Social and educational challenges of international students caused by accented English in the Australian context:
A sociolinguistic analysis of linguistic experience

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Declaration

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or a diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the dissertation itself.

Signed ________________

Eunjae Park
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Abstract

This study investigates the issues that international students studying at tertiary institutions in Australia face due to their accented English. While studies in the field of international education have clearly established the impact of these students’ language difficulties, limited attention has been directed at the issue of the effects of accentedness on L2 tertiary students. International students have to deal with difficulties caused by accented English at two different levels: 1) their own foreign accent or that of their conversation partner, which can result in loss of confidence in their linguistic skills: and 2) negative societal attitudes towards foreign accents. This study adopted a sociolinguistic lens when viewing this issue, providing a richer level of understanding of accent-associated linguistic experience of these students in both social and educational settings.

A mixed-methods approach was employed to access the views of international students. This combined a survey of international students, followed by group interviews, in order to explore the students’ views of their difficulties associated with accentedness, and strategies they used to mitigate those challenges. While the survey captured an overall pattern of the experiences of accentedness and the strategies used to address these issues, the follow-up group interviews added in-depth perspectives on accent-related experiences, beliefs, perceptions and concerns of the students.

The results reported the linguistic experiences of 182 L2 students who were enrolled at three major universities in South East Queensland. Descriptive analysis was used to capture the interesting and unexpected responses of the majority of the participating L2 students. Thematic analysis was employed to account for the issues arising from the survey and achieve a richness in understanding the experiences of these students.

Although the language proficiency of the students was comparatively high, they reported that they still experienced challenges caused by accented English. Diverse communicative strategies as well as coping strategies were employed by the students to overcome communication breakdowns and to integrate with other accented speakers. Notably, accent stereotyping and negative perceptions against accentedness were clearly experienced by this student community. Moreover, accentedness was a salient determinant of friendship formation.

The findings from this study, through the examination of challenges and corresponding strategies identified from the students, provide insights that can inform future policy and practice in this area. In particular, the greater awareness provided by this study, of this previously under
researched aspect of the study experience of international students makes a valuable contribution to policy and practice. Enhanced understanding of these challenges faced by international students is important in the development of university support services for the assistance of future international students at a tertiary education sector. Furthermore, this study also highlights areas for future research in the field of TESOL, language planning, and multicultural communication.
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>L1</strong></td>
<td>First language or mother tongue (e.g., native speakers of English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L2</strong></td>
<td>Second language (e.g., English as a second language speakers or learners)</td>
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</table>
| **ESL** | English as a second language  
In the current study, this abbreviation is frequently used to refer to the learners whose first language is not English, but learning English in English-speaking countries. For example, a Korean student learning English in Australia. |
| **EFL** | English as a foreign language  
In contrast to ESL, the term EFL often refers to learners who learn English where English is not spoken as a first language or mother tongue. For example, a Chinese student learning English in China. |
| **ELF** | English as a lingua franca  
ELF is an abbreviation for ‘English as a lingua franca’. Lingua franca refers to the language that enables daily communication taking place between people who have different first language backgrounds. English is the most common lingua franca, followed by French and other languages that are used widely (Crystal, 2008). |
| **EIL** | English as an international language  
In the same manner as ELF, English is spoken by not only native speakers, but also speakers with non-mainstream varieties of English (Scales, Wennerstrom, Richard, & Wu, 2006). ‘English as an international language’ reflects the role of English in the world’s communication in today’s globalized and internationalized world (Scales et al., 2006). |
| **Accent** | In linguistic papers, the distinction is important. Accent is a certain feature of a spoken language and manner of pronunciation refers to a particular way of speech which makes it possible to identify where a speaker comes from locally or socially (Crystal, 2008). We could have regional or local accents, social economic status accents which may be dependent on educational, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds (Crystal, 2008). In this current study, foreign accent is the main focus which refers to accent of L2 learners or speakers while they speak their second language. |
| **Pronunciation** | “Pronunciation refers to the production of sounds that we use to make meaning” (Gilakjani, 2012, p. 96). “This includes the particular sounds of a language (segments), aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual sound, such as intonation, phrasing, stress, timing, rhythm (suprasegmental aspects) and how the voice is projected (voice quality)” (Gilakjani, 2012, p. 96). |
| **Intelligibility** | Intelligibility is the extent to which speakers’ speech is understood by interlocutors (Munro & Derwing, 1999). |
Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

In recent years, Australia has become a global leader in international education (Harmon, 2015). Australia as a tertiary education exporter in the international market is ranked after the United States and the United Kingdom (Harmon, 2015). As a result, tertiary education in Australia is the third largest contributor to the economy after transport and tourism (Harmon, 2015; Sawir, 2005), with the number of international students coming to Australia rapidly increasing (Telbis, Helgeson, & Kingsbury, 2014). These students frequently encounter a wide range of academic and social transitional issues while adjusting to new learning and social environments (Andrade, 2006). One of the biggest and the most urgent challenges for international students, who speak English as a second language, are language related problems in their social and academic environment (Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000; Zhang & Mi, 2010).

While interactions with others provide a significant support mechanism for students integrating into their new social and educational surroundings (Lacina, 2002), communication difficulties such as speaking and listening can impose substantial limitations on these students as they establish social network and seek to become actively involved in their learning (Andrade, 2006; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Thus, communication skills are absolutely essential for these students due to the importance of the language use in the classroom setting and other social contexts (Sawir, 2005). Limited English proficiency of students, especially in relation to speaking and listening, essential elements of communication, can be the greatest barrier to these students, resulting in social exclusion (Andrade, 2006; Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Although no studies have focused on the issue of accent alone, accent has been identified as one element of language difficulties (Campbell & Li, 2008; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Lacina, 2002; Leong, 2015; Malau-Aduli, 2011; Sherry, Thomas, & Chui, 2010; Sicat, 2011). In particular, understanding the lecturer’s accent has been raised as one of the language barriers for international students in their academic experience (Campbell & Li, 2008; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Malau-Aduli, 2011). Sicat (2011) also found that not only do students experience difficulties in understanding their second language but also in understanding different accents, that is, each other’s accents influencing communication and lecturers’ accents. Another noteworthy aspect of accentedness is that it can impact negatively
on students’ friendship formation due to accent stereotyping and discrimination against those with accented speech (Lacina, 2002). Munro and Derwing (1998) also reported that some non-native English speakers encounter numerous aspects of discrimination due to their accent.

Accent can make communication complex (Munro, Derwing, & Morton, 2006). Second language (L2) speech containing grammar or lexical errors can still be easily understood; whereas, unintelligible speech cannot (Gilakjani, 2012). This being so, Gilakjani (2012) highlighted that speech intelligibility can cause miscommunication. Some researchers have concluded that accent is the most salient skill within spoken English language as accent-related problems weaken communicative competence (Gilakjani, Ahmadi, & Ahmadi, 2011; Hinofotis & Bailey, 1980; Lin, 2014), and this can be the root of racism and other types of discrimination (Derwing & Munro, 2009). Studies found that L2 speakers of English with different levels of English proficiency employ various strategies to repair communication breakdowns such as paraphrasing, self-repetition and the use of synonyms (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; López, 2011; Osburne, 2003). However, the target participants of these studies were not L2 international students, but students at different levels of English proficiency in English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) context - thus facing different pressures than international higher education students.

A small number of studies have analyzed corresponding coping strategies of L2 international students to mitigate the linguistic challenges they faced (Huang & Klinger, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Malau-Aduli, 2011). In particular, two Australian studies highlighted difficulties caused by verbal communication skills including accentedness (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Malau-Aduli, 2011). Since the focus of these studies was not accent specific, the coping strategies identified did not appear to specifically relate to accent-related issues, for example, joining a club and interacting with local people more often.

Despite the fact that L2 students face various linguistic difficulties, the majority complete their study successfully and experience social interactions in Australian society throughout their study period. According to Lin (2002), international students develop their own strategies in order to mitigate challenges they face; however, the characteristics of coping strategies of L2 tertiary students have not been closely investigated. Therefore, this study focuses on providing greater understanding of accent-related issues of L2 international students in an integrated manner, and complements the growing body of research in this area. Accent-related issues addressed in this study are: 1) accentedness as one of the communication difficulties for
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L2 students, 2) accent as a trigger of stereotyping and discrimination, and 3) how students mitigate those challenges.

Given the current wave of international education in Australia as well as the consistently growing number of L2 international students studying in Australia, this study seeks to explore some of the key issues faced by these students as a focus for an enhanced understanding of language in society. The current study is considered broadly sociolinguistic in nature as a central concern is the relationship between language and society. Thus, the concept of linguistic capital will be employed as both a theoretical and explanatory tool in considering the impact of accent on L2 international students in Australia.

Aim of the study and research questions

The main objective of this research was to explore an element of the language difficulties experienced by L2 international students - specifically that of accented English. This mixed-methods study sought to unpack the social and educational challenges caused by accented English in the Australian context. Additionally, the use and perceived value of corresponding strategies to achieve communicative success and social harmony were explored.

The research questions were designed to gain insight into the issues experienced by L2 international students in relation to accentedness and identify strategies they found effective to mitigate those challenges. This research responds to the following research questions:

1) What social and educational challenges caused by accented English do international students (competent users of English) in Australia experience?
2) What communicative strategies do they use to overcome communication issues?
3) What coping strategies do they use to support these issues?

The answers to these questions will extend our understanding of the accent-related issues faced by L2 international students and inform the existing research on language difficulties of L2 tertiary students as well as accent studies in Australia.

Significance of the study

International education makes a significant contribution to Australian economy, and international students make valuable contributions to educational and economic advancement (Sawir, 2005). In order to capture these benefits, it is essential to focus on the social and
educational difficulties experienced by these students (Sawir, 2005). Any improvements based on their experience can, not only enhance the positive reputation of Australian universities, but also ensure sustained benefits (Sawir, 2005).

“Studying abroad is not without its challenges” (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011, p. 203). A wide range of stressors have been identified and these stressors can be attributed to the students’ adjustment difficulties, which can severely impact on their learning and wellbeing (Huang & Klinger, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). However, many international students are still successful in completing their academic studies and eventually contribute to society (Huang & Klinger, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). For successful progress, these students need to know how to use their knowledge and skills (Huang & Klinger, 2006). The examination of coping strategies used by participating students will assist and guide future international students along with enhancing university support services for this student group (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011).

As accent is raised as one of the communication difficulties for these students, it is worthy of further investigation. Accent stereotyping and discrimination against accented speech have been controversial and have given rise to a trend to improve negative attitudes towards accented speech (Jenkins, 2000). Therefore, it is important to better understand such attitudes towards the accentedness of international students in both social and educational contexts in order to better support students in their existing studies.

**Structure of the thesis**

The organization of this thesis is as follows: Chapter 2 discusses the research literature about accent-related issues in social and educational settings. Accent as one of the linguistic difficulties as well as the sociolinguistic aspects of accentedness are explored. In addition, the findings of the studies of communication strategies and supportive coping strategies to mitigate challenges are addressed. Chapter 3 presents the methodology for the current study. It explains how this study was carried out and the ways in which data was analyzed. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the study with each research question answered accordingly, using the results of the survey and the follow-up group interviews. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the issues raised by the participating L2 international students and provides the conclusions from the study. It also identified limitations in the study and outlines possible directions for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

This chapter introduces the pertinent literature regarding language difficulties of L2 international students in higher education and a relationship between language and society. It draws on literature focusing on accented English originated from communication barriers and its consequences for L2 international students. In considering social issues associated with accented English such as accent stereotyping and negative perceptions against accentedness, the societal aspects of accentedness in both social and educational settings are reviewed. In this research, accented English is treated as one of the elements, causing linguistic and social challenges due to linguistic diversity of these students. This chapter then addresses diverse strategies developed and employed by L2 students to mitigate those challenges, which led to successful study experience.

This review firstly introduces the theoretical framework used in this study and examines the literature regarding international students’ language difficulties, particularly, communication issues and challenges that are caused by accented English. The concept of ‘linguistic capital’, developed from Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) Theory of Capital, is used as a lens to analyze the research focus for a deeper understanding of the foundational concerns of the current study. It highlights several sociolinguistic studies on the challenges and difficulties that occur as a result of non-standard accent in social and educational settings. It then describes communicative strategies that non-native speakers of English at different levels of proficiency employ in order to overcome communication difficulties. The final section discusses coping strategies of international students to mitigate those challenges.

Theoretical Framework

Sociolinguistics is the systematic study of the relationships between language and society (Cook, 2003; Wardhaugh, 2010). The current study can be broadly conceptualized as sociolinguistic in nature. Several studies which investigated language attitudes in the field of sociolinguistics stressed significant problems in relation to societal attitudes towards foreign accent (Dewaele & McCloskey, 2015; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Kinzler, Shutts, DeJesus, & Spelke, 2009; Tsurutani, 2012). Pierre Bourdieu’s conceptualization of capital provides a lens for us to think about how accent plays out in international students’ lives (Bourdieu, 1986). This study will consider how accented linguistic L2 production pertains to linguistic capital.
The following section will provide an overview of sociolinguistics as an overarching theoretical framework. It will then describe Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of capital as developed in the concept of ‘linguistic capital’ as a theoretical lens for this research (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991).

**Sociolinguistics: the study of language and society**

While language is used for communication, transmitting and conveying meaning, the use of language can be complex (Chacón Beltrán, 2013). One reason is that language is also used to establish and preserve social relationships (Chacón Beltrán, 2013). In this sense, the clarity of language is essential because the speaker is in a social environment and their relationship with the other members of their speech community is related to social phenomenon (Chacón Beltrán, 2013). Due to the complexity of human relationships, speech patterns vary and the way of transmitting messages is affected by who they are talking to, especially when social hierarchy is involved (Chacón Beltrán, 2013).

Sociolinguistics is defined as the systematic study of the relationship between language and society with the purpose of establishing a better understanding of both the structure of language and its role within communication (Cook, 2003; Wardhaugh, 2010). Variety is seen as a central theme of sociolinguistics (Chacón Beltrán, 2013; Coulmas, 2005). In terms of sociolinguistics, the most significant information is “the way social and situational factors affect language and make it vary” (Chacón Beltrán, 2013, p. 27). For example, listeners may be able to recognize the variables of a speaker such as gender, age, geographical location and social or ethnic origin due to the variety of language they use (Chacón Beltrán, 2013). Sociolinguists are interested in why people speak differently depending on the social context, how language functions in society and the ways the language is used to deliver social meaning (Holmes, 2008).

Sociolinguistics encompasses two approaches; ‘micro-sociolinguistics and ‘macro-sociolinguistics’. Coulmas (2005) stated that ‘micro-sociolinguistics’ refers to how social structure impacts on the way people talk and how language varieties and patterns of use correlate with social attributes such as class, gender and age. ‘Macro-sociolinguistics’ examines what societies do with their languages, for example, the attributes and attachments accounting for “the distribution of speech forms, language shift, maintenance, replacement and the delimitation and interaction of speech communities” (Coulmas, 2005, p. 2). To put it
another way, micro-studies investigate finer patterns in context (e.g., conversational structure or accent in a particular community) and macro-studies examine large-scale patterns with regard to social structure when the focus is extensive (e.g., multilingualism in a country) (Mesthrie, 2009). The relationship between ‘micro-sociolinguistics’ and ‘macro-sociolinguistics’ is complex and it is the research task of many sociolinguists. Chacón Beltrán (2013) noted that language and society have many possible bidirectional relations.

According to Wardhaugh (2010), studies in the field of sociolinguistics bring together linguists and sociologists to scrutinize social issues involving language and its use. However, scholars in diverse fields become involved in sociolinguistics (Wardhaugh, 2010). For example, anthropologists study kinship systems, beliefs and cultural practices and psychologists investigate the effects of language and its structure on social and psychological behaviors such as motivation, attitudes and language disabilities (Wardhaugh, 2010). In addition, many educators should take sociolinguistics into account when making decisions about issues including teaching and learning of language and language issues in the classroom (Wardhaugh, 2010). Sociologists have been actively involved in studying attitudes and practices in speech communities (Wardhaugh, 2010). Language planners and policymakers should have substantial linguistic knowledge when making decisions about which language variety to promote, standardize and use in education and so forth (Wardhaugh, 2010).

**Sociolinguistic studies in language attitudes**

Language attitudes refer to the feelings people have in regards to their own language and the language of others (Crystal, 2003a; Parveen & Mehmood, 2013). Attitudes towards a particular language can be acquired or formed by society in different ways (Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011). For example, “by hearing others refer to groups or people, including their languages and cultures, in certain manner, and through exposure to particular varieties and instructions reflecting teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and choices” (Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011, p. 392). Even though particular language attitudes are often related to hypothetical and psychological formation, such attitudes reflect the reality of language life (Parveen & Mehmood, 2013). With this in mind, language attitudes may affect L2 learners’ learning behaviors, motivation, language practices and successful acquisition of a target language (Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011).

Studies in the field of sociolinguistics, particularly language and attitudes, have identified that native speakers of English tend to be attracted to speakers who share their native accent,
whereas, they react negatively towards speakers with non-standard English accents (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011). Negative views on foreign accented English in English-speaking countries have been reported in a few studies (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011). Even though none of the varieties of English is considered superior to others (Kirkpatrick, Deterding, & Wong, 2008), discrimination against speakers with foreign accented speech has been noted as an issue, triggering a trend to mitigate negative views on accentedness of speakers of non-standard varieties (Jenkins, 2000; Tsurutani, 2012).

As sociolinguists are interested in the relationship between language and society, sociolinguistics is a theoretical lens well placed to consider issues of interest to this study. Although sociolinguistics is not primarily concerned with language learning and teaching, it has been a strong contributor to language learning theories (Hornberger & McKay, 2010). English is an international language (EIL); it is no longer only the property of the speakers who speak the language as a mother tongue within English-speaking countries (Richards, 2015). This is in no small way related to the role of English as a powerful mechanism in the context of the international economy in this present era (Richards, 2015). Hornberger and McKay (2010) noted that globalization had a major impact on the field of sociolinguistics. Due to the current globalization, individuals within their countries or across borders are motivated to learn new languages and identities (Hornberger & McKay, 2010). This fluid context of shifting language raises interesting questions of the relationship between language(s) and society (ies).

**Bourdieu's linguistic capital**

Most international students at a tertiary education level in Australia are either bilingual or multilingual. Being able to speak more than one language is a valuable asset not only for individuals but also for the world economy (Morrison & Lui, 2000; Park, 2011). Despite this, no matter how proficient these students are, their foreign accent may impede their learning and may impact people’s perceptions of them, generating negative social consequences and academic challenges. The concept of ‘linguistic capital’ is a mechanism through which to understand the experience of these students.

Linguistic capital derives from Bourdieu’s view of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; lisahunter, Smith, & emerald, 2015; Morrison & Lui, 2000). Cultural capital refers to the culturally valuable possessions and socially worthwhile practices of a field (lisahunter et al., 2015). Cultural capital may denote “qualifications one attains, the
type of schools or university one attends, the possessions one has that may reflect one’s social class, a distinction more clearly embodied in some cultures than others” (lisahunter et al., 2015, p. 13). In schooling and education, the notion of cultural capital has been used to describe the ways in which some students have the cultural background and propensities (Morrison & Lui, 2000). For example, “positive attitudes to school, motivation, parental support, social advantage, ease in dealing with authority, high culture and linguistic facility” (Morrison & Lui, 2000, p. 473), so that when they are exposed to the institutional practices and knowledge of schooling, they easily and comfortably ‘fit in’ and can take full advantage of schooling (Morrison & Lui, 2000). Bourdieu shows how the possession of such cultural capital gives students an advantage in making full use of education (Morrison & Lui, 2000).

Morrison and Lui (2000) describe linguistic capital as “the aspects of fluency in and comfortable use of, a high-status, world-wide language which is used by groups who possess high economic, social, cultural and political power as well as status in local and global society” (2000, p.473). Linguistic capital can result in enriched life opportunities (Morrison & Lui, 2000). This is because linguistic capital, like other types of capital (social, cultural, symbolic) is valuable and exchangeable in a market economy (Morrison & Lui, 2000). This is particularly true in the case of the EFL context, for example, as English holds a crucial place as a cross cultural common language (Crystal, 2003b; Morrison & Lui, 2000); English proficiency is a valuable component in obtaining a more competitive edge for individuals as well as nations in the current era of globalization (Joe & Lee, 2013). In short, linguistic capital can be translated or traded for economic capital (lisahunter et al., 2015). A good command of English paves the way for lucrative careers, not only within many non-English speaking countries, but in the world economy (Morrison & Lui, 2000; Park, 2011).

The English language is a valuable form of linguistic capital for both native and non-native speakers. For non-native speakers it can act as an influential mechanism for social integration and economic betterment (Park, 2011). However, as noted earlier, bilingual speakers of English with a foreign accent appear to be devalued to some extent in English-speaking contexts. Bourdieu and Thompson (1991, p. 55) stated that “speakers lacking the legitimate competence are de facto excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence”. Although international students who have been officially accepted to enroll at universities in English speaking countries must have met the minimum English language requirements and, as such, should be comparatively competent and capable of managing their study in their second language, their accent may still prove a hindrance both academically and socially. In keeping with Bourdieu’s encouragement
to use his theory as both a theory and a method, lisahunter et al. (2015, p. 12) noted that “Bourdieu’s theoretical framework also offers a way to analyze the enduring behaviors, characteristics and cultural practices of social groups”.

**Language Barriers for International Students**

The population of international students in Australia is rapidly growing (Telbis et al., 2014). The third largest industry in Australia is education, and some universities’ faculties are comprised of nearly 50% of students whose first language is not English (Sawir, 2005; Storch & Hill, 2008). Generally, students undertake study in tertiary education institutions in pursuit of greater academic achievement and this entails an adjustment to new academic and social environments (Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008). Several challenges have been identified for international students including issues such as language-related problems, cultural differences, social isolation, financial needs, racial discrimination, alienation, homesickness, and academic performance stress (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Telbis et al., 2014; Yeh & Inose, 2003). However, Mori (2000), Yi and Lin (1997) recognized that for the majority of international students, language difficulties can be the most challenging of all the difficulties, because lack of English language skills can cause academic challenges, which can also lead to psychological anxiety. More specifically, Sawir (2005) insisted that more than any other skill, communication skills are particularly important due to the importance of language in the classroom setting and other social contexts.

The language difficulties for international students identified in this section focus on the consequences of communication difficulties and, further, how accent in particular impacts these students lives in social and educational settings.

