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## Native English: ESL learners' perceptions of female speakers' accents

Zahariah Pilus

Department of English Language and Literature,  
International Islamic University Malaysia

NurShahida Zakaria

Muhamad Khairul Zakaria

English Learning Center,  
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, Malaysia

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### Key words

Native English accents, ESL learners, Accent perception

### Abstract

*This paper presents preliminary findings of a study which investigates undergraduate ESL learners' perceptions of British, American, Australian and New Zealand English accents. The participants were 66 Malaysian undergraduates from a public university in Malaysia. They were presented with speech samples of four female native speakers reading a short passage. The students were asked to rate the speakers for a number of items including the ease of understanding, being pleasant to the ears, being an ideal English teacher and being a speaker the learners wish to sound like. The learners were also asked to state the nationalities of the speakers. In general, the study found that the speakers whose accents were familiar to the learners were rated higher in terms of the items examined. The study also found that the speakers whose accents were familiar to the learners were better identified for their nationalities than those whose accents were less familiar to them. Pedagogical implications of these findings on English language teaching and learning in Malaysia are discussed.*

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