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# **The competence and warmth of Thai students' attitudes towards varieties of English: the effect of gender and perceptions of L1 diversity**

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Previous language attitude research indicates that presenting speech forms allows listeners to index information about and attach social meaning to the perceived group(s) of speakers. Despite the volume of research undertaken elsewhere in Asia, there appear to be no in-depth studies investigating Thai nationals' evaluations of specific varieties of English speech. This large-scale study examines 204 Thai university students' attitudes towards forms of UK, US, Japanese, Chinese, Thai and Indian English, provided by highly proficient female speakers. The study also examines the extent to which Thai students' perceptions of linguistic diversity in their L1 and their gender affect their attitudes. Multivariate analysis demonstrated UK, US and Thai English speech was ranked significantly higher than other Asian forms of English, for competence and warmth, attitudinal dimensions consistent with recent findings in social cognition. Further analysis indicated females and those most positive towards L1 variation expressed significantly higher levels of ingroup loyalty towards Thai English speakers. The findings are compared and contrasted with the results of equivalent studies undertaken in other Asian contexts and, given recent cutting-edge research in social cognition confirming the primacy of warmth judgements, calls for language attitude researchers to consider speaker warmth ratings more fully in future studies.

## **Introduction**

### ***The sociolinguistics of English in Thailand***

Thailand, unlike its neighbouring South-East Asian nations, was never colonised by a western power, despite the large US presence during the Indochina War. Nevertheless, the first contact with the English language dates as far back as the reign of King Nang Klao (Rama III) (1824-1851). The specific focus on English was a deliberate decision since it was seen as a valuable resource to gain access to 'western technology' and, in turn, as a means to *avoid* colonisation. The use of English during this period was, however, largely restricted to the nobility and it was not until 1921 that the language was introduced into the School Curriculum for learners at grade 4 and above (above the ages of 9-10) (see Foley, 2005). In 1996, English was designated a compulsory subject from Grade 1 at state schools, whilst other foreign languages remained optional. As a result of governmental recognition of the exponential growth of the use of English in trade, tourism and science, the language is also a required component of the national entrance examination for public universities in Thailand. Outwith the formal school system, large numbers of Thai nationals study English at private

language schools and a thriving English language teaching industry exists. The 2009 decision, taken by The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Thailand is a founding member, to formalise the use of English as the official working language of the group from 2015 onwards, has increased awareness amongst Thai politicians, policy makers, business leaders and the general public of the importance of being able to communicate in the English language. English has a growing presence in the linguistic landscape of both urban and rural Thailand, most noticeably regarding the dual use of English and Thai script in street signs, shop signs, advertising billboards and consumer products. The English language continues to have a prominent role in the Thai media. Thai-based daily English language newspapers, most notably the broadsheets *The Bangkok Post* (founded 1946) and *The Nation* (founded 1971), are widely available in the major cities and tourist areas of the country and accessible free of charge on the internet. Both titles have a reputation for quality and a relative lack of political bias and as such, are read by many Thais as well as foreign nationals. Since 1955, Thais have been able to watch newscasts and English language films, mainly from the USA, with Thai subtitles (Masavisut, Sukwiwat and Wongmontha, 1986). Through satellite and cable television, access to overseas English language channels from Europe, North America and elsewhere in Asia is also increasing. Of course, electronic communication and access to the internet allow Thais to interact with other L1 and L2 English language users throughout the world, in both written and spoken English.

Thai nationals studying at higher educational institutions in Thailand have especially extensive opportunities to interact with users of English from outwith the country. This is principally because growing numbers of overseas students come to study at universities in Thailand, mainly from other Asian nations. The most recently available government statistics, for 2012, indicate that 40.97% of overseas students come from China, with much lower numbers from Myanmar (7.05%), Japan (2.17%) and the USA (4.39%) (Office of the Higher Education Committee, 2013). Overseas students are often attracted by the chance to study an ever-expanding range of ‘international programs’ taught in the medium of English, in a country with a growing reputation in Asia for the quality of its higher education (Lavankura, 2013). It is notable that the image of Thailand as a prestigious ‘regional higher education hub’ for international students has been promoted by the Thai media (e.g., Phetdee, 2009), the Thai government (see Lavankura, 2013) and the universities themselves (Kanvong, Chantaroagwong and Sotthibandhu, 2014). In recent years many universities in Thailand have signed multiple memorandums with overseas universities for research and teaching co-operation involving, for instance, reciprocal study-abroad programs for students as well as opportunities for staff exchange between the participating institutions. In 2014, the greatest percentage of collaborations were with universities in China (35%), the United States (17%), the UK (9%) and Japan (7%) (Kanvong *et al.*, 2014). In light of the above, it seems evident that greater numbers of Thai nationals, and Thai university students in particular, are exposed to different varieties of English, both native and non-native, and especially spoken English, for longer and longer periods of time.

