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Language attitudes of Hungarian speakers towards Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle varieties of English*

Abstract

This paper explores the language attitudes of Hungarian speakers towards Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle varieties of English, based on Kachru's (1992) model. The study hypothesizes that Hungarian speakers favor Inner Circle varieties (e.g., British, American, and Scottish English) over Outer (e.g., Indian and Nigerian English) and Expanding Circle varieties (e.g., Hungarian and Argentinian English), particularly on status traits, and perceive Outer Circle speakers as non-native.

A questionnaire-based study involving 182 Hungarian participants under 30 assessed audio samples from seven speakers representing these circles. The results confirmed the hypothesis: Inner Circle speakers were rated highest on both status and solidarity traits, the Hungarian speaker scored intermediately, while Outer Circle and Expanding Circle speakers received the lowest ratings. This suggests that Hungarian speakers' exposure to Inner Circle varieties through media and education influences their language attitudes, often aligning with stereotypes prevalent in native English-speaking contexts.

The findings highlight the reproduction of Inner Circle language attitudes within the Expanding Circle, reflecting underlying power dynamics. This research contributes to the understanding of sociolinguistic patterns and calls for further investigation into the language attitudes of non-native English speakers towards various English dialects.

1. Introduction

A common, fundamental trait of every human being is that everyone judges others based on their language use. Whether this act of judging is conscious (like in the highly popular movie *The Silence of the Lambs* (Demme 1991, 17'), in which the antagonist comments on the main character's West Virginian accent, calling it "poor white trash" and concluding that her father may have been a coal miner) or unconscious (like in the movie *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming 1939), where the R-lessness which characterises the plantation owners' language use indicates their high social status in the South), people's ways of using language encode a surprising amount of information about where they come from, which social class they belong to, and what kind of people they are. Sociolinguists refer to this phenomenon as language attitudes.

Dragojevic (2017: 88) defines language attitudes as "evaluative reactions to different language varieties." These evaluations might work for speakers' advantage, or for their disadvantage (Meyerhoff 2006: 54), and although in certain contexts some varieties are much more advantageous, there are no good and bad varieties of any language. Why some people say that some varieties are better, or more specifically, more prestigious than others is because they attribute certain values to speakers of one variety that they do not attribute to other varieties. As Milroy (2001: 532) indicates, "varieties of [any] language do not actually have prestige in themselves: these varieties acquire prestige when their speakers have high prestige."

Everyone has language attitudes towards different varieties of the language(s) of their own society, but attitudes towards different (foreign) languages and their varieties are also common,

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although somewhat less widely studied (Balogh, 2020: 151). This research focuses on the language attitudes of Hungarian speakers of English towards different varieties of the English language. The reasons why I chose to focus on language attitudes towards EFL in a Hungarian context are (1) because this area of research is relatively unexplored, and (2) because a significant proportion of the younger generations in Hungary are markedly familiar with the English language and its culture, not only because of their exposure to it in our education system, but also as a result of globalisation, which has provided the English language with a special status as an international language (see Jenkins, 2009; Sharifian, 2009; Seidlhofer, 2011).

At this point, before I formulate the fundamental hypothesis which constitutes the starting point of the present research paper, I believe it to be crucial that I discuss two concepts, which are indispensable in order to understand my hypothesis. First, let me clarify a distinction that is highly important in any study that deals with language attitudes. Status traits, as both Edward (1999) and Fenyvesi (2011) describe, characterise a speaker based on their competence and social status. For example, some status traits that Fenyvesi (2011: 230) investigates include *educated, successful* and *rich*. Edward (1999: 120) describes the other major category, namely, solidarity traits, as one that combines "integrity and attractiveness." The solidarity traits that are investigated in Fenyvesi's (2011: 230) research include, for example, honesty and trustworthiness.

Second, another important theoretical consideration that needs to be discussed here is Kachru's (1990) three circles model, which divides speakers of English into three categories that constitute three concentric circles, the innermost being the Inner Circle, which refers to countries (and of course, their speakers) that he considers "the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English (Kachru, 1991: 356). This means, for instance, Australia, the USA, and Canada. The other two circles are the Outer Circle (where people speak English as a second language) and the Expanding Circle (where English is 'only' a foreign language). Further explanations and more details will be provided in the following Literature Review section.

Having clarified the above concepts, let us turn to the hypothesis that lies at the core of the present study, namely that non-Inner Circle speakers will be evaluated less favourably by English-speaking Hungarian participants than Inner Circle speakers, especially on status traits, and even native speakers of Outer Circle varieties will be perceived as non-native, because of the differences between the Inner Circle standard varieties and theirs. In other words, as perceived by the participants, native varieties of English are expected to be synonymous with Inner Circle varieties. To put this hypothesis to the test, the present paper discusses the findings of a questionnaire-based study that investigated Hungarian native speakers' attitudes towards several different varieties of English.

More definitions that need to be clarified are going to be discussed in the Literature Review section. Also, the most important ideas regarding both the unique situation of the English language in the modern world and language attitudes will be highlighted. Then, in the Methodology section, I am going to demonstrate my research method, followed by the Discussion section, which contains a detailed analysis of the results of the present research. Finally, I am going to draw conclusions about whether – and to what extent – my hypothesis has been confirmed as well as suggest possible future avenues, along the lines of which the present study can be taken a step further.

2. Literature Review

In this section, the topic of variation in language will be introduced and explained. Then, the current state of English as a world language will be described, and a model of categorising its speakers will be suggested. Lastly, the topic of language attitudes will be expanded upon.

2.1. Variation in language in general

Before diving deep into the topic of language attitudes, it is essential that I explain what variation in language exactly means. In everyday language, people often notice and remark how certain people use different *accents* or *dialects*, using these two words interchangeably. In fact, by definition, people have different accents where they only "differ (or vary) at the level of pronunciation" (Meyerhoff, 2006: 27) and use mostly the same grammar. In other words, "dialect and accent are distinguished by how much of the linguistic system differs. Dialects differ in terms of more than just pronunciation, i.e., on the basis of morphosyntactic structure and/or how semantic relations are mapped into the syntax" (Meyerhoff, 2006: 27).

Wardhaugh (2006: 49) argues that dialects help us "describe differences in speech associated with various social groups or classes." Furthermore, he differentiates between *regional* and *social dialects*. On the one hand, regional dialects are easy to define: they are characteristic of speakers from or living in a certain geographical area. An example would be the Traditional Cockney dialect of English, which Mott (2012: 71) describes as being "associated with an imprecise area north of the River Thames referred to as the East End."

However, Meyerhoff (2006: 28) warns that the term *dialect* generally has negative connotations. When people talk about dialects, they usually refer to a certain local dialect, which inherently differs from what they know to be proper or good English, which is used by, for instance, academics and newsreaders. What they refer to as proper or good English is most often the standard variety of their language, the issue of which I am going to address later in this section. To avoid such negative connotations, linguists generally prefer a "relatively neutral term used to refer to languages and dialects" (Meyerhoff 2006: 28), namely, *varieties*.

