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The Drama on Provincial Accented Speech

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Received:	Abstract
10/08/2022	This phenomenological study looked into the lived experiences of fourth-year
Accepted: 23/09/2022	students exposed to the drama of provincial accented speech. Colaizzi's descriptive approach was used in the study with the purposively chosen key informants with various tools to cross-check their responses. Results showed biases on an accent
	because the informants thought inferiority of their accent, harassment on accented
Keywords:	speech for they experience overt linguistic racism, probable accent discrimination,
English second	and accent intelligibility were some of the issues the students encountered. However,
language,	there were also feats to consider in using provincial accented speech to fellow second
Provincial	language (L2) English speakers. These were the accent sapiency and accented
accent,	speech ego and pride. Based on the study's findings, the English second language
Phenomenology.	teachers and professionals are encouraged to address these identified dramas, for
	they have a valuable role, provided they possess the knowledge and attitudes needed
	to foster acceptance of linguistic diversity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Accented speech is associated with various regional dialect variances and is frequently related to challenges of intelligibility and negative sentiments toward those who speak with an accent (Kutlu, Tiv, Wulff, & Titone, 2022). Provincial-accented speech is one area of linguistics that has been overlooked to investigate (Sethi, Rho, Vasquez & Worley, 2020). In a variety of native speakers of English research, discriminatory attitudes toward accented speakers have been found. Knowing that even native speakers of a language have problems with accented speech, the informants of this study who speak English as a second language have it far worse. Thus, this descriptive phenomenological study will focus on the experiences of the select informants from the academe concerning provincial-accented speech.

On the global scene, According to Trudgill (2006), there are two main standard varieties of the accent of English those are British English and American English. Moreover, in the study conducted by O'Cassidy (2005), Accented speech is a type of discourse in which one is born and raised and through which society observes information about one who speaks with an accent. That reflection lies in between good and negative. Accents do not merely shape the sounds of spoken words but also shade how the listener sees the speaker with the regional accent. Meanwhile, Munro (1995) asserted that accented speech is just one of the number of characteristics, along with skin colour, dress, or mannerism, that may be used to identify someone as "foreign" or "different," and that can serve as an excuse for discriminatory treatment. He added that people regard an accent itself as an undesirable characteristic, and negative attitudes toward second-language speakers with regional or provincial accents in their speech are sometimes promoted even by teachers and researchers. Moreover, Sethi et al. (2020) found that foreign-accented speakers are perceived as less credible, and having this foreign-accented speakers' credibility.

According to the study by Episcopo (2009) found that non-native speakers have biases about non-native accents of the English language. Moreover, research conducted by Love Success, a leading London employment agency, stated that having a strong accent can affect one's employability. This is because employers favour certain accents over others, with intelligence, friendliness, and trustworthiness supposedly represented by the accent. In addition, a study by ComRes and ITV found that 28% of people in the UK feel discriminated against in how they speak, while 12% have encountered accent discrimination in job interviews. The study has also found that one in five Brits has altered their accent to boost their chances of getting a job. As a result, the person who is discriminated against because of speaking with his/her regional or provincial accent is likely to have low self-worth regarding language.

In the Philippines, the diverse linguistic backgrounds of Filipinos create a challenge for English teachers and learners of English as an auxiliary language (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014). In addition, people who speak with a Standard English accent are linguistically seen through a positive lens; those whose English is accented are stigmatized. Accent discrimination affects linguistic minorities from diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, including foreign-accented English speakers (Orelus, 2020). He went on to remark who talk with a native-like English accent gained favourable sentiments, in contrast to those whose accents are more provincial.