Whilst it is worth bearing in mind that it presently remains impractical to categorise ‘Thai English’ as a single homogenous variety of the language, there exists a specific tendency amongst many L1 Thai speakers to assign tone to their English speech. It is also notable that the specific forms of English spoken by L1 speakers of Thai do seem to share both certain communalities with and stands distinct from forms of English spoken elsewhere in South/South-East Asia. In the case of the former, there is evidence to suggest that the English spoken by Thai speakers frequently exhibits characteristics typically associated with other South-East Asian forms of English, such as the English spoken in Brunei (Salbrina, 2006) and in Singapore (Deterding and Kirkpatrick, 2006). This is particularly the case in

relation to the monophthongisation of [er] and [oo], i.e., a tendency amongst speakers in South-East Asia towards less formant movement when compared to the manner in which these two diphthongs are produced by speakers of English in the UK, the US or Australia (see Tsukada, 2008; Trakulkasemsuk, 2012). In contrast, research has also indicated that the uniform stress-timed rhythm often employed by Thai speakers of English, largely as a result of the transfer of rhythmic characteristics found in Thai, diverges from the overly syllable-timed rhythms found amongst speakers of English in Singapore and India (Sarmah, Gogoi and Wilshire, 2009).

### ***Social judgments of linguistic variation in L2 English-speaking contexts***

Lay attitudes towards language and language varieties are important because the findings of folklinguistic research, conducted by sociolinguistics and social psychologists, strongly indicate that attitudes towards specific speech varieties reflect social evaluations of the perceived (communities of) speakers of the varieties under consideration, i.e., where combinations of specific lexical, morphosyntactic and phonological features employed in different speech forms allow listeners, whether correctly or incorrectly, to index information about and attach social meaning to the perceived speakers (see also Silverstein, 2003).

Historically, the great majority of language attitude research into diversity in English has been conducted amongst L1 speakers of the language. Analysis of the data collected in language attitude research conducted within L1 English-speaking contexts has tended to uncover two complex, and often contradictory, underlying evaluations: *status* and *solidarity/social attractiveness*. In particular, it has been demonstrated that speakers of varieties perceived as standard tend to be rated highly in terms of status (traits such as intelligence and education) whereas speakers of varieties perceived as non-standard are generally evaluated more favourably in terms of solidarity (traits such as honesty and friendliness). The distinctions made between perceptions of standard and non-standard forms of spoken English have been demonstrated in a large number of studies in L1 English-speaking countries, whether through the presentation of speech samples or involving other sociolinguistic instruments, including: Australia (Bradley and Bradley, 2001); England (McKenzie, in press); New Zealand (Bayard *et al.*, 2001); Republic of Ireland (Edwards, 1977); Scotland (Cheyne, 1970); the USA (Fought, 2002); Wales (Garrett, 2010); and the UK more widely (Coupland and Bishop, 2007).

There also exist more recent studies examining L2 English users' social evaluations of different forms of the language. Much of this research has been conducted amongst university students in Japan (see McKenzie, 2008a, 2010; McKenzie and Gilmore, 2015 early view; Cargile, Takai and Rodriguez, 2006; Sasayama, 2013) and the results again point to the differentiation of language attitudes within status and social attractiveness dimensions. Taken together, the findings of these studies have revealed that Japanese users tend to evaluate L1 English varieties, and especially forms of English spoken in the US, most positively in terms of status. In contrast, whilst there is some evidence that Japanese students express solidarity towards speakers identifiable as Japanese (McKenzie, 2008b), the English speech of nationals from other areas of Asia, including China, India and Thailand, tend to be downgraded on both status and solidarity traits (McKenzie and Gilmore, 2015 early view). In other East Asian contexts, the results of recent research examining evaluations of Chinese and Korean students towards specific forms of English have indicated that UK and US varieties were rated significantly more highly in terms of status, but not necessarily solidarity, than either 'local' Chinese or Korean English speech forms (Xu, Wand and Case, 2010; Yook and Lindemann, 2013).

Interestingly, the dual factors of status and solidarity/social attractiveness found in prior language attitude studies seem to broadly reflect the universal attitudinal dimensions of social cognition: *competence* (related to perceived ability and efficacy) and *warmth* (related to perceived friendliness and trustworthiness) (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick, 2008; Fiske, Cuddy and Glick, 2006). The primacy of these two content dimensions has been firmly established by the results of numerous studies, conducted by social psychologists, examining individuals' judgments of a range of other social groups within society, including differences in gender (e.g., Abele, 2003), race (e.g., Fiske *et al.*, 2002), ethnicity (e.g., Kenworthy and Nicole, 2008), age (Cuddy, Norton and Fiske, 2005), and nationality (e.g., Kervyn *et al.*, 2008). More specifically, there is considerable empirical evidence suggesting that groups of individuals perceived as both warm and competent elicit consistently positive emotions from participant judges (e.g., nurses) whilst those groups perceived as low in both dimensions elicit uniform negativity and (frequently) contempt (e.g., welfare recipients). Moreover, groups of individuals evaluated negatively on one dimension but positively on the other, i.e., competent but cold (such as successful groups of immigrants), or incompetent but warm (such as the elderly), elicit predictable but ambivalent emotions and behavioural responses (for a more in-depth discussion see Fiske *et al.*, 2006; Fiske *et al.*, 2002). Given the wealth of empirical attitude research confirming the apparent primacy and universality of competence and warmth as fundamental dimensions of human social perception (Fiske *et al.*, 2006), and the often compensatory patterns of evaluations uncovered by researchers, i.e., where groups rated high in competence are frequently rated low in warmth and vice versa (see Yzerbyt, Provost and Corneille, 2005; Kervyn *et al.*, 2008), in order to better determine the precise role which *linguistic* differences can play in social evaluation, it would be of value for the data obtained in *language* attitude studies to be interpreted more fully within the competence-warmth paradigm.