**Consequences of communication issues**

International students often encounter not only academic but also social transition issues (Andrade, 2006). A growing body of literature has emphasized English language proficiency as an essential component of international students’ success in both education and social contexts (Andrade, 2006; Sherry et al., 2010; Yeh & Inose, 2003). International students in academic settings require verbal communication skills, facilitating opportunities to participate in academic group discussion, seminars and tutorials (Jones, 1999). It is probable that students with a higher level of English proficiency will perform better in class as they may feel comfortable with verbal communication in their second language and hence, take an active
part in speech-related learning activities (Kao & Gansneder, 1995; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Additionally, as Barratt and Huba (1994) found, students who are fluent in English may be less embarrassed or conscious about their accent and ethnicity. Non-native students of English interact with local students whose first language is English, however, this can be problematic in terms of not only miscommunication but also lack of communication (Jones, 1999). For this reason, international students often remain exclusively in enclaves with fellow nationals (Yeh & Inose, 2003).

The greatest barrier experienced by international students appears to be their ability to become involved socially with other students and this can often be attributed to lack of English speaking proficiency (Andrade, 2006; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Studies that investigated international students’ adjustment factors highlighted language barriers, especially speaking and listening (Campbell & Li, 2008; Leong, 2015; Sherry et al., 2010). The findings of all the studies indicate that establishing new social networks was an important factor for international students’ adjustment to a new environment (Campbell & Li, 2008; Leong, 2015; Sherry et al., 2010). Unfortunately, students’ lack of speaking fluency can affect the formation of a new social network and result in social exclusion (Andrade, 2006; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). Although cultural differences may hinder forming friendship with local students (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992), interactions with other pupils provide a medium for international students to integrate into their university life, consequently establishing new social networks (Lacina, 2002).

Table 2-1 summarizes three particular studies, conducted by Campbell and Li (2008), Sherry et al. (2010) and, Leong (2015) that investigated the English difficulties that international students experienced studying at universities in English-speaking countries. The most commonly emphasized contributory factors to students’ difficulties were language barriers and cultural differences (Campbell & Li, 2008; Leong, 2015; Sherry et al., 2010). Each study addressed the aspects of cultural barriers with the findings very similar in relation to cultural-related difficulties. In contrast, in terms of language difficulties of speaking and listening, the studies had slightly different results. Specifically, accent was only raised by one of the studies as one of the challenges for international students in their academic setting. Apparently, accent studies, focusing on the students are limited in number and the number of participants in the studies is also low.
Table 2-1. A summary of international students’ language difficulties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>English difficulties</th>
<th>Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leong, 2015</td>
<td>Qualitative (Interview)</td>
<td>11 International students</td>
<td>Speaking and listening for communication</td>
<td>An American University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherry, Thomas &amp; Chui, 2010</td>
<td>Qualitative (Internet-based research)</td>
<td>121 respondents</td>
<td>Speaking &amp; Knowledge of slangs and idioms</td>
<td>An American University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell &amp; Li, 2008</td>
<td>Qualitative (Semi-structured interviews)</td>
<td>22 Asian international students</td>
<td>Speaking and listening proficiency &amp; Lecturers’ accent</td>
<td>A New Zealand University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 4th column indicates aspects of English difficulties each study identified. The identified difficulties in spoken English language are pertinent to this study, although the language barriers examined in these studies were not specifically accent-related. The findings of Sherry et al. (2010) noted that international students emphasized spoken language more than written language as their central language problem along with the desire to learn slang and idioms for social interactions with local students. Additionally, Leong (2015) indicated that lack of fluency in the English language, especially speaking and listening, led to miscommunication, misunderstanding and resulted in students being socially isolated.

Likewise, the findings of the research carried out by Campbell and Li (2008) concentrating on Asian international students also addressed speaking and listening proficiency. Interestingly, they claimed that the lecturer’s accent was a significant challenge for these students. This can be attributed to the type of English they had been exposed to in their homelands, such as British or American English (Campbell & Li, 2008). Indeed, Campbell and Li (2008) found that listening to strongly accented lecturers was challenging for these students, noting that even students who had been in New Zealand for more than two years still had difficulty in understanding the lecture content because of the strong accent of lecturers.

The studies were predominantly conducted by a single method, usually a qualitative approach. The internet-based research included open-ended and closed questions in the survey which takes less advantage of the benefits of the ‘face-to-face format in enhancing the quality of data. The findings and results would have been more generalizable if participants from diverse geographical, cultural and first language backgrounds were chosen.
Foreign accent of international students

Having a foreign accent is a common aspect of second language acquisition, especially when L2 speakers acquire their second language after their childhood (Munro, Derwing, & Morton, 2006). Although it is a normal process, the impacts of an accent on L2 students’ communication experience within their community are varied. In other words, accent is a cause of miscommunication (Derwing & Munro, 2009). Moreover, in some cases, their foreign sounding accents have been linked to stereotyping and linguistic discrimination, which could influence the social adjustment of students.

According to Dörnyei and Kormos (1998), in L2 communication, lexicon, grammar and phonology are identified as resource deficits. However, Gilakjani (2012) stressed that speech intelligibility can cause miscommunication rather than the other resources. This is because speech containing lexical or grammatical errors can often still be understood, whereas, speech with unintelligible patterns of sounds may not be understood easily (Gilakjani, 2012). In other words, with the presence of a “foreign accent on the phonological level can influence other linguistic levels such as lexicon, grammar and so forth” (Coulmas, 2005, p. 111). With this in mind, it is evident that accent-related problems can weaken communicative competence and have a flow on effect, with some researchers concluding that accent is the most significant issues of spoken English language (Gilakjani et al., 2011; Hinofotis & Bailey, 1980; Lin, 2014).

Previous studies with international students (Table 2-1) were not specifically concerned with accent, but speaking in general (Campbell & Li, 2008; Leong, 2015; Sherry et al., 2010). It may be suggested from the research on accent that accented English can be an issue for students on two fronts: 1) students own accent causing communication difficulties; and 2) students’ understanding of others’ accents. It is apparent that even though factors such as not knowing frequently used English expressions may lead to communication breakdown for international students, accent particularly hampers interactions with others (Lacina, 2002). Sicat (2011) found that the most common difficulties among Asian international students enrolled at a university in the Philippines were their inability to follow their lectures and participate in class. This has been attributed to both struggles in understanding their second language and the issue of understanding different accents - each other’s accents and the lecturers’ accents (Sicat, 2011). This result is consistent with another qualitative research conducted in Australia. Many students at Australian universities experienced a major problem understanding their lecturers’ Australian regional accent, which frequently interfered with their
social and educational challenges of international students caused by accented English in the Australian context

studies (Kell & Vogl, 2007; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). Furthermore, students also expressed that they had an issue with people’s understanding of their accent, which led to an embarrassing moment for both speakers (Kell & Vogl, 2007; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011).

Due to the presence of discrimination against language difference, particularly accentedness, the formation of new social networks is not always straightforward (Lacina, 2002). Moreover, non-native speakers of English, from time to time, are evaluated negatively or discriminated against because of their different patterns of speech (Munro et al., 2006). Indeed, the same holds true for international students. Lacina (2002) asserted that language discrimination caused by foreign accent obstructs many international students as they adjust to new social surroundings.

To sum up, although none of the studies focused on accent alone, it is possible to posit that accented speech may have a negative impact on international students who are required to have a good command of English for their studies and their adjustment in a foreign country. For a deeper understanding of how accent functions with international students’ university life, empirical and practical approaches need to be employed in order to examine this matter further in tertiary education settings.

Attitudes towards Non-native Varieties of English

Accents may be a salient element that is detectable in social interactions serving as a momentum for social categorization (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010; Massey & Lundy, 2001; Seyedabadi, Fatemi, & Pishghadam, 2015). Accents are the most powerful determinants of speakers’ nationality, ethnic or socioeconomic group, and non-standard accents potentially provoke listeners’ perceptions of characteristics that they relate to the group (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011). Unfortunately, accents can give rise to stereotypes and prejudice with regard to ethnic groups or countries, either where the accent has a strong ethnic identity or is associated with other multinational groups (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010). In fact, myriads of non-native speakers of English in the world successfully communicate whilst having a non-standard accent (Munro, 2008). Foreign accents are not a speech or language disorder, and it is hard to judge if one accent is superior to another (Kremenchugsky, 2013). In reality, however, accent has been blamed for miscommunication and can be at the root of racism and other kinds of discrimination (Derwing & Munro, 2009).
A long history of immigration to English-speaking countries has generated social issues in relation to discrimination against non-standard accented speakers due to accent stereotyping (Tsurutani, 2010). In effect, foreign accented English speakers are often regarded as less educated or less reliable as native English speakers and low in intelligence (competence) (Kinzler et al., 2009; Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010; Tsurutani, 2012). Crawford (2000) asserted that accents, which are from the norms of L2 speakers of English, are not tolerable for many first language (L1) speakers because linguistically unsophisticated speech is not favored and evokes stereotypes. Owing to such stereotypes, the typical societal impression of foreign accent is frequently ‘unintelligible’ (Munro & Derwing, 1999). Besides, native speakers of English often judge that a non-standard English speakers’ accent is less prestigious than theirs (Dewaele & McCloskey, 2015; Lindemann, 2005).

Negative social attitudes towards foreign-sounding accents impact on non-native speakers’ lives adversely. The following section will examine issues raised by attitudes towards foreign accents in society together with both native English speakers’ and non-native speakers’ perspectives on accented English.

Societal attitudes and perspectives of foreign accents

In general, the stereotype pertaining to foreign accented speakers is that they are not sufficiently educated and not as interesting or trustworthy as native speakers of English (Kinzler et al., 2009; Tsurutani, 2012). Lev-Ari and Keysar (2010) ascertained that people with a foreign accent are believed to be less reliable when listeners face any difficulty in understanding caused by L2 speakers’ poor fluency. In addition, such loss of credibility may have an insidious effect on speakers who normally interact with others in their second language (Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010). According to Eisenchlas and Tsurutani (2011), research has revealed that L1 speakers tend to judge L2 speakers with a foreign accent as low in intelligence (competence), but attractive socially. Even among children in the United States, a non-standard accent is a more negative signal than nationality, and young children in both the United States and France prefer being friends with other native speakers with the same accent of their native language (Kinzler et al., 2009).

Cargile’s (1997) study in the American context focused on attitudes towards Chinese- accented speech in two different sites: a job interview and a classroom setting. Cargile (1997) concluded that context was essential to the degree of tolerance for accent. In the job situation,
accented speech was not an influential factor in estimating candidates’ status or dynamism, whereas the same accent resulted in low expectations of their suitability and ability in a classroom context (Cargile, 1997). In contrast, Munro (2003) reported that recently confirmed human rights cases about accent discrimination arose out of an educational setting in Canada. A substitute teacher who had a Polish accent but did not have any communication problems in English was adversely evaluated in terms of his English by his administrator (Munro et al., 2006). A human rights tribunal ascertained that his employment was rejected because of his accent and compensation was awarded as a result (Munro et al., 2006).

Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) scrutinized perceptions of accented speech of native and non-native English speakers in America. Their first study looked at perceptions of non-native speakers of English with regard to stigmatization, discrimination and issues in communication. As part of the “English with Accent” survey aspect of the study, non-native participants responded that on a regular basis, they experience stigmatization and issues in communication (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Notably, in the second study, the researchers explored social perceptions of accented English of 88 participants, both non-native and native speakers (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). This study revealed that non-native speakers in America have less feeling of belonging to their society (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Furthermore, in the assessment of accented English, native speakers manifested biases and discrimination against accented speech (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010).

It is not necessarily the case that negative evaluation of non-native varieties of English exclusively originates from native speakers of English. Previous studies on ESL or EFL learners’ perspectives on their own foreign accented English demonstrated that not only native English speakers, but also non-native English speakers highly endorse a native variety rather than non-native varieties, and are unwilling to accept their own and other non-native English accents (Chiba, Matsuura, & Yamamoto, 1995; Fraser, 2006; Matsuda, 2003; Timmis, 2002).

Fayer and Krasinski (1987) found that non-native speakers of English showed more negative reactions, such as annoyance and intolerance, towards speakers with foreign accents than to native speakers of English. Likewise, in the British context, adult multilingual language users who were at a high level of language proficiency had unfavorable attitudes towards foreign accent, not only their own, but also the foreign accent of others (Dewaele & McCloskey, 2015). The findings of this study indicated that gender had no impact on attitude towards their own accent with the exception of female participants being more bothered by it. However, education level and age were considerably associated with pessimistic attitudes.
towards foreign accent (Dewaele & McCloskey, 2015). It was younger and more-educated participants who were more bothered by other people’s foreign accent; whereas, educational level had no impact on the attitudes towards their own foreign accents.

The effect of accent stereotyping in education

Eisenchlas and Tsurutani (2011) noted that studies in the field of education probed into teachers’ perceptions of young pupils’ behaviors, personalities and academic capabilities based on their accent. These studies suggested that on the basis of ethnicity, students’ accent can be systematically involved in stereotypes and discrimination against speakers of non-standard varieties of English (Anderson-Clark, Green, & Henley, 2008; Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011; Elhoweris, Mutua, Alsheikh, & Holloway, 2005). According to Williams, Whitehead and Miller (1972) teachers’ expectations of students’ academic ability appears to be affected by teachers’ attitudes towards students’ verbal skills. That is to say, teachers anticipate that speakers with the standard accents perform better academically than speakers with foreign-sounding accents (Williams et al., 1972). Moreover, not only students’ foreign accents, but also their speech style and regional dialects influence teachers’ expectations of students’ abilities (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011). This is concerning because Ford (1984) identified the correlation between teachers’ expectations and students’ academic achievement.

Eisenchlas and Tsurutani (2011) found that this tendency has also been identified in tertiary education settings where international students’ academic performance is undervalued because of accented speech. Furthermore, Devos (2003) and Jackson (2008) found that Asian students are often regarded as incapable as they are reluctant to be involved in learning activities. However, students with non-mainstream accents are often given fewer opportunities to take part in their lectures owing to the lecturer’s differential expectations (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011). This undesirable judgment about international students in higher education, stemming from their accented speech, may negatively affect their marks in speech-involved learning activities and may result in them being excluded in class (Munro, Derwing, & Sato, 2006; Nakane, 2006). Ongoing controversy over simplification of academic standard to accommodate international students in tertiary education needs to be re-investigated based on the findings and expectations mentioned above (Devos, 2003; Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011).

Despite the fact that negative views on accentedness exist, people’s attitudes towards non-standard accent does not seem to be always pessimistic. An experimental study conducted in Australia presented a hypothesis that L1 university students studying foreign language courses
are expected to have better understanding of non-standard accents (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011). To test this hypothesis, Eisenchlas and Tsurutani (2011) recruited 41 students enrolled in a Bachelor in Languages and Linguistics at Griffith University. They used a matched-guised technique in the study, which is a sociolinguistic experimental method to elicit people’s attitudes towards one’s speech, dialect or accent (Holmes & Hazen, 2013). The findings of the study revealed that students at the School of Languages and Linguistics have positive attitudes towards unseen speakers with a foreign-sounding accent, whichever languages they study and regardless of the “level of accentedness of the speakers” (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011, p. 233). However, the students tended to be less favorable towards L2 accented speakers when they could not identify the speakers’ mother tongue. Additionally, they suggested that a shared learning environment is a possible factor for the positive assessment by L1 students. In other words, a shared learning environment could have fostered favorable attitudes towards accented L2 speakers and provided the opportunity to experience foreign accents that are not associated with the degree of intelligence or ability of the speaker.

Whether considered favorable or unfavorable, accent has social and communicative consequences for L2 speakers of English. Accent stereotyping as well as discrimination are not only controversial issues of the past, but are major contemporary issues in English-speaking countries as stereotyping impacts on social activities and interactions of non-native speakers. Although as previously mentioned, other than the specific context of L1 studying linguistics, studies examining perspectives on foreign accent and accent stereotyping generally find accent has negative consequences for L2 English speakers. In multinational and multicultural contexts such as Australia, both L1 and L2 university students are exposed to foreign accents. It might be the case that university students may understand non-mainstream varieties of English more than people who seldom come into contact with L2 speakers of English. Since few studies have focused specifically on international students’ accentedness, this study will seek to investigate their challenges intertwined with accented English.

**Communicative Strategies and Coping Strategies to Mitigate Challenges**

Communication strategies are defined as techniques which an individual uses to resolve communication issues in order to achieve their communication goal (Aliakbari & Allvar, 2013; Dörnyei, 1995; Færch & Kasper, 1983; Sukirlan, 2014). When attempting to deliver a message to another interlocutor, speakers may strive to find suitable expressions and grammatical structures to bridge the gap between their available linguistic resources and the communicative goal (Sukirlan, 2014). Although a growing body of research has examined ESL and EFL
learners’ communicative strategies (e.g., Bialystok, 1983, 1990; Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; Dörnyei & Scott, 1995; Færch & Kasper, 1983; Kasper & Kellerman, 2014; López, 2011; Osburne, 2003; Oxford, 1990; Paribakht, 1985; Poulisse, 1993), more attention has been paid to speaking skills in general rather than specific phonological skills (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002). Moreover, little is known about communication strategies ESL students at a tertiary level used to continue conversations and resolve communication breakdowns.

It is worth noting that the students’ overall experience when they study in a foreign country along with their academic objectives can be adversely influenced by a wide range of contributory factors such as linguistic difficulties and some other external factors (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). In the face of challenges caused by curriculum overload, assignment tasks and other types of social issues, these students are required to have high English proficiency, which consequently leads them to develop their own coping strategies to confront or manage these challenges (Huang & Klinger, 2006; Lin, 2002). Studies identified particular coping strategies used to overcome language difficulties (Huang & Klinger, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Malau-Aduli, 2011). However, the identified coping strategies do not appear to overcome or manage accent-related issues during conversation supportively, which are the main interests of the current study. Very little progress has been made in complementing the dearth of studies on behavioral strategies international students adopt for communicative success, which are linked to their academic performance as well as social harmony in the light of accentedness.

This section will describe what communicative strategies ESL or EFL speakers employ when they encounter communication difficulties; followed by coping behaviors they adopt to manage their linguistic difficulties.

**Preferred communicative strategies**

Linguistic issues on the part of L2 speakers may be by no means the only problem in miscommunication. Listeners’ lack of competence or performance can be the cause of communication breakdowns (Dörnyei & Kormos, 1998; Dörnyei & Scott, 1995). Listeners could have difficulties understanding when speech contains patterns of verbal production that are unfamiliar to them. In that sense, accented speech can, from time to time, result in loss of intelligibility (Munro et al., 2006). Intelligibility is the extent to which speakers’ speech is understood by interlocutors (Munro & Derwing, 1999). Other sources that can hinder communication are insufficient resources and processing time pressure (Dörnyei & Kormos,
1998; Dörnyei & Scott, 1995). However, it is undeniable that to be successful in overcoming miscommunication, it is essential for L2 learners to employ problem-solving mechanisms appropriate to the types of language-errors or mistakes.

The ultimate goal of learning English for L2 learners is to be understood in broad contexts by various communities of interlocutors (Jenkins, 1998; Munro & Derwing, 1999). Given the role of English as a lingua franca and English as an international language (Morrison & Lui, 2000), miscommunication can occur not only between a L1 speaker and L2 speaker, but also amongst L2 speakers. Second language speakers of English employ various strategies to resolve communication breakdowns. Studies conducted in English-speaking countries revealed that the patterns of strategies that L2 learners of English employ can differ dependent on their level of English proficiency (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; López, 2011; Osburne, 2003).

Derwing and Rossiter (2002) noted that a growing body of research has drawn attention to the communicative strategies that L2 learners of English use to overcome miscommunication (e.g., Bialystok, 1983, 1990; Dörnyei & Scott, 1995; Færch & Kasper, 1983; Kasper & Kellerman, 2014; Rebecca L. Oxford, 1990; Paribakht, 1985; Poulisse, 1993). A number of studies have attempted to explore ESL and EFL students’ communicative strategies in both the English speaking contexts and non-English-speaking contexts (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; López, 2011; Osburne, 2003). Table 2-2 summarizes these students’ strategies for understanding.

Table 2-2. A summary of L2 learners’ communicative strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Derwing & Rossiter (2002) | Qualitative Research (Interview) | 100 Adult ESL immigrants from low to high intermediate level | 1. Paraphrasing  
2. Self-repetition  
3. Writing/spelling | A college in Canada |
| Osburne (2003)          | Quantitative Research (Experimental) | 50 Adult ESL students at advanced level | 1. Memory or imitation  
2. Paralanguage  
3. Single sound or cluster  
4. Individual syllables or words | Language institutes in Canada (No: Unknown) |
| López (2011)            | Quantitative Research (Questionnaire) | 142 Mexican EFL Adult university students from beginner to advanced level | Asking for repetition, paraphrasing, synonyms asking for clarification | Five Universities in Mexico |

Derwing and Rossiter (2002) conducted research in Canada regarding strategies of intermediate ESL adult L2 speakers from different first language (L1) backgrounds. Intermediate ESL learners in this study employed diverse strategies such as “self-repetition,
writing or spelling, volume adjustment, speaking clearly, controlling speech rate and paraphrasing” (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002, p. 159). Interestingly, the most popular strategy amongst this group of people was paraphrasing. Derwing and Rossiter (2002) found that in a few studies, this strategy has already been recognized as effective for avoiding communicative challenges (e.g., Green & Oxford, 1995; Haastrup & Phillipson, 1983). In addition, Rossiter (2001) declared that the ability to paraphrase brings positive consequences of accessing considerable alternatives, such as a wide range of lexical items and syntactical features for instructed L2 learners.

A quantitative study by López (2011) was designed to identify the strategies 142 Mexican EFL tertiary students at all levels of language proficiency used to overcome speaking difficulties. Although this study did not focus on phonological strategies with regard to accentedness, it was distinctive because López (2011) investigated not only strategies employed by L2 speakers, but also strategies the speakers asked people to perform. The most common strategies used by the Mexican EFL students were requesting repetition, paraphrasing, use of synonyms and asking for clarification. The study demonstrated that learners at higher levels of English employ more complex and sophisticated strategies even in an EFL context where they have limited exposure to the target language (López, 2011). In contrast, the most frequently used strategy for advanced L2 speakers in Canada was memory or imitation, followed by the use of paralanguage (i.e. making adjustments in pitch, amplitude and voice quality of speech) and local articulatory repetition of single sound or a word (Osburne, 2003).

The three studies discussed above used different methodologies: Derwing and Rossiter (2002) interviewed participants then quantified their answers, while López (2011) gathered quantitative data using a questionnaire. Unlike other research, Osburne’s (2003) quantitative study was distinctive in that it was experimental and solely pronunciation oriented. The participants were asked to give a short speech about their spoken language learning experiences and the researcher recorded the speech, encouraging them to speak where it was necessary. While researcher and participants listened to the recording together, the participants were asked to speak a difficult sentence, which included various sound patterns and monitored how they produced better pronunciation.