In addition, Dimaculangan (2018) looked at attitudes toward English as *Lingua Franca* in the East Asian context and revealed that many English speakers still cling to the notion that only near-native accents are acceptable and that the quality of an English accent can only be evaluated concerning its closeness to British or American varieties. However, the most interesting part is when Jenkins (2009) sees that soon, those who occupy the top of the English language hierarchy will no longer be the native speakers of English, but internationally-competent bilingual speakers of English, who have the skills to function comfortably in multilingual communication. So, with this claim of Jenkins, it is truly heartening that provincial accented speech will be one of the accepted and appreciated varieties of English still need to note the new and changing hierarchy or trend of Englishes if they wish to participate effectively in international communication.

In light of the circumstances mentioned above, concerns about foreign-accented or provincial-accented speech are particularly prevalent in society, to a great extent, in communities where second language speakers live. Thus, this paper examines the lived experiences of the 4th-year graduating college students who encountered the drama of provincial accented speech.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This part presents a review of related literature. Concepts on language varieties are included in this section since the study deals with accents that fall under the umbrella of varieties in sociolinguistics. It follows with different views on accents in language. Accents are intertwined with different insights, so they are presented with an emphasis on negative attitudes. A representative sample of research dealing with positive insights and attitudes towards accented speech is described next. The following section offers the implications of accented speech in English Language Teaching. This chapter concludes with strong determination, highlighting this study's importance in changing stereotypes that one accent is inferior and the others are superior.

Moreover, Kachru in Kang (2015) suggested that the varieties of English worldwide are based on three circles: inner, outer, and expanding. The inner circle is countries where English is spoken as a native (first) language. The outer circle is countries where English is a second language, and the expanding circle refers to countries where English is distinguished as a foreign language. This shows that English has emerged in different varieties around the world. Thus, among the varieties of English, the standard of English is still known as British English and American English (Melchers & Shaw, 2011).

Meanwhile, there are different social classes in the Philippines, and social classes also vary in different provinces in the country. It cannot be denied that most people living in these provinces use English as a second language regardless of social class. So, it can be considered that most of these individuals belong to the outer circle variety of English, where issues regarding using this English as a target language commonly occur. In this research, it is the provincial accented speech which is highlighted.

Furthermore, the term Standard English refers to grammar and vocabulary and is described in terms of written language (dialect) but not pronunciation (accent) (Trudgill, 2000; Yule, 2006). British English is normally written and spoken by educated speakers in England. It is associated with a prestigious accent, namely RP (Received Pronunciation). On the other hand, American English is normally written and spoken by educated speakers in the United States of America and is known as GA or General America accent.

Dealing with an accent, Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2003) state that an accent refers to the characteristics of speech that convey information about the speaker's dialect, which may reveal in what country or what part of the country the speaker grows up or to which sociolinguistic group the speaker belongs, and the speech of someone who speaks a language non-natively.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher believes every region has its own regional accent. It is one of the logical evidence of the connection between individuals and regions to establish a certain language (accent). It shows that the connection between language and the speakers occur. Moreover, accent choices indicate language attitudes and speech perception (Heblich, Lameli, & Renier, 2015).

From Lippi-Green's (1997) study of the treatment of accented characters in Disney feature-length animated films, it was found that certain accents are treated as subordinates to a standard accent which cause conflict as portrayed by the characters. Lippi-Green added that the more 'negatives' a character has to deal with (gender, colour, stigmatized language, less favourable national origin), the smaller the possibilities for success in the world. Following the study of Lippi-Green, it was clear that negative attitudes toward accented speech may lead to rejection of the person's communicative burden, that is, the responsibility of mutual comprehension to ensure a successful communicative act. However, this study on provincial-accented speech concentrates on the real people who possess stereotypical traits more than the characters studied by Lippi-Green. In connection to this, it is interesting to find out if the same fate and scenarios happened to the people in the real-world setting who communicate with provincial-accented speech.