A few language attitude studies, involving both L1 and L2 users of the language in question, have also measured the extent to which individual differences can account for variations in listener attitudes. Such analyses can help indicate the direction of any attitude change in progress led by particular subsections of the population. Prior research has indicated that participant gender may be an influential factor. Coupland and Bishop (2007), for instance, found UK females were significantly more positive than males towards the prestige and social attractiveness of a number of regional varieties of English and speculated that there may be an attitude change in progress, led by females, towards greater tolerance of more localised forms of English spoken in the UK. In Japan, McKenzie (2010) also found female participants' ratings for the social attractiveness of standard and non-standard US and Scottish English speech, although not Japanese English, were significantly more favourable when compared to males. McKenzie attributed the female preference for native English varieties to the feminisation of language education in Japan and, in turn, to gender-specific opportunities for social and career advancement for Japanese females through the acquisition and use of native-like English. McKenzie (*ibid*) called for similar research to be conducted in other Asian contexts. Given the traditional economic and social segregation of the genders in Thailand (Keyes, 1984), which largely persists in rural areas to the present day, as well as the considerable differences between male and female language use in all varieties of Thai (Prasithratsint, 1989, Smalley, 1994), it would be interesting to examine gender as a potential determinant of Thai attitudes towards specific varieties of English.

A further recently examined variable, 'perceptions of linguistic diversity' has been found to influence status and solidarity ratings of the English speech of UK nationals, with those most open to sociolinguistic diversity significantly more positive towards a range of varieties of the language (Coupland and Bishop, 2007; McKenzie, *in press*). McKenzie

(2008a) also operationalised the variable for use in an attitude study involving L2 users of English in Japan. Analysis demonstrated a significant effect for differences in ‘perceptions of diversity in L1’ (in this case, social and regional variation in the Japanese language), with a clear tendency for participants with less sociolinguistic awareness of diversity in Japanese to show lower levels of solidarity towards Japanese English speakers. In light of these results, there have been calls to extend the investigation of this variable by incorporating measures of perceptions of linguistic diversity into the design of language attitude studies conducted in other contexts and amongst different populations (Garrett, 2010; McKenzie, 2010). In the specific case of Thailand, the presence of regional differences within Thai speech, unlike the use of Malay in the southern provinces, is not generally considered a cause of disunity for Thais and there is evidence to suggest that both male and female Thai nationals’ attitudes towards regional variation in Thai are generally favourable (Smalley, 1994; Huebner, 2006). However, at present, it is not known whether and, if so, to what extent the broadly positive perceptions which Thai nationals appear to hold of standard and non-standard varieties of the Thai language influence any attitudes they may hold towards social and regional variation within the English language.

Whilst sociolinguistic research within the Thai context more broadly is still in its infancy and much remains to be done (Bradley, 2010), given the volume of recent studies measuring social evaluations of variation in the English language elsewhere in Asia, it is perhaps surprising that there does not appear to be any in-depth research investigating Thai nationals’ folklinguistic perceptions of specific varieties of English. This is especially the case considering many Thai nationals, and Thai university students in particular, are increasingly exposed to different L1 and L2 English speech forms (see above). Thus, to extend and allow comparison and contrast with the findings of previous similar research examining perceptions of English language diversity conducted in other domains, especially within Asia, as well as to help address the general paucity of sociolinguistic research on linguistic variation in Thailand more generally, the present study investigated Thai university students’ attitudes towards different varieties of English spoken in the US, the UK, Thailand and elsewhere Asia. A further objective was to determine the extent to which the attitudinal dimensions of status and solidarity, and competence and warmth, uncovered in prior (language) attitude studies, also frame Thai university students’ social evaluations of English language variation. The study also examined the effect of Thai participants’ gender as well as their perceptions of linguistic diversity in the Thai language upon their attitudes towards social and regional variation in English, thus allowing for the examination of whether any changes in language attitudes are underway, led by particular subsections of the population.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The sample was composed of 204 undergraduate and postgraduate students from two universities in Thailand: a high-ranking university situated in the city of Phitsanulok in central Thailand and a *Rajabhat* university (i.e., former teacher-training college), located in Sakon Nakhon, a semi-rural area in north-east Thailand. Sixty-two males and one hundred and forty-two females took part in the study (mean age=19.49 years,  $SD=1.78$ ), similar to the gender imbalance found throughout higher educational establishments in Thailand (Grubbs, Chaengploy and Worawong, 2009). All participants had studied the language for a minimum of 15 years at school as a compulsory subject and, at the time of the data collection, all were studying English alongside other subjects.