In general, English proficiency of international students at university level can be regarded as more proficient than those at language institutes because international students are required to achieve a certain level of English proficiency to be enrolled. In that respect, it is
presumed that ESL speakers in tertiary institutions in Australia might adopt different communicative strategies. This study seeks to investigate international students’ preferred strategies, and how effective these strategies are mitigating communication difficulties, in order to gain a richer level of understanding of problem management in communication of L2 tertiary speakers.

**Supportive coping strategies**

International students develop and adopt effective coping strategies for successful study experiences and social integration (Huang & Klinger, 2006). In terms of communication difficulties of L2 speakers, a number of studies addressed corresponding compensatory strategies for communication breakdowns (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; López, 2011; Osburne, 2003), although the central focus of these studies was not L2 international students. In fact, these studies approached accentedness as a merely a linguistic problem of L2 speakers. However, such approach may not be sufficient to understand L2 students’ experiences of accented English in communication. This is because experiences of stigma and problems in communication are correlated for people with non-native accents (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Accentedness is one of the thresholds of adjustment to a new society as it provokes parochial attitudes (Crawford, 2000; Lacina, 2002). Having a non-native accent may engender a lower sense of belonging to the speakers’ society (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Many studies argued that language difficulties of L2 students are considerable barriers for multicultural friendship formation (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). In that respect, accentedness may play a role in establishing social networks as it has been identified as one of the language difficulties. However, little research has been undertaken to investigate how L2 students manage issues with social integration arising from accent-related communication difficulties.

Very few studies investigated challenges of international students and coping strategies used by them to meet these challenges (Huang & Klinger, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Malau-Aduli, 2011). These studies included accentedness as one of the linguistic difficulties of L2 students. Therefore, the strategies of L2 students identified by Khawaja and Stallman (2011) and Huang and Klinger (2006) seemed to be more relevant to improvement of overall language proficiency as an ultimate goal, while the strategies identified by Malau-Aduli (2011) seemed to be more supportive for accent-related communication difficulties. Table 2-3 summarizes the extracts taken from each study identified in respect of coping strategies to overcome language issues.
Social and educational challenges of international students caused by accented English in the Australian context

Table 2-3. A summary of L2 international students’ coping strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Coping strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khawaja &amp; Stallman</td>
<td>Qualitative (Interview)</td>
<td>1. Mastering and learning English enough before they leave their country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2011)</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>2. Stepping out of their comfort zone and pushing them to interact with Australian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 L2 international students</td>
<td>3. Joining clubs or other organizations to enhance the language skills and practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sites</td>
<td>more often.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malau-Aduli (2011)</td>
<td>Mixed-methods (Survey &amp; Focus</td>
<td>Receiving support with translation from domestic students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>group)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>46 L2 international medical students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sites</td>
<td>One Australian university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang &amp; Klinger (2006)</td>
<td>Qualitative (Semi-structured</td>
<td>1. Spend more time and prepare more than native Canadians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview)</td>
<td>2. For reading, paying attention to key words, titles, summary, topic sentences,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>the first and the last paragraph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Chinese international students</td>
<td>3. For writing, reading more sample journal articles before starting to write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sites</td>
<td>Two North American Universities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The shaded column indicates coping strategies used by L2 international students to mitigate language difficulties in Australia and Canada. Khawaja and Stallman (2011) identified communication skill-based coping strategies; whereas, Huang and Klinger (2006) confirmed that Chinese international students employ different strategies for each area of English. The two studies included difficulties caused by not only accented English, but also other types of English difficulties deriving from lack of knowledge of lexicon, grammar and the degree of confidence using English rather than focusing on one specific area. In effect, the core of the studies was to identify a wide range of issues and associated coping strategies these students found effective. However, students’ strategies can differ from the specific types of language-errors or mistakes they make. In addition, those strategies do not seem to be applied when the students face accent-related communicative difficulties, especially during a conversation or other types of social interactions. On the other hand, these strategies appear to be what students do or can do in the longer term to improve their language proficiency eventually.
A mixed-methods study of Malau-Aduli (2011) conducted in Australia identified that L2 international medical students had difficulties not only because of limited written language skills, but also verbal communication skills in relation to the Australian accents of the lecturers. This study did not solely concentrate on challenges caused by spoken English language. However, it identified one coping strategy; that is, receiving support with translation from L1 students, which seemed to be associated with overcoming communication difficulties. Such strategies may be more practical when it comes to immediately overcoming communication difficulties caused by accented English and remaining in a conversation than those identified in other studies mentioned earlier.

To sum up, establishing a new social network in Australia can be particularly difficult for those students who have left their families and friends in their homeland and language difficulties prevent them from being socially integrated in a new society (Huang & Klinger, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). Although previously identified coping strategies help these students to achieve social integration as well as language difficulties, they may have coping strategies to spontaneously overcome accent-related communication difficulties, also to be socially integrated with others.

**Synthesis**

The proceeding review has identified some limitations in the research literature. As noted earlier, communication difficulties stemming from foreign accents can result in considerable social issues and cause many challenges for non-native speakers of English living in English-speaking countries. Accent is a significant verbal cue that adversely affects international students’ lives in social and educational surroundings. However, previous studies that have focused on international students in tertiary education were not firmly accent oriented or only included accent as part of their studies.

Accentedness may provoke particular societal language attitudes, which vary from favorability to unfavorability (Parveen & Mehmood, 2013; Tsurutani, 2012). The accented English of international students may have negative consequences, such as stereotyping as linguistic discrimination. Many studies in the field of sociolinguistics have examined perceptions and societal attitudes towards non-native varieties of English with regard to accentedness (Cargile, 1997; Eisencllas & Tsurutani, 2011; Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010), however, L2 international students were not a major focus of the majority of these studies. In addition, these studies investigated attitudes of listeners rather than experiences of L2 speakers.
with foreign accents. The experiences of students and potential impact of social attitudes towards L2 accented English have been addressed. L2 international students’ challenges and difficulties caused by their accents, including stereotyping and discrimination against accentedness have received little attention, especially in the Australian context. The current study will explore the concept of linguistic capital as a means to both explain and theorize the impact of accent on L2 international students in Australia.

Accent can result in speech intelligibility, which can severely restrict communication. L2 speakers of English employ various strategies in order to resolve communication-related difficulties. A wealth of studies have examined the strategies used by both ESL and EFL speakers at different levels of English proficiency and from diverse L1 backgrounds in both ESL and EFL contexts. This study is pertinent to investigate L2 international students who are at tertiary education level in Australia as they might employ different strategies.

While many studies have examined the strategies used by ESL or EFL students to overcome communication breakdowns, little is known about coping strategies used by L2 students to immediately mitigate communication issues in their endeavors to integrate with Australian society. Accented speech could hinder communicative success and provoke negative perceptions of people, consequently leading students to be socially isolated. However, previous studies have not focused on how L2 students overcome accent-related communication issues with other accented speakers while they are studying in a foreign country. As accentedness arises out of language difficulties and social integration issues, this study will focus on L2 international students’ coping strategies to support accent-related communicative issues.

The main issues identified by previous studies as well as the lack of attention to accented English for L2 international students have positioned this research. This project thus focuses on the following research questions in order to address gaps identified in previous studies.

1) What social and educational challenges related to accented English do international students (competent users of English) in Australia experience?
2) What communicative strategies do they use to mitigate communication issues?
3) What coping strategies do they use to support communication difficulties?
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

As little progress has been made in investigating how accent plays out in the student community, the intention of this research is to examine accent-associated linguistic experiences of L2 international students in Australia. There is the possibility that these students will encounter a number of issues caused by accented English in social and educational settings. This research explores challenges faced by these students during their sojourn in Australia and how they cope with these challenges in order to successfully complete their academic program and integrate in Australian society.

This chapter provides details of the research approach adopted in order to respond the following research questions:

RQ1: What social and educational challenges related to accented English do international students in Australia experience?

RQ2: What communicative strategies do they use to mitigate communication issues?

RQ3: What coping strategies do they use to support communication difficulties?

This chapter outlines the overall methodological approach including how the approach fits to the overall research design and the specific methods used to collect and analyze the data. It presents details on recruitment. It then describes development of data collection instruments and the use of the instruments and data collection procedure. It concludes by explaining the different strategies used in data analysis.

Research Design

This study used an “explanatory sequential mixed methods design” (Creswell, 2014, p. 224). In this approach, quantitative data is firstly collected through a survey. The analysis of the outcomes of the survey phase then support the planning of the subsequent qualitative data collection (Creswell, 2014), in this case, group interview sessions. The qualitative phase is often effective in helping to understand an unexpected result that arises in the initial quantitative phase (Creswell, 2014). In order to gather quantitative and qualitative data systematically, surveys and group interviews were chosen. The overall purpose of this design was to firstly use the survey responses to profile the target group and then have the survey outcomes inform the development of the explanatory qualitative data instrument (Creswell,
An initial survey was used to collect the broad views of students regarding both the issues of accentedness and the strategies they have used to mitigate these issues. The findings from the survey informed the development of a series of group interview sessions in which the experiences of the students were explored in greater depth. The combination and sequence of methods provided the opportunity to profile the views of a large number of students followed by the explanatory phase in which issues raised in the survey could be explored by extensive discussion with a range of students.

**Rationale for Employing Mixed Methods**

A mixed-methods approach was used to address the research questions. Pragmatism is the philosophical basis for mixed methods studies (Creswell, 2014; Morgan, 2007). This philosophy has many forms, but for the majority, pragmatism arises out of “actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions” (Creswell, 2014, p. 10). There is a focus on ‘what works’ and ‘solutions to problems’ (Creswell, 2014). Poorly enacted pragmatist mixed methods can draw the criticism of being merely convenient, and as such lack reflective depth and lack validity as well as theoretical coherence (Denzin, 2012; Hall, 2013; Lipscomb, 2008). However, the knowledge provided by pragmatic mixed methods approaches is relative, not absolute (Feilzer, 2010; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In addition, ‘validity’ is not interpreted as truth in the scientific sense of “correspondence to reality” (Feilzer, 2010; Mounce, 1997, p. 98; Rorty, 1991, p. 64), rather ‘validity’ pertains to confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. Pragmatism can shed more light on how research approaches can be mixed effectively and enhance communication amongst researchers from diverse paradigms (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The very core of employing pragmatic and pluralist approaches is that they should be combined in a utilitarian way that provides opportunities for unpacking significant research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Pragmatic research designs emphasize the research problem, and employ all approaches available to gain a deeper understanding of the problem (Creswell, 2014; Rossman & Wilson, 1985). A pragmatic design allows researchers the freedom to adopt the strategies, procedures and methods that best fit their needs and the purpose of their studies (Creswell, 2014). Diverse approaches can be considered for data collection and analysis rather than examining them through one method (Creswell, 2014). The theoretical lens enables researchers to use multiple methods, assumptions and diverse forms of data collection and analysis. Given these frameworks, quantitative and qualitative instruments were selected.
As reviewed in the preceding chapter, with the exception of one mixed-methods study (Malau-Aduli, 2011), previous studies relevant to the research focus of this study have predominantly relied on qualitative methods (Campbell & Li, 2008; Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; Huang & Klinger, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Leong, 2015; Sherry et al., 2010; Sicat, 2011), with only two studies found that used quantitative methods (López, 2011; Osburne, 2003). Therefore, a mixed-methods approach was employed in this study in order to gain more rounded insight into experiences of accent-associated linguistic issues for L2 students and the strategies used to mitigate these challenges.

Mixed methods may be superior to a single method as certain types of questions are not amenable when relying on a single method, either qualitative or quantitative, alone (Creswell, 2014; Pole, 2007). By combining such methods, the groundwork can be established by one for the other, and both approaches may support one another to provide multiple perspectives on the same issue (Pole, 2007).

Participants and Settings

The sample group comprised L2 international students attending three major universities located in South East Queensland. Student recruitment was conducted at Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology and The University of Queensland. The students were purposefully chosen from international students speaking English as a second language with an overall International English Language Test System (IELTS) score between 6.5 and 7.

The majority of Australian universities set a minimum score of IELTS of 6.5 as one of the entry requirements (Read, 2015). According to the official guidelines for IELTS, 6.5 is regarded as “probably acceptable for linguistically less demanding courses such as Agriculture, Pure Mathematics and Technology” (Read, 2015, p. 5). Students at band 7 are “probably ready for more demanding courses in disciplines such as Medicine, Law and Linguistics” (Read, 2015, p. 5). The minimum overall English entry requirement to South East Queensland-based universities for international students ranges from 6.5 to 7.0 with no sub-score of less than 6 to 6.5, based on faculty levels. The target students had a minimum level IELTS score between 6.5 and 7. For the purpose of this research, these ranges were used as the definition of ‘competent users of English’. Students with IELTS score of greater than 7 were excluded because they may be too competent to experience language difficulties due to accentedness, therefore, it was less practical to include this group in the study.
Procedures

Given the research design of the current study, it was necessary to develop two different data instruments for efficient quantitative and qualitative data. The following chart summarizes the data instruments development process and the data collection process.

![Diagram of research procedures]

Figure 3-1. Sequence of research procedures.

Surveying

Survey is a commonly utilized tool to collect data and carry out quantitative studies (Hartwig, 2014). This quantitative method is typically used to scan a wide range of issues on a
large scale in order to measure or describe generalized features (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Surveys are useful and efficient to gather data on a “one-shot basis” from many people quickly, and many variables can be measured without increases in time and cost (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 256). Moreover, a survey approach is an effective means to determine typical attitudes and characteristics of a large population (Cohen et al., 2011). Nonetheless, surveys often suffer from a low response or non-response rate, which is a serious drawback of many survey studies (Cohen et al., 2011).

One of the major challenges of survey research is to reach a sufficiently high response rate to obtain credibility and reliability of the data (Cohen et al., 2011). Online surveys reduce the time and cost in the distribution of surveys and data gathering and enables a large population to be accessed (Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, researchers can reach less accessible populations under the cover of anonymity as well as confidentiality (Cohen et al., 2011). Nevertheless, electronic-internet based surveys and surveys mailed as questionnaires frequently suffer from the problem of low response rates compared to paper-based surveys because participants can easily abandon or cancel the survey as they lose interest or are distracted (Cohen et al., 2011; Lauer, 2006).

Considering the strengths and weaknesses of an online survey, both a paper survey and online survey were designed. Potential students on campus were approached by using hard copies and others who preferred online survey or were not approachable due to the distance issue were asked to complete the online survey. The purpose of data collected through the survey was to identify characteristics of the students, common issues caused by accented English, typical communicative and the coping strategies that international students employed to overcome these challenges.

**The survey instrument**

For efficient data collection, a structured survey was constructed based on previous research literature (Campbell & Li, 2008; Derwing & Munro, 2009; Huang & Klinger, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Lacina, 2002; López, 2011; Osburne, 2003; Robertson et al., 2000; Sicat, 2011), which included specific social and educational settings where communication was an issue, preferred communication strategies of L2 learners in both EFL and ESL contexts and coping behaviors in order to mitigate accent-related issues. The survey comprised three major areas (See appendix A). Firstly, respondents were asked to assess their experience of communication breakdowns not only because of their accent, but also because of
people’s accent in a range of situations, using a Likert 5 point scale (1: very often, 2: often, 3: sometimes, 4: rarely, 5: never, with an additional option of uncertain). Secondly, students were asked to assess various communicative strategies with regard to the frequency of use and perceived effectiveness of each strategy. Again, five point scales were provided to evaluate frequency and effectiveness of the strategies (1: very effective, 2, 3, 4, 5: not effective).

As little is known regarding accent-associated coping strategies specifically, statements were developed to provide examples to the participants in order to assist them to identify their particular coping behaviors. The researcher firstly created a draft statement based on her experience and then invited six international students, three from Korea, two from China and one from Brazil, studying at Griffith University and Queensland University of Technology for a group discussion. This discussion generated 22 statements of coping behaviors, which were then categorized and contrasted with the initial draft. At the final stage, the 22 statements were condensed into a set of 14, as many statements overlapped in terms of meaning. After more in-depth discussion among the students, those statements were further reduced to ten statements.

**Survey piloting**

With the purpose of enhancing reliability, validity and practicability of the survey (Cohen et al., 2011; Morrison, 1993; Oppenheim, 2000; Wilson & McClean, 1994), the survey was piloted prior to administering it on a large scale. As the wording of surveys is paramount, pre-testing is a crucial step to ensure successful data collection (Cohen et al., 2011). Piloting the survey included people from different first language backgrounds. Six international students, three from Korea, one each from China, Germany and Brazil, studying at Griffith University were invited to test the survey. While completing the survey, the students were asked to think out aloud and report to the researcher exactly what came into their mind each time they answered a question. The researcher made notations throughout the exercise and reviewed the notes from each section at the completion of the pilot surveying. As a result, through piloting the survey, the researcher was able to consider whether questions and instructions given in the survey made sense to students, identifying any problems that might lead to biased answers and ascertain the time taken to complete the survey to ensure the effectiveness of the future survey (Cohen et al., 2011).

In order to demonstrate the internal consistency and reliability, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients were calculated for the three question sets. This revealed alpha values of .845 for the section on frequencies of communication difficulties caused by students’ and
Survey data collection

The survey collection was conducted over a three-week period at the selected universities in South East Queensland. Both a paper-based survey and an online survey were utilized to maximize the response rate. The survey gathered data about students’ demographic characteristics, beliefs, opinions and attitudes towards the issue of accentedness. A snowballing sampling technique was employed to recruit students for the survey. The researcher contacted potential students personally and then facilitated snowballing sampling by asking the students to recommend the survey to their peers and associates. Thereafter, invitations to participate in this research with the survey URL and hard copies were distributed by the researcher’s peers and colleagues. Students were able to choose either the online survey or the paper survey. In order to secure a sufficient number of students, Griffith English Language Institute (GELI) assisted to publicize the research and to distribute invitations to EnglishHelp Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students.

Group interviews

Group interviews were designed to obtain comprehensive understanding of the issues arising from the survey. Group interviews, as the qualitative component of this study, rather than individual interviews are a popular means of data collection in educational research (Watts & Ebbutt, 1987). By having more than one interviewee, one can complement the other with additional points or they can cross check on the matter with one another, consequently leading to more reliable data (Cohen et al., 2011). As this approach allows for the potential of discussions, a wide range of responses can be obtained than in individual interviews (Cohen et al., 2011; Watts & Ebbutt, 1987). This research technique is frequently more rapid than individual interviews and hence time-saving (Cohen et al., 2011). On the other hand, some drawbacks of group interviewing have been recognized. For example, group interviews could produce ‘group think’ wherein individuals feel unable to speak out in contradiction to the majority or dominant group opinion (Cohen et al., 2011). Moreover, one participants can dominate the group interviews and some participants may become reticent or less honest, withholding information due to ‘public line’ (Cohen et al., 2011).
When conducting group interviews, it is important to be aware that the unit of analysis is to capture the view of the whole group, instead of the individual interviewees (Cohen et al., 2011). A collective group response is the aim of this approach (Cohen et al., 2011), even though individuals might hold a different view (Cohen et al., 2011). This ensures individuals are not marginalized or ostracized for having a different opinion (Cohen et al., 2011). In order to prevent students feeling uncomfortable to speak for any reason, grouping students with members from similar cultural or first language backgrounds was given priority. Each group consisted of students who were acquainted with each other and discussions were encouraged.

**The group interview protocol**

Given the research design, the group interview question protocol could not be finalized until the outcomes of the survey were known. After completion of quantitative data collection, descriptive analysis was conducted in identify common views, attitudes and beliefs of the L2 students regarding accent-related matters. Structured interview protocols were guided by the results of the survey (See appendix B). An open-ended approach allows interviewees to feel free to elaborate more deeply on specific matters, which place the interviewer in a better position to recognize the complexities of experiences and perspectives of the students (Patton, 1987). Therefore, 13 open responses questions without a predetermined set of responses were used to gather qualitative data from the students without restricting their response options in order to explore in depth some interesting and unexpected findings from the survey.

**Qualitative data collection**

Potential students for the group interviews were self-identified through the initial survey process. Thirty-two students who completed the survey indicated a willingness to take part in group interviews. However, at that time of inviting students, some students were not available as they went back to their country for summer break. There were a number of students who professed to have many ideas to share about their experiences during their sojourn in Australia. Therefore, a total of 16 students were selected given their availability and a volume of experiences in the addressed issues of this study. This purposeful sampling was sought to maximize and achieve the depth and richness of the data to answer the research questions ultimately. Qualitative data collection was conducted over the period of one week at the preferred places of the students. While the survey presented an overall profile, group interviews were adopted to gain extensive information on the experiences and concerns of the students. The outcomes of the survey assisted the development of the group interview question protocol, which directly related to the concerns of the students (See appendix B).
Interviews were a significant source of data that procured the in-depth understanding of issues that could not be explored by the survey alone.

Given that a single group interview is not sufficient as it is impossible to know whether the outcomes of the survey are unique (Cohen et al., 2011), four group interviews were conducted to achieve greater quality of data. The 16 samples were divided into four groups; a Korean group (n = 7), a Chinese group (n = 3), a European group (n = 3) and a Brazilian (n = 3). Interview questions were designed to explore the students’ challenges with regard to accented English, yet were not firmly linguistically-oriented. Therefore, the students were grouped together based on their first language and cultural background in order to create a comfortable atmosphere. The rationale for the group interviews was that there might not only be some common issues pertinent to that language, but also cultural influences to their views and attitudes in relation to the issues emerging from the survey.