As Wardhaugh (2006: 49) admits, it is hard to define what a *social group* or *social class* is. Generally speaking, in most developed countries, we differentiate between the working-class, the middle-class and the upper-class. Wardhaugh (2006: 49) lists a set of "factors that can be used to determine social position", which includes "occupation, place of residence, education, 'new' versus 'old' money, income, racial or ethnic origin, cultural background, caste, religion, and so on." This is important for us, because these aspects are fundamental when it comes to our understanding and investigation of varieties.

2.2. Variation in English

The English language has, in fact, by far the highest number of varieties in the world. Crystal (2008: 4) estimates between one and two billion English speakers worldwide, depending on what criteria we base our methods of identifying the speakers on. While the exact number would be impossible to guess, in the following paragraphs, I am going to address the significant role of English in today's world as well as its multidimensionality.

A few centuries ago, in the pre-colonial era, English was only spoken by the population of England, whereas today, it is spoken in nearly every single country on our planet. Thus, a refined categorization for the varieties of the English language across the globe has become necessary, and one of the first scholars to fulfil this need was Braj B. Kachru (1992), whose model can be seen in Figure 1.

As Jenkins (2009: 15) postulates, ENL (English as a Native Language) is "the language of those born and raised in one of the countries where English is historically the first language to be spoken", namely the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, to which Kachru (1992: 356) refers as "the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English," ultimately terming it as the Inner Circle.

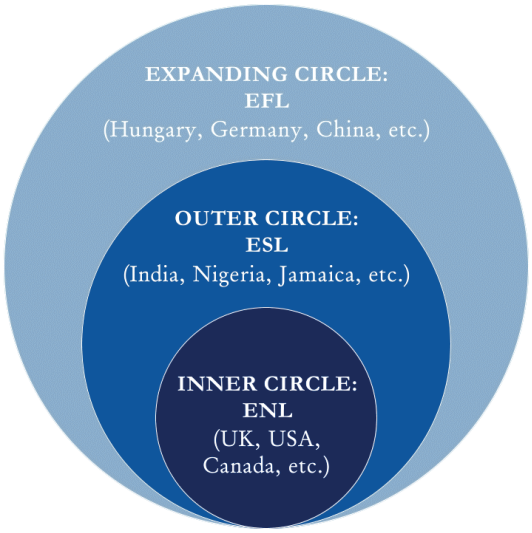

Figure 1. Kachru's three circles. (adapted from Huber, 2022)

Besides ENL speakers in Kachru's (1992: 356) Inner Circle, there are also ESL (English as a Second Language) speakers, from countries formerly colonised by Britain (Jenkins 2009:16), such as India and Jamaica, "where English comes after at least one other language, and has been present for at least a century." (McArthur 2001: 8) In Kachru's (1992: 356) framework, these countries constitute the Outer Circle, in which, the varieties of English have become institutionalised and are developing their own standards.

Finally, EFL (English as a Foreign Language) is "the English of those for whom the language serves no purposes within their own countries" (Jenkins 2009: 16), meaning that these people have learnt the language for various purposes such as education, career, moving abroad, and so on. Kachru categorizes these as Expanding Circle varieties, the growing importance of which is illustrated by Kirkpatrick (2011: 3), who declares that "universities across the world are desperately seeking to internationalize," which mostly means education through the medium of the English language. This trend of internationalisation undeniably has a great number of advantages, such as allowing for student exchange and increased academic cooperation.

To illustrate the complexity of the English-speaking world, Jenkins (2009: 15) estimates a total of more than one and a half billion speakers of English (350 million ENL, 350 million ESL, and around one billion EFL speakers of "reasonable competence"). In comparison, in the middle of the seventeenth century, the English-speaking population was somewhat below 5.3 million (Morgan 2010: 328), meaning that over the last four centuries, the number of English-speaking people has increased more than threehundred-fold.

While it would be nearly impossible to suggest a model, which categorises speakers of English worldwide that is accepted by all, there have been several attempts for it, the oldest one being that of Strevens (1992), which depicts a global map with an upside-down tree diagram, indicating how, since the acceptance of a unique and distinct American English variety, all succeeding English varieties have had affinities with each other (cf. Jenkins 2009: 17). Onysko (2016: 198) describes this tree model as one that "reflects the main forces for the spread of English in terms of colonialism and territorial interests of Britain and the US."

As has already been mentioned in passing, on the basis of Strevens's (1992) tree model, in the following decade, so-called circular models of English(es) were proposed by Kachru (1990), McArthur (1987), and Görlach (1988) (cf. Jenkins, 2009: 17). Out of these three, Kachru's (1992) "Three Circles of English" model has been the most widely accepted and applied as well as the most influential to this day.

Despite the influence of this model, it has been criticised by various scholars since it was first imposed, mainly because of its limitations. Jenkins (2009: 20) summarises the main points of these critiques as follows. One is that Kachru's categorisation focuses on geography and history rather than "the way speakers currently identify with and use English." Because of this, more speakers who use English as their first (or even only) language are not considered to be among the Inner Circle native speakers.

Furthermore, McArthur (1998: 43–46) lists six difficulties with Kachru's three-way categorisation of speakers of English, the most important one arguably being that this model considers people born in the 'native countries' inherently superior to others, "regardless of the quality of the language [their] members speak." Bonfiglio (2010) goes as far as questioning the term *native speaker* in the first place, and prefers instead to refer to an ENL speaker as an L1 speaker of English, in order to avoid any attribution of authority to this group of people. He argues that "[t]o employ the designations 'native speaker,' 'native language,' and 'mother tongue' unreflectively is to engage, from the instant of first perception, in a gesture of othering that operates on an axis of empowerment and disempowerment" (Bonfiglio 2010: 218).

However, in the present research, it is important that we keep Kachru's (1992) distinction between the Inner Circle and the Outer Circle, because in this study, a wide range of aspects are going to be addressed besides the functionality of English. Although some of these regions may not be very different when it comes to the role and significance of English, there are fundamental differences in politics, economics, culture, society, etc. Also, it is expected that the results will vary depending on which circle the speakers belong to, as people usually have very different attitudes towards, for instance, Indian and British speakers of English.

Other arguments against Kachru's model refer to certain regions that are difficult to put into one category as they are either currently transitioning or their population is constantly changing, with more and more bi- and multilingual speakers making categorisation increasingly complicated. Also, the model makes it difficult to define speakers "in terms of their proficiency in English. [...] The fact that English is somebody's second or third language does not of itself imply that their competence is less than that of a native speaker" (Jenkins 2009: 20). Moreover, Kachru's (1992) model also implies that countries within one circle are uniform, which is far from true. Bruthiaux believes this categorisation "conceals more than it reveals" (2003: 161). Although I find these arguments valid, one could argue that they over-simplify the model, which may lead to misinterpretation, as Jenkins (2009: 17–18) highlights, upon discussing how Kachru defends his model against the aforementioned criticism.