## ***Instruments***

The verbal-guise technique (VGT) was chosen as a method of language attitude measurement. The technique involves presenting listeners with speech stimuli, comprising samples of natural, spontaneous speech provided by a series of different speakers of the varieties in question. Following Clark and Schlee (2010) and McKenzie and Gilmore (2015 early view), as a means to capture a more subtle measurement of participant judgements than those achieved on more traditional 5 or 7-point scales employed in much of the previous language attitude research, the listeners in the present study were requested to rate the speakers on a number of bi-polar personality traits by placing an ‘x’ at a specific position along an 80-point semantic-differential scale (see also Bard, Robertson and Sorace, 1996). Moreover, to allow for a valid comparison with the findings of similar prior research conducted amongst other Asian university students, the traits employed in McKenzie’s (2008b, 2010) Japanese study were used to construct the semantic-differential scale in the present study. To avoid any left-right bias in participant responses (Oppenheim, 1992), the positive traits were randomly positioned sometimes on the left and sometimes on the right of the scale.

pleasant	.....	not pleasant
not clear	.....	clear
confident	.....	not confident
modest	.....	not modest
dishonest	.....	honest
clever	.....	not clever
not gentle	.....	gentle
not fluent	.....	fluent

**Figure 1.** Verbal-guise semantic-differential scale

Recordings were made of the 7 female speakers completing a map-task, i.e., each gave directions on the same fictitious map (see Appendix 1), thus controlling for potentially extraneous variables such as passage content and avoiding the possible disclosure of any information regarding speaker age, socio-economic status, nationality or regional provenance. In a pilot study, each of the seven samples were judged, from a larger database of speech recordings, as most representative of the English varieties under consideration (see description of each speech sample below) by means of a focus group comprising three or more users of the form of English in question (see also McKenzie, in press).

Again, to enable valid comparison and contrast with the results of similar attitudinal studies conducted in Japan, the same seven spontaneous speech samples employed in McKenzie and Gilmore’s (2015 early view) recent language attitude study involving Japanese university students were utilised as stimulus in the present study, i.e., provided by the same seven individual female speakers of the forms of English in question (mean speaker age=26.2 years, mean sample length=64.51 seconds, excluding pauses). It would have been useful to have included a greater number of English speech forms as stimulus, and especially more examples of English spoken in the ASEAN region. However, it was clear that if too many recordings were presented, listener-fatigue may compromise the validity of the data collected (see McKenzie, 2010). Further speaker information, together with descriptions of salient phonological features, and to a lesser extent other linguistic features, evident in each of the samples included in the study are detailed below. To provide a measure of subjective speaker fluency more accurate than mere speech rates, following Jacewicz, Fox, O’Neill and

Salmons (2009), articulation rates (detailed in syllables per minute) were also calculated for each of the speech samples (mean articulation rate=205.55 syllables/minute).

**Scottish Standard English (SSE)** Female, 30 years old from Glasgow. L1 English speaker. 224.56 syllables/minute. The speaker employs a number of phonological features characteristic of Scottish Standard English, including a lack of phonemic distinction between /ʊ/ and /u:/ and between /w/ and [ʍ], e.g., in ‘wee’ and ‘which’. Indexical of Scottish English speech in the UK, vowels followed by /r/ are always rhoticised, e.g., in ‘church’, ‘north’ and ‘sharply’. The sample also includes the (standard) Scottish lexical items ‘wee’ and ‘kink’.

**Southern United States English.** Female, 24 years old from Montgomery, Alabama. L1 English speaker. 203.65 syllables/minute. The speech sample includes linguistic features associated with ‘the southern drawl’, including the monophthongisation of /ai/ as [ɑ:], e.g., in ‘side’, retroflexion of ‘r’ realised as [ɹ], e.g., in ‘right’, as well as the realisation of /e/ as [ejə], e.g., in ‘bend’ (a process known as *breaking*, see Trudgill and Hannah, 2008).

**Mid-West (Standard) United States English.** Female, 34 years old from Iowa. L1 English speaker. 231.24 syllables/minute. The speech contains features typical of ‘General American English’, i.e., without regional characteristics. These include the realisation of /ɪ/, e.g., in ‘reach’, ‘straight’ and ‘factory’, no phonemic distinction between /w/ and /ʍ/, e.g., in ‘when’ as well as lax /æ/, e.g., in ‘after’ and ‘pass’. In addition, use of US English lexis ‘gonna’ and ‘jog to the left’.

