaged in normal day-to-day activities. They take selfies of their commutes to work or school. People take selfies of themselves eating. Other people take selfies to show what they are wearing or whom they are hanging out with.

The most common way to take a selfie is by holding a cell phone at arm's length. Some people take selfies by taking a picture of their reflection in a mirror. In these pictures, you can usually see the phone the person is taking a picture with. Selfies taken using a mirror often are taken in a bathroom, which some people think is offensive. The bathroom is a very private place, not a place to take pictures.

Some people think that selfies are a sign that people are becoming vain or superficial. It is not often that people take pictures of themselves that make them look bad. When people take pictures of themselves, they usually are trying to present themselves in the best light.



However, some people use selfies to show what they really look like. Some people are trying to challenge stereotypes of what makes someone attractive. (308 words)

Passage 3: Facebook

One of the most recent social changes taking place in the United States, and in the world, is social networking. Social networking in itself is not a new development. These types of groups have been in existence for at least 150 years, and probably longer than that. In the times before the invention of the personal computer, and the advent of the World Wide Web, social networking was done in person. People who had similar likes and interests would gather together to share experiences, make new contacts, and promote themselves, or their businesses.

On the Internet, social networking websites made their first appearances during the late 1990s. The first major social networking website in the United States was MySpace. MySpace was a comprehensive, social networking site that allowed its users to exchange messages, share pictures, and make new friends in a way that was never thought of in the past. With MySpace, people who did not go out much could reach out to others from the comfort of their own homes.

In 2004, Facebook was created. It was originally a website created for use by Harvard University students, graduates, and faculty, but it soon expanded to include just about everyone. Facebook is an elaborate social networking site that has grown incredibly fast. It is now larger than some of the largest companies in the world. It is a website that is in constant change. New features are added regularly. Facebook has revolutionized the way people stay connected with each other and the rest of the world. The way it works is simple. Users can set up a new account easily. All a new user needs is an email address to start. Once a person has created an account, he, or she can invite friends by sending a request out to people they know who also have their own Facebook pages. Once you get started, making new friends will come easily. (320 words)