Taking everything into account, one of the important features of language variety is the accent. In linguistics, it is a distinctive mode or way of pronunciation, especially one associated with a particular nation, locality, or social class. As mentioned by the researchers, accented speech issues occur in different contexts. It is noticeable that English second language speakers experienced more issues regarding accented speech. Moreover, it is said that negative attitudes toward accented speech will take a long time to be resolved. However, there are also researches claiming positive attitudes toward accented speech can be built up with the right use of the intervention. The right intervention resulted in an acceptable discernment toward accented speech and even gave a sense of pride to one's national identity. With this, it is enthralling to find out the important role of English Language Teachers in promoting social literacy, especially in dealing with different accented speech. Positively, it is looked forward that provincial- accented will be one of the accepted varieties of World Englishes. With these researches and observations in the real world, the issues that add the drama on provincial-accented speech are still considered an important linguistic entity that needs to be addressed.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1.Research Design

The topic under investigation was explored using a descriptive phenomenological approach. This involved an in-depth one-on-one interview with the participants. This design was deemed appropriate in that it helped to reveal the experiences of the target participants regarding the study. The researcher conveyed the meaning for multiple persons of their lived encounters with a concept or a phenomenon, which can only be gathered from the accounts of individuals who have personal experience with the central phenomenon being examined (Creswell, 2013). An object of human experience is another term for this phenomenon.

3.2.Key Informants

The key informants of this study were the purposively selected fourth-year students from one of the campuses of the state university located in Bohol, Philippines. Purposive sampling was used in choosing the fourth-year students who gave the information necessary for the needs of the study (Polit & Beck, 2017). In this study, the fifteen (15) informants could study English subjects as part of the course of the degree program they had taken. The key informants were selected using the following inclusion criteria: (1) must have undergone English language courses or instruction, and (2) must be second language (L2) English speakers. Moreover, their experiences using provincial accented speech in the English language, which was the meat of this study, were considered important factors to draw different perspectives and behaviours about the study. In this study, the exclusion criteria were the unwillingness of the key informants to participate and those who do not have English subjects taken as part of their degree program.

3.3.Instruments

Since this was a phenomenological qualitative study, the main instrument was the researcher. Considering that the study involves an interview of the participants, the researcher used interview guide questions and an audio-video recorder to document all the conversation details during the interview. Aside from the audio-video recorder, the researcher also used a journal notebook as a supplementary tool in documenting the things that happened as information gathering progressed.

3.4.Data-Gathering Procedure

The researcher secured a letter of permission to conduct the study, which was addressed in the institution where the purposely selected participants were currently enrolled. A copy of the letter of permission, as well as the nature/background of the study, were given to the selected participants. In addition, the researcher reassured that the participants were voluntarily admitting themselves to undergo the said interview. The researcher requested that the interview be recorded through audio or video. The researcher used a record or a journal notebook in complement to the audio-video recorder to capture what transpired during the information collection procedures. When the interview started, the researcher used the researcher-made interview guide to get the sentiments of the key informant regarding the phenomenon studied. Finally, when the selected participants' interview was successful, the information gathered will be subjected to thematic analysis using Colaizzi's method. All gathered information is subjected to member checking for validation since the study involved an interview and a phenomenological one.

3.5.Data Analysis

This study used Colaizzi's data analysis method, deemed the most appropriate for phenomenological study in describing the informants' real-life experiences. First, all of the participants' verbatim transcripts of the phenomenon were read and re-read according to Colaizzi's seven-step data processing method. Participant transcripts extracted significant statements and terms relating to the phenomena in the second phase. The created meanings were then organized into cluster themes, which evolved into emerging themes in the fourth step. The results were blended into a detailed and exhausting description of a live experience. In the sixth step, the participants validated the full description. Finally, the researcher went back to the participants to validate and cross-check for any inconsistencies in the findings compared to their personal experience of the phenomenon. This study utilized a phenomenological method to explore the 4th-year graduating students' experiences with drama on provincial accented speech to generate a composite description of the essence of the participants' experiences.