**Thai English** Female, 25 years old from Chiang Rai, Thailand. L1 Thai speaker. 178.11 syllables/minute. Similar to many Thai users of English, the speaker tends to assign tone to individual syllables (see also above). Moreover, /ð/ is realised as [d] in word initial position, e.g., in ‘the’, ‘this’, and ‘that’, /v/ is realised as [w] in word initial position, e.g., in ‘volcano’ and is deleted in word final position, e.g., in ‘five’ and /nd/ is realised as [w] in word final position, e.g., in ‘around’. In addition, vowels in unstressed words are frequently stressed rather than replaced by a schwa, e.g., in ‘to’.

**Japanese English.** Female, 33 years old from Hyogo, Japan. L1 Japanese speaker. 171.39 syllables/minute. Frequent use of ‘please’ at the end of the sentence (five instances) (see also McKenzie, 2015). Other noticeable features include /ð/ realised as [d] in word initial position, e.g., in ‘the’, ‘that’ and ‘there’, a lack of phonemic distinction between /l/ and /r/, e.g., in ‘right’, ‘left’ and ‘straight’ and /d/ realised as [t] in word final position, e.g., in ‘side’. The primary stress is also frequently shifted to the first syllable, e.g., /vɒlˈkheɪ.nəʊ/ is realised as [ˈwo.khe.no].

**Chinese English.** Female, 24 years old from Xi’an, China. L1 Mandarin Chinese speaker. 207.83 syllables/minute. Distinguishable overall tonal rhythm of the speech. /ð/ is realised as [d], in word initial position, e.g., in ‘the’, ‘there’ and ‘that’, and several final consonants are deleted, e.g., /t/ in ‘short’ and /d/ in ‘road’.

**Indian English.** Female, 27 years old from Tamil Nadu, South India. L1 Tamil speaker. 242.97 syllables/minute. The sample exhibits a syllable-timed rhythm, typical of Indian English speech. Moreover, /tʃ/ is realised as [s] in initial word position, e.g., in ‘church’, /tʰ/ is realised as [t] in syllable initial position, e.g., in ‘take’, ‘mountain’, ‘hospital’ and ‘turn’ and /ð/ is realised as [d] in word initial position, e.g., in ‘the’.

To assess the potential influence of participant perceptions of sociolinguistic diversity in the Thai language upon English speaker evaluations, following Coupland and Bishop (2007) and McKenzie (2008a), the same 204 participants were asked to respond to the statement ‘I like



to hear varieties of Thai different from standard Thai', again on an 80 point scale (see Figure 2. below). Participants were also requested to indicate their gender.

I like to hear varieties of Thai different from standard Thai

yes ..... no

**Figure 2.** Measurement of perception of linguistic diversity in Thai

### ***Procedure***

Data was collected amongst participants in groups of 16 to 38 within lecture theatres at the two participating universities. To control for order effects, the speech stimulus employed in the verbal-guise study was played, through a high quality sound system to each whole group of participants, in three different randomised sequences. To contextualise the speech, participants were informed that each of the speakers was giving directions on a map. They were permitted to hear the speech samples once only.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Preliminary Analysis***

To investigate the potential existence of distinct attitudinal components within participants' mean ratings of the speech stimuli, Exploratory Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was performed on the 8 traits, revealing a two-factor extraction model with eigen values greater than 1.0, responsible for 54.4% of the variance. The loading of these two non-overlapping components mirrors the reliably differentiated attitudinal dimensions uncovered in prior (language) attitude studies and were thus interpreted as *competence* (clever, confident, fluent and clear) (26.5% of the variance) and *warmth* (modest, honest, gentle) (27.9% of the variance). The pleasant trait loaded strongly onto both dimensions and was thus suppressed (see Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013).

### ***Speaker Evaluations***

*Competence:* A one-way repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant difference between the mean ratings for the speakers  $F(6, 198)=108.3, p<0.001 (p=0.000), \eta^2=0.766$ . As detailed in Table 1 below, further post-hoc analysis, involving Bonferroni comparisons, demonstrated that all three L1 English varieties included for evaluation were ranked significantly more positively by the Thai students in comparison with the three forms of Asian English spoken outwith Thailand. As discussed above, similar positive ratings have been found amongst university students in Japan and China and are likely to reflect perceptions of UK and US English speech as 'correct English' more broadly, regardless of whether they are categorised as standard or non-standard forms within those speech communities in the UK and the US.

However, the analysis also indicated a comparatively high-ranking for the competence of Thai English speech, rated broadly similarly to all 3 varieties of US and UK English presented, and significantly more positively in comparison with the other 3 forms of Asian English speech. This finding is perhaps surprising given the results of equivalent studies undertaken in Japan (McKenzie, 2008a, 2010; Tokumoto and Shibata, 2011), China (Xu *et al.*, 2010), South Korea (Yook and Lindemann, 2013) and Oman (Buckingham, 2015) where university students were repeatedly found to rate the status of their own forms of English significantly less positively than L1 English speech, though in some cases again

significantly more favourably than Chinese and Indian English (McKenzie and Gilmore, 2015 early view).