The initial plan for interview protocol was confirmed by the survey, if the questions were still relevant. The set of draft interview questions are presented in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1. Draft group interview question protocol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Draft Interview questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Could you describe how different your overall experiences of communication difficulties? Both when you talk to native English speakers and ESL speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Would you consider the strength of your foreign accent affects your communication either to be successful or unsuccessful as significant?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Would you please describe if you have experienced communication difficulties when you participated in tutorials, discussions or any speech-related learning activities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Have you ever experienced difficulties in understanding lecturers because of your accent or the lecturers’ accent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Have you ever felt that you’re treated unequally by anyone because of your accent? Any experience of unfair judgments or treatment? If so, please explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Would you please describe a bit more specifically, if you have experienced communication breakdowns either because of your accent or people’s accent, while you’re interacting with people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>How does your accent or others’ accent function when you communicate with others at work or when you have a job interview?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Would you please describe if you experienced communication difficulties because of your accent or people’s accent when you go shopping?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Have you ever felt that you are evaluated or treated unequally because of your accent in any contexts we have discussed so far? If so, please describe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>How do you overcome communication difficulties caused by accented English, using which of those strategies? What works well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Would you consider pronunciation or clarity of your speech to be a key strategy to overcome communication breakdowns?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Which of those strategies have you employed to remain in a conversation and integrate with accented speakers? What works well and why do you do that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Would you consider accent is a significant contributory factor that affects your friendship formation or social network? Please explain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each group interview took approximately one and a half hours. Since students were acquainted with each other, it was a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Before starting group interviews, the researcher briefly introduced the purpose of the group interviews and the topics to discuss. As signed consent forms were already obtained in the previous stage, the students were reminded about the information on the information sheet and consent forms. To ensure the quality of qualitative data, the researcher conducted practice interviews briefly with the students, and then formally conducted group interviews. During a trial of interviews, it was found that some of the questions were answered when discussing other relevant questions. As a result, the researcher became attentive to how the interview progressed in order to ensure all issues and topics were covered. Conflicts and debates were encouraged to avoid ‘group think’ and domination of some students. In addition, some quiet students were given separate time to share their experiences and ideas on the matter. Group interviews were audio-recorded for later transcription.

Handwritten notes were also taken for further examination as audio-recording could not reflect the interviewees’ physical movements and verbal actions. Open-ended questions were mainly used to prevent restriction of the students’ responses, which were in the form of an informal conversational interview and entirely natural interaction. The four group interviews flowed well. The main language used during the group interview was English with the exception of the Korean group as the researcher’s mother tongue is Korean. As a result, the group interviews responded to the interesting and unexpected issues that arose from the survey and explored the outcomes in more depth by gaining extensive qualitative data.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected through the surveys was used to inform the subsequent qualitative data collection; the qualitative data assisted in the interpretation of quantitative data. The databases of quantitative data and qualitative data were analyzed separately as different analytic techniques were applied to each phase. All data was de-identified to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of the students. Quantitative data was entered into Statistical Packages for the Social Science (SPSS) and qualitative data was manually transcribed through NVivo for effective data analysis and development of codes and themes.

Quantitative analysis

A total of 188 surveys were completed, 111 through the online survey and 77 through the hard copy survey. After initial screening of the data, six online surveys were excluded as these
had no responses to any of the questions, leaving 182 surveys. Responses from the online survey were electronically uploaded to SPSS version 23 for further analysis, while the additional hard copy responses were entered into SPSS by hand.

Descriptive statistical analysis was undertaken to firstly profile the student group, in particular frequencies and cross-tabulations of responses against background variables to identify overall trends of responses of survey questions. Responses from the survey were analyzed using SPSS to identify unique results that should be addressed systematically, in the follow-up group interviews. Following the identification of interesting findings, frequencies and mean scores were calculated to compare the differences in descriptive statistics across one or more factors.

Further statistical analysis, for example, Chi Squared tests of differences in attitude, was not undertaken. While there was a relatively large sample the data was from a very diverse group of participants – by nationality, age, gender and experience in Australia. The sample included 30 different nationalities with the largest groups being Korean and Chinese with 37 and 27 responses respectively. Thus, a within nationality analysis was not viable. An initial analysis of all responses on strategy use and effectiveness, for example, showed no significant differences by age, gender or experience. Thus, it was felt that the comparative descriptive analysis, complemented by the data from the group interviews provide the best perspective on this issue.

Qualitative analysis

The 13 open-ended questions listed above were used with the intention of stimulating responses in relation to the main issues around social and educational challenges caused by accented English identified from the outcomes of the survey. In order to organize and make sense of textual data, thematic coding of the responses was undertaken as summarized in the six step process below. Initial codes were identified from the survey responses, for example, communication difficulties caused by accented English in social and educational settings, developed communicative strategies and coping strategies to mitigate challenges.

The qualitative data analysis used Creswell’s (2014, p. 197) six-step coding process:

1) Organize and prepare the data for analysis (Transcribing interviews)
2) Read through the data
3) Generate codes and themes
4) Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or themes for analysis
5) Interrelate themes and description
6) Interpret the meaning of themes and description

NVivo was used for effective qualitative data analysis and management. As the group interviews were conducted using two different languages (i.e., English and Korean), each interview was translated into English and transcribed to facilitate further analysis. Following on, the researcher read through all the data. Responses were organized and classified in order to develop codes. Coding the data identified themes, patterns and relationships by looking at the similarities or differences across the sets of data (Creswell, 2014). Coding was used to arrange the collected data segmenting sentences and labelling those categories with terms (Creswell, 2014). Following the initial identification of codes a grouping of codes was undertaken, with the initial codes grouped together in key themes used in the subsequent analysis.

**Ethical Consideration**

This research was undertaken according to the Griffith University’s ethical guidelines and conditions as set out by the committee. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Griffith University Human Ethics Committee (GU: 2016/035). As paper surveys were used, every student was provided with an information sheet and consent form (See Appendix C). The researcher informed the students about the characteristics of the project, their rights and responsibilities at the commencement of participation in this research. Sufficient information was provided in advance for students to make a voluntary and informed decision. As this study also included an online survey, the above information was provided in the introductory part of the survey. Students for the group interviews were chosen from the quantitative stage, and thus were aware of the initial ethical approval. These students’ completed consent forms to allow the researcher to record the interviews, use extracts in the research dissertation and any further publications arising from the research. All students’ names are anonymized and pseudonyms used in written reports. The recordings were destroyed after each group interview transcription was completed. The transcripts are stored in a secure cabinet and password protected computer as per Griffith guidelines.
Synthesis

This small-scale research was conducted by employing a mixed-methods approach in order to investigate accent-related challenges of international students studying at universities in South East Queensland. In addition, communicative strategies to overcome communication breakdowns and coping strategies to support communicative issues and socially integrate with others were investigated. Data were collected through two types of the surveys, online and paper-based, followed by group interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS with descriptive statistics. Qualitative data such as the group interviews were audio-recorded for later transcription. Qualitative data was analyzed using NVivo by employing a six-step coding process of Creswell (2014), referring to the hand written notes taken by the researcher during each interview. After the completion of data analysis, the results were compared then reported in the following chapter.
Chapter 4: Results

The findings from the research presented in this chapter are based on responses collected from survey and group interviews. This study set out to investigate the challenges of L2 international students due to accented English and corresponding strategies to mitigate those challenges with an attempt to answer the following research questions:

Table 4-1. Research questions for the current study.

| Q1 | What social and educational challenges caused by accented English do international students in Australia experience? |
| 2 | What communicative strategies do they use to overcome communication issues? |
| 3 | What coping strategies do they use to support communication difficulties? |

A sequential data collection approach was adopted, with group interviews informed by the initial survey process, data from both methods relates to each research question, with the findings from the group interviews providing more detailed explanation of issues raised in the surveys. Thus, the presentation of results sequentially addresses each research question, with the initial survey findings presented followed by the rich detail from the group interviews. The chapter outlines the demographic profiles of students. It then explains the themes and codes developed from the qualitative data for analysis purposes. Finally, it presents results from the survey and group interviews for each of the three research questions.
Demographic Profile of All Students

Valid survey responses were collected from a total 182 students; 16 of whom also participated in the group interviews. The demographic background of the students is summarized in Table 4-2, according to students’ gender, age and level of education and length of stay in Australia.

The student group was quite diverse by gender, age and experience. The students included a greater proportion of females: 66% (n = 120) females and 34% (n = 62) males. The students’ ages ranged from 20 to over 40 years. While the majority were between 25~29 (37%), there were many of a younger age, with 25.4% aged 20~24 years and also 37% 30 years and above.

Table 4-2. Characteristics of students who completed the survey and group interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Survey N (%)</th>
<th>Group interviews N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>120 (66.0)</td>
<td>13 (81.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62 (34.0)</td>
<td>3 (18.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age in Groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20~24</td>
<td>46 (25.4)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25~29</td>
<td>67 (37.0)</td>
<td>11 (68.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30~34</td>
<td>43 (23.8)</td>
<td>3 (18.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35~39</td>
<td>19 (10.5)</td>
<td>2 (12.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40+</td>
<td>6 (3.3)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you are now studying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>57 (31.5)</td>
<td>1 (6.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>54 (29.8)</td>
<td>6 (37.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>23 (12.7)</td>
<td>1 (6.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Grad Dip or Cert)</td>
<td>47 (26.0)</td>
<td>8 (50.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Stay in Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than a year</td>
<td>34 (18.7)</td>
<td>3 (18.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1~2 years</td>
<td>47 (25.8)</td>
<td>3 (18.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2~3 years</td>
<td>45 (24.7)</td>
<td>8 (50.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3~4 years</td>
<td>46 (25.3)</td>
<td>2 (12.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>10 (5.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to length of stay in Australia, again there was diversity. Most students had been in Australia more than a year, but less than 5 years; with 18.7% (n = 34) for less than a year and 5.5% (n = 10) for more than 5 years. The current study also included students undertaking both undergraduate and postgraduate programs, with the sample consisting of 31.5% of students in a Bachelor’s degree (n = 57), 29.8% in a Master’s degree (n = 54), 12.7% Doctoral (n=23) and 26% in Graduate diploma or certificate program (n = 47).
Group Interview Students

The follow up group interviews included 16 students identified during the initial quantitative stage of the research. The length of stay in Australia of these students ranged from less than a year to less than 5 years; with 18.8% (n = 3) for less than a year and 12.5% for 3~4 years (n = 2). The majority of the students in group interviews were female (81.3%, n = 13). Their ages ranged from 25 to below 40 years. Most were between 25~29 (68.8%), with 18.8% aged 30~34 years and 12.5% aged 35~39 years. The majority were postgraduate students with the exception of one undertaking a Bachelor’s degree (6.3%). The qualitative sample was comprised of 50% of Graduate diploma or certificate students (n = 8), 6% of a Master’s degree (n = 6) and 6.3% of a Doctoral degree (n = 1).

There were 32 surveyed students who showed willingness to participate in the group interviews. However, 16 interviewees were chosen because they professed to have many experiences to share regarding the issues raised by this project. Group interviews included students from European, Asian and South American countries. With the purpose of developing a comprehensive understanding of qualitative data, self-reported accent strength and nationality of students are summarized and compared in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3. Self-reported accent strength of interviewees and nationalities, with mean strength score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>Self-reported accent strength</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country of Origin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None 1</td>
<td>Weak 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4-3, many L2 students reported that they perceived their accent strength between mild and strong (M = 3.5), which was a little higher than the survey students. It was particularly students from Brazil, Serbia and Russia regarded their accent as strong (M = 4 each); whereas, accent strength of a Norwegian student was none (M = 1). The perceptions of accent strength of the Korean students (M = 3.6) was higher than that of the Chinese students (M = 3.3).

These students had a wide range of first language and cultural backgrounds. The current study included international students from 30 countries in the survey and 6 countries in the
group interviews. The diversity of the students and their perceived strength of accentedness are compared as the Table 4-4 illustrates below.

Table 4-4. Self-reported accent strength of the students and nationalities, with mean strength score.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Weak</th>
<th>Mild</th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Extreme</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table summarizes students’ self-assessment of their accent strength with mean scores from the highest to lowest. In particular, students seeing themselves with the strongest accent were from Nepal, Spain, Switzerland and United Arab Emirates (M = 4.0); whereas, it was students from Norway (M = 1.5) who rated their accent as the lowest among the groups, although the sample consisted of only two students from that country. The majority who evaluated their accent strength as stronger were; with 5% of Colombian students (M = 3.7) and German students (M = 3.6) and 6% of Indian students (M = 3.5). On the other hand, it was revealed that 5.5% of Brazilian students felt that their accent was rather mild (M = 3.2), followed by 20% of Korean students (M = 3.1) and 7% of Japanese students with the mean score. Noticeably, many respondents from China seemed to be confident about their accentedness in comparison with other Asian groups as the mean score on accent strength was
2.6. These results clarified a hierarchy of diverse groups of students in terms of accent strength when they spoke English as a second language.

Those who selected ‘none’ commented that this was because they learned one particular native variety of English as it was included in their mainstream education in their countries. Some of them commented that they improved their foreign accent after they tried to remove such distinctive accent for a long time.

**Themes from Qualitative Data Analysis**

Extensive information was obtained through group interviews. During the qualitative data analysis, major and minor themes were found. However, those major and minor themes were later merged. By employing thematic analysis using a six step cording process of Creswell (2014), 15 codes were evaluated and merged into 6 themes. Themes and sub-categories developed by thematic analysis were used as a framework to report results. These are summarized in Table 4-5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-perceived overall communication experiences</td>
<td>1) Communication with L1 and L2 speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Influences of accentedness on communicative success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of diverse varieties of English</td>
<td>3) Views on Australian native English accents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Difficulties in understanding particular varieties of English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges caused by accented English in educational settings</td>
<td>5) Communication difficulties when participating in tutorials and discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6) Difficulties in understanding lectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7) Experiences of prejudice associated with communicative problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges caused by accented English in social settings</td>
<td>8) Communication difficulties in a wide range of situations (e.g., social interaction, shopping, at work and job interviews &amp; telephone communication)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9) Experiences of prejudice associated with communicative problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative strategies &amp; perceived effectiveness</td>
<td>10) Communicative strategies employed by L2 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11) Relationship between people’s strategy and students’ communicative strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12) Mismatches between preferred strategies and effective strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13) Pronunciation as a key strategy to mitigate communication issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping strategies to support communication issues and mingle with others</td>
<td>14) Coping strategies to support communication difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15) Accentedness and friendship formation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participating L2 international students, defined as competent users of English reported diverse experiences with regard to accented English in social educational settings. It was not only the accentedness of these students, but also of other people (both L1 and L2) that
generated a number of issues. These included communication difficulties as well as experiences in communicative problems with prejudice. However, it appeared that communication breakdowns and social challenges originated from the accent of others more frequently than L2 students. Interestingly, students from different countries had positive or negative accent-associated communication experiences with prejudice. These are discussed in the following chapter.

**RQ1: Social and Educational Challenges Caused by Accented English**

Research Question 1 examines communication difficulties faced by L2 international students with regard to accentedness in social and educational settings. The data used to respond to this research question come from the survey responses regarding communication difficulties caused by students’ and others’ accents based on frequency of responses, followed by group interview data on the challenges caused by accented English in educational and social settings.

**Findings from the Survey**

In the survey, students were asked to assess communication issues in a range of social and educational contexts caused by their accent and the accents of other people. The follow up group interviews investigated the communicative issues in more depth, identifying various types of experiences in relation to accentedness.

According to survey responses (see Table 4-6), the majority of students did not frequently encounter communication difficulties due to their accent, although this varied depending on the situation. Interestingly, they reported that they experienced communication breakdowns most often in educational settings.

**Table 4-6. Communication breakdowns due to the accent of the students (N = 182).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At work</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job interview</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in tutorials &amp; discussions</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding lectures</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen from Table 4-6, L2 students did not report frequently experiencing communication difficulties because of their accent. However, they still encountered a few issues within most given contexts. Over half of the students selected that they experienced issues in social interactions (52.7%) followed by understanding lectures (52.3%) and job interviews (52.3%). Notably, they reported that they most frequently experienced communication breakdowns due to their accent when they participated in tutorials and discussions (43.4%). Shopping was the least problematic context for the students in terms of communication breakdowns due to their accent, as no considerable difference between those who reported sometimes (39.5%) and rarely (39%).

Overall, the data from the survey indicates that students infrequently confronted communication breakdowns originating from their accent. However, they found that their accented English, particularly hampered communication when they participated in tutorials and discussions in their learning environment. While study placed significant pressure on the students for precise communication, students found their accented English caused less communication breakdowns while they were shopping.

Students were also asked to report how often they experienced communication breakdowns due to other people’s accent (summarized in Table 4-7). Similar patterns of communicative experiences were found to those in Table 10. In other words, students encountered communication difficulties due to other people’s accents, particularly in educational settings. In addition, it appears that these students experienced communicative breakdown due to other people’s accent slightly more than from their own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At work</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job interview</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in tutorials &amp; discussions</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding lectures</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over half the students indicated a high level of communication breakdown (i.e. very often or often) while in tutorials and discussions (52.2%) with almost half reporting high level difficulties in understanding lectures (41.8%). In contrast, only 10.9% experienced high level
communication issues due to other people’s accent when shopping. During social interactions in which diverse types of English can be used with various phonological characteristics, 38.5% of respondents experienced a high level of communication breakdowns due to others’ accentedness. 23.1% of students reported the same difficulties at work; whereas, nearly identical proportion of students (23.6%) indicated that they rarely or never faced communication breakdowns. Further, a large proportion of students (34.6%) indicated that they rarely or never had communication breakdown in job interviews.

Considering these results and assumptions, communicative difficulties caused by accented English of both students and people were explored at the qualitative stage.

**Challenges by other factors**

As some students provided comments indicating that they put a lot of effort into improving their accented English, it was presumed that students who had been in Australian for a longer period may have fewer difficulties than those who recently arrived. Therefore, communication difficulties based on frequency were analyzed according to their length of stay in Australia. Interestingly, no marked differences in communication difficulties were found.

Table 4-8. A summary of communication difficulties caused by students’ accents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Less than a year</th>
<th>1-2 years</th>
<th>2-3 years</th>
<th>3-4 years</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At work</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job interview</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in tutorials &amp; discussions</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding lectures</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Uncertain responses excluded.*

As shown in Table 4-8, students with a longer length of stay in Australia (5+) still experienced difficulties and those difficulties were not that different from those who had been in Australia for less than a year. In particular, in educational settings many students reported difficulties. The frequency of communication difficulties for these two groups of students with maximum (5+) and minimum stays (<1) in Australia was within the same range; participating in tutorials and discussions (M = 2.7, M = 2.9 respectively) and understanding lectures (M = 3.0, M = 2.9 each). In addition, result shows students with 2-3 years of residence in Australia
faced more difficulties than those with a minimum stay, when participating in tutorials and discussions (M = 2.5).

Results regarding communication difficulties in social settings showed a similar pattern. It was not recently arrived students, who faced the most difficulties due to their accented English. Students with 5 years of stay did not appear to experience remarkably fewer difficulties than other groups, as their responses were ranged within the same categories. However, as the discrepancy in numbers, students who had been in Australia for 2~3 years seemed to have more difficulties than the other groups, although mean scores did not indicate a considerable difference.

Communication difficulties caused by other people’s accent could be improved over time. However, no noticeable differences in mean scores were found in Table 4-9, when comparing both frequency and length of stay.

Table 4-9. A summary of communication difficulties caused by other people’s accents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Less than a year</th>
<th>1~2 years</th>
<th>2~3 years</th>
<th>3~4 years</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At work</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job interview</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in tutorials &amp; discussions</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding lectures</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Uncertain responses excluded.

Comprehension difficulties faced by these students with both maximum and minimum stays did not indicate substantial differences, especially in educational settings (Mean difference M = 0.1). Within other groups (More than a year, less than 5 years), the frequency of difficulties was relatively similar. In employment-related situations, the frequency of difficulties in job interviews for these two group was the same (M = 3.8 each); whereas, student with a maximum stay faced more difficulties than those with a minimum stay at work (Mean difference M = 0.8). In fact, students who had been in Australia shorter period felt that social interaction was the most difficult for them (M = 2.6). Interestingly, it appeared that different groups faced difficulties within different situations. For example, students with 3~4 years of stay, perceived comprehension difficulties while shopping more than in other contexts (M = 2.6) but other groups of students (More than a year, less than 5 years) regarded shopping was
less demanding (M = above 3.0). For students who had stayed in Australia for 2~3 years, understanding lectures was as difficult as social interactions (M = 2.5 each).

Given these results, it appears that the effect of a longer stay in Australia in relation to accent-related issues may not be influential in reducing communicative difficulties on the part of students as well as comprehension difficulties caused by other people’s accent.

**Group Interview Responses**

The survey results showed that communication with regard to accentedness was particularly challenging for L2 students in the educational context. Thus, they were firstly asked to discuss difficulties and challenges they faced due to accentedness in educational settings. Students reported that they experienced a number of communication difficulties due to accented English. In contrast with survey findings, the students in the group interviews reported that they had more communicative problems due to others’ accent than their own. Different ethnic groups had diverse views, perceptions and experiences of communicative problems with bias in educational settings. For example, Asian students had more contrasting experiences in relation to accent stigmatization and stereotyping compared to other ethnic groups in this study. These findings are summarized in Table 4-10 against the identified themes.

**Table 4-10. A summary of issues in educational settings based on nationalities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>Brazilian</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>European</th>
<th>Korean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulties when participating in tutorials and discussions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges caused by accentedness in educational setting</td>
<td>Difficulties in understanding lectures</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiences of prejudice associated with communicative problems</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students all indicated that they faced difficulties when understanding lectures and participating in tutorials and discussions. However, limited understanding of lecture content was not seen as a serious issue by students. The accents on the part of students were problematic, consequently leading to communication breakdowns. Moreover, others’ accents caused comprehension difficulties. Comprehension difficulties were a major problem and where often linked to adverse academic consequences for the students. Predominantly, Asian students reported communicative problems regarding prejudice from lecturers and pupils in educational contexts.
Difficulties when participating in tutorials and discussions

Students emphasized the communication difficulties they experienced when participating in tutorials and discussions. Communication was also an issue when completing group assignments with accented speakers. Both Queensland regional accents and non-native accents of L2 speakers were challenging for these students, causing comprehension difficulties. Some experienced issues with accentedness together with deficits in other areas of English skills; whereas, others reported that accentedness itself caused comprehension problems.