3.6.Research Rigor

This research rigor was developed in the study to uphold qualitative inquiry principles. Trustworthiness is thought to be a more acceptable criterion for qualitative investigations. Guba and Lincoln (1989) propose that the research should meet four requirements to be trustworthy. The researcher ensures and communicates to the readers supporting proof that the results authentically speak for what was studied; transferability, the researcher bestowed detailed contextual information so that readers can ascertain whether the results are befitting to their or other situations; dependability, the researcher, describes the study process adequate detail so that the work can be repeated; confirmability, the researcher ensures and communicates to the reader supporting evidence that the results accurately represent what was studied. The researcher defined the ethics in research design, member checking, longer interaction with the informants, and one-on-one interviews of the study participants to raise the rigour and trustworthiness of this study.

3.7.Ethical Considerations

The researcher observed the basic ethical consideration in this study. Before the data was collected, the participants were informed of the study's goal, and nature and gave their informed consent. The fourth-year college students were clearly advised that their participation in the interview was voluntary and that they might choose not to finish it without facing any consequences. The key informants were also made aware of their anonymity, and the information gathered was kept totally confidential.

3.8.Member Check Validation of Findings

To preserve the trustworthiness of a study and enhance its credibility, Lincoln and Guba (2000) advocate using member checks. Member checking was an explicit data analysis component that Colaizzi (1978) refers to as a validation procedure in step seven of his phenomenological analysis. Participants were asked to review the themes and look for any discrepancies between the findings and their personal accounts of the phenomenon. All participants reported the findings and conclusions to be accurate and consistent with their personal experiences. As a result, no further investigation or modification to this study was considered necessary.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the data gathered and analyzed using Colaizzi's conceptual framework lens, supported by participant narratives. The analysis was based on the transcripts of the fifteen key informants after the researcher reached the point of data satisfaction or also known as data saturation. This relates to the degree to which new data repeat what was expressed in previous data (Morse, 1995). The data were collected from interviews with open-ended questions based on the focus of the study.

Two hundred and eighty-three significant statements were retrieved from the fifteen informants' interview transcripts. Significant statements from the informants revealed the feat and defeat of provincial accented speech, which contributed to the drama of the use of provincial accented speech. Eight formulated meanings emerged from these significant statements, yielding six emergent themes. For the defeat of provincial accented speech, these

are the following emergent themes; Biases on Accent, Harassment on Accented Speech, Probable Accent Discrimination, and Accent Intelligibility. For the feat on Provincial accented speech, these are the following emergent themes; Accent Sapiency, Accent Speech Ego, and Pride.

Formulated Meanings	Theme Clusters	Emergent Themes
• The informants have less confidence and felt shy compared to the native accent, which could affect	their regard to their own accent.	
 their use of provincial accent The informants think that American and British accents are more appropriate to use. 	• Other accents are considered standard.	Biases on accent
• Teachers preferred/favoured the use of L1 accent compared to provincial accented speech		
• The informants experienced being bullied and laughed at because of their accents.	Having an experience of derision and mockery or being bullied.	Harassment of Accented Speech
• The informants foreseen potential accent discrimination in job interviews.	Have foreseen accented speech discrimination	Probable Accent discrimination
• The informants experienced that they were not understood by the listener	Listeners having trouble understanding what they have said.	Accent Intelligibility

Table 1: Emergent Themes on the defeat of provincial accented speech

4.1.Biases on accent

In the informants' views, they experienced biases in their accents. With this, the informants thought that their accent was inferior. This is why they are self-conscious, or they hold themselves when using provincial accented speech since they believe their accent is inferior to the native accent (*American and British*), which they regard as the standard. The finding parallels the study of Chakraborty (2017), who claimed that biases against accented speech are still a problem for most L2 speakers. Because of these biases, inferiority and superiority concerning accent come to exist. Moreover, it is sad to note that even teachers influenced the students to prefer one accent over the other. This provincial accented speech issue is manifested through the informants' statements:

