

Undergraduate University Students' Views regarding *Intelligibility* and *Comprehensibility* of the Pronunciation of Native English Teachers' (NETs) versus Non-native English Teachers' (NNETs') Pronunciation-A Case-Study at Assumption University of Thailand (AU)

Valentin Tassev

Woosong Language Institute (WLI), Woosong University
171 Dongdaejon-ro, Dong-gu, Daejeon, Republic of Korea 34606
Email: valentinetassev@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research study investigates students' views with regards to perceived levels of both intelligibility and comprehensibility of various English pronunciation models. The findings suggest that from students' perspectives, the pronunciation models of native English teachers (NETs) were both more intelligible and comprehensible than those of non-native English teachers (NNETs). In addition, this study established that intelligibility and comprehensibility could be indeed analysed as a single entity rather than two separate entities as they largely complement each other. Furthermore, the findings suggest that most of the participants exhibited more positive views towards native speaker (NS) norms than non-native speaker (NNS) norms as their desired future pronunciation models in terms of linguistic output too. In light of this, their answers revealed that their existing high levels of familiarity precisely with those particular norms highly influenced their choices for those models of pronunciation, again both in terms of input and production. In this regard, this study suggests that students might hold a certain bias towards NS norms and their in-built perceptions, therefore, might be largely socially-constructed. Lastly, this study reveals that students need to be taught and exposed to a larger variety of pronunciation models, both various NS models and various NNS models. In light of this, the area of pronunciation should be perhaps viewed through a more pluri-centric and pluri-cultural prism since students' future communicative activities in the era of globalisation would involve a large number of both.

Keywords: comprehensibility, intelligibility, pronunciation, views

Introduction

For quite a long time, numerous research studies have been conducted exploring the differences between NETs and NNETs from the perspectives of both the theory and practice of English language teaching (ELT). In the wake of the spread of World Englishes (WEs), English as an international language (EIL) and English as a lingua franca (ELF), this area of research has gained even more momentum and attention.

Moreover, given that nowadays NNETs and generally NNSs of English outnumber NETs and also NSs of English, (Hwang & Yim, 2019; Ishaque, 2018), there is a greater call to examine the advantages of both groups of teachers (NETs and NNETs) in various areas of ELT along with revisiting the respective norms and standards of how English should therefore be taught: based on NS norms or rather NNS norms. As a result, one could perhaps plan and

develop a series of necessary pedagogical implications that would envision and drive further the theory and practice of ELT in the coming years hopefully towards a better success.

This particular study aims to make contribution to the existing body of knowledge regarding the role learners' views play in defining the ideal teacher with a particular focus on the study of pronunciation.¹ More broadly speaking, this study also aims to reveal some key issues surrounding the bias and controversy of the *NS/NNS) polemic*.²

At large, examining students' views on pronunciation is increasingly important for the purpose of establishing certain benchmarks and criteria as to what constitutes correct and acceptable pronunciation in English. This will help inform instructors and educational policy-makers as to how English should be both taught and assessed in a local Thai context and even beyond. Furthermore, students' views on pronunciation could provide valuable insights into how to better facilitate and promote levels of communication and interaction among NSs and NNSs through language, especially in international contexts, such as Thailand. Lastly, this study could provide insights into the implications of English language education and levels of cross-cultural cooperation and integration on Thailand's future role in global and regional/local contexts and, especially, within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Quite important for identifying a desired pronunciation model is determining whether a model is pleasant, acceptable, intelligible and comprehensible enough, which later might also influence the interlocutor or listener's decision to mimic, copy and use such a model in their future communication in English, especially in international and intercultural settings, such as Thailand.

In determining the degree of comprehension, Smith (1992, 2009) thus proposed a three-dimensional approach to assessing one's English speech in inter-cultural settings. The first level is *intelligibility*, which measures the listener's ability to identify and recognize words or utterances. The second level is *comprehensibility* which measures the listener's ability to understand the meanings of words or utterances in their given context. The third level is *interpretability*, which measures the listener's ability to perceive and understand the intention of the speaker (Natiladdanon & Thanavisuth, 2014).³

Examining the levels of intelligibility and comprehensibility is particularly important for highlighting whether accuracy or rather mutual intelligibility is more important for the purposes of international and inter-cultural communication. As such, the overall aim of this study is to find out whether from students' perspectives, accuracy and correctness on a word level (hence *intelligibility*) or rather communicative efficacy on a sentence level (hence *comprehensibility*) is more important for negotiating and reaching meaning among various speakers of English, especially in multi-cultural and multinational contexts, such as Thailand. Presumably, this piece of information will not only have implications on how English should be taught and assessed in Thailand, but also it will make contribution as to how the levels of communication and cooperation in Thailand involving various groups of English speakers could be increased through the use of a common and shared language.