More recent models have been proposed by various scholars to categorise English speakers in different ways: some of them go into more detail, while others take into consideration more recent developments. Jenkins (2009: 21) lists a dozen of these new suggestions; however, in this research, Kachru's model is going to be applied as it is the most influential one among all of the attempts to this date.

2.3. Questions of the standard(s)

Almost everyone participating in English education is taught a standard variety of the language. Trudgill and Hannah (1982) define Standard English as

> "the variety of the English language which is normally employed in writing and normally spoken by educated speakers of the language. It is also, of course, the variety of the language that students of English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL) are taught when receiving formal instruction."

Standard English is most often heard on radio and television as well, which makes many people believe that it is the most prestigious or proper variety of the language, and this also makes many people regard other local dialects as *bad English*.

However, as English has become an international language, even standard English now comes in different national varieties, depending on which part of the English-speaking world one is looking at. Clyne (1992) regards languages which have both a standard variety and an official status in more than one country as pluricentric. According to his model, English is undoubtedly pluricentric, which is important for us to know, as the present research includes speakers from several different countries which have developed their own standard variety of English and in which English is an official language. However, as Clyne (1992: 455) admits, "[a]lmost invariably, pluricentricity is asymmetrical, i.e., the norms of one national variety (or some national varieties) is (are) afforded a higher status, internally and externally, than those of the others." Because of these differences regarding the prestige of certain standard varieties, Clyne (1992) and Muhr (1996) differentiate between dominant (e.g. standard American English) and non-dominant varieties (e.g. standard Jamaican English).

2.4. Language attitudes

Although what language attitudes are is somewhat implied by the term itself, it is not easy to come up with a definition that would enjoy universal acceptance. To cite a rather broad definition, Crystal (1997:215) very simply defines language attitudes as "the feelings people have about their own language or the languages of others." Even though this conceptualization is extremely helpful in terms of providing a simple explanation of the term, a number of scholars have put forward suggestions of more fine-tuned definitions, at the core of which lies the concept of attitudes in general.

Edwards (1994: 97–98) explains that "[t]he concept of attitude, a cornerstone of traditional social psychology, is not one about which there has been universal agreement." According to him, "at a general level, [...] attitude is a disposition to react favourably or unfavourably to a class of objects", a disposition that he describes as being constituted by three elements: an affective one (feelings), a cognitive one (thoughts) and a behavioural one (action) (1994: 97–98). Language attitudes, then, in Fasold's (1987: 147–148) definition, "are distinguished from other attitudes by the fact that they are precisely about language."

A similar but more specific definition is suggested by Richards et. al (1992: 199), who define language attitudes as "[t]he attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language". They go on to explain that language attitudes may indicate "impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc" (1992: 199) This definition is similar to Dragojevic's (2017: 88), who defines language attitudes as "evaluative reactions to different language varieties''. According to him, language attitudes "reflect, at least in part, two sequential cognitive processes: social categorization and stereotyping," and "are organized along two evaluative dimensions: status and solidarity (2017: 88)".

As has been briefly mentioned before, a fundamental distinction needs to be made in this topic: the difference between *status traits* and *solidarity traits*. Edwards (1999: 120) explains very briefly that status traits reflect competence while solidarity traits reflect personal integrity and

social attractiveness. To give an example of what these traits are, in one of her studies, Fenyvesi (2011) investigates the following status traits: *educated, successful, rich, ambitious, respected, confident* (as well as their opposites); and the following solidarity traits: *honest, trustworthy, lovable, sympathetic, generous, interesting* (as well as their opposites).

When it comes to investigating language attitudes, most often it is within one language: attitudes towards different varieties of a given language are studied. Balogh (2020: 151) argues that "the amount of research about non-native speakers' language attitudes towards their second or foreign language accents and speakers has been quite limited so far." She goes on to explain that we very often base our attitudes towards varieties of our native language on "inherited and shared concepts." (Balogh, 2020: 151) However, we do not know if the same can be said when it comes to a second or foreign language. She believes this phenomenon to be interesting for two main reasons, the first one being that "in a controlled language learning process [...] learners' pronunciation is continuously corrected, and, at the same time, they are requested to [...] avoid speaking with a foreign accent"; and the other reason being that "the majority of the teaching materials [...] are based on standard-accented speech". These two factors, she claims, might lead to non-native speakers developing stereotypical attitudes against native speakers of their second or foreign language not speaking with the accent that the non-native speakers are used to (cf. Balogh, 2020: 151 and Preston, 1989: 88–94).

Because language attitudes towards varieties of foreign and/or second languages are still arguably a research gap, this thesis might be of use for further studies, for instance, in connection with either Hungarian speakers of English, or language attitudes of Outer Circle speakers towards varieties of English.

3. Methodology

In this section, multiple methodological aspects of the investigation will be addressed. Firstly, the number of the speakers as well as a short description of them will be provided. Then, the participants will be described, and lastly, the method of data collection is going to be discussed. Also, some further definitions and explanations fundamental for the understanding of the investigation will be added.

The investigation included audio recordings from seven speakers of different varieties, which all the participants were required to listen to. After having listened to each of them, respondents were requested to fill out a questionnaire, which contained 15 questions in connection with each speaker.

As for data collection, when it comes to language attitude studies, there are two commonly used techniques: the *matched-guise technique* and the *verbal guise technique*. In the case of the matched-guise technique, "the same individual appears twice (or even more often) on the stimulus tape, each time exhibiting a new speech style, a new guise" (Auer and Schmidt, 2009: 544). The matched-guise technique is different from the verbal guise technique, "in which the language varieties are recorded by different speakers" (Garrett 2010: 42). Although the matched-guise technique probably yields more reliable results, it is often very difficult to implement, as it can be hard to find speakers that are competent in all the necessary varieties. Accordingly, due to the aforementioned methodological considerations, in this research the verbal guise technique was applied.

3.1. The speakers

The first step of carrying out this investigation was gathering audio recordings from a wide range of speakers. The most important criterion was to include at least two speakers from each circle in Kachru's (1992) model. All of the speakers contributed to the study voluntarily and

accepted that their recordings would be used anonymously, for research purposes. To avoid differences between attitudes toward male and female speakers as well as different age groups, all of the speakers I included are adult men from the following countries: 1. England (Inner Circle), 2. India (Outer Circle), 3. Hungary (Expanding Circle), 4. USA (Inner Circle), 5. Argentina (Expanding Circle), 6. Nigeria (Outer Circle), and 7. Scotland (Inner Circle). All of the recordings were between 45 and 65 seconds long.

As for the level of education of the speakers, six of them either have taken or are currently taking part in higher education. Only one of them, namely, the speaker of a standard British variety has not studied at a college or university; however, although he has no university degree, he works as a mechanical engineer. However, his lack of university studies might result in his language use being different from the other speakers.