**Table 1.** Mean evaluations (and standard deviations) for SPEAKER COMPETENCE ( $N=204$ ) (1=most negative rating, 80= most positive rating)

Speaker	
* Southern US	57.64 (12.67)
* Thai	54.11 (15.16)
* Scottish Standard	49.82 (19.80)
* Mid-West Standard US	47.03 (17.51)
** China	41.68 (15.22)
Japan	31.16 (15.23)
India	28.47 (14.26)

\* Indicates statistically more positive ratings for speaker when compared with ratings for the Japanese and Indian speakers ( $p<0.001$ ) and the Chinese speaker ( $p<0.05$ )

\*\* Indicates statistically more positive ratings for speaker when compared with ratings for Japanese and Indian speakers only ( $p<0.001$ )

*Warmth:* A further one-way repeated measures ANOVA again indicated a significant overall difference  $F(6, 198) = 16.52, p<0.001$  ( $p=0.000$ ),  $\eta^2=0.334$ . Post-hoc analysis, detailed in Table 2, again demonstrated comparatively favourable warmth ratings for the Thai English speaker, and significantly higher than the Indian, Japanese, Mid-West US and Chinese speakers. As discussed above, this result is perhaps unsurprising considering the findings of prior research investigating attitudes towards a range of stimuli, including linguistic diversity, and across different cultural settings, have generally demonstrated high levels of solidarity expressed towards the participants' ingroup (see Fiske and Cuddy, 2005). In contrast, the significantly less favourable warmth shown towards the English speech of the Indian, Japanese and Chinese speakers strongly suggests Thai students do not identify with Asian speakers of English from outwith their own country. When the ratings for the three L1 English speakers were compared, the speaker of standard United States English (Mid-West US English) was evaluated much less positively. This finding is broadly compatible with the results of previous language attitude research undertaken amongst listeners from the US (Buck, 1968), Japan (Cargile, Takai and Rodriguez, 2006; McKenzie, 2010) and Malaysia/Indonesia (Tan and Castelli, 2013), who also downgraded speakers of standard US English on warmth/solidarity traits.

**Table 2.** Mean evaluations (and standard deviations) for SPEAKER WARMTH ( $N=204$ ) (1=most negative rating, 80= most positive rating)

Speaker	
* Southern US	53.51 (13.32)
* Thai	52.42 (12.97)
** Scottish Standard	50.53 (13.23)
India	47.36 (15.95)
Japan	46.92 (15.18)
Mid-West Standard US	46.22 (18.65)
China	42.97 (15.17)

\* Indicates statistically more positive ratings for speaker when compared with ratings for Indian, Japanese, Mid-West US and Chinese speakers ( $p<0.001$ )

\*\* Indicates statistically more positive ratings for speaker when compared with ratings for Chinese speaker ( $p<0.001$ )

### ***Within-participant comparisons: The effects of gender and perceptions of L1 diversity on speaker evaluations***

#### *Perceptions of linguistic diversity in Thai speech*

Despite the standardising influence of The Royal Institute (i.e., the Thai language academy involved in language planning and policy), participant perceptions of Thai language diversity, again on an 80-point scale (see Figure 2 above), were generally very positive (mean=57.99,  $SD=22.27$ ). This result provides further, up to date evidence for the broad positivity of Thai nationals' evaluations of spoken variation in their L1 found in prior studies (see above). In the case of the present study, it thus proved somewhat difficult to make a clear differentiation between positive and negative evaluations. A decision was taken, on the scale of 80 as the most favourable and 1 as the least favourable, to classify the most positive ratings as those of 69 or higher ( $n=109$ ) and less positive ratings as 68 or lower ( $n=95$ ).

Initial inspection of the mean ratings revealed no discernible overall pattern for the effect of perceptions of L1 diversity upon attitudes towards the 7 forms of English speech. It was noticeable however, on both competence and warmth dimensions, that the group of participants who were most positive towards variation in Thai (competence mean=54.33,  $SD=16.61$ ; warmth mean=54.67,  $SD=12.97$ ) were most favourable towards Thai English when compared to the group of participants who were less positive (competence mean=53.91,  $SD=14.32$ ; warmth mean=50.46,  $SD=12.71$ ). One-way between-groups MANOVAs demonstrated the only significant main effect related to attitudes towards variation in Thai on the *warmth* ratings for the Thai speaker  $F(1, 202) = 5.48, p<0.05$  ( $p=0.02$ ),  $\eta^2=0.026$ . That is to say, the analysis demonstrated that Thai nationals who were most favourable towards variation in their L1 expressed greater solidarity with speakers of Thai English. This echoes the results of similar prior research undertaken in Japan (McKenzie, 2008a) and the UK (Coupland and Bishop, 2007), where those participants who held the most positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity more broadly were also found to express the greatest levels of ingroup loyalty towards speakers of their own forms of English.