Literature Survey

¹ Throughout this study, the terms *pronunciation model* and *accent* are sometimes used very closely; yet, the focus rather is on *pronunciation* as this study looks in more details at the general characteristics of *pronunciation*. Thus, the study looks at pronunciation both on a word level and on a sentence level.

² It should be noted here that all words and word groupings that are considered important for the purpose of the research study, such as the one here, are placed in italics.

³ The level of *interpretability* is not assessed and explored throughout this study as it involves issues of pragmatics and social context that, despite being crucial for determining levels of understanding, might probably move the study beyond the focus on pronunciation.

As mentioned earlier, a large body of literature has examined the advantages and disadvantages of NETs and NNETs in various areas of ELT, including the one of pronunciation. Hence, it is important to mention the influential works of Medgyes (1992) and Phillipson (1992), who both outlined and described in details the main differences between NETs and NNETs.

Thus, according to Medgyes (1992), language competence is indeed a “substantial” advantage that NSs possess in comparison to their non-native counterparts (p. 342). The author argues that NNSs could never achieve a NS’s competence despite the presence of a series of factors in their favour, such as motivation, experience, education and aptitude amongst others. Similarly, according to Phillipson (1992), there is a given assumption that a NS is considered “the best embodiment” of the norm and target for learners considering factors, such as pronunciation and the production of correct and fluent language forms (p. 194).

Recently, research on the *NS/NNS dichotomy* has been oriented more towards examining the differences between NETs and NNETs, including the area of pronunciation, as interpreted by the learners themselves. Thus, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2002) conducted a study exploring undergraduate university students’ views and preferences in the Basque Autonomous Community in Spain with regards to NETs and NNETs in different areas of teaching. They found that students exhibited preferences for NETs in the areas of pronunciation, speaking, listening, vocabulary as well as culture and civilization.

A study of a similar kind was conducted in a local Thai context. Phothongsunan and Suwanarak (2008) examined the self-perceptions of 24 Thai English teachers (TETs) into themselves and NETs. Apart from providing their own insights, the participants also reported how, according to them, students perceived both NETs and TETs. Thus, participants stated that students preferred to study with NETs when taught speaking and listening. Thus, as far as pronunciation, oral practice or language proficiency were concerned, students placed a higher value on NETs, according to participants.

Similarly, Todd and Pojanapunya (2009) examined students’ voices on drawing comparison and contrast between NETs and NNETs. One of the areas they looked at was concerned with explicit attitudes, divided into preferences and feelings. The findings suggest that for explicit attitudes, students expressed a general preference for NETs to NNETs, whereas they felt warmer towards NNETs.

Research Methodology

Objectives

Two main objectives characterise the scope and direction of this study. On a broader level, this study will highlight key issues surrounding the controversy around the *NS-NNS polemic*. More specifically, this study seeks to investigate university students’ views with regard to the area of correct pronunciation when learning English with a NET or a NNET.⁴ With those issues in mind, this research study will address the following four main research questions (RQs):

1. What are students’ views regarding levels of *intelligibility* when studying with a particular NET as compared to studying with a particular NNET as far as pronunciation goes? (RQ 1)
2. What are students’ views regarding levels of *comprehensibility* when studying with a particular NET as compared to studying with a particular NNET as far as pronunciation goes? (RQ 2)

⁴ Throughout this study, the terms NSs and NETs are almost always used interchangeably. So are the terms NNSs and NNETs, respectively.

3. Is there a relationship between the levels of *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility* and, thus, should they be looked at interchangeably or separately as interpreted by students? (RQ 3)
4. What are students' views in terms of their desired pronunciation model(s) with regard to their future communication in English (while still comparing NETs with NNETs)? (RQ 4)

Sample Design

Subjects for the purpose of this study were undergraduate students at Assumption University of Thailand (AU), located in Samut Prakarn, Thailand. The students were enrolled in a freshman English course, called English 1. This course is compulsory for all freshmen students at AU unless they take the IELTS exam. Most of the students had studied English at AU for at least two to three semesters prior to the time the research study was conducted.

