

The Influence of Media Exposure and Education on the English Accent of Dutch Speakers

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Abstract

This research investigates the correlation between the English accent of Dutch speakers and their high school education and exposure to English media. Questionnaire data were collected from 34 native Dutch speaking participants about their accent in English, education, exposure to media, and the most frequent English accent in their exposure to media. Additionally, an audio analysis was done to review the accent of 11 participants to ensure their judgement of their accent was accurate. The analysis showed a strong correlation between the accent in the media exposure and the self-reported English accent of the speaker, yet no significant correlation between the education they received and their self-reported adopted English accent. The audio analysis showed that the participant's judgement of their own accent could be trusted and found that Dutch speakers all tend to pronounce words with Secondary Stress and Rhoticity with an American accent. These results suggest that exposure to media has a significant influence on the speaker's accent and these factors should be taken into consideration while improving the English education in the Netherlands.

Keywords: Accent, American English, British English, English accents, Media exposure, education, self -reported accent

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1. Introduction

The Netherlands is currently ranked first in the world on quality of non-native English speech (EPI, 2019), both their extensive English education and the rise of mostly English media is an important factor in the rise of Dutch speakers' fluency. The exponential growth of the internet and social media is one of the underlying factors in the rise of English use and fluency. Social media also caused English to be even more of a world language than it used to be. Currently, 61.8% of existing websites are in English (W3techs, 2021), while English is also steadily becoming increasingly more American (Gonçalves et al., 2017; Svartvik & Leech, 2016). This Americanization of English could expose learners to American English and influence them into (unconsciously) switching between British English (henceforth '*BrE*') and American English (henceforth '*AmE*') and create inconsistencies in non-native English speakers.

There is a contrast between the leaning British English education in the Netherlands and the partially American media that people are exposed to in the present day. Exposure to media, such as social media, TV shows and online video games, can have a significant influence on learners' acquisition of the English language (Pérez-Serrano et al., 2021; Muñoz, 2012). People are exposed to informal language use and a substantial number of accents. If the exposure is both significant and frequent enough, learners will eventually begin to copy and implement similar traits in their language usage, this is also called Incidental Learning or Language Convergence (Al Zoubi, 2018). Much is still unknown about the influence of exposure to media on the accent of Dutch speakers of English, and this thesis can play a significant role in addressing this phenomenon.

The main research question is: What is the effect of education and media on the English accent of native Dutch speakers who graduated from high school within the past five years? The hypothesis for this research is that there will be a positive correlation between the accent of the participant and the exposure to the corresponding form of English. Using a questionnaire and audio analysis will reveal whether students were asked to adopt a British English accent in the first place, the average accent and amount of exposure to English media and whether or not it influenced students' accent while speaking now. Knowing and having this information can help us evaluate the Dutch English education and the course books used for teaching. Taking another critical look at the current curriculum will help us create a better teaching experience for students of English in Dutch high schools.

This thesis has been divided into four sections. In Section Two, a review of previous literature and a summary of the main phonological differences between British English and American English accents will be discussed. In Section Three, the method of the research, the questionnaire, and the phonetic analysis will be reported. In Section Four, the results of the research will be discussed, including suggestions for future research.

2. Background and Literature review

2.1 English education in the Netherlands

English education is becoming increasingly more important in Dutch education. English education can start early in elementary school (between the ages of 6 and 11), but is an obligatory course throughout high school, thus from the age of 11 all children in the Netherlands are obligated to learn English in school. Around 130 high schools in the Netherlands also offer bilingual education, teaching students their normal curriculum but 25-50% of the normal curriculum is taught in English (*Alle Tto-Scholen in Nederland*, n.d.). The syllabus for the final exams that Dutch students take to graduate high school does not mention a preference and very little research has been carried out in regards to British or American language teaching in the Netherlands. Though through personal experience in both teaching and being taught English in high school, it is apparent that English education and course books in the Netherlands are largely in British English. Some schools also offer a 'Cambridge course' which allows students to learn English more intensely and eventually take Cambridge exams for certificates in English fluency, all of which are in British English. Consequently, this exposure and education in British English can lead to students both speaking and writing in a British manner. On the other hand, it is not specified in the curriculum for English teaching in high schools that the students learn one specific form of English, so ultimately it is up to the educator's personal choice whether or not to enforce one form over the other.

2.2 Acquisition of the English accent through Second Language Learning

When learning a new language, having a non-native accent is normal. Only if the language acquisition process starts before the age of seven, will there be minimal chance of transfer from the speaker's L1 with regards to accents (Loewenthal, 1981). The possibility to speak an L2 with a native-like accent is lower after the age of seven (Flege et al., 1995). The desire to speak with a native accent comes mostly from social contexts (Levis, 2016). An accent gives away a lot of information about a person and this can both positively and negatively influence the way the speaker is perceived by third parties. Various research has shown that people often judge a person significantly on their accent (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014; Nejari et al., 2012; Ladegaard & Sachdev, 2006). This can lead to people using aspects such as accent and fluency to determine people's skill in a second language. Because of this, people often try to hide their non-native accent and swap it in for a native accent, to come across as smarter, better, or generally more professional.