#### *Gender*

Preliminary examination of the mean ratings by gender demonstrated that females were generally more positive towards the speech varieties when compared to males for both competence (besides Mid-West US English and Indian English) and warmth (except Indian English). Further fine-grained inferential analysis, involving one-way between-groups MANOVAs indicated the only significant main effect related to gender ratings for the *warmth* of the Thai speaker  $F(1, 202) = 8.28, p < 0.05$  ( $p = 0.004$ ),  $\eta^2 = 0.039$ , with female evaluations (mean = 54.12,  $SD = 12.67$ ) significantly more favourable than those of males (mean = 48.53,  $SD = 13.05$ ). The possibility exists that the differences may result from a greater tendency for females to prioritise warmth over competence dimensions in social cognition more broadly (see Abele, 2003). Nevertheless, this finding is particularly interesting because whilst it is perhaps unremarkable that Thai-born females would express especially high levels of ingroup loyalty with native female speakers of the Thai language, it indicates that the effect is extended to Thai females speaking in an L2 (i.e., English).

### *Interaction Effects*

Further two-way ANOVAs demonstrated that the interaction between gender (X 2) and attitudes towards variation in L1 (X 2) on evaluations of the warmth of the Thai English speaker was not significant  $F(1, 200) = 0.20, p > 0.05$  ( $p = 0.887$ ),  $\eta^2 = 0.000$ , thus providing greater external validity regarding the main effects found for perceptions of linguistic diversity in L1 and gender upon the warmth ratings for the Thai English speaker.

## **General Discussion and Conclusion**

Given the dearth of existing studies examining the sociolinguistics of English in Thailand, the present study investigated Thai students' attitudes towards specific forms of English spoken in the UK, US, Thailand and other areas of Asia. Analysis revealed significant differences in attitudes towards the 7 English speech forms presented for evaluation on non-overlapping dimensions of competence and warmth, reflecting universal categories of social judgment uncovered by researchers working in the fields of social psychology and social cognition.

The Thai students rated all three UK and US speakers of English highly in terms of competence. As discussed above, this finding is broadly compatible with the results of studies conducted in other Asian contexts, where L1 speakers of both standard and non-standard varieties of English speakers were also evaluated most positively. Whilst high levels of warmth were expressed towards the speakers of Scottish English and Southern English, the speaker of the standard US form of English was rated less favourably - a pattern consistent with the judgements of English language users from other areas of Asia (Cargile *et al.*, 2006; Tan and Castelli, 2013) - perhaps indicating that Thai students hold ambivalent attitudes towards the dominant political and economic influence which speakers of standard forms of US English hold both within Thailand and in other Asian countries (see McKenzie, 2010).

The Chinese, Indian and Japanese speakers of English were downgraded on both competence and warmth dimensions, indicating uniform negativity and, in turn, perhaps suggesting some degree of prejudice (Fiske *et al.*, 2002) against these groups more broadly. These negative evaluations were found despite the presence of large (Thai-speaking) Chinese and Indian communities in the major cities in Thailand (Kosonen and Person, 2014), especially in Bangkok (Peleggi, 2007), and indeed there is some historical evidence of negative stereotyping of Chinese and South Asians more broadly within Thai society (see Basham, 2001 and Mani, 2006 for a more detailed discussion). Likewise, the presence of large numbers of high-ranking, English-speaking Japanese staff working in the many Japanese companies in Thailand as well as the widespread and frequent transmission of

Japanese popular music (J-Pop) on Thai radio and television channels, the lyrics of which generally contain an interesting linguistic hybrid of Japanese and Japanese English (Moody, 2006; McKenzie, 2008c), again did not result in positive ratings for the Japanese speaker of English.

The low competence and warmth ratings found for the English speech of the individuals from other areas of Asia included in the study are perhaps particularly relevant considering the increasing numbers of Asian visitors to Thailand, the majority of whom are likely to employ their own forms of English to communicate with Thais as well as, from 2015, the use of English as the sole working language of communication between all ASEAN members, and again presumably involving interaction between speakers of different forms of Asian English. For this reason, in future equivalent studies it would be interesting to measure Thai nationals' attitudes towards speakers of English from other ASEAN nations, such as Singapore, Vietnam and Malaysia. To minimise for potentially confounding variables, a deliberate decision was made to present speech stimulus provided by relatively young, female speakers of English who were highly proficient in the language. Clearly, in order to confirm (or not) the findings obtained in the present study it would be desirable to include English speakers of different ages, genders and levels of English proficiency in future research investigating the language attitudes of Thai nationals. Likewise, given the differences found between the articulation rates of the speech samples employed in this study, it would also be worthwhile to investigate any potential effect which articulation rates may have upon listener attitudes to speech.

Since Thai-born university students have particularly extensive opportunities for face-to-face communication with speakers of both L1 and L2 English, and most specifically with speakers from other areas of Asia, the tendency found for Thai students to downgrade the English speech of Japanese, Chinese and Indian nationals is somewhat worrisome for Thai universities. This is particularly so given the growth in the number of formal memorandums signed between Thai and other universities in Asia, most notably with institutions in China and Japan, together with the associated rapid expansion in overseas students, particularly from China, undertaking degree programs taught in English. Given that attitudes towards specific language varieties reflect attitudes towards the perceived community of speakers (see above), unfavourable evaluations of Asian English speech forms imply the existence of rather negative stereotypes of Chinese, Indian and Japanese students amongst Thai university students. Whilst the long term effects remain unclear, and further fine-grained research is again required, such broadly negative attitudes may well have undue implications for the internationalisation project within Thai higher education more widely.