Some students highlighted that understanding others was challenging. Problems with an accent were not the only issue, but other deficits such as language proficiency and vocabulary skills contributed to communication difficulties:

I needed to do a group assignment with an Asian student, basically we needed to talk and discuss how we were going to divide the assignment. No matter what he said, I didn’t understand anything because his accent made it difficult for me to understand, but on top of that, his English was really poor. (Group Interview A, Brazilian)

When I participated in a discussion with other second language speakers of English, I sometimes don’t follow them because of my lack of vocabulary and their accent and in that case, I just drop out of the conversation and stop actively participating in the discussion. (Group Interview A, Brazilian)

Understanding each other when participating in discussions was also challenging, particularly during L2 communication. Such limited mutual understanding delayed their learning processes:

For me when I participated in a discussion one day, I had miscommunication with Asian students and they also had difficulties in understanding me. So we needed extra time to combine our opinion and presented what we decided, what we agreed and where we were going to. (Group Interview C, European)

Accentedness of both speakers was problematic as it hindered overall understanding of multicultural communication. Continuous miscommunication with other L2 speakers delayed communicative success and the learning processes. Similarly, students from an Asian background appeared to struggle with particular varieties of English such as the Queensland regional accent and other L2 accents. The findings indicate that the communication difficulties faced by these students were linked to their emotional distress:

The same thing happened to me with a Vietnamese student. She was quite friendly, but when participating in that kind of learning activities, we’re supposed to learn from each other. I didn’t feel...
like I was learning something from her because I barely understood her. I don’t know how she felt when I said I didn’t understand, but it was an unpleasant moment for me because I was not learning or sharing anything. (Group Interview D, Korean)

A lot of misunderstanding and miscommunication are going on while I’m in a discussion. I often don’t understand Australian regional accent especially those from Queensland, and some international students. The thing is if that lasts for a longer period of time, I lose my confidence in speaking English and when I don’t have much confidence, I don’t actively participate in a discussion. (Group Interview D, Korean)

Students indicate that their communication difficulties relied more on others’ accent. Due to the lack of understanding caused by accentedness of other students from diverse backgrounds, students expressed feelings of dissatisfaction and frustrations regarding inputs that they obtained from other students. In addition, their limited understanding of diverse accents negatively affected their level of confidence in speaking English, which resulted in low participation.

Active participation in tutorials was challenging for some Asian students because of the strong accent of their L2 tutors:

I had quite a few Indian tutors. When they spoke... I didn’t understand almost anything. I could hear some words I know and then I tried to understand just like I was putting the puzzle together. However, sometimes that didn’t work. So I had to ask my Australian friends who always understand that unique accent from the Indian tutors. One day I asked the tutor where exactly I didn’t understand. He explained it to me, but I didn’t understand because of his accent again. (Group Interview D, Korean)

To sum up, the group interviews identified a number of issues where students’ speech would normally be the main tool used to expand their knowledge and interact with others. While students were participating in tutorials and discussions, not only the accent of students, but also others caused communication difficulties. However, students were more likely to struggle with understanding due to others’ accent. One obvious issue identified here is that accentedness is a significant contributory factor, leading to communication difficulties and academic issues.

**Difficulties in understanding lectures**

Accentedness of both L1 and L2 lecturers was also identified as an issue when understanding lectures for some L2 students. Even though the opportunities for active communication during lectures may be fewer than in tutorials and discussions, these students still faced communication difficulties due to their accent and those of the lecturers. However, students
showed an unwillingness to ask for repetition of statements by their lecturer. Interestingly, students mentioned that limited understanding of their lecture content due to the lecturer’s accent was not a critical issue for them. This was because additional learning resources were available to support their understanding:

I would say it wasn’t that serious cause I asked my classmate who could follow his accent to explain to me or I could always refer to the lecture slides. (Group Interview A, Brazilian)

I wouldn’t be able to understand if there were no supportive learning resources like all the recommended reading resources and lecture slides... things like that. I could always refer back to lecture capture. I could understand the things I didn’t understand in the lecture by listening to the lecture capture one or two times. (Group Interview C, European)

Some students reported that communication was difficult in a lecture format due to their accent. This was because when these students asked a question, their accent hindered the understanding for the lecturers. Such difficulties generated embarrassing moments for these students:

When I asked a question to my lecturer, she asked me to repeat several times but she didn’t understand because of my accent apparently. I suddenly felt shy because everyone looked at me so I just ended up asking a question. (Group Interview A, Brazilian)

Moreover, L2 students faced difficulties in understanding due to different English accents in this case a strong Queensland accent, as well as the foreign accent of the lecturer. It was noted that accented speech was also challenging for a student had been in Australia for a longer period of time:

We couldn’t understand James who was an Aussie lecturer with a very strong Queensland accent. During each lecture, we always sat at the back in the classroom. It was really difficult to understand what he was talking about. It was my first year in Australia and it was Elena’s second year in Australia, but we both found that his English was very difficult to follow because of his accent. (Group Interview B, Chinese)

I have an Indian lecturer. Sometimes it’s just... I don’t understand and when I look around, I can see other people tend to be also confused. Indian accent is definitely difficult... sometimes some African accent... (Group Interview C, European)

Some students believed that asking lecturers for repetition could result in interruptions for other students and deterioration of the quality of lectures:

I couldn’t stop the lecturer every time I didn’t understand. I think it’s also the quality of the lecture. (Group Interview C, European)
I asked her several times to repeat or paraphrase, but later, I felt so sorry for asking her again and again, so I just stopped asking any more questions. I didn’t want to interrupt other students too much as well (Group Interview D, Korean)

Experiences of prejudice associated with communicative problems

The issue of prejudice due to accents was a theme raised in discussions. The students showed contrasting opinions and beliefs regarding accent-related societal issues such as accent stereotyping as a form of linguistic discrimination in an educational setting. Some believed it may not be common within the boundaries of universities; whereas, Asian students reported accent stereotyping experiences caused by their accented English, and also comprehension difficulties in educational settings caused by others’ accented English. In summary, the communication problems of these students appeared to lead to adverse perceptions and attitudes towards these students. It was also observed that there were nationality differences in response to this question.

Brazilian and European students in particular, regarded their accents as strong (M = 4). They indicated they saw fewer situations in which they experienced stereotypical attitudes towards them in an educational setting. However, they tended to believe that this can be because people at university were well-educated:

I don’t think I experienced such a negative thing at university. People at university are all for better education and they’re well educated. (Group Interview A, Brazilian)

Not so much I think. Some people try to mock around my Russian accent, but I don’t take it seriously now and it doesn’t usually happen at university I believe. (Group Interview C, European)

On the other hand, the circumstances were quite different for Asian students. The self-evaluation of accent strength indicated that these Asian students, from China (M = 3.3) and Korea (M = 3.6) considered their accent to be between mild and strong. However, these students reported that they experienced unfair treatment due to their accent as well as pronunciation. Interestingly, Asian accented American English contributed to biased perceptions and negative outcomes of an assessment:

When I was doing my Masters, I had a few chances to do presentations. Compared to how other students did, mine seemed to be better or at the same level apparently, but I didn’t get high marks and I think that’s because of my accent as well as pronunciation. (Group Interview B, Chinese)

I learned American English so I spoke English with um... kind of American accent and... Some of the
words in my presentation slides were Americanized. After my presentation, he picked up that American spelling and the words I pronounced in an American way and told me that I should learn Australian English because I’m in Australia and change the American spelling to British spelling. I thought I did quite well, but my mark was below my expectation. (Group Interview D, Korean)

Asian students expressed feelings of frustration due to incorrect assumptions by lecturers and pupils, especially when these students struggled with comprehension difficulties due to others’ accent. They pointed out that L1 lecturers and students had a tendency to attribute communication breakdowns to a lack of language proficiency on the part of the Asian students:

I think not just me but also quite a few students experience low expectation from native students or native lecturers of English. We know our English proficiency is not like native English speakers, but that doesn’t mean it’s always us who don’t understand or suffering from a lack of knowledge. Our understanding can depend on people’s accent as well. (Group Interview B, Chinese)

It was not only Chinese students, but also Korean students who reported that they experienced inaccurate assumptions and judgement about their language proficiency:

I was discussing something with an Aussie student. He had a strong accent and his speech was very fast. After the discussion, my lecturer pointed me out asking me if I could share what we discussed to other classmates. I was really embarrassed because I didn’t expect that and I just pretended as if I was following him. Anyway, I tried to say something, but basically, I stuttered again and again because I had no idea what to say. After a few days, I was informed that that lecturer said to other people that my spoken language is not as good as other non-native students. I was shocked at that time and very unhappy. (Group Interview D, Korean)

These Asian students’ experiences were associated with inaccurate assumptions and judgements about their language proficiency. These tendencies were shown mainly by L1 accented speakers, when communication was difficult for L2 speakers because of a strong Australian regional accent.

It is worth noting that one of the European students who had a British-like accent observed that he was always positively treated by others because of the native-like accent. This student believed that people showed favorable attitudes due to the British accent as a second language speaker:

I’m positively discriminated based upon my cultural heritage as Scandinavian in Australia but also my accent. Among native speakers, they’re very positive towards me because I’m able to speak English with this kind of accent like I said before an authority in my accent. They like my accent. It might be because they like British accent very much based on my experience. (Group Interview C,
From the findings, it was evident that it was predominantly students from Asian backgrounds who felt that they suffered from low marks, incorrect assumptions and misjudgement from L1 students and lecturers. On the other hand, Brazilian and European students reported that while they initially experienced communication problems, they did not experience prejudice based on their accent. Asian American accented English appeared negatively perceived; whereas, British European accented English was positively viewed in educational settings.

**Challenges caused by accented English in social settings**

The discussions indicated that communication difficulties in educational settings were not as frequent as social settings. Nevertheless, students reported a wide range of communicative issues in social contexts. These students discussed social interactions, shopping, work and job interviews and the additional challenges caused by telephone communication. Similar to in educational settings, students encountered communication difficulties in understanding others more frequently than being understood. Negative societal attitudes towards foreign accented speakers were pervasive within the broader social community. All participating ethnic groups, except European students, experienced prejudice associated communicative problems. These findings are summarized in Table 4-11.

**Social interactions**

Students typically emphasized that strong Queensland accents led to communication breakdowns with local people. Difficulties in understanding this particular Australian accented English often led to students dropping out of a conversation and ceasing socializing with L1 accented speakers:
I have two friends who have Aussie boyfriends. When we went out last time with other friends all together, I found that one of their boyfriends had a strong Queensland accent. Basically, I couldn’t even stay in a conversation and eventually I just stopped talking to him because I couldn’t understand anything. (Group Interview A, Brazilian)

No one actually wanted to talk to him. Everyone stayed away from him and tried not to talk and I’m pretty sure he felt isolated. The only person who talked to him was his girlfriend. (Group Interview A, Brazilian)

Some students differentiated Australian English from other types of English such as American and British English. The differences between Australian English and other varieties of English were surprising for the students, especially as new comers. Students reported that an Australian accent often hindered mutual understanding. Moreover, continued comprehension difficulties caused by others’ accented English resulted in loss of confidence for these students:

Before I came to Australia, I knew that Australian English is different from American and British accent, but I didn’t expect that it was that different. So...I was rather losing my confidence in speaking English... because when I didn’t understand, I couldn’t respond to a person I was talking to. (Group Interview C, European)

Students from Asian countries believed that elderly L1 speakers tended to have a strong accent. Furthermore, a distinctive speech style of Australian young people hindered these students’ comprehension along with accentedness:

Elderly people usually have a stronger accent than young people and their speech is not clear for me to understand. (Group Interview B, Chinese)

One day when I took a taxi, I had some difficulties in understanding the driver’s English because of his Queensland accent. He was a young Aussie guy, but he tended to mumble and slur words too much as if he was drunk. (Group Interview D, Korean)

**Shopping**

Survey responses indicate that shopping was the least demanding context for students in terms of communication breakdowns due to accented English. Although the majority reported that shopping was straightforward, it was noted that some students encountered pronunciation issues. Students reported that they did not feel anxious about understanding or being understood due to accented English. This was because they knew many alternative expressions when they could not deliver their meaning due to accentedness. To mitigate accent-related
communication issues, they used their mobiles to show a picture of what they were looking for to provide more clarification to the listeners:

_\text{I think shopping is alright. I think I know many expressions that I can explain in different ways, if people don’t understand my English. Sales people who are Australian usually speak really really fast but I usually have nothing to buy from them... and yeah... if people from different countries don’t understand or I can’t understand them, I just google and show a picture of what I need. (Group Interview A, Brazilian)}_

_\text{I’m not stressed out because of my accent or other’s accent. I can expect what will happen and what I want to get. If people don’t understand things I’m describing, I can easily show a picture using my mobile. (Group Interview B, Chinese)}_

It was noticeable that pronunciation issues arouse in the context of shopping. Although these students remarked that shopping was not difficult most of the time, it appeared that they faced some problems with pronunciation, especially with words that they did not use on a daily basis. Further, producing artificial sound was challenging:

_\text{Shopping is kind of easy. Occasionally, it’s really hard. Especially when I have to completely pronounce new things that I’ve never pronounced before and the new words consist of certain sounds that I have some problems with pronunciation. Otherwise, it’s easy. (Group Interview D, Korean)}_

**At work and job interviews**

Students who had work-related experiences shared their stories about work and job interviews. As Australia is a multicultural and multinational country, it appeared that L2 students were exposed to diverse accents at work, which generated multiple communication issues. Some students reported communication difficulties in the first few months after they arrived in Australia; whereas, others expressed concerns around comprehension difficulties caused by the accent of others. Some suffered from language anxiety due to their accented English and that of others.

Students reported that they experienced difficulties due to an Australian regional accent, especially in their first few months in Australia:

_\text{I used to work in a restaurant for the first six months when I arrived in Australia. At that time, I didn’t like that job much because I was new here and I couldn’t really follow what people said because they normally spoke very fast especially Aussies and others like from different countries... they all had different accents. Basically communication wasn’t that easy for me at all times. (Group Interview C,)}_
Unlike these students, Asian students were concerned about communication breakdowns due to their accent as well as people’s accent. They were concerned about communication difficulties due to accentedness. As a result, they tried not to communicate with other accented people:

The most difficult situation for me is at work, communication with foreigners and native English speakers. I’m just worried what should I do if they don’t understand my English because of my accent or what can I do if I can’t understand them because of their accent. Maybe I will not speak with anyone a lot. (Group Interview B, Chinese)

Other Asian students pointed out young Australians with fast speech rate also tended to use many slang and shortened words. These all additionally contributed to communication difficulties for these students:

I used to work as a salesperson at a shopping center. I remember I hated Australian teenagers. They never speak clearly. Elderly Australian people or those who are mature enough tend to speak slowly, if I don’t understand, but it’s completely different when I talk to young kids. They tend to use a lot of slang and shortened words and they never speak slowly. Additionally, it’s difficult for me to understand because of their accent. (Group Interview D, Korean)

A student who worked at a language school also faced accent-related issues. However, she made an interesting point that she found no direct correlation between the degree of accentedness and language proficiency:

I work at a reception desk at a language school. I meet international students from all different countries in the world every day. For me, understanding different accents of them is really difficult. On average, it’s worse with those who have lower language proficiency, but this doesn’t mean I always understand those advanced learners. In that sense, I don’t think there is a definite relationship between accent and language proficiency. (Group Interview D, Korean)

One student reported that in a job interview, the accentedness of both the student and interviewers influenced the flow of the interview in a negative way. As they felt nervous during the interview, they felt that the level of their accentedness became stronger than usual. In addition, they had difficulties in pronouncing terminology or recalling accurate pronunciation because they did not frequently use such terminology in their daily lives:

I had a quite a few interviews for my internship, but my job interviews didn’t go well, mostly because of my accent and English. My strong Korean English accent popped out suddenly several times
because I was nervous. On top of that, I don’t usually use a lot of terminology in my daily life, so I tend to forget to pronounce precisely. So, during the job interviews, I wasn’t sure if my interviewers really understood me because of my accent and unclear pronunciation. My Korean accent was getting stronger when I got nervous and when I didn’t precisely remember how to pronounce a certain jargon. (Group Interview D, Korean)

Interestingly, another student reported that the degree of anxiety of L2 students depended on the strength of accentedness of the interviewer, especially with L2 interviewers:

I remember I felt a lot more comfortable when I had an interview with a clear accent. However, I was rather nervous when I had a job interview with a second language interviewer with a bit of a strong accent because how well I did with that job interview was directly linked to my employment, so I had to listen carefully so as not to miss out anything. (Group Interview D, Korean)

**Telephone communication**

The students surveyed provided additional comments regarding concerns over telephone communication, indicating that they often found this challenging. Therefore, interviewees were asked to report issues of accent-related telephone communication experiences. Some students were negative about this experience, particularly with regard to talking with L2 speakers in a telephone format. Difficulties in telephone communication resulted in a wide range of issues for these students.

A student reported that phone communication difficulties led them to missing job opportunities due to accentedness miscommunication:

About a few month ago when I was looking for a job, I had a phone call from one of the stores I handed in my resume. The person phoned me had the heaviest accent I’ve ever heard. I think he was talking about having an interview... things like that but it was my guess because I barely understood him. He was not a native speaker for sure. I can’t even guess where he is from but I just hung up the phone. All I said to him was ‘pardon’, ‘sorry’ many times and by hanging up the phone, I just gave up the job interview. (Group Interview A, Brazilian)

In addition, European students reported that they had encountered challenges of telephone communication, especially with L2 call operators, and such difficulties delayed problem resolution. As a result of this, these students believed that telephone communication was harder than face to face communication. Further, they were reluctant to speak with L2 telemarketers through the phone due to accentedness of the L2 call operators.

The same thing happened to me when I phoned my motorbike insurance company. The receiver was an Irish person and he had the thickest Irish accent ever and I was ‘please repeat that’ and he was
confused about my accent. I was definitely confused because of his accent. We just spoke back and forth and I just had to end up with that conversation. I just said I’m gonna call back. I’ve got a meeting so let’s talk later’. I just couldn’t keep it up. He spoke faster or slower but no... didn’t work. It was difficult. (Group interview C, European)

Especially with Indian call operators... I had a couple of bad experience with them. Umm... my modem was sent to the wrong address and I called them maybe more than five times to explain the address was wrong. It was actually their mistake. I explained that situation several times but they never ever understood me and I hardly understood them, so I was like... ‘Look! I don’t want to speak with Indian anymore ... please ... let me talk to native English speakers’. I was holding the phone for about five hours... explaining them it was sent to the wrong address... but what they did was they actually transferred the call to another person... another department. I had to explain from the very beginning to everyone who received the call. When they transferred the call to a native English telemarketer, I solved the problem within 5 minutes... so I’m not happy when I have to communicate with someone over the phone. It’s harder. (Group interview C, European)

Despite the fact that the telephone is a convenient tool for communication, used by most of the students, comprehension difficulties in telephone communication due to accentedness were found to be a major issue for many. Such issues resulted in the loss of job opportunities, delay of problem resolution and unwillingness to communicate with L2 accented speakers via phone.

**Experiences of prejudice associated with communicative problems**

Accentedness caused not only linguistic problems for L2 students, but also social difficulties. Students were asked to report if they had any negative experiences due to accented English as a consequence of communication problems. The findings presented here indicate that with the exception of the European group, other participating ethnic groups experienced stereotypical attitudes towards them and these were associated with their communicative problems due to the accent of students and other people.

Some students pointed out that L1 speakers had a tendency to underestimate the language proficiency of these students. Due to such views, people became impatient when L2 students did not understand them because of people’s accent, attributing communication breakdowns to these students:

*One day while I was waiting for a bus to go to the city, an elderly guy came to me and asked me something, but I didn’t really understand what he said because his accent was not clear enough to understand and it was quite noisy around that area. After I repeated, ‘sorry?’, ‘pardon?’ several*
times, his face set and he said, ‘if you don’t speak English, why are you in Australia?’ (Group interview A, Brazilian)

I think native English speakers tend to judge our language proficiency even before we talk to each other for a reasonable amount of time. If I don’t understand because of their accent, their speech rate becomes dramatically slow, but that’s what nice people do. When I was on a bus asking some directions from a bus driver with a strong Queensland accent, she answered me with a very fast speech rate, but when I asked her a second time, she just said, ‘just hop in!!’, or a long sigh first and then, ‘just forget it!’ abruptly. This kind of thing happened to me several times. They probably think I don’t speak good English, but I don’t understand because of their accent. (Group interview D, Korean)

The foreign sounding accent of L2 students also was felt to play a role in the perceptions of these students’ ability. Students reported that they sometimes felt that people underestimated their ability because of their foreign accent and Asian look:

When I was travelling in Cairns with my other Chinese friend, I came across an Australian lady and we briefly greeted each other. She knew I don’t speak English as a native speaker, not only because of my Asian look, but also my accent. When I told her I’m a teacher teaching Mandarin, she was like ‘ahh you’re a teacher… who do you teach?? Chinese??’ I said ‘Aussie students’ and then she looked really surprised saying ‘ah…. Australian… you teach Australian…??!!’. I can feel that sometimes people look down upon me. (Group interview B, Chinese)

Some students with Asian accented American English speech were mistreated and blamed for not following the linguistic norms in Australia:

When I was working at the Garden City Shopping Center, someone directly said ‘your accent is weird! You must have learned English from an American TV program. You have to change it like Australian’. And when I had a little argument with my customer about the refund policy, that customer said ‘oh I didn’t understand about the policy because of your accent’, but the policy is written in English right next to the cash register. (Group interview D, Korean)

Unlike Brazilian and Asian students, European students reported that they did not experience such negative attitudes towards them. British-like accents seemed to be a preferred variety at work compared to other varieties of English:

I still think people are quite positive about me. At work, there are a lot of South African, Asian.. they struggle to fit in a group. For them, it took a while to join a group, for me it took less than a day to join. I was in a group straight away. I think people are patient with my accent. I think I’m lucky. If I don’t understand, people try to facilitate and they become more curious about me and they and I
know it's not because of accent things. We just express things in different way. (Group interview C, European)

**RQ2: Communicative Strategies to Overcome Communication Issues**

Research Question 2 investigates the communicative strategies reported by students in order to overcome accent-related issues during conversation in social and educational settings. The data used to respond this question comes firstly from the survey responses. These responses give an overall view of students in regards to the preferred strategies and perceived effectiveness of the strategies. It was noted that students had contrasting views regarding their preferred and effective strategies.

**Findings from the Survey**

Students were asked to indicate types of communicative strategies and how often they were employed, followed by the self-perceived effectiveness of each strategy. According to survey responses, there was some the inconsistency between preferred strategies and their perceived effectiveness. Although students seemed to believe that accurate pronunciation was highly effective, it was not their most preferred strategy. Figure 4-1 summarizes these survey findings.

![Figure 4-1. Communicative strategies and effectiveness](Image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency: 1: Never to 5: Very often</th>
<th>Paraphrase</th>
<th>Repeat</th>
<th>Write down / Spell out</th>
<th>Speak more clearly</th>
<th>Speak more slowly</th>
<th>Speak louder</th>
<th>Pronounce more precisely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness: 1: Not Effective to 5: Very effective</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Figure 4-1, a marked contrast was seen in terms of the mean scores on frequency and effectiveness. The frequency of use during conversation by the L2 students did
not align with their perceived effectiveness of the strategies. The most frequently used strategies selected by the students were repeating (M = 3.8), followed by paraphrasing (M = 3.6) and speaking more clearly (M = 3.6). In contrast, the students regarded pronouncing more precisely (M = 4.2), followed by paraphrasing (M = 4.1) and speaking more clearly (M = 3.8) as the most effective strategies to overcome communication breakdowns. Furthermore, writing down or spelling out (M = 2.6) was considered the least preferred strategy during conversation, in spite of its effectiveness (M = 3.3). Speaking louder (M = 2.4) was regarded as the least effective strategy. However, such strategy (M = 2.6) was employed by the students as frequently as writing down or spelling out.