One of the methodological challenges that presented themselves throughout the project was the observer's paradox, a concept first recognised by Labov (1985) and explained by Meyerhoff (2006: 38) as follows:

> [t]he paradox every sociolinguist faces in trying to account accurately for variation within a speech community is that they want to know what people say and do in their everyday lives, but as soon as they start to record them they change the dynamic even slightly. So what they want to know is, in one sense, unknowable. This has come to be known in sociolinguistics as the *observer's paradox*.

Because it was crucial to receive recordings of their *vernacular,* which Petyt (1980: 25) defines as "the speech of a particular country or region," or more academically, "a form of speech transmitted from parent to child as a primary medium of communication," it was essential that I try to avoid the speakers paying too much attention to how they speak. Thus, before I received the audio recordings, I had not told any speaker what I needed their audio samples for.

Also, in order to avoid the speakers paying attention to their speech, thus eliminating the observer's paradox as much as possible, I made a short comic which they were asked to tell the story of. I believe that letting the speakers express themselves freely directed their attention to

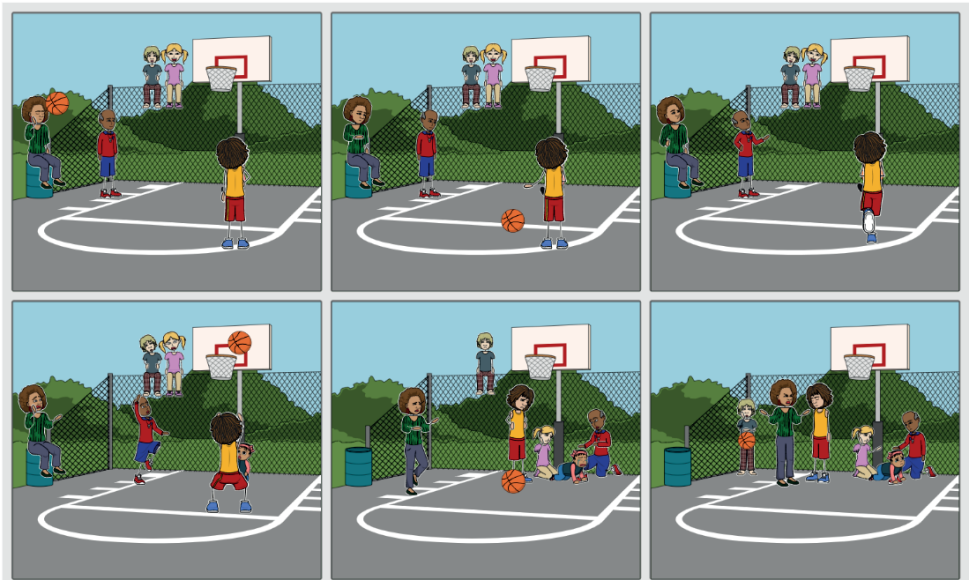

Figure 2. The comic

what they were saying instead of how they were talking.

3.2. The participants

There were altogether 182 people filling out the questionnaire, all of them being under the age of 30, which means that this survey is not representative of the whole population; however, it does yield valuable results concerning the young English-speaking Hungarian population. 58% of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 29, while the others were underaged. 62.6% of them were male, 36.3% female, and 1.1% (i.e. a single person) identified as non-binary. As for their education (completed or in progress), 72% answered high school, 23.1% college or university, and 4.9% primary school. When it comes to their level of English, 37.9% regarded themselves as advanced or proficient (C1 or C1+), 56.6% as intermediate or upper-intermediate (B1 or B2), and 5.4% as beginner or elementary (A1 or A2).

3.3. Data collection

The participants were sent an online questionnaire which included the audio sample of and the same 17 questions regarding each speaker (see Appendix 1). They have completed the questionnaire anonymously.

The questionnaire included two yes-or-no questions; one multiple choice question, twelve questions that contain a five-point semantic scale and one open-ended, opinion-based question that participants had to respond to. The following status traits were investigated: whether the speaker is a native speaker, whether he is from a place where English is official, how decent his English skills are, how understandable he is, what his levels of education and income are, and also how successful and intelligent he is. As for solidarity traits, the following were investigated: how easy it would be to have a conversation with him, how likely the participant would be to ask him for help, how embarrassed the participant would be to overhear him talking, how willing the participant would be to sit next to him, as well as how friendly and confident the speaker is.

A copy of the questionnaire is available on the following link: https://forms.gle/WLfpTjNowrZKVWSP7 – since it is a Google questionnaire, after I had disabled receiving new answers, the questions are no longer visible either. Thus, a copy of the questionnaire was needed to avoid receiving new answers which may change the results of the questionnaire. In this study, only questions relevant to the hypothesis have been studied.

3.4. Data analysis

Different questions were analysed differently. When analysing yes or no and multiple-choice questions, the percentages of the people voting for either answer were calculated. When it comes to the other questions where the scale had to be used, speakers' average scores were calculated. In order to do this, I had to export the results into an excel file.

4. Discussion

In this section, the results of the research will be discussed. As mentioned before, my hypothesis is that non-Inner Circle speakers will receive less favourable ratings than Inner Circle speakers, especially on status traits, and even Outer Circle (ESL) speakers are going to be considered non-native. The speakers are going to be grouped according to which circle they belong to in Kachru's (1992) model. After the speakers' ratings have been discussed individually, differences between status and solidarity traits are going to be investigated.

Before going into detail about each speaker, a general conclusion drawn from the results of the research is that participants rated Inner Circle (i.e. the English, the Scottish and the American) speakers the most favourably in (nearly) all questions. Their results were very similar to each other. The Hungarian speaker achieved fairly good ratings; however, not nearly as good as the Inner Circle speakers. The other three (Indian, Nigerian, Argentinian) speakers received the least favourable results. Their results were also rather similar to each other.

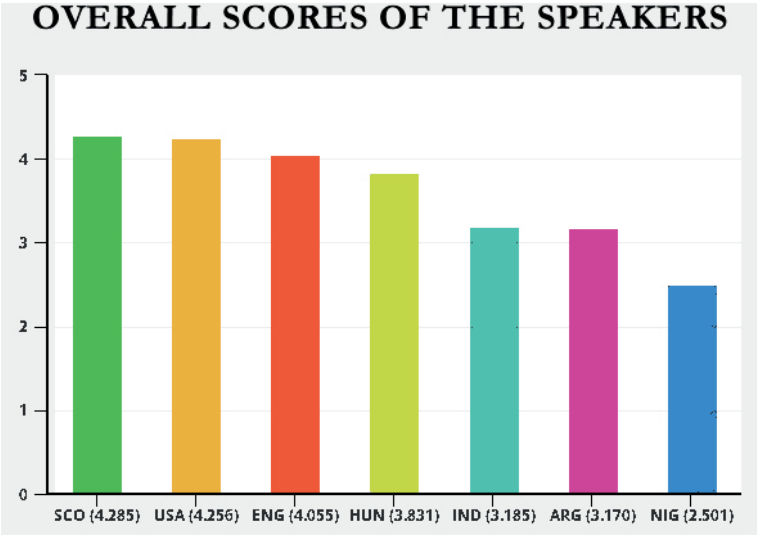

Figure 3. Overall average scores of the speakers.