The most striking finding relates to the high levels of both competence and warmth afforded to the Thai speaker of English. This result supports the notion that Thai users of English retain a clear sense of linguistic security regarding the form of English which they are themselves most likely to speak and, in turn, provides evidence that they view Thai English speech, or at least the fluent speech of the Thai speaker of English included in this study, as an appropriate, and perhaps desirable, norm of English language use for L1 speakers of Thai. It may well be that the relative linguistic harmony which exists in Thailand, involving a general tolerance of different forms of the Thai language (Smalley, 1994; Huebner, 2006), can account for such positive ratings for the Thai English speaker. This finding contrasts markedly with the results of equivalent language attitude research conducted in other Asian contexts, and especially in Japan, where there exists considerable evidence to suggest a tendency for university students to evaluate speakers of forms of US and UK English much more highly in terms of competence than English speakers from their

own country (e.g., McKenzie, 2008a; McKenzie and Gilmore, 2015 early view; Xu *et al.*, 2010; Yook and Lindemann, 2013).

Analysis also found that those Thai students who held the most positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity in their L1 expressed significantly more warmth towards speakers of Thai English, demonstrating that different levels of ingroup solidarity transferred across language boundaries. As discussed above, the general positivity of the Thai students' attitudes towards regional and social variation in the Thai language is noteworthy and whilst further research is needed, involving the use of more refined instruments and amongst other populations, this finding reinforces the potential importance of 'perceptions of L1 variation' as a central explanatory variable in determining levels of solidarity expressed towards ingroup forms of L2 English.

Gender also differentiated warmth evaluations of the Thai English speaker. Female responses were found to be significantly more favourable, a result which may be explained by particularly high levels of solidarity shown towards other Thai females. It may also be that amongst the Thai population, Thai females are early adopters of more positive attitudes towards Thai English, thus leading attitude change towards greater acceptability of the 'local' form of English speech within Thai society more broadly. In contrast, the comparatively low levels of ingroup loyalty found amongst the male participants may be a manifestation of assumptions in Thailand concerning the study and use of English as a principally female activity. It is indeed the case that Thai females constitute the vast majority of English language students attending universities in Thailand. It is thus not unreasonable to suggest that for Thai males, born and raised within a deeply ingrained male-dominated culture espousing patriarchal values (Peleggi, 2007), Thai English speech itself may be associated with feminine behaviour and subsequently, for some, may evoke somewhat negative connotations with male homosexuality; and there is indeed some evidence of particularly high levels of appropriation of English lexis within the gay male community in Thailand (Jackson, 2004). Whilst such an interpretation remains somewhat speculative, there exists considerable evidence concerning Japanese nationals' perceptions of the 'feminisation' of the English language in Japan (Kobayashi, 2002; Takahashi, 2013), promulgated by the English teaching industry and the Japanese media more widely (McKenzie, 2010). Clearly, further research incorporating this variable in the Thai context may help clarify the extent to which the Thai media influences male and female Thai nationals' evaluations of specific forms of English speech, including Thai English.

Finally, in prior language attitude studies involving both L1 and L2 listeners, arguably, there has been a tendency amongst researchers to pay most attention to status/competence speaker ratings. This may be because high status languages and language varieties are generally felt to reflect prescriptive evaluations by the general public of the correctness and standardness of the specific linguistic forms under consideration, and thus deemed most socially meaningful. Similarly, these high status forms are frequently afforded greater levels of institutional support (see Cameron, 2012; Mugglestone, 2003). However, the results of the present study, where warmth ratings were responsible for 27.9% of the variance and significant differences within the independent variables examined were demonstrated through divergent levels of speaker solidarity expressed, point to the primacy of warmth evaluations. This finding reflects recent evidence from the field of social cognition, where studies suggest, for evolutionary reasons, individuals' warmth judgments carry more weight and precede competence judgments, since judges are believed to infer warmth (or not) from the perceived motives of others and which, in turn, determine approach-avoidance strategies historically necessary for human survival (Fiske *et al.*, 2006). For this reason, it would seem of theoretical and methodological value for sociolinguists, conducting future studies

investigating the social evaluations of language diversity, to consider more fully the potential influence, and relevance, of the levels of warmth expressed by listener-judges, especially in relation to any 'local' speech forms presented, as well as to compare and contrast their findings with the results of cutting-edge attitude studies undertaken by researchers working in the fields of social psychology and social cognition, where warmth judgements are consistently revealed as primary for a range of other attitudinal objects, and in a wide range of social domains and across cultures.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1. Map-task to elicit spontaneous speech stimuli

Please describe how to get from the church to the castle.