"Maulaw ko sa akong accent if I'll talk with my accent." (**I am shy of my** accent...) – P1 "I am not confident using my accent". - P5 "Way lami man sir ug pina provincial accent". (It's not good sir if provincial accent is used") - P6 "Akong teacher sauna sir kay gusto gyud mi nga sound like native speaker in speaking in English. (Our teacher before wanted us to sound like a native speaker...) - P4 & P10 Our teachers suggest to use American or British English. - P7

The scenarios mentioned above conformed to the assertion of Hendriks et al. (2021), which accentuated that those negative attitudes toward second-language speakers with regional or provincial accents in their speech were sometimes promoted even by teachers and researchers. This means that from the very start, teachers greatly influence the perception of the students towards provincial accented speech. Hence, some teachers and students should also be open that other accent varieties like the provincial accent also exist. Like other accents, this accent has a particular role and function in society, which must be seriously considered.

4.2.Harassment on Accented Speech

Another defeat in accented speech sensed by the informants was the harassment due to their use of a provincial accent. This implied that people in the society still need to be informed about the variety of English accents in the world and the local context. As found in Ro, (2021) study, overt linguistic racism could take the form of deliberate belittlement or shaming, such as "ethnic-accent bullying," which occurs regardless of someone's English proficiency. It can be seen that the informants experienced this situation. The evidence was reflected in two of the informants' responses.

"Kasuway gani ko sir nga gikataw-an ko sa akong ininglisan sauna kay mura kuno ug tuno sat aga cogtong". (I've had people laugh at the way I speak English because it sounds like people from Cogtong). – P3 (Cogtong - a town in the province of Bohol, the Philippines, where people have distinct accents compared to standard accent)

Furthermore, this act of harassment actually led to negative sentiments and attitudes toward those who speak English with a different accent. In general, based on the data gathered, it could be noted that non-native speakers were thought to be less trustworthy, clever, and competent. As asserted in the study of Peker (2016), foreign-accented speech bullying was a prevalent phenomenon in today's age, becoming a fear factor in the language learning process. Thence, educators and curriculum developers have the responsibility to help L2s cope with accented speech bullying in class and outside the classroom environment.

4.3. Probable Accent discrimination

The findings also revealed that the graduating students who were the respondents of this study had foreseen potential provincial accented speech discrimination. With this, they prefered to alter their accent to get hired for the job they wish to apply for without changing their accent, and there will be less percentage to be hired. This finding conformed to the study conducted by Garcia (2016), stating that people felt discriminated against in how they speak, and they had faced accent discrimination in job interviews. This situation was shown in the statements of the respondents:

"When the interview comes, I will alter my accent to sound like a native speaker for me to get hired." – P2 "Mangaplay unta ko puhon sa call center sir, pero murag dili ko madawat tungod sa akong accent". (I wish to apply in a call centre in the future, yet I have a doubt if I could be hired because of my accent). – P12

Moreover, a 2020 report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development found that 76% of employers admitted to discriminating candidates based on their accent, while only 3% recognized accent as a protected category.

4.4.Accent Intelligibility

Informants also expressed concern about being misunderstood by someone unfamiliar with the use of provincial accented speech. In this sense, native speakers or someone unfamiliar with provincial accented speech had difficulty understanding L2 speakers like the informants of this study. This finding was consistent with Munro's (2009) research, which contended that L2 accented speech was sometimes less intelligible or may require listeners to allocate more processing resources than native speech. The statements of the informants demonstrate this.

"Lisud sabton sa maminaw labi na kun mga kanang wala maenad bitaw ang maminaw sir kung mag provincial accent". (**The listeners have the difficulty in understanding our accent especial if they are not used to it**) -P13 "Ma misinterpret man gud sa maminaw if provincial accent ang gamiton sir"(**the listener misinterprets it if provincial accented speech is used**) - P15

In addition, Bresnahan et al. (2002) affirm that the listener's attitude was going to be more positive if the accented speaker was intelligible. According to the informants, they have had a bad experience with accent intelligibility since their accent has caused them to be misunderstood. With this, it could be deduced that recognizing and familiarity with specific accents and specific persons will definitely help you understand accented speech better. Further, a refusal to recognize the variations in one's communicators may sometimes be the root of an objection to accents or provincial accented speech, particularly on the grounds that they are difficult to understand rather than true concern about comprehension.