The speakers can be ranked, according to their results, as Figure 2 shows. It is important to note that when calculating the averages of their results, only those 10 questions were taken into consideration which had to be answered on a scale of 1–5, where 5 was the most favourable option.

Thus, as can be seen in Figure 2, we can differentiate between two groups: the first group, consisting of the Inner Circle speakers, whom the participants regarded as decent native speakers, and the second group, which participants regarded as less decent, non-native speakers. The Hungarian speaker occupies an intermediate position between these two groups.

In what follows, I am going to expand on the results of the individual speakers based on Kachru's (1992) categorisation, breaking them down into three categories: Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle speakers.

4.1. Inner Circle Speakers

The three Inner Circle speakers, namely, the Scottish speaker, the American speaker, and the speaker of a standard British variety undeniably scored the highest.

Participants perceived the Scottish speaker as the most likely to be a native speaker, the most likely to be from a country where the English language has an official status, as well as the most confident, intelligent, and successful speaker, and also the one with the most decent English skills as well as the highest income. He was also considered, as Figure 3 demonstrates, the most educated speaker. This means that participants rated him the most favourably in all questions related to status traits.

When it comes to solidarity traits, there were six questions where the Scottish speaker did not receive the highest ratings. Consequently, we can draw a conclusion that people generally attribute high levels of status traits to different speakers than to whom they attribute high levels of solidarity traits. In other words, it is very unlikely that the speaker with the highest levels of status traits will also be the speaker with the highest levels of solidarity traits.

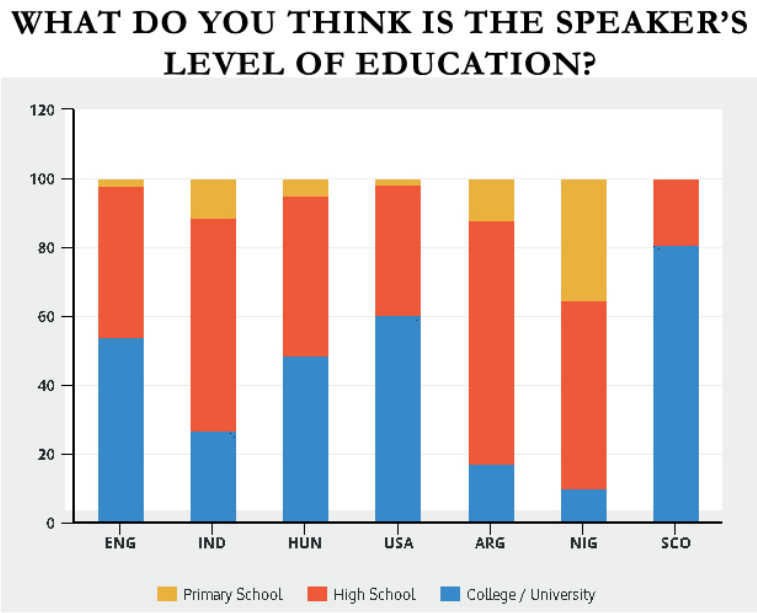

Figure 4. Results of Question 4.

As for the American speaker, he did not achieve any low scores either. According to the results, he would be the easiest to have a conversation with, his English is the easiest to understand, and he is the friendliest speaker. Also, participants would be the most willing to both sit next to him on public transport and ask him for help on the street.

The speaker of standard British English also achieved favourable results; however, he was not rated as favourably as the other two Inner Circle speakers. Participants would be the least embarrassed to talk to him in public, as can be seen on Figure 4. Also, in the question about how willing participants would be to ask him for help on the street, he received 4.49 out of 5 points. Although his scores were not as high as those of the other two Inner Circle speakers, they were certainly higher than those of the speakers from the other two circles.

In most questions, there is a significant difference between the results of Inner Circle speakers and the results of the other speakers. While there must be several explanations for this, I believe that the most relevant one might be that most participants are only used to hearing the Inner Circle standard varieties of English, as these dominate television, social media, popular music, and most media that the younger generations consume. Encountering other varieties might be an unusual experience for an average Hungarian listener, which may result in them giving less favourable ratings.

Also, it is worth noting that while I tried to make the selection of speakers as homogeneous as possible, my options were limited. Thus, there might be differences between the speakers and

their skills. For instance, two of the Inner Circle speakers are teachers, which means that they most probably are not only more educated but they are also likely to have better communication skills than an average speaker of their variety. Also, the speaker of a standard British variety records videos of himself on a regular basis, which provides him a decade-long experience of recording his voice, and that is an undeniable advantage on his side. Moreover, the Scottish speaker in his recording used a more interesting and engaging way of telling the story of the comic than other speakers, who tried to simply and objectively describe what they saw. This seems to have influenced the participants' ratings too. Although this decreases the validity of the findings, a general tendency that Inner Circle speakers receive more favourable ratings than any other speaker still holds its place.

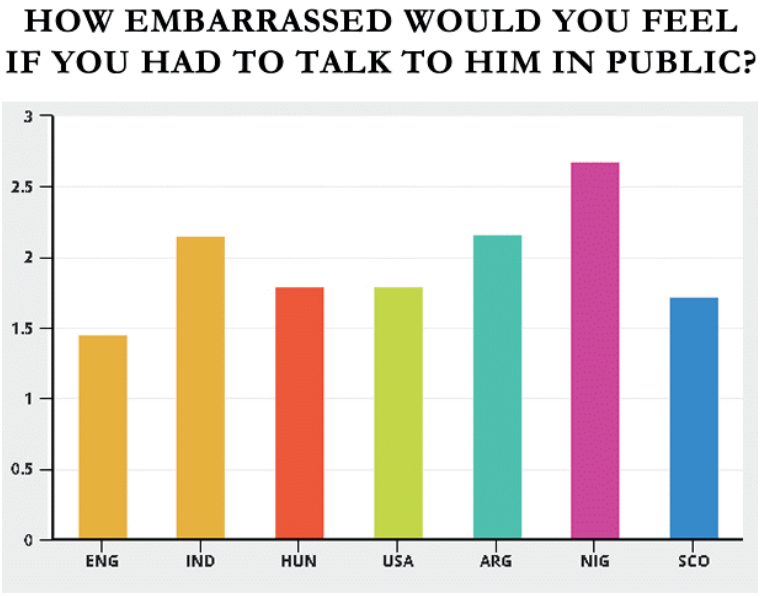

Figure 5. Results of Question 10.

4.2. Outer Circle Speakers

The results of the Outer Circle speakers, namely, the Indian and the Nigerian speakers, were the least favourable on average.