Hence, it should be noted that AU is the first international university in Thailand, where the medium of instruction is solely English. Moreover, it should be mentioned that AU, in particular, includes a large number of both NETs and NNETs as English instructors. Therefore, it could be concluded that students, including the participants in this study, are largely exposed to both groups throughout their undergraduate studies pursued in English. In total, 72 students responded and participated in the study. 63 students are Thai, whose mother tongue is Thai; 8 students are Chinese, whose mother tongue is Mandarin and 1 student is Cambodian, whose mother tongue is Khmer.

Measurement and Data Collection Design

A single type of research instrument was used. This study employed the use of a questionnaire, written in English (see *Appendix 1*). The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part of the questionnaire collected information about the participants' backgrounds and some personal information (i.e. their first language/nationality; how long they have studied English at AU). This information is found in Question No. 1-Question No. 3, including.

The second part of the questionnaire asked students to indicate and elaborate on their views regarding their perceived levels of *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility* separately on a 5-point Likert scale (*Strongly Agree; Agree; Neutral; Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree*). Two more open-ended questions followed, related to each variable, where students were asked to provide any extra information concerned with those two levels/variables in their own words. This information is found in Question No. 4-Question No. 7, including.

The third or last part of the questionnaire asked students to indicate and justify their views as to their desired accent/pronunciation model(s) in their future communication in English in terms of linguistic output. This information is found in Question No. 8-Question No. 9, including. Question No. 8 is a closed-ended item, again providing a list of options on a Likert scale, related to various pronunciation models (*British; American; Thai; Other* and *Neutral*). In contrast, Question No. 9 is an open-ended question asking students to justify their preferences in their own words.

Analytical Design

The findings are presented both quantitatively and qualitatively. With regard to the closed-ended questions and items/options, the findings are displayed numerically via numbers and percentages. These figures are presented in the form of tables (see *Results and Discussion* section).

With regard to the open-ended questions, the findings are categorised and analysed whenever there are consistencies, recurring patterns and similarities among students' responses. In other words, the procedure that was adopted here is a *key word* analysis, generating categories from the statements made by the respondents. The data thus was displayed in the form of coded themes, presented in bold, italics font when providing students' original quotes. Also, each theme has been analysed and rated based upon the number of its frequencies among students' answers. Later on, the frequencies of these themes have been

displayed again quantitatively (numerically) via percentages found in tables, which was followed by a close, qualitative analysis of each of these themes (see *Results and Discussion* section).

Results and Discussion

Students' views regarding levels of intelligibility comparing NETs with NNETs (RQ 1)

With regard to RQ 1, among all 72 respondents, 45 participants (62.5 %) agreed to various extents that they found the pronunciation models of NETs more *intelligible* than those of NNETs. 42 participants ticked the category *Agree* and 3 participants ticked the category *Strongly Agree* on the 4-point Likert scale.

According to these figures, based on students' views, NS norms therefore are more *intelligible* than NNS norms. Moreover, the results indicate very little preference for NNS norms. Table 1 below reveals all the results.

Table 1

Views regarding Levels of Intelligibility comparing NETs with NNETs

NS Norms-More <i>Intelligible</i>	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
	62.5 %	approx. 5.5 %	about 29 %

Students' views regarding levels of comprehensibility comparing NETs with NNETs (RQ 2)

With regard to RQ 2, among all respondents, 47 participants (about 64 %) agreed to various extents that they found the pronunciation models of NETs more *comprehensible* than those of NNETs. 41 participants ticked the category *Agree* and 6 participants ticked the category *Strongly Agree* on the 4-point Likert scale.

Similar to the findings related to the category of *intelligibility* above, these figures suggest that, seen through students' eyes, NS norms are more *comprehensible* than NNS norms. In addition, the results indicate very little preference for NNS norms. Table 2 below reveals all the results.