Formulated meanings	Theme cluster Having a better understanding on the statements uttered both speakers and listeners	<i>Emergent theme</i> Accent sapiency
• The informants have a better understanding when speaking to fellow L2 speakers using the		
 provincial accented speech The informants develop a sense of pride in being a Filipino when using the provincial accented speech 	Develop a sense of pride in one's own accent as the identity of being a Filipino	Accented speech ego and pride

Table 1.1: Emergent Themes on the feat of provincial accented speech

4.5.Accent Sapiency

There are also feats to celebrate concerning provincial accented speech. One of these was accent sapiency. In this occurrence, the informants had formed a positive attitude about provincial accented speech since they had found it easier to communicate and understand. This kind of aspect was far beyond the understanding of a certain language. Furthermore, this referred to the emotional connection between L2 speakers in which they both loved to speak with an accent, for they felt comfortable using such. This implied that language connects to the hearts of other L2 speakers who had shared the same accent in the English language. This is manifested in the informants' responses during the interview:

"I can understand better when the provincial accent is used by both speaker and listener" – P10 and P2

"Understanding the message is more important than sounding like a native speaker." "Mas okay nako if provincial accent ang gamiton sir, dili tong pina native speaker gyud oy kay dali ra gyud masabtan."(It is much okay for me sir if the provincial accent is not with the native-like accent because it is easier for us to understand) -P11

Although this finding contrasts with the study of Dimaculangan (2018) and Li (2019), stating that people encountered a problem with the level of comprehensiveness related to accented speech. However, the study of Tonio (2019) claimed that the Philippine English accent or provincial accented speech had a high level of sapiency to students who speak with the same accent. Moreover, it was also supported by the statement from QQEnglish, an English Second Language School in the Philippines, that the Filipino English accent was truly more friendly and comprehensible than other English accents heard in Asia or Europe.

4.6.Accented speech ego and pride

Another feat found in the study was the accented speech ego and pride. In this, the participants had developed a sense of ego and pride in using provincial accented speech, which they noted as their phonological-cultural identity as English L2 speakers. This finding relates to Tananuraksakul's (2017) study, which states that having an accented speech could be the reason to be proud of one's uniqueness in the use of language. This insinuated that there was a need to promote positive attitudes toward own's English accent to influence social behaviors or social literacy and language learning positively. This was shown in the informants' statements:

"Mao man gyud ni atong sinultian, dapat proud ta kay pinoy man ta, mao ni atong identity"(**This is the way we talk, we should be proud of it because we are Filipino, this is our identity)-** P1

The results of the interview conducted in No and Park's study demonstrate that respondents were aware that the proliferation of English worldwide had modified the concept of the native speaker and the entitlement to English. Respondents also acknowledged that language and culture are inextricably linked. Therefore, it was proposed that the term "glocalized or global-local English speech" be used instead of "native English speech" to highlight the uncertain nature of English speakers properly. Indeed, their findings were staging the same sentiments of the study's informants.

5. CONCLUSION

Considering the communication and linguistic fields' efforts to educate people about the variety of Englishes used around the world, fourth-year still experienced issues on the usage of provincial accented speech. Biases on accent, harassment on accented speech, probable accent discrimination, and accent intelligibility were some of the issues and challenges they encountered. However, there were also feats to consider when it comes to the use of provincial accented speech to fellow L2 English speakers. These were the accent sapiency and accented speech ego and pride. Concerning the drama on provincial accented speech, which included its defeat and feat, the academe, especially the English second language teachers, are encouraged to address these identified dramas. Here, ESL teachers may have to offer a valuable role, provided they possess the knowledge and attitudes needed to foster acceptance of linguistic diversity.

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