To sum up, the differences in the mean scores identified contrasting views between the students’ preferred strategies and the perceptions of the effectiveness of the strategies. In order to resolve communication issues caused by accented English, students reported that accurate pronunciation was the most useful strategy; however, they relied more on repetition to resolve communication issues.

**Group Interview Responses**

The survey analysis revealed that the preferred strategies of the students were not consistent with the degree of effectiveness. For this reason, the follow up group interviews examined how those students overcame accent-related communication issues in more detail. Students were asked to report their preferred strategies and how they used them during a conversation to achieve communication goals. In addition, they were asked to share their perceptions of effective strategies. As mismatches between preferred strategies and effective strategies were found in the previous stage, qualitative outcomes provide explanations of the contrasting quantitative results and students’ beliefs and perceptions of pronunciation as a key to overcome accent-related communicative issues.

**Communicative strategies employed by L2 students**

As described previously, the survey identified the most preferred strategy among L2 students was repetition followed by paraphrasing. However, communicative strategies of these students were more complex as they did not rely to one particular strategy all the time.

Many students remarked that they did not simply use one strategy to compensate for communication breakdowns. However, they employed multiple strategies until they achieved their communication goal:
I often rephrase and try to pronounce precisely. I repeat at first, but if people still don’t get it, I just rephrase. You know I can get to know when pronunciation goes wrong. It happens after when I repeat a word several times, and then I realize my pronunciation is the problem and then I try to pronounce more correctly. (Group interview B, Chinese)

I’m usually trying to rephrase. Of course, I’m trying to speak more clearly or slowly, but when someone says that they can’t understand what I’m saying, I never just repeat the same thing. I always try to rephrase. When someone asks me to repeat, I think I may pronounce things in a wrong way, so I just try to re-construct my sentence and speak clearly... (Group interview C, European)

The findings of preferred communicative strategies of these students were fairly matched with the survey findings. However, students at a competent level of English did not rely on a single strategy. Rather, multiple strategies were employed until they achieved their communication goals. These included pronunciation and clarity of speech as a backup strategy.

Some students relied on less complex strategies such as spelling out and they believed such low level strategy was effective:

When people don’t understand because of my accent, I think... spelling out is the most effective based on my experience. (Group interview D, Korean)

**Pronunciation as a key strategy to mitigate communication issues**

The survey findings showed that L2 students regarded more accurate pronunciation as the most effective strategy to overcome communication issues due to accentedness. However, they also showed that pronunciation was not the most preferred strategy among the students. Therefore, the students were asked to explain their views and beliefs concerning pronunciation to achieve their communication goal. To allow for alternate explanation, they were also asked to describe the inconsistency between their preferred strategies and the most effective strategies. These questions were designed to encourage richer and more complex accounts of the relationship between accentedness and pronunciation.

Students remarked that not only their accent, but also mispronunciation resulted in communication difficulties. They highlighted that problems with accents could be more serious than the other linguistic resources. Moreover, mispronunciation caused by inability to produce artificial sounds and intonation resulted in communication breakdowns. Further, speech habits influenced by their first language contributed to communication problems:

*I think accent can make things worse because even if you have a wide range of vocabulary and you
have a really really strong accent that people don’t understand, you can’t communicate with them anyway. We can paraphrase to explain in different ways, if we don’t know certain words, we can always use our phone to google, but what can we do with our accent? (Group interview A, Brazilian)

With specific pronunciation problems I have, for example, ch, sh or th. I feel that a lot of native speakers ask me to repeat. I think Korean doesn’t have that dramatic intonation unlike Chinese, but we do have some sort of habits like we tend to draw a last sound of a word at the end of each sentence. I guess that also affects mutual understanding. (Group interview D, Korean)

Students believed that problems with accent and pronunciation could deteriorate not only communicative success, but also the high level of other English skills. Further, limited knowledge of the sound system of new words was also problematic. L2 student perceived issues with accentedness and pronunciation were more critical than other skills. Therefore, they emphasized pronunciation as one of the significant aspects of spoken English language based on their previous experiences:

If your pronunciation is accurate, problems with your accent will be covered. I think that’s why language teachers emphasize to speak clearly and slowly. I found that if I slow down my speech rate, my pronunciation will be much more accurate. (Group interview B, Chinese)

I assume that problems with accent can be improved by practicing pronunciation. I can’t completely remove my Russian accent though; I think practicing pronunciation will make... my accented English... approximate to native speakers. I’m not sure if it is right but the only way to improve someone’s speech because of accent can be related to pronunciation. (Group interview C, European)

Students believed that pronunciation was an important way to improve problems with accentedness, also foreign sounding accents could be improved by practising pronunciation. Despite this, many did not pursue native-like accentedness, instead, reasonably intelligible accentedness for every English speaker to communicate with each other:

Accent and pronunciation, both are important, but in different aspects. If I need to clarify something specific, explaining it with proper pronunciation is a key, but in usual conversation, and I want to maintain good conversation and we communicate with each other socially, accent is very important. It doesn’t have to be English accent but understandable accent. (Group interview C, European)

Our accent doesn’t need to be perfect, but it should be at an understandable level for everyone. (Group interview D, Korean)

The findings demonstrated that L2 international students showed a great awareness of pronunciation for resolving accent-related communication difficulties. For communication,
these students highlighted a good level of accent intelligibility was important, instead of having a native-like accent.

**Mismatch between preferred strategies and effective strategies**

Although these students indicated a great awareness of the significance of pronunciation, they tended to believe this strategy was less suitable during conversation. Students explained that they were not very aware of pronunciation or accentedness during spontaneous conversations; instead they reacted according to the situations. Further, they believed that accurate pronunciation could hinder natural flow of communication:

In spontaneous communication, you have to go with the flow. You can’t just say a word precisely and stop, say a word and stop. I don’t regard such thing as communication. It is communication but I don’t see any natural flow of social interaction. It’s not a good means of communication because it would take too long to say what you want to say. There will be communication breakdowns because people get impatient, then people wouldn’t want to listen to you. *(Group interview C, European)*

I guess international students at our level don’t really have many issues. I mean in terms of language... and people usually or mostly understand what we say. So they don’t think their pronunciation is the major problem, but a part of their problems. So when communication breaks down, they just act accordingly to the situation they’re in, but they know how important pronunciation is. *(Group interview D, Korean)*

It was noted L2 students believed that pronouncing words more precisely was not an ideal strategy to overcome communication breakdowns especially during conversation, given its spontaneous format. Besides, precise pronunciation could hinder the natural flow of communication. Moreover, they showed a tendency to respond to listeners spontaneously and correspondingly without thinking too much about pronunciation or recognizing the problem was accentedness.

**RQ3: Coping Strategies to Support Communication Issues**

Research Question 3 examines coping strategies used by L2 students to support communication issues. The data used to answer this research question was drawn from the survey, which captured an overall picture of coping strategies employed by students to support communication difficulties. Subsequently, the information from the group interviews which was coded under themes on coping strategies and friendship formation provided detailed explanations regarding views, opinions and attitudes of L2 students towards the issues.
Findings from the Survey

The survey asked students to indicate what extent they agreed or disagreed with the given 10 statements. Survey analysis discovered certain behaviors were used to support communication difficulties and mingle with accented speakers. Formation of multicultural friendship was raised in discussions. Students tended to agree that establishing social networks with accented speakers was challenging, which means accented English was a contributory factor for their socialization. These are summarized in Table 4-12.

Table 4-12. A summary of coping strategies of the students (N = 182).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I try to sit next to a person with a heavy accent.</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I try to talk to heavy accented people to get used to their sounds production when they are friendly.</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) I honestly tell accented speakers that I need time to get used to different accents.</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) I tell accented speakers not to be offended when I ask for repetition in advance.</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) I sometimes just pretend as if I understand because I do not want to offend them.</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) If an accented speaker is abrupt or irritated by being asked to repeat, I avoid them.</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) It's hard to be friends with heavily accented speakers.</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) I prefer talking through text rather than face to face conversation</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) I honestly tell accented speakers that their speech is not intelligible so it is possible for me to ask them to repeat or explain in a different way.</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) I basically avoid communicating with strongly accented ESL speakers.</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 4-12, students indicated using some interesting behaviors to support their communicative issues. Survey results show that these students regarded pretending to understand was a useful coping strategy when they did not want to offend the speaker (47.3%, M = 3.7). Moreover, avoidance of accented speakers was a preferred option to reduce the possibilities communication difficulties, as nearly a half of students indicated
disagreement in sitting with accented speakers (45.6%, M = 2.4). Students’ decision to remain in a conversation with accented speakers was dependent upon the speaker’s attitudes in reaction to continuous requests for repetition. They indicated a desire to avoid to continuing conversations once they perceived negative attitudes from the interlocutor upon requesting repetition (47.3%, M = 3.6). On the other hand, when students perceived positive attitudes, they endeavored to become familiar with the accent of the speakers (41.2%, M = 3.3).

Students showed uncertainty about being open with accented speakers about the fact that communication may be difficult due to the speaker’s accent. This can be seen from the reactions to statement 4 (38.7%, M = 3.1) and 9 (40.7%, M = 2.8). Presumably, students may believe being honest was not an ideal way to cope with their communication difficulties or continue a conversation. On the other hand, 40.6% of students agreed (33.5%) and strongly agreed (7.1%) about advising accented speakers that they need time to become familiar to different accents, suggesting a situation where they are managing the situation by taking the responsibility partly on themselves for the communication issues. Although students did not intentionally avoid communication with accented speakers (M = 2.7), 45% of students agreed (36.8%) and strongly agreed (8.2%) that they had difficulties in becoming friends with heavily accented speakers.

**Group interview responses**

L2 students used particular behaviors to support their communication with accented speakers and socially engaged with them. As strategies developed by these students indicated a relationship between accentedness and friendship formation, this issue was addressed in more depth in the group interviews. It appeared that when communicative strategies were insufficient, these students sought to use coping strategies to support communication or comprehension difficulties and socially integrate with heavy accented speakers. Coping strategies developed by these students seemed dependent on how significant the information was for them to obtain. As survey findings indicated, establishing friendship was affected by accented English and reactions from accented speakers when they were asked for repetition or clarification by these students.

**Coping strategies to support communication difficulties**

The interviewees were asked to discuss coping strategies developed and adopted in order to support their communication difficulties. When communicative issues caused by accented English were not easy to mitigate, students employed a variety of coping strategies instead of
continually asking accented speakers for repetition or clarification. Coping strategies used by L2 students were re-themed and listed as below:

1) Pretending to understand
2) Changing the means of communication from spoken to written language (e.g., texts, emails and documents)
3) Not to be around heavily accented speakers
4) Telling accented speakers that time is needed to familiarize with different accents
5) Scanning how accented speakers respond

Although pretending did not seem to be an ideal solution to overcoming communication breakdowns, students frequently employed this strategy to avoid an embarrassing moment for both speakers and listeners:

*Oh yeah, I’ve done that many times. I become uncomfortable after asking people more than three times to repeat and I still don’t understand, then I just pretend and smile.* (Group interview A, Brazilian)

*This is not the best solution, but I often do that. For everyone, if they need to repeat things over and over, they wouldn’t be so much happy about it. So I just let it go, but things are different, when I have to understand something important at university or other kinds of social situations.* (Group interview D, Asian)

Students eventually pretended to understand, especially when they felt asking for repetition several times would be embarrassing for both speakers and listeners. However, these students only employed this strategy if the information was trivial.

The survey findings did not highlight written English language such as using emails or texts. In contrast, it was noted that for group interview students, using texts, emails and other types of document based on written language was an effective way of increasing students’ understanding. Students indicated that they often relied on written English language when dealing with important information:

*Yeah especially when we need to do our assignment together, it is important and I don’t want to lose any marks. So, I will definitely try to understand what the heavy accented speakers say by doing something different. Text messages or emails will be helpful. At least I can understand what the person says. I think reading would be helpful even with some mistakes, when I can’t understand anything because of their accent.* (Group interview B, Chinese)
I think it’s good to have a document when I’m dealing with important things just to make sure I’m not missing out anything. (Group interview C, European)

In addition, students who disliked telephone conversations also preferred written English language when confirming information they received through phone to ensure they did not miss anything important:

Having conversation with someone face to face is okay but I don’t like telephone conversation. Sometimes, I’m not able to pick up important things. So I ask the other person to send me a text with important information such as meeting place… time because I want to make sure I’m actually right on track. (Group interview C, European)

Although students seemed to have different coping strategies depending on whether or not understanding was necessary, the results here indicate that the majority showed unwillingness to sit next to accented speakers:

I wouldn’t mind much, but things might be different when I need to participate in some activities. I wouldn’t be happy working with heavy accented speakers. It could result in my marks and it would take a longer time to understand each other. (Group interview B, Chinese)

I normally avoid sitting next to heavy accented speakers to be honest. Unless I have to communicate with them for some reasons, I won’t do that. I don’t feel pleased to have conversation with someone who I can’t understand and who can’t understand me. So I would rather avoid that situation, because it will be an unpleasant situation for both of us. (Group interview C, European)

One of the survey findings indicated that honesty with accented speakers was not a preferred coping strategy when students faced communication difficulties due to accented English, indicating that such difficulties were caused by the speakers. Instead, they said they needed time to be familiar with different accents. Group interview students suggested that they used such a white lie to keep a conversation going as they felt uncomfortable to be honest with accented speakers:

I wouldn’t be that honest. Because he will feel unhappy and if I was in his shoe, I would be definitely unhappy as well. So I won’t do that… but maybe.. I would say something different. Maybe.. I would say I need time to get used to different accents. (Group interview C, European)

It’s better to be honest with accented speakers, but I wouldn’t say ‘it’s because of your accent’, but I could say ‘my English is not as good as you so would you speak more clearly and slowly? Or ‘I need time to get used to different accents’ In that case, accented speakers won’t be offended because I said my English is not as good as yours! It’s a compliment! (Group interview D, Korean)
Students tended to decide not to be honest as it could negatively affect the feelings of accented speakers. For this reason, students had a tendency to attribute communication breakdown to themselves in order to support communicative success, although it was not true.

For L2 international students, scanning how accented speakers responded to L2 students either favorably or unfavorably appeared to be an important determinant to decide to remain in a conversation and establish social networks with accented speakers. The positive attitudes and responses when students asked for repetition or clarification were also significantly influenced friendship formation of these students. These are introduced in the following section.

**Accent and friendship formation**

Students were asked to explain whether accentedness was a significant contributory factor in friendship formation, based on the outcomes of the survey. When communication breakdowns occurred between L2 students and accented speakers, students had a tendency to notice attitudes and reactions from the accented speakers. L2 students discontinued conversation with them, especially when they perceived negative reactions from the speakers when asking them for repetition. As a consequence of this, formation of multicultural friendship was negatively influenced:

*It’s hard to communicate with a person with a strong accent and if that person is impatient or irritated by being asked to repeat several times, I’ll just stop talking to that person. It’s not worth trying to be friends with them. (Group interview A, Brazilian)*

*I think that friendly attitudes are important for me to have a relationship with accented speakers. I sometimes run into some people who are very abrupt and they don’t even know why people don’t understand them easily. They never change their attitudes but actually think, ‘oh your English is not as good as mine’. I had a couple of issues with Indian classmates. Like we discussed, when people don’t understand us more or less twice, we try to correct our pronunciation or speak more clearly, but there’re some people we can never expect that. When I ask them to repeat several times, I can see they’re getting impatient. I also do not want to communicate with those kinds of people. There’s no reason to be around them. (Group interview D, Korean)*

On the other hand, when accented speakers positively responded to these students, they attempted to stay in a conversation to be familiar with accents and speech habits of the speakers.

*I try to listen carefully, if accented speakers also try to start a conversation with a friendly attitude, and I’m certain that things are not easy to understand at the first meeting in terms of accent and their
speech habits can be familiarized depending on how much I try. (Group interview D, Korean)

Although favorable responses from accented speakers was an important factor, L2 students believed that establishing friendship with accented speakers was only possible when the speakers had intelligible or familiar accent:

Communication is essential when making friends. I think I can only be friends with accents that I can possibly familiarize. If not, I’m not sure. (Group interview B, Chinese)

I actually disagree with the statement ‘it’s hard to be friends with accented speakers’. I have heaps of friends with a heavy accent, but it depends on how strong their accent is. (Group interview C, European)

It seemed that students did not intentionally avoid accented speakers due to accentedness until they received negative responses. However, students believed that they could be friends with accented speakers, only when their accent is at a certain degree that students could be familiar with. In light of this fact, accentedness affected the friendship formation of the students.

**Synthesis**

The purpose of this chapter was to present the information gathered from the survey and group interviews, which addresses the research questions regarding challenges caused by accented English and corresponding strategies used to mitigate those challenges. This includes the integration of the two different data sets into one comprehensive response to the research problem. From the above findings, L2 students, defined as competent users of English in this study, encountered a wide range of academic and social issues due to accentedness. In other words, accented English was not a linguistic problem for these students. They also experienced prejudice associated communication issues. Accent stereotypical attitudes towards L2 students played a role within the student community. In accordance with this, L2 students developed and adopted diverse communicative strategies as well as coping strategies in order to survive in Australia.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

The present study reports on the social and educational challenges faced by L2 international students, focusing particularly on the issue of accentedness. Thus this study shifts attention from the main focus of most previous studies on the language difficulties to a specific element of spoken English language difficulties, addressing linguistic aspects as well as social aspects of accented English. In addition, this study also provides interesting insights into corresponding communicative and coping strategies to mitigate challenges caused by accented English.

This chapter firstly outlines and discusses the key findings from the study in relation to communication difficulties caused by accented English in social and educational settings, followed by associated social issues arising from accentedness. It then discusses the corresponding communicative and coping strategies used to mitigate those challenges.

After identifying limitations of this study, the overall conclusions are presented integrating a discussion of the implication for policy, language teaching and learning. Directions for future research are also suggested based on the research findings.

Overview

The findings of the current study provide detailed information about the issues faced by students with accented English in social and educational settings, and also the strategies they adopted to address these, which complements previous literature on this issue. The findings reported in Chapter 4 outline not only issues with accented English, but also views, perspectives, opinions and attitudes towards diverse varieties of English in terms of accentedness. As found by this research, this group faced a wide range of academic and social difficulties due to accented English, with managing the issue of understanding other’s accented speech a particular concern. Before drawing a conclusion, identified key aspects of the current study and its results are discussed.
Social and educational challenges of international students caused by accented English in the Australian context

**Accented English in a globalized university – linguistic-associated issues concerning living as an international student in Australia**

In Australian studies, the most frequently cited language related learning problems for international students include oral comprehension and communication, aligning with the studies in the United States and United Kingdom (Robertson et al., 2000; Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland, & Ramia, 2012). This study focused on one such element, accentedness. It was found that for Australian ESL L2 students, comprehension difficulties often outweighed the communication difficulties caused by students in both educational and social settings. According to students’ reports, they experienced a wide range of accent associated-linguistic difficulties.

**Accent as a linguistic issue in educational settings**

Difficulties in understanding both L1 and L2 pupils, tutors and lecturers caused academic challenges for students. This study compared two typical educational settings such as lectures and tutorials. In tutorials and discussions, communication as a means of participating in learning activities can be more important than in lectures. Therefore, students felt that they experienced more communicative issues when taking part in learning activities than understanding lectures.

As in Robertson et al.’s (2000) study, L2 students in Australia reported that their challenges with language such as anxiety and lack of confidence limited participation. The impact of others’ accented English on communication was similar. Many reported that in tutorials and discussions, the majority of the comprehension difficulties they faced were caused by both Australian regional accents and foreign accents of other students and tutors. They reported that inadequate comprehension caused by accentedness could be a major obstacle for active participation in tutorials and discussions. Further, many suffered feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction regarding their learning processes. Due to continued oral comprehension issues, some indicated a loss of confidence in speaking English. Therefore, it is suggested that accented English of others may prevent the proactive participation of L2 students, causing emotional distress around the impact this has on their academic progression.

The findings from this study support previous studies. Similar to the findings by Khawaja and Stallman (2011) and Malau-Aduli (2011), this study also identified that L2 students faced
comprehension difficulties in lectures due to the strong accents of some Australian lecturers. While those studies addressed students’ concerns around understanding L1 accented English, this study found that accented English of L2 lecturers was challenging for the students. Khawaja and Stallman (2011) noted that such difficulties affected students’ study. Although this may be true, students in this research did not recognize that comprehension difficulties were a serious issue. In addition, students believed that asking lecturers for repetition could deteriorate the quality of the lectures. Therefore, the students in this study showed a reliance on additional learning resources. Further, they sought translation assistance from other students to support their understanding. In effect, the chances of communication with others in lectures might be less than in tutorials and discussions. However, this study did find that when questions and answers went back and forth between lecturers and students, some students reported that they felt embarrassed when lecturers did not understand their accented English and were concerned about how this impacted on the lecturer’s perception of their abilities.

While it would seem likely that students with greater time studying in Australia would be less subject to these issues, interestingly, a longer stay in Australia may not ensure better understanding in terms of accentedness. The survey findings showed, when students with different times in Australia were compared, no marked differences were apparent. In lectures for example, this study found that a longer length of stay in Australia did not appear to be an influential factor in understanding or becoming familiar with different accents of lecturers. As findings indicate, a strong accent was challenging for both students who recently arrived and also students who had stayed in Australia for 3 years. This was consistent with the findings of Campbell and Li (2008) who reported on a L2 student, who had the same issue after 2 years in New Zealand. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that it is not necessarily students with a longer residence in Australia, who had the advantage in better understanding with regard to accentedness. There might be various factors behind this finding with time in Australia one possible aspect. The determining factor may, for example, be related to the level of exposure to the target language. Another possible contributory factor noted by Sawir et al. (2012) and Singh (2005) was that of different English accents, finding that L1 students who had trained in British or American English, found following lectures with Australian accents a big barrier.

To meet such challenges in educational settings, as previously identified by Malau-Aduli (2011), these students sought translation assistance from both L1 and other L2 students. A few students indicated that they could not overcome comprehension difficulties, although they requested lecturers and tutors for repetition or clarification. A student who had difficulty
understanding Indian English relied on L1 students. In some instances, non-native accented English appears to be understood by native listeners, including some native-produced dialect (Munro & Derwing, 1999). However, for non-native English speakers, communication is complex as they may encounter difficulties in understanding accented speech which does not contain familiar sound patterns (Munro et al., 2006). This may be why L2 students who were not accustomed with other non-native varieties of English struggled with understanding other L2 speakers and sought for translation help from L1 students. On the other hand, some felt seeking help for translation assistance from co-national students was more efficient. A female student indicated: “We just escaped and discussed things with Chinese classmates who spoke better English than us and I felt more comfortable and useful when they explained in my first language” (Group interview B, Chinese).