Table 2

Views regarding Levels of Comprehensibility comparing NETs with NNETs

NS Norms-More <i>Comprehensible</i>	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
	approx. 64 %	approx. 4 %	approx. 28 %

Relationship between intelligibility and comprehensibility (RQ 3)

Concerning the relationship between the levels of *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility* considering students' views, out of those 45-47 participants who respectively found the pronunciation models of NETs either more *intelligible* or more *comprehensible* than those of NNETs respectively, 34 participants (between about 72 %-75.5 % out of those) indicated that the models of NETs were both more *intelligible* and more *comprehensible*. Table 3 below reveals all those results.

Table 3

Relationship between Levels of Intelligibility and Comprehensibility

NS Norms	Percentage
Both more <i>comprehensible</i> and more <i>intelligible</i>	72 %-75.5 %

These findings indeed strongly reveal the close inter-relationship between the levels of *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility* as interpreted by students. In light of this, students' answers indicate that *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility* could be indeed evaluated interchangeably or those two layers and dimensions in the process of *listening comprehension*, in fact, support and complement each other. It stems therefore that from the perspective of *listening comprehension*, pronunciation should not be analysed as a single or isolated entity,

but within the context of whether the overall meaning of a communicative act has been successfully conveyed to the interlocutor. In other words, pronunciation perhaps should be analysed on a broader level or rather on a sentence level, and assessed in line with a series of other elements, related to content and structure, that could play a largely supportive role the meaning of a text or a message.

As to the underlying causes for their preferences, 31 participants (of those 34 participants) justified their answers convincingly and provided elaborate answers as to the causes of what their preferences were. They variously provided answers in support of either *intelligibility* only, or *comprehensibility* only, or both *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility*. Their answers variously consisted of single words, collocations and/or whole phrases, as the examples below illustrate.⁵ Herewith, the answers of only 8 participants have been provided as they largely illustrate the nature and recurring themes found variously in the answers given by all 31 participants. Thus, some of the answers given were as follows:⁶

“Because NETs would know how to speak English **correctly** and **clearly**...NETs are the language owners, so they can use English language **correctly**.” {Participant 1}

“NETs' accents are **easier** to **understand** than NNETs' accents.” {Participant 4}

“I can **understand** what they want to say **more easily** than the other group (NNETs) and also we can **understand** the meaning of the word in English, not in Thai.” {Participant 5}

“...because I think accents of NETs are so **clear** and **easy** to listen to.” {Participant 6}

“Most of what I have learnt and I have learnt English mostly from NETs, and they can speak **clearly** and **correctly**...Because accents of NETs are **easy** to hear and I have more friends from America and other countries in Europe.” {Participant 7}

“NETs can pronounce words **more intelligibly** than NNETs...I **can understand NETs more** than NNETs.” {Participant 9}

“They are **more intelligible**; it is not hard to listen...They are **more comprehensible**; it is very **clear**.” {Participant 13}

“The accents and pronunciation of NETs are **original**...The **original** accents and pronunciation of NETs are **more comprehensible**...” {Participant 15}

Even though the themes pointed out and described by students appeared in various forms (and parts of speech) taking into consideration students' original answers as they were, the data still suggests recurring consistencies and patterns among participants' answers. As the examples above illustrate, each category has been presented as a coded theme, analysed and rated based upon the number of its frequencies among students' answers. The themes, therefore, could be grouped and categorized as follows.

1 Understanding

Understanding or better *understanding* as a thematic category was cited most frequently, given in support of the pronunciation of NETs. It appeared 30 times and occurred in various forms, such as “*understand*”, “*understand more*” and/or “*understand better*”. This

⁵ As it was mentioned earlier, each thematic category has been displayed in the form of coded themes, highlighted in bold, italics font. Also, each theme or thematic category has been analyzed and assessed based upon the number of its frequencies occurring among students' answers. Thus, the key factor is how many times each theme has been quoted/cited in total, irrespective of whether it was quoted by the same participant or different participants. The theme that has been mentioned most often, therefore, would appear as the leading thematic category and so on, which obviously would be taken into account when analyzing the data and the findings later.

⁶ It should be noted here that students' original quotes were mostly cited throughout this study (i.e. as they were given). However, whenever needed, very small corrections were made if, for example, students had made grammatical mistakes and/or what they had written was somehow unclear and ambiguous. For example, a few students could have missed a preposition, or a punctuation mark, or an auxiliary verb, or might have made a small mistake regarding a subject-verb agreement. However, no changes have been made in terms of content.

category, as well as all the other categories, has been presented as a coded theme, highlighted in bold, italics font.