However, as Levis (2020) explains: there is no need to eradicate non-native accents, as sounding nativelike is not the most important part in language learning. Levis (2020) discussed the contrast between the Nativeness principle and the Intelligibility Principle regarding accents in a foreign language. Commenting on erasing non-native accents, Levis states that "ideologies of nativeness and near-nativeness are deeply entrenched within L2 pronunciation, partly because of the influence of Chomsky's (1965) concept of competence." Levis argues that we aim for sounding native-like because of Chomsky's substantial influence on the theory of language acquisition but instead, learners should aim to be comprehensible rather than native-like. Being understood is more important than sounding native. The Intelligibility principle further embraces the idea that non-nativeness is not necessarily a barrier to communication in said second language (Levis, 2020) and that instead of nativeness, intelligibility should be used as a guideline to determine one's skill in second language acquisition. The judgement of society, however, still remains and thus people still aim for a more native-like accent.

In this paper, two types of accents are discussed: a native English accent (such as British English and American English) as well as a non-native accent (Dutch). Derwing (2015) thoroughly discusses the several experiments which have been carried out with regards to attitudes towards non-native accents. Other research has shown that there is a preference towards western non-native accents as opposed to non-western accents (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014). Previous research has established that a British accent is associated with people of a higher status than people with a Dutch accent, taking into consideration that high status is associated with higher intelligibility, comprehensibility, and more positive attitude regarding a speaker, practising for a native accent can have great benefits in the professional field. (Nejjari et al., 2012).

Data from several studies suggest that Dutch speakers generally pronounce English with a mix of a British and American accents (Van den Doel, 2006; Van der Haagen, 1998). To determine the attitude towards Dutch speakers of English with Dutch accents, Hendriks et al. (2016) demonstrated that Dutch people often feel less positive about fellow Dutch people with a strong accent while speaking English, ranking them as 'less likeable and less comprehensible'. But those with a slight accent were ranked more positively than native speakers. These results could show that a listener's preference for native speech is only applicable when challenged by someone with a heavy accent, which could hinder intelligibility. Hendriks et al. propose that the preference for someone with a slight accent can

be explained through the Similarity-attraction Paradigm, which makes people attracted to things that are similar to them.

A variety of authors have attempted to create the perfect course guide for speakers of Dutch to acquire a native-like accent when speaking English, such as Gussenhoven and Broeders (1997) and Collins et al. (2018). These course guides teach the reader the basics of phonetics and address the sounds native speakers of Dutch are often struggling with. Collin (2018) covers every phoneme, stress pattern and other features of connected speech.

Another important factor in acquiring a native-like accent is the speaker's attitude towards a certain accent. Various aspects such as social associations, attitudes of educators, and personal associations can influence whether learners prefer one accent over the other and thus will try harder to learn a specific one.

English currently has over 370 million native speakers, of which over two-thirds are American (Svartvik & Leech, 2016). The other third is scattered globally in countries such as Canada, Ireland, South Africa, and more. Because of this, there is an abundance of English accents and vernaculars, from General American (GA) to a local cockney accent used in East London. There is a large number of published studies (Edwards, 1982; Sachdev et al., 1998; Taylor, 2000) that show that RP is generally evaluated more positively with regards to solidarity, speech quality dimensions, status, and competence, both amongst native and non-native speakers (Ladegaard & Sachdev, 2006). A previous study from Poulsdatter Larsen (2000) on associations and stereotyping regarding Britons and Americans revealed a correlation between positive stereotypes and descriptive nouns concerning Britons, while the stereotypes of Americans were often more negative.

This data appears to support the assumption that people value a British accent over an American accent because of the associations we make in regard to culture. This claim would be in support of the Language-culture Consonance hypothesis, which argues that there is a positive correlation between language preference and culture (Giles & Coupland, 1991). However, this idea is still being discussed, so the Language-culture hypothesis should not be taken as objective truth but still as a hypothesis.

2.3 Influence of media on English Second Language Learning

Learning English through media and other platforms in English is often referred to as incidental learning. The speaker is not actively trying to learn a language; however, they unconsciously learn because of the exposure to a second language. Previous studies have

explored the correlation between media consumption and incidental learning. Kuppens (2010) studied the effects of consumption of English subtitled forms of media on the translation abilities of Flemish children and found that consuming media with subtitles positively influenced the translation abilities of the participants. De Wilde & Eyckmans (n.d.) also showed that exposure to the English language has a positive influence on children who have not received any previous English education and showed that this resulted in some children already having CEFR A2 level before ever getting English lessons. A number of authors have also further confirmed that exposure to language helps with incidental learning (Pérez-Serrano et al., 2021; Muñoz, 2012). The exposure to English media and other forms of entertainment thus has a significant influence on the learner's abilities. Because of this it is fair to assume that exposure to either American or British accents can influence a learner's accent.