The exploration of the strategies adopted to address issues with accentedness also provided insights into students’ experiences. For example, not asking questions, sitting next to co-national students and lack of participation in learning activities have been identified in the past as the most unproductive attitudes of L2 international students (Tompson & Tompson, 1996). However, as demonstrated in this study, when students faced accent-related problems within educational boundaries, they had their own views and beliefs on how to achieve better academic success. Understanding lectures was an issue due to the accented English of both L1 and L2 lecturers. Additionally, it was found that communication, even in a lecture format, was challenging for some students. However, they did not perceive this as a major problem because additional resources and translation assistance were available to enhance their understanding.

**Accent as a linguistic issue in social settings**

This study also looked at accent-related communication issues in social settings. Being understood was problematic due to students’ accent, yet not as much as understanding accented speech of L1 and L2 speakers. Apparently, students had more issues in understanding Australian English in social settings than in educational settings. They highlighted a number of factors which made communication difficult. For example, a strong Queensland accent, distinctive Australian speech style, fast speech and the use of slang and shortened words were all identified as problematic. L2 accented speech of other people also played a role, particularly in telephone communications. Communication issues with regard to accented English on the part of students as well as pronunciation issues were raised during the
discussion. In addition, students shared their views concerning the relationship between accented English and language proficiency.

The accent associated with Australian English also contributed to comprehension difficulties especially when socially interacting with people and communicating at work. When discussing those two contexts during group interviews, students suggested their views and opinions regarding Australian regional accents as well as speech habits of local people. To these students, a strong Australian regional accent (specifically, Queensland accents), the use of shortened words, slang, fast speech and distinctive speech habits such as mumbling and slurring words contributed to comprehension difficulties. Moreover, some students differentiated Australian English from other types of native English varieties which they were not aware of before they arrived in Australia. These findings are consistent with the study of Kell and Vogl (2007), which observed L2 students’ experiences in settling into an Australian University and social community. Kell and Vogl (2007) found students lost confidence speaking in English. In addition, some expressed fear of understanding or being understood due to their own accent and that of other people especially in working environment. This fear consequently led to an unwillingness to communicate with other people.

It was interesting to note that one of the students believed that accentedness was one thing, and language proficiency was another. This student worked at a language school as a receptionist and she was exposed to ESL learners from diverse backgrounds with different level of English proficiency and various foreign accents. This student mentioned that there was no a strong connection between language proficiency and the degree of accentedness based on her experience. This was because although she could communicate better with higher levels of students, communication with those high level students was not always successful due to their strong accents. Despite the claimed by Munro and Derwing (1999) that strongly accented speech is not always regarded as unintelligible, accent strength can frequently impact on the listeners’ capability to comprehend and process speech (Munro & Derwing, 1995). Thus, it can be said that students’ ability to accommodate diverse accents or strong accents was limited, this leading to greater comprehension problems. It is possible that L2 learners’ higher language proficiency may have helped to reduce communicative failure in some way.

In the situation of a formal job interview, students believed that the overall flow of job interviews was negatively impacted by accented English whether by students or the interviewers. They felt that their degree of accentedness increased because they felt nervous
about the interviews. Intelligible accents of the interviewers were a significant factor for these students in being able to feel less anxious about communication during the job interviews. Some reported that inaccurate pronunciation of terminology was also problematic. This was because they did not use the terminology on a daily basis. As a result, they were not able to recall how to pronounce the words precisely. Given the psychological anxiety as well as pronunciation issues, students may have fallen victim to stereotypic evaluation, consequently leading not being successful in a specific interview, or in finding work overall. This is because although many non-native English speakers are capable of communicating with others fluently (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010), people may find it hard to separate noticeable accents and communication skills (Creese & Kambere, 2003).

Shopping was seen as a less demanding social setting for students to cope with. Given the characteristics of shopping, which are often designed to sell, shop assistants may be willing to accommodate whatever accents they hear. This is noticeably different from other social settings. Students mentioned that they knew alternative expressions and shopping was a predictable situation in terms of language use. Despite this, difficulties with the pronunciation of infrequently used words were noted. Furthermore, they expressed issues with pronouncing words containing certain sounds patterns. It is possible to assume that such sound production difficulties originated from their first language as students’ first language can differ from English phonologically (Gilakjani et al., 2011). Although students have achieved a high level of language proficiency to undertake a higher degree in Australia, the findings indicate that they still faced pronunciation issues. To be successful in communication, some students showed a tendency to use their mobile to show a picture of what they were looking for.

As Australia is multicultural and multinational society, students experienced increased intercultural exposure and chances of intercultural communication. Students in this study emphasized not only the difficulty they found with known national accents with which they were unfamiliar with (e.g., Irish accents), but also the English accents of other L2 speakers that were difficult for them to comprehend (e.g., Indian, African, some Asian English accents). English is widely spoken as a lingua franca, thus intercultural communication can be perceived as somewhat problematic (Kaur, 2011). One of the sources and nature of misunderstanding in intercultural communication was performance-related misunderstanding (Kaur, 2011). As students interact with other students all speaking different varieties of English, “the variations in pronunciation and accent impinge on the clarity and intelligibility of certain sound segments”
(Holmes & Dervin, 2016, p. 101; Jenkins, 2000). Limited ability to identify the phonological sequence of a word or phrase may result in misunderstandings (Weigand, 1999). This is a fundamental obstacle for many L2 students when communicating with other L2 speakers.

The vast majority of group interview students struggled with telephone communication, particularly when communicating with L2 speakers or call operators. Understanding L2 accented speech on the phone was more challenging for students than face to face conversations. According to their experience, this issue led to the loss of job opportunities and delays with problem resolution. Although telephone can be one of the most significant communication mediums, it is a medium that relies totally on sound with no additional aspects such as gestures. Students who experienced struggles with telephone communication showed great reluctance to communicate with L2 accented speakers. A female student interviewed in this study mentioned: “Telephone communication is particularly hard. You know it’s totally faceless. I can’t read someone’s facial expressions or gestures. Because of that when there is a little bit of difference in accents that I’m not familiar with, I often misunderstand or don’t understand” (Group interview D, Korean). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that understanding L2-produced speech hindered comprehension of L2 students from different first language backgrounds and it was even more challenging when communicating with L2 speakers through the phone.

Taking these into account, L2 students were exposed a number of accent-related issues within the broader social community. Interestingly, students in this study believed that high language proficiency and accent strength were not correlated. However, they may have supported communicative success. Some students experienced pronunciation issues and language anxiety due to their accent and those of other people. Australian English, including strong Queensland accents and speech habits of local people caused communication difficulties, loss of confidence in speaking English and an unwillingness to remain conversations. Unfamiliar native English varieties, differences in pronunciation and accents of other L2 speakers from diverse first language background impacted on students’ comprehension negatively affecting mutual understanding.
Accented English in the Australian multicultural society – social issues for international students

Derwing and Munro (2009) have identified that many L2 speakers experiencing accent stereotyping and discrimination in response to their foreign sounding accent. This was an issue that was raised frequently across the group discussion. Bourdieu’s theoretical insight ‘linguistic capital’ was involved in the process of addressing issues with accent-related societal issues of L2 students at many points. English is necessary for the students wishing to study in English-speaking countries and such ability is valuable, as it will give a competitive edge. The linguistic capital of English will not wane due to the role of English for “business, trade, economics, travel and access to science and technology” (Morrison & Lui, 2000, p. 482).

However, this study found that the presence of accent stereotyping was entrenched within the student community, causing negative consequences within both social and educational settings. In other words, the linguistic capital of L2 students was undervalued due to accentedness and communicative problems of these students were accompanied bias. According to Lippi-Green (1997), communication is a dynamic interactive process and communication failures cannot be attributed entirely to the listeners. Unfortunately, although students were capable of facilitating or remaining in conversation in their second language, people were biased against these students when communication breakdowns occurred.

Accent as a societal issue in social settings

Accent is an impediment causing a number of issues around stigmatization and experiences of communicative problems with bias. Accentedness of L2 students and others led to negative experiences in two ways: 1) experiences of accent stereotyping as linguistic discrimination, and 2) communicative problems with prejudice. As accentedness of students was an indicator of their status as non-native English speakers, it provoked bias and adverse attitudes towards them. It appeared that many students suffered from their lack of capability to accommodate diverse accents. However, they became the object of criticism, as if their language proficiency undermined mutual understanding, causing communication breakdowns.

Lippi-Green (1997) found that accent stereotypical attitudes towards L2 speakers were associated with race. One of the findings of this study corresponds with that argument. Most students in this study reported that they experienced stigmatization because of their accents. In particular, some Asian students reported that they perceived people had low expectations
regarding their ability. Although they indicated that the level of stereotypical attitudes toward them was not at a critical level, they presumed that such underestimations of their ability were related to their foreign accent and Asian-looking appearance. Furthermore, some other Asian students reported that people tend to judge rashly regarding their language proficiency without communicating for long enough. A student mentioned: “Asian looking people can speak English as much as native English speakers, but people tend to judge my level of English by hearing a few statements with my Korean accent. This happens all the time at public offices like police station, post office, immigration office... they always ask me first if I need an interpreter” (Group interview D, Korean).

Robertson et al. (2000) identified most racist incidents were reported as occurring in the wider community usually the street, when shopping or on public transport. Interestingly, L2 students encountered prejudiced L1 speakers within those places, experienced stigmatization. They reported that prejudiced L1 interlocutors did not try to facilitate or remain in communication with L2 students when the students did not understand them due to their accent. In particular, Brazilian and Asian students experienced great annoyance and impatience from L1 speakers when these students had trouble comprehending them. These students also reported that L1 speakers had a tendency to misjudge and underestimate their language proficiency, ceasing communication. As discussed earlier, communication breakdowns can be caused by heavily accented speech or an unfamiliar native English variety. However, L2 students were frequently the target of criticism for communicative failure. In other words, the actual language proficiency of L2 students was often undervalued and misjudged by L1 listeners due to comprehension difficulties the students faced because of the L1 accented speech. This study confirmed that cross-border communication was frequently fraught with such adverse attitudes and prejudice on the part of native speakers of English (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002).

As contended by Sawir et al. (2012) most discrimination incidents were associated with language proficiency and accents at work. In this study, different accents based on different native varieties, rather than language proficiency triggered stereotypical attitudes of people. It is interesting to note that one example of Asian American accented speech was blamed for miscommunication at work – the who was directed to acquire Australian English. In contrast to Asian American accented English, a student with a British-like accented speech had an opposite experience at work. This student reported that he was positively evaluated on the ground of not having a foreign accent. In addition, this student believed that such native-like
accentedness caught people’s interest and attention. This student also remarked: “*They like my accent. It might be because they like British accent very much based on my experience*” (Group interview C, European).

These differential findings are consistent with the results of Harrison (2013), in which a European participant perceived a warm reaction from people in Australia due to his European accent. Further, this participant speculated that Asian accents are generally less well-received in Australia. This indicates that an ability to speak English does not have the same market value in terms of accentedness. Another interesting point from Harrison’s (2013) study was that several L2 workers living in South East Queensland experienced that the higher status of British English compared to American English in the Australian work environment. Racial differences may have contributed to the difference in experiences of Asian and European students as it is common to make connections between accentedness and race (Lippi-Green, 1997). As a result, it can be said for L2 students, accentedness and race were implicated in discriminatory practices in the workplace.

This study found that accentedness generated a number of issues regarding accent stereotyping and linguistic discrimination. A foreign accent was a potential trigger for stereotypical attitudes towards, with the experience that their comprehension difficulties provoked annoyance, impatience and inaccurate assumptions of people. Asian American accented English seemed undervalued compared to British-like European accented English, especially in the work environment. In other words, there was some differentiation to the response to accentedness with some accents being positively valued as linguistic capital, trading to economic capital in the Australian context.

**Accent as a societal issue in educational settings**

According to the study of Sawir et al. (2012), L2 students in Australia experienced communication difficulties with bias mostly when off-campus. This contrasts with the findings of this study that accent stereotyping and linguistic discrimination were still occurring on campus. Students, depending on their origin, had different views and experiences regarding this matter. Interestingly, it was predominantly Asian students who experienced prejudicial attitudes of lecturers and classmates. On the other hand, students from Brazil and Europe tended to believe that negative attitudes towards them within the boundaries of education did not exist.
L2 students stated that their foreign sounding accent and issues of pronunciation were major factors in their final mark, especially when being assessed by presentation. This is supported by the literature (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011; Munro et al., 2006; Nakane, 2006). Furthermore, they had an issue with using a particular native variety of English. Americanized speech in educational settings could be considered difficult, as in the example from the group interviews. However, using a different native variety of English can be influenced by a student’s previous learning experience. Students in the study conducted by Sawir (2005) were also corrected when they spoke English with an American accent, instead being compelled to speak with an Australian accent.

As contended by Sawir (2005), due to students’ previous learning experience, many L2 students struggled gaining sufficient exposure to specific English language accent (in this case, Australian accent), with this potentially leading to comprehension difficulties. Thus the adoption of Australian English norms for L2 students who have already have acquired a different variety of English has difficulties. “There is not just one norm, but a series of norms, even in the same community; and some norms even cut across communities and languages” (Bamgbose, 1998, p. 2). Moreover, students’ sociocultural settings of language use are not negligible. For example, Norwegian students wish to have an accent approximate to native English speakers; whereas, Nigerian students do wish to acquire an accent that differs from their local ones (Bamgbose, 1998). Some students with non-native linguistic features are stigmatized due to such features because they are very different from the norms within the community. However, the ultimate goal of learning English for many L2 speakers is to be understood in broad contexts by various communities and conversational partners (Jenkins, 1998; Munro & Derwing, 1999). Within the broader international contact, intelligibility may be more important than acquiring a certain type of linguistic convention as students do not talk to L1 speakers only.

To sum up, this study identified a number of ongoing issues surrounding the social and educational challenges caused by accented English. This study identified that speaking with a foreign sounding accent entails a variety of possible adverse consequences for L2 students. In addition, it was also explored how bilingual skills of L2 students can be seen as an asset. Accentedness of these students as well as comprehension difficulties caused by others’ accent contributed to negative consequences, provoking accent stereotyping and discrimination. The devaluation of linguistic capital was evident, especially for Asian students. On the other hand,
the value was attached to a particular linguistic convention, which was British European accented speech.

**Corresponding Communication strategies and coping strategies of L2 students to mitigate accent-related challenges**

Students in this study used a wide range of communicative strategies to mitigate accent-related communication issues. Although they regarded pronunciation as the key of compensating for communication breakdowns, the most preferred strategy among L2 students was not pronunciation-related. The use of communicative strategies by L2 students appeared to be more complex as they did use multiple strategies. Furthermore, L2 students developed coping strategies to minimize communicative failures and remain in a conversation. These were mostly non-verbal linguistic strategies. Although students adopted verbal or non-verbal strategies to communicate with accented speakers, accentedness was still a salient determinant when establishing multicultural friendship.

**Preferred communicative strategies and perceived effectiveness**

This study identified three key communicative strategies employed by L2 students. Firstly, these students did not simply use one strategy to compensate for communication breakdowns caused by their accented English and pronunciation issues. Secondly, the findings indicate that even L2 students at a high level of English proficiency employ some less complex communicative strategies. They also believed that such low level strategies were effective. Lastly, accurate pronunciation was regarded as the most effective strategy; whereas, it was considered as a less suitable strategy to employ during conversation.

The top three communicative strategies among the students were self-repetition, paraphrasing and clarity of speech. Those strategies did not appear to be complex or relevant to sound adjustment. However, as qualitative findings indicated, students did not simply employ one strategy. They tended to use their preferred strategies first and then when they could not compensate for communication breakdowns, they used backup strategies while using their preferred strategies. These included increasing the clarity of speech and accuracy of pronunciation. It was noted that L2 students with a higher level of language proficiency also employed less complex strategies such as spelling out. They believed that such strategies were successful and effective when they faced difficulties in pronouncing a word. A female student interviewed in this study indicated: “I try to pronounce it first, but if that doesn’t work, I just
spell it out I think” (Group interview C, European). Communicative strategies employed by L2 students appeared to be general. However, the way they employed these strategies was not so. In that sense, this study confirmed that high level English language speakers such as L2 tertiary students employed multiple types of compensatory strategies (Oxford, 1996).

According to the perceived effectiveness of communicative strategies, L2 students believed that pronunciation was a key strategy to overcome communicative failure, followed by paraphrasing and speaking clearly. As students struggled with their accented English and pronunciation issues, they tended to believe that those areas could exacerbate other linguistic skills such as vocabulary. Due to such difficulties, students felt that an improvement of pronunciation would alleviate their phonological problems. Therefore, many L2 students perceived that accurate pronunciation was a salient strategy to overcome issues with their spoken English language. Nonetheless, it was not chosen by L2 students as priority during communication. In fact, they regarded accurate pronunciation as less suitable communicative strategy.

Some believed that L2 international students at a competent level of English would not face many communication issues. Therefore, it was not easy to recognize problems with accents or pronunciation during conversation. A female student interviewed in this study indicated: “I guess it’s hard to think of pronunciation in the midst of communication. We just do what we can do spontaneously and habitually. If I have a strong accent, but accurate pronunciation, problems with my accent can be improved. At least, I believe so. But communication is not based on what we plan, it’s spontaneous, so I think that’s why the results of the survey are contrasting” (Group interview D, Korean). In addition, some believed that accurate pronunciation would hinder the natural flow of conversation at the time of conversation and this would provoke intolerance from the listeners. As a consequence, accurate pronunciation was regarded as a less ideal strategy for spontaneous communication.

Many showed a great awareness of the importance of pronunciation to overcome communication difficulties as well as to improve their accented speech. In spite of this, students were not pursuing native-like accents, just intelligible pronunciation. These findings of students’ perceptions of accentuatedness were contrasted with the result of studies conducted in the EFL context. Fraser (2006) found that in the Japanese EFL context, Japanese-accented English was easy to follow for the participants. However, they did not prefer such foreign sounding accent. Rather, they valued a particular native accent. In addition, a study carried out
by McKenzie (2008) discovered that Japanese university students more positively reviewed American-accented speakers than Japanese-accented speakers in the light of competence. McKenzie (2008) drew a conclusion that such results reflect ‘native speaker ideology’, which shows a strong endorsement of a native variety of English. In other words, non-native speakers of English in the EFL context do not seem to be always antipathetic to foreign-sounding accent, but they prefer a native variety of English as an ideal model for second language acquisition.

Paraphrasing was identified as a preferred strategy and an effective strategy for L2 international students. In fact, paraphrasing has been identified as one of the popular strategies among L2 students at diverse language levels (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; López, 2011). In general, paraphrasing may not be closely relevant to pronunciation (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002). However, many students reported that they employed paraphrasing along with increased clarity of speech or accuracy of pronunciation. In view of the usage of the strategy, it is possible to mention that paraphrasing may be a useful strategy to overcome communication failure caused by accentedness. This finding supports the study of Derwing and Rossiter (2002) which concluded that paraphrasing could help L2 learners to avoid difficulties in pronunciation, especially those who felt that they did not have control over their pronunciation. This was because unintelligible sound production may not be improved by self-repetition. On the other hand, paraphrasing may provide comprehension options to the listeners (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002). The ability to paraphrase has been recognized as effective not only for communicative success, but also instructions for L2 learners (Littlemore, 2003; Rossiter, 2001). Instructions of paraphrasing enable L2 learners to access diverse alternatives such as synonyms and expressions to facilitate successful communication (Rossiter, 2001).

Based on the findings of the study, it is possible to presume that students experienced communicative failure due to linguistic verbal production. In order to achieve their communicative goal, students used a wide range of strategies. Students perceived that pronunciation was effective and important to compensate for communication breakdowns caused by their phonological difficulties. However, they were not in pursuit of native-like accentedness, unlike students in the EFL context.

**Coping strategies to support communication difficulties**

One of the goals of this study was to examine coping strategies used by L2 students to support their communication difficulties. These strategies were mainly developed and adopted to better comprehend accented speech of others by using non-verbal linguistic strategies or
behaviors, such as pretending to understand and communicating in writing. Coping strategies differed depending on how significant of the information was. In addition, some behaviors indicated a socializing aspect to integrate with other accented speakers. Accented speech and formation of multicultural friendship were correlated.

Asking for clarification and repetition were identified as communicative strategies in the study by López (2011). L2 students in this study also employed such strategy; however, they showed unwillingness to repeat it many times. In the case that miscommunication continued, they believed that this may led to an embarrassing moment for both students and speakers. As a result of this, they developed an interesting coping strategy; that is, pretending to understand. Although it was regarded as a less than ideal strategy to comprehend accented speech, it prevented embarrassing, unpleasant moments and helped better flow of communication. A female student indicated: “I think at least we ask them to repeat and explain to us in different ways, but I would feel embarrassed if I ask them more than three times. Then I would just pretend as if I’m following them” (Group interview B, Chinese). Another female student was not only concerned about the flow of communication, but also how people would perceive her language proficiency. This student said: “The reason why I pretended was I just didn’t want to interrupt too much while a person is talking, and they might think my English is not good” (Group interview C, European). These students also mentioned that pretending to understand was useful, when information provided by the accented speaker seemed unimportant.

It is interesting to note that students relied on written English rather than spoken English language, when they needed to understand significant information. They preferred using text messages, emails or documents to achieve better understanding and confirm obtained information. In the situations that communication was essential, such as doing a group assignment with accented speakers or other types of important circumstances, L2 students particularly preferred communicating with a written form. This was so as not to miss out any important information, and also as a confirmation. When face to face conversation did not go smoothly with accented speakers, reading a written text was far more straightforward for these students to understand. A female student remarked: “Things are different, when I have to understand something important at university or other kinds of social situations. Talking through text is good because when face to face conversation doesn’t work, reading a text is a lot clearer” (Group interview D, Korean). Although text messages or emails could contain some syntactical mistakes, L2 students still regarded that written forms of communication were better for their comprehension. Another female student stated: “I think reading would be
helpful even with some mistakes, when I can’t understand anything because of their accent” (Group interview B, Chinese). In that sense, it can be said that for L2 students, it was mainly less intelligible speech, which caused communication difficulties rather than other linguistic resources (Gilakjani, 2012). To acquire accurate information, written English was preferred.