2 Clarity

Clarity as a category occurred as the second most-often cited category given in support of the pronunciation of NETs. It was quoted 18 times and was given in various forms, such as “clear”, “clearly” and/or “more clearly”.

3 Easiness/Ease

Easiness or *ease* as a category occurred quite frequently too-in fact, the third most-often cited category given in support of the pronunciation of NETs. It was quoted 12 times and was given in various forms, such as “easy”, “easier”, “easily” and/or “more easily”.

4 Correctness

Moreover, *correctness* as a thematic category was cited quite often too in support of the pronunciation of NETs. It was the fourth most-often cited category. It appeared in two forms, namely “correct” and/or “correctly”. In terms of frequency, it occurred 8 times.

5 Comprehensibility, Intelligibility and Originality

Comprehensibility, *intelligibility* and *originality* as thematic categories appeared 4 times each. *Comprehensibility* appeared in two forms, namely “comprehensible” and/or “more comprehensible”. *Intelligibility* alone occurred in various forms, such as “intelligible”, “more intelligible”, “intelligibly” and/or “more intelligibly”. *Originality* alone appeared only as “original”.

Table 4 below reveals all those results and relationships, and, in particular, the frequencies of each thematic category and how many times it was quoted in total by participants.

Table 4
Frequencies of Themes Quoted by Participants

Themes/categories	Frequency/Rating of Quotes
<i>Understanding</i>	30 times
<i>Clarity</i>	18 times
<i>Easiness/Ease</i>	12 times
<i>Correctness</i>	8 times
<i>Comprehensibility</i>	4 times
<i>Intelligibility</i>	4 times
<i>Originality</i>	4 times

These findings reveal that students’ positive attitudes towards NS pronunciation models could largely be a result of the fact that students have learned those norms since young age and, therefore, they had been *familiar* with them the most or *exposed* to them the most. As evident from the answer particularly given by Participant 7 earlier, as a result of having *learnt* the accents of NETs, this participant (and presumably also most of the other participants quoted above) thus has found these accents *more familiar* and, as a result, *clearer*, *more correct* (*more acceptable* perhaps) and, after all, *easier* to *comprehend* or *understand* at large.

In this regard, the issue of *familiarity* could be an important factor in influencing students’ views and preferences regarding their desired pronunciation model(s). One could conclude, therefore, that students’ existing levels of *familiarity* with certain models could affect their beliefs about such norms in a positive way and, as a result, students would end up favouring the use of such norms, at least from the perspective of being the listeners in the communicative act. So, if students consider a model *familiar*, they would therefore find it *easy*, *intelligible*, *clear*, *easily-recognizable*, *comprehensible*, or *understandable* as whole, as their answers have so far revealed.

Indeed, these findings support the findings of Kaur and Raman (2014), who state that *familiarity* with certain accents results in having learners develop more “favourable and positive” attitudes towards those particular accents. As a result, they therefore consider them as more acceptable, pleasant and correct (p. 258).

Having established that, it would be interesting on a further note to investigate whether the preference for a pronunciation model of one as the listener could also lead to one's preference for using such a variety for the purposes of communication, even when one is the speaker himself/herself, not simply the listener. Thus, it would be a matter of interest to find out whether indeed there is a relationship between one's preference for a variety due to existing levels of *familiarity* (and thus perceived *comprehensibility* of such a norm), and later on one's desire or goal to make use of such a variety in their future communication in English. Indeed, this issue will be further explored throughout the following sub-section.

Students' preferences in terms of their desired pronunciation model(s) with regard to their future communication in English (RQ 4)

Regarding RQ 4, among all 72 respondents, 66 participants (about 91.5 %) stated that they would like to mimic and copy NS pronunciation models in their future communication in English. 35 participants expressed preference for American English (AE) only; 26 participants expressed preference for British English (BE) only and 5 participants expressed preferences for both.

Moreover, regarding RQ 4, the results indicate very little preference for NNS models. Thus, only 5 participants stated that they would prefer to mimic and copy NNS models in their future communication in English. 4 participants expressed preference for Thai English (TE) pronunciation model.⁷ 1 participant expressed a preference for Chinese English (CE) pronunciation model. Only 1 participant remained *neutral* with regard to his/her future preferences. Table 5 below reveals all the results.