Altogether, the Indian speaker's results only exceeded those of the Argentinian and the Nigerian speakers. He did not achieve first, second or third most favourable results in any of the questions. He was perceived to be the least confident speaker (as can be seen in Figure 5), and he also scored rather low in the case of the questions regarding income and success as well as how bothersome it would be to overhear him talking in a bar, how embarrassing it would be to talk to him in public, and how willing participants would be to sit next to him on public transport.

In Inner Circle countries, especially in the United States, there are commonly held stereotypes of and negative attitudes towards the Indian population and Indian English. To demonstrate some of these negative attitudes, Kutlu and Wiltshire (2020) investigated the attitudes of US citizens towards Indian English, and they found out not only that "participants are aware of linguistic discrimination towards Indian English" (2020: 7), but also that most participants

prefer other Inner Circle varieties over Indian English. As Roy (2016) explains, "[t]he problem is not the accent, it's the stereotypes that come as carryon baggage, in this case job-stealing BPOs, lack of deodorant and pennypinching Patel motels. That's why a French accent is charming and an Indian accent is downmarket snakecharmer."

What is interesting here is that the participants of this study were all from an Expanding Circle country, and their attitudes reflected those of the Inner Circle speakers. Although the majority of the participants most probably had never met, spoken to, or had any real life experience with an Indian speaker of English, their answers still indicated negative attitudes toward Indian English. This is important because it proves that with the language, EFL speakers also acquire other cultural elements, including language attitudes towards different varieties of the language.

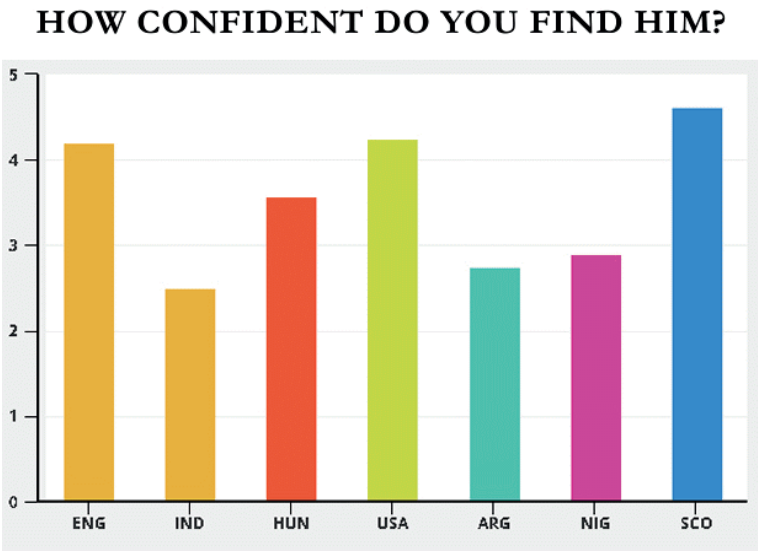

Figure 6. Results of Question 13.

When it comes to the Nigerian speaker, he achieved the least favourable ratings in all except two questions. The only two questions where he did not score the lowest were the one concerned with being from a country where English is official, and the one about confidence, as shown in Figure 5. He also received the most votes for "primary school" (35.2%), which is the least favourable category in the question in connection with education, as can be seen in Figure 3.

Although these results prove the hypothesis right, they are still surprising, especially those of the Nigerian speaker, who scored unexpectedly low on the questions. Both speakers used a strong accent, which clearly indicated that the speakers are not from an Inner Circle country; however, as Figure 6 also demonstrates, 24% of the participants believed that the Hungarian speaker was from a place where English has an official status, which is more than the people together who thought the same when it comes to the Indian, Argentinian and Nigerian speakers.

Lack of familiarity with these varieties is one possible explanation of the Outer Circle speakers' results. Although they both speak English fluently, their varieties differ greatly from

Inner Circle standard varieties, which might make an average listener think that the speakers do not have decent English skills.

Also, when it comes to the Hungarian language, its speakers and its varieties, the numbers are limited. Although there are certain varieties of the language which differ in terms of pronunciation and/or grammar, these differences are not as significant as the differences between, for instance, standard Indian and standard American English. In other words, because variation in the Hungarian language is nowhere near as extensive as variation in English, participants may have believed that the two Outer Circle speakers had learnt the language in school, as part of foreign language instruction, similarly to Expanding Circle speakers.

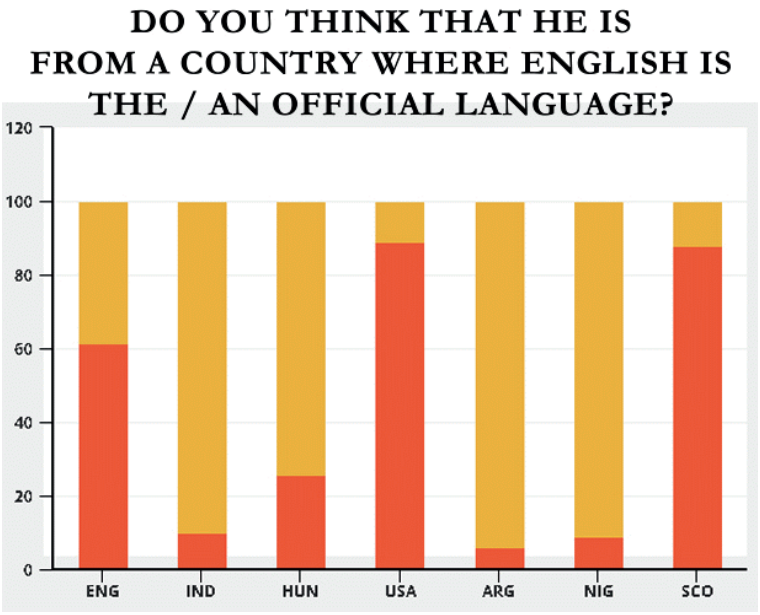

Figure 7. Results of Question 2.

Moreover, it is possible that a great percentage of participants are not aware of English having an official status in Nigeria and/or India. Very little is included about the history and culture of these countries in the Hungarian national curriculum, which might result in the participants thinking that these speakers are speaking what is commonly referred to as broken English, trying to mimic an Inner Circle standard variety. Most probably, if the participants had not lacked information about these countries' history and culture, the results of the questionnaire would have been more favourable when it comes to Outer Circle speakers.

4.3. Expanding Circle Speakers

The results of the two Expanding Circle speakers, namely, the Hungarian, and the Argentinian speakers, are going to be examined independently, as they are greatly different and lead to different possible conclusions.

Interestingly, when it comes to the average of the results of each speaker, the speaker with a strong Hungarian accent is located between the Inner Circle speakers and the other non-Inner Circle speakers. In most of the questions (13 out of 15), his score was between those of the Inner

Circle speakers and the other three speakers. He is certainly not a native speaker of the language, which, as Figure 7 shows, the majority (75.8%) of the participants have realised. However, why he received more favourable results than all other non-Inner Circle speakers needs to be investigated.