It was noted that written forms of communication were effective and efficient for those who felt language anxiety in regards to accentedness. A female student interviewed in this study mentioned: “I’m worried about my accent because people might think my English is not good, also my accent is rather strong. So, I feel relieved when I don’t have to talk or listen carefully. Text messages or emails, those kinds of tools are very useful for me. I don’t have to worry to speak better and there’s no pressure to understand what heavily accented speakers say” (Group interview B, Chinese).

When L2 students faced comprehension difficulties due to the accentedness of others, they felt uncomfortable being honest with accented speakers. Many believed that telling accented speakers that their accent was not intelligible could draw emotionally negative consequences from the accented speakers. Moreover, these students were not willing to request repetition and clarification many times. To prevent such negative consequences, students tried to say something circuitously. For example, “I need time to get used to different accent” (Group interview C and D, European and Korean). Also, “My English is not as good as you. So, would you speak more clearly and slowly?” (Group interview D, Korean). L2 students were not willing to attribute communication breakdowns to accented speakers directly, although it was true. Instead, these students expressed communication difficulties indirectly, caring about the feelings of accented speakers.

Due to expected communication difficulties with accented speakers, L2 students were sometimes reluctant to be around accented speakers. A female student indicated: “I sometimes feel nervous when I accidently sit next to a person with a heavy accent. I’m like... ‘what if this person talks to me’, ‘what if I don’t understand...’, ‘what should I do?’ I can ask them to repeat or explain me in different ways but what if I still can’t understand?? It’s embarrassing to ask them again and again” (Group interview A, Brazilian). Some stated that they did not mind sitting next to accented speakers. However, to prevent negative communication experience with accented speakers, many indicated that they tried not to sit next to accented speakers. In particular, these students were rather negative about doing academic related
activities with accented speakers. This was because these students believed that it could impact on their final marks and delay of communicative success.

These strategies were fairly different from those in previous studies as their central focus was not accented English (Huang & Klinger, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Malau-Aduli, 2011). The identified coping strategies appeared to help these students understand messages from the accented speakers, obtain important information and avoid embarrassing moments.

**Accentedness and friendship formation**

The majority of L2 students believed that communication was essential to the formation of multicultural friendship. Students held a variety of views on accented speech and friendship formation. This was not because of accent stereotyping or discriminatory attitudes towards other accented speakers. However, expected communication difficulties and the degree of accentedness of L2 speakers were concerns for these students when establishing social networks. It was noted that they developed another interesting coping strategy when establishing multicultural friendship with accented speakers.

Previous studies concluded that communication difficulties on the part of L2 students may lead to social exclusion and loneliness (Andrade, 2006; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992). Although this may be true, the findings of this study indicated that accented speech as a distinguishable element of communication had a significant effect on the friendship formation of L2 students. Accentedness of others was a major issue. Students believed that communication should be the foundation of a relationship. However, they felt that establishing a deep friendship with accented speakers would be challenging. A female student remarked: “I don’t think I can be friends with heavy accented speakers. I consider that we can only be acquaintances. Friends are supposed to share a lot of things and do a lot of things together, yet, with heavy accented speakers, communication, which is the basic thing, becomes the most difficult thing” (Group interview B, Chinese).

The majority of students did not avoid accented speakers intentionally. Rather, they attempted to understand and be friends with accented speakers. These students tended to firstly examine how accented speakers reacted when students faced comprehension difficulties, and then decide to remain in a conversation. When these students perceived negative reactions or attitudes such as annoyance, abruptness and impatience from the accented speakers, students
ceased communication and decided not to develop relationships with accented speakers. By contrast, L2 students tended to be tolerant communication breakdowns with accented speakers when these speakers were positive regarding comprehension difficulties of L2 students. However, many believed that establishing a friendship was only possible if they could eventually become familiar with accented speech. In other words, L2 students considered the degree of perceived accentedness as an important factor in friendship formation. A male student stated: “I actually disagree with the statement ‘it’s hard to be friends with accented speakers’. I have heaps of friends with a heavy accent, but it can be depend on how strong their accent is” (Group interview C, European). In view of this, it can be conclude that the degree of accentedness of other speakers as well as their reactions to these students’ comprehension difficulties significantly affected friendship formation.

This study showed extensive evidence of the coping strategies used by L2 students. A wide range of coping strategies were identified. These strategies not only to support communicative failures, but also facilitate integration with other accented speakers. Accentedness of other speakers and their attitudes towards communication breakdowns were an issue for L2 students negatively impacting on their comprehension and friendship formation.

Limitations

A mixed-methods study such as this has strength and limitations. This have been identified and taken into account. The strength of the explanatory mixed-method approach was its capacity and capability to address research problems. Multiple variables were identified and an in depth study of all aspects of the issue was conducted. Despite these strengths, this research is not without limitations. These include the methodological approach and the sample of students who provided both quantitative and qualitative data for the current study.

As the survey was distributed by employing a snowballing sampling method to access possible participants, the researcher had little control over the sampling method. Although the purpose of this study was to investigate students’ linguistic experience according to their English language proficiency ranged from 6.5 to 7 in IELTS, the representativeness of the survey sample as relevant forms to this accent study may be not guaranteed. However, given the large and diverse sample the range of responses are likely to be suggestive of issues faced by students.

This study relied on the students’ self-declared English language proficiency. Students’ English proficiency in this research was supposed to range from 6.5 to 7 in IELTS. The current
study clearly attempted to narrow the parameters; nevertheless, without formal assessment measures of the students’ English proficiency, the views of students whose English was greater than 7.5 or equivalent might have potentially been included in the data set. One potential cause is that students who took the test several years ago and have been continuously living and studying in Australia may have improved their English overtime.

The interpretation of data relied on students’ self-reported accent appraisal. At the time of data collection, the researcher acknowledged that some students evaluated their degree of accentedness generously and others were very humble. However, if the students’ level of accentedness was measured objectively; for example, by playing a short recording of group interview, this would be more convincing than IELTS scores.

The data analysis for the study was limited to descriptive analysis. While there was a reasonable sample it was felt for this initial exploratory study using hypothesis tests, for example to suggest statistical significant differences between various subgroups, was not appropriate. The variation within groups such as age and degree being studied were likely to be greater than those between such groups – an initial analysis indicated no significant differences. Thus the analytical approach adopted was for descriptive analyses with the findings then linked to the views expressed by students in the group interviews.

Another limitation was the sample of students for qualitative data collection, which used volunteers. This study provided four representative cohorts. Thus, there is potential for selection bias. Moreover, this study grouped students from the same nationality with the exception of the European group. Therefore, it did not sufficiently capture the challenges and strategies from the same ethnic group. As a result of these, some of the responses may have been biased due to overrepresentation or underrepresentation.

**Implications for Policy, Practice and Future Research**

There are several implications for policy and practice drawn from this study. There are also some suggestions, which can be built upon in future research. These are presented and discussed below.

**Implications for policy and practice**

A greater level of acknowledgement of current language difficulties and their impacts on L2 tertiary students could inform policy and practice.
The global status of English includes linguistic diversity in terms of accented speech as it is spoken throughout the world. As Australia is a linguistically diverse environment, students do not only speak to native speakers of English. For L2 speakers, having intelligible accents and pronunciation is vital to be understood in the international context. Moreover, having an ability as a listener to accommodate diverse accents appears to be necessary. Communication skills are often highlighted to many ESL speakers as a way to survive in a foreign country. However, without understanding linguistic diversity in terms of accented speech and the capability to accommodate diverse accents, communication as well as social integration will hardly be successful.

Non-native English speakers outnumber native English speakers (Crystal, 2003b). This means English as a global language includes many forms of non-native English varieties. Unfortunately, linguistic intolerance and lack of awareness of the changes in English were shown in both social and educational settings. It is important to raise awareness of variant of English spoken by L2 speakers from diverse first language backgrounds and to be more open to their linguistic diversity, especially accented speech. One way to enhance people’s understanding and awareness of varieties of English is exposure and education regarding linguistic diversity.

Universities can devise more effective ways to accommodate international students by enhancing awareness of issues experienced by the current L2 students. It is a responsibility of universities to consider how best to cope with ongoing issues with accented English faced by students. Social and educational challenges of students were not always caused by the accent on the part of students or limited language proficiency. Limited ability to accommodate diverse accents (both L1 and L2) caused many difficulties. Communication breakdowns can occur even among L1 speakers. It cannot always be attributed to students’ language proficiency. However, students’ linguistic experiences were closely associated with accent stereotyping and discrimination. Therefore, universities should consider training staff to increase their awareness of potential bias that occur with and L2 students.

Students in this study were not socially vulnerable; however, there may be many accented L2 students who encounter difficulties in establishing social networks in Australia which could well impact on their vulnerability. University services could provide pronunciation training for the students. As many believed, pronunciation would improve their phonological difficulties.
The findings of this study suggest pronunciation instruction focusing on speech intelligibility for future tertiary students would help students’ cross-border communication with others. Many potential L2 tertiary students may focus on reaching IELTS requirements and writing skills rather than intelligible speech with good pronunciation. In language education, generally, pronunciation instruction is emphasized more in lower language proficiency classes than in advanced ones. However, pronunciation instruction should not be marginalized reflecting the needs of the current L2 international students.

The analysis of communicative strategies will assist language educators to conceptualize better strategies for L2 learners to resolve communication difficulties. The use of developed and adopted communicative strategies is not an indicator of a failure to communicate (Sukirlan, 2014). Rather, students could have more opportunities to negotiate their meaning and solve communicative problems by learning communicative strategies (Sukirlan, 2014). Therefore, explicit instruction of verbal strategies is essential for L2 learners while their linguistic resources are insufficient to deliver their messages (Sukirlan, 2014).

**Directions for future research**

This study outlined limitations which provide some directions for future research. Not many studies have paid attention to L2 speakers with higher language proficiency, assuming that they would not face many language difficulties. Although this may be true, this study demonstrated that such L2 students still encountered a number of linguistic challenges along with social challenges. Thus, more understanding of ongoing issues with regard to L2 international students is an important direction for future research.

This study focused on students with the minimum language level acceptable for international students, however, a wide range of issues were identified. Future research could investigate how students with more proficient English skills face issues with accentedness and how they are treated differently depending on their ability to communicate. Furthermore, it would be valuable to examine whether students with stronger foreign accents experienced further stereotyping or discrimination. This could establish a correlation between language proficiency and the level of accentedness. This calls for additional research in higher education settings as well as in wider community.

Questions remained on the extent of discriminatory perceptions as a function of international students’ length of study. It could be worthwhile to examine a larger number of
cohorts of L2 students’ academic and social experiences based on length of stay and compare how much discriminatory perceptions caused by language difficulties and foreign accents. Such variation still merits attention in future research.

Conclusion

This exploratory study provides in-depth understanding of social and educational challenges caused by accented English for L2 tertiary students in Australia. This study explored issues with accented English at two routes: 1) accented English as linguistic difficulties, causing communication issues and 2) accent associated communication experiences with prejudice. By dividing the student community into two, the social and educational settings, challenges students faced and how they mitigated these challenges were examined.

The conclusion reached in this study was that accented English was a trigger of communication issues. Two aspects were considered – L2 students as speakers and also L2 students communicating with other L2 students. For students as speakers, their foreign accents and mispronunciation contributed to communication breakdowns. On the other hand, where students were the listener, limited capacity and capability to accommodate diverse L1 and L2 accents faced comprehension difficulties. Although their communicative problems seemed to be more associated with comprehension difficulties caused by others’ accents rather than students’ phonological issues, these communication difficulties were the main causes of academic difficulties and social difficulties.

Accented English had negative social consequences for students as they experienced prejudice accent associated communicative problems. Accent stereotyping as linguistic discrimination was more pervasive outside of university as all cohorts, with the exception of European students, encountered prejudicial people. A particular native English variety was preferred, indicating linguistic intolerance in terms of other native varieties of English and other non-native varieties of English within Australian society.

Students developed and adopted communicative and coping strategies to mitigate challenges they faced. These strategies helped students to remain in conversations and socially integrate with others. Cross-cultural friendships are an important part of successful study experience, also social adjustment. Although students did not manifest linguistic discriminatory attitudes, accented speech itself regarded as a perceived barrier for formation of multicultural friendship.
Further research following the completion of this study may provide valuable information that Australian educational institutions can use to mitigate ongoing issues of L2 international students. Research on the language difficulties of L2 international students face may also offer suggestions on ways in which the quality of higher education and university services for L2 international students in Australia could be enhanced sustaining the current reputation of Australian universities. By looking at language difficulties L2 speakers at higher language proficiency, the current trend of language needs can be provided, which can support the directions for language teaching programs.
References


Social and educational challenges of international students caused by accented English in the Australian context


doi:10.1177/1028315309336031
Appendix A: Survey

Griffith University Ethics Reference Number: 2016/035

Social and Educational Challenges of International Students caused by Accented English in the Australian Context: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Linguistic Experience

This survey is to explore international students’ English communication-related experience focusing on foreign accent. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; I am interested in knowing your experience.

I’m a postgraduate HDR student conducting this survey as a part of my project for 5608EDN Master of Education and Professional Studies Research. It would be appreciated if you could complete this survey.

Please note I am asking about your communication in English – both native and also ESL speakers.

We’re asking some questions to understand who you are, and would appreciate if you could tick the appropriate response.

Q1: Could you please indicate your gender?
   - Male □
   - Female □

Q2: Could you indicate the age group you’re in?
   - 20~24 □
   - 25~29 □
   - 30~34 □
   - 35~39 □
   - 40+ □

Q3: Can you please indicate which country you are from? ________________________

Q4: What are you studying for now?
   - Bachelor’s degree □
   - Masters’ degree □
   - Doctoral Degree □
   - Others (Grad Dip or Grad Cert) □

Q5: How long have you been in Australia?
   - Less than a year □
   - 1 ~ 2 years □
   - 2 ~ 3 years □
   - 3 ~ 4 years □
   - 5+ □

Your background using English

Q6: Do you think that you speak English with a non-native accent?
   - Yes □
   - Uncertain □
   - No □ Why? ________________________ (Go to question 3)

Accent is a distinctive way of pronouncing a language, especially one associated with a particular country, region or social class. Accent in this question refers to a foreign accent (e.g., your first language accent) when you speak English as a second language.

Q7: How strong is your accent when you speak English on a scale where 1 is no accent and 5 is very strong?
   - 1 (None) □
   - 2 (Weak) □
   - 3 (Mild) □
   - 4 (Strong) □
   - 5 (Extreme) □
Q8: Do you find that native English speakers understand you easily when you speak English?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Not sure
- Seldom
- Never

Q9: Do you find that non-native English speakers understand you easily when you speak English?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Not sure
- Seldom
- Never

Q10: How often do you experience communication breakdowns in the following situations because of your accent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
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<td>Shopping</td>
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<td>At work</td>
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<td>Job interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participating in tutorial &amp; discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding lectures</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Others (Please specify here)

Q11: How often do you experience communication breakdown in the following situations because of other people's accent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
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<td>Shopping</td>
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<td>At work</td>
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<td>Job interview</td>
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<td>Participating in tutorial &amp; discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding lectures</td>
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</table>

- Others (Please specify here)

- Others (Please specify here)
Q12: What do you do when people cannot understand your English? And how effective is each strategy? [Tick NA if you don’t use the suggested strategy]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>NA</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paraprase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repeat</td>
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<td>Write down / Spell out</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speak more clearly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speak more slowly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speak louder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pronounce more precisely</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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(Please specify here)

Q13: What do people do if they cannot understand your English?
- Ask you to repeat yourself ☐
- Ask for clarification (e.g. What do you mean?) ☐
- Ask for an explanation in different words ☐
- Others ☐

(Please specify here)

**Communicating and integrating with other English speakers**

Q14: In the following statements, to what extent do you agree or disagree?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I try to sit next to a person with a heavy accent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I try to talk to heavy accented people to get used to their sounds</td>
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<td>production when they are friendly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I honestly tell accented speakers that I need time to get used to different accents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I tell accented speakers not to be offended when I ask for repetition in</td>
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<tr>
<td>advance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I sometimes just pretend as if I understand because I do not want to</td>
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<tr>
<td>offend them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If an accented speaker is abrupt or irritated by being asked to repeat,</td>
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<tr>
<td>I avoid them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It’s hard to be friends with heavily accented speakers.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Social and educational challenges of international students caused by accented English in the Australian context

Griffith University Ethics Reference Number: 2016/035

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I prefer talking through text rather than face to face conversation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I honestly tell accented speakers that their speech is not intelligible</td>
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<tr>
<td>so it is possible for me to ask them to repeat or explain in a different</td>
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<td>way.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I basically avoid communicating with strongly accented ESL speakers.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Others ____________________________

(Please specify here)

Q15: Would you be prepared to do an interview? If so, could you give your contact details?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Mobile</th>
<th>Email</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Do you have any further comments?

______________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you so much for participating in this survey!
Appendix B: Group Interview Question Protocol

1. Could you describe how different your overall experiences of communication difficulties? Both when you talk to native English speakers and ESL speakers.
2. Would you consider the strength of your foreign accent affects your communication either to be successful or unsuccessful as significant?
3. Would you please describe if you have experienced communication difficulties when you participated in tutorials, discussions or any speech-related learning activities?
4. Have you ever experienced difficulties in understanding lectures because of your accent or the lecturers’ accent?
5. Have you ever felt that you’re treated unequally by anyone because of your accent? Any experiences of unfair judgements or treatments? If so, please explain.
6. Would you please describe a bit more specifically, if you have experienced communication breakdowns either because of your accent people’s accent, while you’re interacting with people?
7. How does your accent or others’ accent function when you communicate with others at work or when you have a job interview?
8. Would you please describe if you experienced communication difficulties because of your accent or people’s accent when you go shopping?
9. Have you ever felt that you are evaluated or treated unequally because of your accent in any contexts we have discussed so far? If so, please describe.
10. How do you overcome communication difficulties caused by accented English, using which of those strategies? What works well?
11. Would you consider pronunciation or clarity of your speech to be a key strategy to overcome communication breakdowns?
12. Which of those strategies have you employed to remain in a conversation and integrate with accented speakers? What works well and why do you do that?
13. Would you consider accent is a significant contributory factor that affects your friendship formation or social networks? Please explain.
Appendix C: Information Package

Griffith University Ethics Reference Number: 2016/035

Social and Educational Challenges of International Students Caused by Accented English in the Australian Context: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Linguistic Experience

**INFORMATION SHEET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Research Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chief Investigators</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Dr Helen Klieve  
Griffith University, School of Education and Professional Studies  
h.klieve@griffith.edu.au |
| Dr Elke Emerald  
Griffith University, School of Education and Professional Studies  
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| **Co-investigators** |
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c.tsurutani@griffith.edu.au |
| **HDR Candidate** |
| Eunjae Park  
Griffith University, School of Education and Professional Studies  
eunjae.park@griffithuni.edu.au |

**Why is the research being conducted?**
This research is being conducted for a dissertation of 5608EDN Master of Education and Professional Studies Research at Griffith University under the supervision of Dr Helen Klieve, Elke Emerald, Wendy Harte and Chihiro Tsurutani. This research examines the challenges international students face in both social and educational settings caused by accented English.

**What you will be asked to do**
There are two ways in which you may be asked to be involved in this research:

**Survey** – a survey of international students studying at universities in South East Queensland will be conducted at the beginning of the project. In this survey, we seek your views and experiences with English-communication difficulties caused by accented English. It is expected that the survey would take around 5 minutes to complete.

**Focus Group Interviews** – in addition to the survey, it is planned to interview at least 2 groups of students who have the same first language background based on the survey outcomes. Through focus group interviews, we would like to obtain a deeper understanding of your experience as an international student in a tertiary institution. Focus groups will last 1 and a half hours.
The expected benefits of the research
Although foreign accent has been discussed in the field of sociolinguistics, there have not been many studies focusing on ESL speakers at tertiary level in the Australian context, compared with the ones in Canada and America. The main benefits of the research will be enriching foreign accent studies in the Australian context, also help language educators and university sectors plan an effective way to accommodate international students.

Risks to you
There are no foreseeable risks associated with being involved with this research project. However, in the unlikely event that you experience emotional distress as a result of taking part in the survey or focus group discussion, you are free to withdraw from the study without having to provide an explanation. You may also wish to contact the following free support services: Lifeline (13 11 14) or Beyond Blue (1300 22 4636)

Your confidentiality
All data collected within this research will be DE-identified, with the survey collection process explicitly not seeking to identify you. While we will interview groups of students, the focus of such interviews is in the understanding of how accented speech impacts on their lives. Therefore, in reporting then findings individuals will not be identified. This will be maintained for reporting, publication, and presentation of this research, where all data will be completely unidentifiable.

Digital and hard copy data will be stored securely by the research team. Interview recordings, transcripts, and any related data will be stored in locked filing cabinets and/or password restricted computer files accessible only to the student researcher.

Your participation is voluntary
Participation for all is voluntary. All participants have the ability to withdraw from this research project at any stage without explanation or consequence. Participation will not impact upon the relationship that any participant has with another participant or with Griffith University.

Questions / further information
If you require additional information or have any questions in regards to this research project, please contact Eunjae Park (eunjae.park@griffith.edu.au).

The ethical conduct of this research
Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. If potential participants have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project they should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 07 3735 4375 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you
You will be provided with a summary of the final study if requested.

Privacy Statement
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at www.griffith.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone 07 3735 4375.
Griffith University Ethics Reference Number: 2016/035

Completion and submission of the online survey will be taken as your consent to participate in the research. However, please note that signed participants consent forms will need to be obtained for those participants who take part in the face-to-face surveys and the focus groups. Interview schedule for the focus groups will be negotiated with other participants after the completion of the surveys. As a focus group interview includes participants sharing information in a group, participants are required to respect the privacy of other participants.
Social and Educational Challenges of International Students Caused by Accented English in the Australian Context: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Linguistic Experience

Consent Form

The Research Team

**Chief Investigators**
- Dr Helen Kleve
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**Co-investigators**
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**HDR Candidate**
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  - Griffith University, School of Education and Professional Studies
  - eunjae.park@griffithuni.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include in participating in a paper survey/interview/discussion about my views and experiences with accented English as an international students studying at university in Australia.
- involves participation in a focus group interview;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand that no foreseeable risks are involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- I understand that I can choose to receive feedback on this research.
- I understand that if I have any additional questions, I can contact the evaluation team.
- I understand that I can contact the manager, Research Ethics at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 07 3735 4375 (or research.ethics@griffith.edu.au), if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project.
- I agree to participate in the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

☐ Yes I would like to be provided with a summary of research findings and conclusion.