Table 5

Students' Preferences regarding a Desired Future Pronunciation Model

Types of Norms/Models	Percentage
<i>NS Norms</i> (AE+BE)	approx. 91.5 %
<i>NNS Norms</i> (TE+CE)	approx. 7 %
<i>Neutral</i>	approx. 1 %

Further insights into the inter-relationship between levels of intelligibility and comprehensibility (RQ 3), and preferences for pronunciation models in English (RQ 4)-all in favour of NS models only

On a further note, the findings of this study here actually seem to suggest a strong correlation between the following variables: the close inter-relationship between perceived levels of *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility* (RQ 3), and participants' preferences with regards to the types of varieties in their future communication in English (RQ 4)-all in favour of NS models only. Thus, among all 34 participants (quoted earlier) who indicated that the models of NETs were both more *intelligible* and more *comprehensible*, 30 participants of those (about 88 %) also exhibited preferences for using NS norms, in particular, in their future communication in English.

Herewith, the answers of only 8 participants have been provided as they largely illustrate the nature and recurring themes found variously in the answers given by all 30 participants. As their answers below reveal, participants variously expressed preferences for AE only, or BE, or both. This information is found in Question No. 8-Question No. 9, and

⁷ It should be noted here that the abbreviations used here, such as AE, BE, TE and CE, are not standardized abbreviations used in the literature on the *NS/NNS polemic*. They are rather the researcher's own abbreviations used here simply in order to make the findings clearer and more comprehensible for the reader.

especially judging from the participants' answers to Question No. 9 (see *Appendix 1*). Thus, some of the various answers given were as follows:

"English is the *original* language of the British. So, I want to use it in the future."

{Participant 3}

"I heard this accent (British). I *can understand* it because it is an *original* language."

{Participant 10}

"I heard that accent (American) several times and I like that accent." {Participant 15}

"I think American accent is *easy* to *understand* and it's like the standard of speaking English." {Participant 16}

"American accent is not complicated and *easy* to *understand* for everyone in each country."

{Participant 20}

"I would like to mimic/copy and use it in my future because I think it is *easy* to *understand* and communicate, and it is used world-widely." {Participant 21}

"Every accent has its advantage. But for me, I'd like to choose American accent because it is widespread." {Participant 27}

"British or American, I like two." {Participant 29}

"I choose both of them because both are the languages which most people use a lot."

{Participant 30}

These findings reveal once again that students' positive attitudes towards NS varieties could largely be a result of the fact that students had been *familiar* with those varieties the most or had been *exposed* to them the most. As evidenced by the answers particularly given by Participant 10 and Participant 15 above, as a direct consequence of having been exposed to the norms of NETs, this participant (and presumably most of the other participants quoted above and beyond) thus has found these models *more familiar* and, as a result, *easier* to *comprehend* or *understand* at large.

One could conclude, therefore, that students' existing levels of *familiarity* with certain varieties could affect their beliefs about such varieties in a positive way and, as a result, students would end up favouring the use of such models, from the perspective of being the listeners. So, if students consider a model *familiar*, they would therefore find it *easy*, *intelligible*, *easily-recognizable*, *comprehensible*, or *understandable* as a whole. Put simply, from students' perspectives, greater *familiarity* with an English pronunciation model indeed leads to higher levels of *comprehension* or *understanding*.

In addition, they expressed preferences for NS pronunciation models in their future communication in English again because of their existing higher levels of *familiarity* with those particular models. So, the more *familiar* a model is, it is thus both more *intelligible* and *comprehensible* for the listener and, furthermore, it therefore becomes the *preferable* pronunciation model in terms of linguistic output too.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

This research study did have a number of limitations. For example, it should be noted here that some of the respondents variously provided insufficient, confusing, ambiguous, contradictory or incomplete answers, or no answers at all. Their answers, therefore, have not been taken into account when analysing the findings. It might be due to the fact that they had not understood the instructions and/or the questions, or had been confused with the questions, or perhaps had not been able to answer some of the questions with certainty. In light of this, perhaps in a future research study of this kind, participants need to be more thoroughly informed about the nature, scope and purposes of the research study.