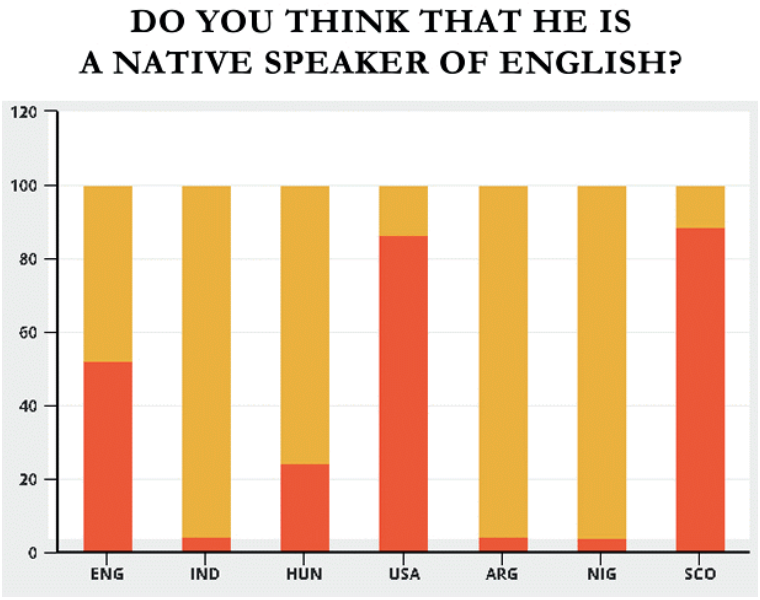

Figure 8. Results of Question 1.

On the one hand, the issue might, again, be explained by the aspect of familiarity. Because an average Hungarian speaker of English encounters this accent often, especially in the learning period (as even some teachers speak English with a noticeable Hungarian accent in this country), participants may simply have got used to this variety, which makes it less alien than other non-Inner Circle varieties.

Another possible explanation could be that people often tend to prefer and privilege their own variety when it comes to solidarity traits (Garrett et al. 2003). Some people may have recognised the Hungarian accent and given the speaker some good points because of it. Some participants may not even have realised that the variety the Hungarian speaker was using is similar to theirs; however, they gave him favourable scores due to unconscious processes.

On average, the Argentinian speaker received the second lowest ratings. Interestingly, he received the most votes for "high school" (70.9%) when it comes to education (as can be seen on Figure 3). His overall score is altogether low; however, participants would be the least bothered to overhear him talking in a bar, as Figure 8 depicts. This is surprising, because when it comes to friendliness, he was rated the second least favourable. Why he received the best ratings on this specific question would need further investigation. On average, his scores are highly similar to those of the Indian speaker, which proves that an average Hungarian speaker of English does not seem to differentiate between Outer Circle speakers and Expanding Circle speakers.

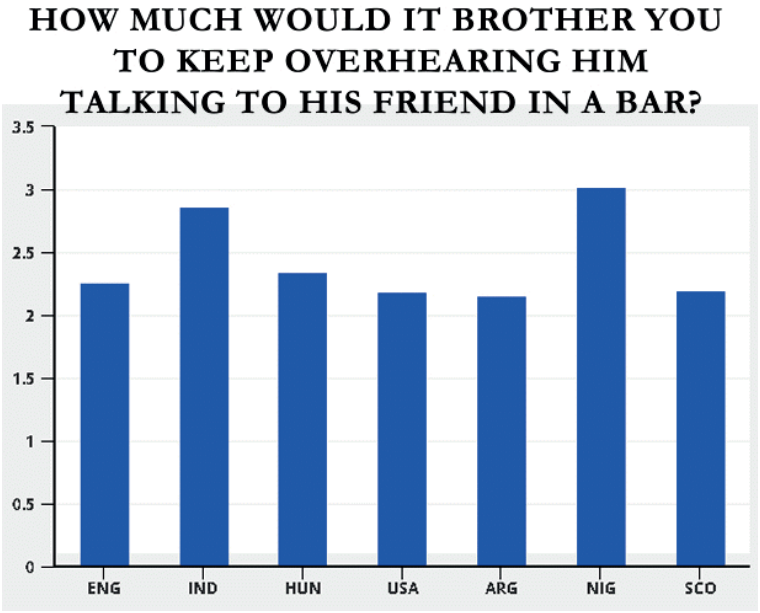

Figure 9. Results of Question 9.

4.4. Tendencies across the three circles

Because the three Inner Circle speakers' ratings were exceedingly better than those of the other speakers, the first part of the hypothesis has been proven. Furthermore, the second part, namely that even native speakers of Outer Circle varieties will be perceived as non-native has also been confirmed, as Figure 7 demonstrates. There were major differences between the results of Inner Circle and non-Inner Circle speakers. One interesting finding is that 24.2% of the participants perceived the Hungarian (Expanding Circle) speaker to be a native speaker, which exceeds the percentages of the Indian, Nigerian (Outer Circle) and the Argentinian (Expanding Circle) speakers by about 20%. As mentioned before, one possible explanation is participants' level of familiarity with certain varieties, while another one is lack of information regarding the status of the English language in the given countries.

Kachru's (1992) model divides speakers of English into three main categories, which challenges our usual way of thinking in binary oppositions (Elbow 1993:53). Because an average Hungarian speaker of English has no background knowledge of sociolinguistics, it is normal that they categorise speakers differently from how Kachru (1992) did it. Also, when it comes to the Hungarian language, a native speaker is thought of as either a person born into a Hungarian family (even if in a minority context) or a person who was born in a Hungarian-speaking area or moved there at a young age. Moreover, Hungary is in Kachru's Expanding Circle, which means that Hungarian people view English in an EFL context. All participants had Hungarian as their mother tongue, which means that they might have used the same perspective when determining who is a native speaker, and anyone who they thought had not been born in an Inner Circle country was considered non-native. In other words, participants saw no difference between Outer Circle speakers and Expanding Circle speakers.

Having explored and interpreted the differences between the results of speakers from different circles of Kachru's (1992) categorisation, the next section will look at the differences between the results of questions regarding status and solidarity traits.

4.5. Status vs. solidarity traits

	1. Do you think he is a native speaker of English?	2. Do you think that he is from a country where English is the / an official language?	4. What do you think is the speaker's level of education?
England	52.0%	61.5%	2.2% PS 44.0% HS 53.8% U
India	4.4%	9.9%	11.5% PS 61.5% HS 26.9% U
Hungary	24.2%	25.8%	4.9% PS 46.7% HS 48.4% U
USA	86.3%	89.0%	1.6% PS 37.9% HS 60.4% U
Argentina	4.4%	6.0%	12.1% PS 70.9% HS 17.0% U
Nigeria	3.8%	8.8%	35.2% PS 54.9% HS 9.9% U
Scotland	88.5%	88.0%	0.0% PS 19.2% HS 80.8% U

Table 1. Results of questions related to status traits

	3. In your opinion, how decent is his English?	5. How high do you think is his income?	6. How easily understandable do you find his English?	14. How intelligent do you find him?	15. How successful do you think the speaker is?
England	4.27	3.36	4.42	3.77	3.75
India	2.87	2.9	3.32	3.49	3.15
Hungary	3.82	3.47	4.26	3.77	3.63
USA	4.61	3.75	4.7	4.01	3.93
Argentina	2.9	2.91	3.31	3.34	3.1
Nigeria	1.98	2.46	1.91	2.87	2.72
Scotland	4.61	3.99	4.41	4.26	4.11

Table 2. Results of more questions related to status traits

Table 1 and Table 2 show the results of the questions related to status traits. Where percentages are shown, the questions were yes-or-no-questions, and the results show the percentage of partic-

ipants who voted for yes. Where numbers between 1 and 5 are depicted, participants were required to use a 5-point Likert scale. In these cases, a higher score meant a more favourable result.

As the tables demonstrate, the Scottish speaker received the most favourable answers for all questions related to status traits. Moreover, the second most favourable results were always those of the American speaker, and the British speaker received the third highest ratings for all questions, except for one. These results perfectly prove the middle part of the hypothesis, which claims that Inner Circle speakers' ratings will exceed non-Inner Circle speakers' ratings, especially when it comes to questions related to status traits.

Possible explanations include, for instance, the commonly held belief that if someone speaks a dominant standard variety of a language, he or she is most probably from a high social class, in a position of power, or someone with high income and respect. Because Inner Circle speakers' varieties are the closest to what an average Hungarian speaker of English encounters in his or her daily life, which is usually a standard Inner Circle variety, certain values, such as *rich, successful, educated,* were attributed to them.

	7. In your opinion, how easy would it be for you to have a conversation with him?	**8. If you were lost, would you ask him to help you find your way?**	**9. How much would it bother you to keep overhearing him talking to his friend in a bar?**	**10. How embarrassed would you feel if you had to talk to him in public?**	**11. Would you like to sit next to him on public transport?**	**12. How friendly do you find him?**	**13. How confident do you find him?**
England	4.42	4.49	2.26	1.45	3.6	4.27	4.2
India	3.23	3.47	2.86	2.15	3.1	3.82	2.5
Hungary	4.05	4.16	2.34	1.79	3.62	3.96	3.57
USA	4.52	4.56	2.19	1.79	3.66	4.57	4.25
Argentina	3.16	3.45	2.16	2.16	3.1	3.68	2.75
Nigeria	1.87	2.32	3.02	2.68	2.7	3.28	2.9
Scotland	4.37	4.49	2.2	1.72	3.56	4.43	4.62

Table 3. Results of questions related to solidarity traits

As can be seen in Table 2, overall, the American speaker received the highest score in four out of seven questions concerning solidarity traits. The British, Scottish and Argentinian speakers scored the highest on the remaining three. Second and third most favourable ratings are shared between the British, Scottish, Hungarian and American speakers. Again, it is important to note that a 5-point Likert-scale was used in these items, where the higher numerical scores indicate a more positive rating, except for questions 9 and 10, where the most favourable results were indicated by low scores.

The results of questions related to solidarity traits are somewhat more diverse than the ones concerned with status traits; however, they are still dominated by Inner Circle speakers. This is interesting, because in a lot of research projects concerning language attitudes there is often an inverse relationship between the two groups: speakers that are attributed high status traits are attributed less solidarity traits, and vice versa. For instance, Xu et al. (1998) concluded that Singaporean Chinese participants rated Mandarin higher in solidarity, but lower in prestige, while English speakers were rated higher in prestige and, but lower in solidarity. (cf. Cavallaro et. al 2009: 144). In this research, this was not the case. Interestingly, the results of the Inner Circle speakers exceeded those of the other speakers in nearly all questions.

Finally, it is also worth noting that the aforementioned benefits (better communication skills, more experience in recording their own voice, etc.) might have provided advantages to Inner Circle speakers, which helped them receive more favourable ratings in solidarity traits-related questions as well.

5. Conclusion

In this paper the language attitudes of Hungarian speakers of English towards different varieties of the English language have been investigated. The hypothesis that Inner Circle speakers would be rated more favourably than non-Inner Circle speakers and every non-Inner Circle speaker would be perceived as non-native was proven.

In general, Inner Circle speakers received the most favourable ratings in nearly all questions, possibly as a result of the aforementioned benefits (better communication skills, more experience in recording their own voice, etc.). In fact, the Scottish speaker received the best ratings in all questions related to status traits, and some other questions as well. of the remaining four speakers, the Hungarian speaker's results were the most favourable. Although I have tried to offer possible explanations for this surprising finding, further research would be needed to prove my assumptions.

The Indian, the Argentinian, and the Nigerian speakers received particularly less favourable results in nearly all questions, and their scores were rather similar to each other. This brings me to the conclusion that Outer Circle and Expanding Circle speakers, from the perspective of an average Hungarian speaker of English, are one homogeneous group of non-native speakers. These results indicate the well known tendency in western cultures to simplify complex relationships and turn them into classic binary oppositions. As Elbow (1993: 51) explains, [t]here is an ancient tradition of binary or dichotomous thinking - of framing issues in terms of opposites such as sun/moon, reason/passion." In this case, it is the simplistic native/non-native dichotomy that helps everyday people frame the highly complex system of the English-speaking world in a comprehensible way, even though it distorts their understanding of the reality.

As for the relevance and importance of the present study, the language attitudes of Expanding Circle speakers toward different varieties of English have scarcely been studied, thus, this research is undoubtedly of considerable importance when it comes to investigating this topic or doing further research in this field.

As has been mentioned before, according to the results of this study, a general tendency can be observed. In Hungary, English is learnt as a foreign language; however, learners of English do not only acquire the language, but also other socio-cultural elements of Inner Circle countries which include language attitudes. The findings clearly indicate that the Expanding Circle reproduces patterns of the Inner Circle language attitudes, reflecting the power relations that differentiate these circles from one another.

However, as has been mentioned before, there are some limitations to the present study, for instance, when it comes to choosing the speakers. Although I tried to make the selection of speakers as homogeneous as possible, there were still differences between them in age, education, experience in recording one's voice, communication skills, and other aspects, which may have distorted the findings to some extent.

Another important remark to make at this point is that this study is not representative of the English-speaking Hungarian population, as the participants were all below the age of 30. Their proficiency in English is also questionable: even though there was a question addressing each participant's level of English, they may not have been able to determine it completely realistically.

Thus, as a future avenue of research, participants could be included in this study from a wider variety of age groups, and their level of English would have to be measured more objectively. Furthermore, to arrive at a more detailed investigation of language attitudes toward Hungarian vs. non-Hungarian speakers of English, speakers with different levels of Hungarian accents could also be included. Also, increasing the number of questions could make it possible to come up with a more detailed conclusion. Finally, the differences between the language attitudes of Outer Circle vs. Expanding Circle speakers toward the same varieties would be another field which could yield valuable findings.

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