In addition, perhaps the 5-point Likert scales should be reduced or narrowed down when asking students to indicate their preferences as to their perceived levels of both *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility*. Instead of having *Agree* and *Strongly Agree*, as well as

Disagree and *Strongly Disagree*, the research study should simply offer the following two options only (instead of four): *Agree* and *Disagree*. When analysing students' preferences, the nuances and differences between *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* (and *Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree*, respectively) might be too small and offer no room for further analysis, especially when dealing with a qualitative type of study, such as this one.

Moreover, perhaps rather than providing students with Likert scales, one should rather provide open-ended questions only throughout the questionnaires. On the one hand, Likert scales might provide options that are too leading for participants and, thus, they might influence them in terms of their choices, perceptions and answers. On the other hand, sometimes Likert scales might be a good substitute for the lack of knowledge and information, and thus participants might feel they have to answer the questions because of necessity, rush and/or intuition rather than because of what their in-built perceptions, knowledge, competencies and developed opinions are. Thus, judging from some of the students' answers, it seems that some students might have been copying from each other and, as a result, they ended up providing the same answers.

Lastly, perhaps questionnaires should be aided or fully replaced by semi-structured interviews, especially when investigating students' preferences and perceptions, in general. Semi-structured interviews would account for far more validity of the research study, its operational methodology and, above all, the originality and contribution of its findings.

Conclusion

This research study examined students' views in terms of their perceived levels of both *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility* of various English pronunciation models, and, furthermore, students' views regarding their desired pronunciation models in terms of their future communication in English. According to the findings, from students' perspectives, the pronunciation models of NETs were found both more *intelligible* and *comprehensible* than those of NNETs. Moreover, this study found that *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility* could be indeed analysed and assessed interchangeably, since they largely complement each other as part of a communicative act. In addition, the findings strongly suggest that most of the participants shared more positive views towards NS norms than NNS norms as their desired future pronunciation models in terms of linguistic output too. In this regard, their answers revealed that students' existing high levels of *familiarity* (or *exposure*) precisely to those particular norms highly contributed to their choices and preferences for those models of pronunciation, again in terms of both input and output. In light of this, this study also established that to a certain degree, students might be biased towards NS norms and their in-built perceptions, therefore, might be largely interpreted as socially-constructed rather than true reflections of their own opinions as to which English pronunciation models could be regarded as the acceptable norms for the purposes of international and inter-cultural communication. Last but not least, this study suggests that students need to be taught and exposed to a larger variety of models, including both various NS models, as well as various NNS models. In light of this, as current trends and theories related to WEs, EIL and ELF presuppose, the area of pronunciation should be perhaps viewed through a more pluralistic perspective, provided that students' future interactions in today's highly globalised and interconnected world and, especially within the ASEAN, would involve a large number of both groups.

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Appendix 1
Questionnaire

1. Are you Thai? Circle the correct answer!
a) Yes
b) No

2. If no, what is your nationality/first language? Please, explain!
.....

3. How many years or semesters have you studied English at Assumption University (AU)?
.....

4. The Pronunciation of native English teachers (NETs) is more *intelligible* than the Pronunciation of non-native English teachers (NNETs). Tick the correct box!

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. Please, provide more information in support of your answer!
.....
.....
.....

6. The Pronunciation of NETs is more *comprehensible* than the Pronunciation of NNETs. Tick the correct box!

1	2	3	4	5
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Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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7. Please, provide more information in support of your answer!

.....

8. Overall, which type of pronunciation model would you like to mimic/copy and use in your future communication in English?

British	American	Thai	Other	Neutral	Other
			Specify:		

9. Please, provide more information in support of your answer!

.....

Intelligibility-the listener's ability to recognise and identify syllables, sounds and words (on a word level)

Comprehensibility-to understand meaning on a sentence level and in the given context

Signature of participant:

Appendix 2

List of Abbreviations/Acronyms:

- American English (AE)
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- Assumption University of Thailand (AU)
- British English (BE)
- Chinese English (CE)
- English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)
- English as an International Language (EIL)
- English Language Teaching (ELT)
- Native English Teacher (NET)
- Native Speaker of English (NS)
- Non-native English Teacher (NNET)
- Non-native Speaker of English (NNS)
- Research Question (RQ)
- Thai English (TE)
- Thai English Teacher (TET)
- World Englishes (WEs)