2.4 Defining the British and American accent

The most recognised British accent has many names, such as Received Pronunciation (RP), General British (GB), Oxford English or BBC English (Gussenhoven, 1997; Collins et al., 2018). All of these are names for the typical British English spoken mostly in England. This accent is most often used to teach non-native speakers of English an English accent, and therefore it was used in this research as a comparison to the accent of Dutch speakers. The American accent is generally referred to as General American (GA) (Gussenhoven, 1997; Collins et al., 2018). Considering the range of this research, General American (GA) and Received Pronunciation (RP), also known as British English will be discussed. Around the late nineteenth century, RP started to gain recognition in the United Kingdom. The upper class in Southern England removed rhoticity as a way to distinguish themselves from the lower classes.

Because of this, RP was often deemed a class dialect spoken by the educated people in the UK. However, after the BBC implemented RP as their standard pronunciation, it quickly grew to become the standard British accent (Momma & Matto, 2008). However, in American English non-rhoticity can only be found in a few areas in the United States, such as New York and New England.

2.4.1 Differences between GA and RP

There are a lot of differences between GA and RP (see review by Gomez, 2009), such as vowel changes and changes in stress patterns. In this study, the following five features are chosen since they are the most salient differences between AmE and BrE.

1. Rhoticity.

In GA, the /r/ is very much present during pronunciation after syllables. The rhotic /r/ is also apparent in Scottish and Irish accents, but not in RP. Words such as *water*, *four*, *born* and *later* are pronounced with a significant /r/ in GA, while this /r/ is absent in RP. As mentioned by Gomez (2009) this /r/ can be pronounced in three different ways, dependent on the place of the /r/: as a retroflex approximant [ɻ], an alveolar approximant [ɹ], and as the alveolar flap [ɾ]. Only the alveolar approximant can be found in RP as well.

The rhotic accent can occur after situations such as long vowels, schwas, and after [ʊ]. GA and RP also have a linking /r/ and intrusive linking. In this case the r is pronounced when a word ends in a central vowel, has an /r/ in the spelling, and is immediately followed by a vowel in the following word (far is pronounced as [fa:] and far away is pronounced as [fa:r əweɪ] (Gussenhoven, 1997).

2. Over articulation in Secondary Stress

GA speakers often over-articulate secondary stress, as mentioned by Darragh (2000). A prime example which was used in this study is Darragh who quoted Ben Shaw who stated that he could always recognize the American because they stress the third syllable in the word *necessary*. Where RP would use a schwa [ə] or not pronounce this vowel at all, GA is more likely to use an [e].

3. Differences in Stress

A change in stress patterns occurs in three different types of words, as mentioned by Gomez (2009). First, in French loan words. Where RP would apply first-syllable stress, GA used second-syllable stress. This occurs in words such as *chalet*, *brochure*, *detail*, and *chauffeur*. There are a few exceptions to this rule such as the words *cigarette*, *décolleté* and *magazine*.

Next, a change in stress occurs in words ending in -ate, especially if those words consist of only two syllables. In GA these words receive first-syllable stress, but in RP they receive second-syllable stress. This includes words such as *donate*, *dictate*, and *rotate*. Most longer words are pronounced in the same manner, together with two-syllable words such as *checkmate*, *graduate* and *duplicate*.

The last way in which stress differs is with words ending in the suffixes of -ory, -ary, -berry and -mony. This occurs in words where there is no case of secondary stress. -Ory is often pronounced stressed in GA, [ɔ:ri]. In RP -ory is either pronounced as [əri] if it succeeds an

unstressed syllable, and schwa deletion [ri] occurs after stressed syllables. -Ary is [eri] in GA and [əri] in RP, with occasional schwa deletion in RP. -Berry in GA is pronounced stressed, as [beri] while RP uses [bəri] or even [bri] in fast speech. -Mony is pronounced as [moʊni] in GA and [məni] in RP.

4. The pronunciation of the 't'

In RP, the 't' is often pronounced quite clearly, whereas in GA it is often changed into a [t̚], which sounds very similar to [d] or left out completely. In GA the 't' is pronounced as [t̚] when it is in between two vowels, while it is pronounced as a clear [t] or a glottal stop [ʔ] in RP. After nasal sounds, the 't' can also be left out completely in GA, in words such as *dentist* and *twenty* (Darragh, 2000).

5. Differences in vowel pronunciation.

Differences in the pronunciation in vowels are plentiful when comparing GA and RP. Though Gomez (2009) provides a concise overview of all the differences, the most important differences will be discussed below.

One of the most prominent differences is the difference between GA [æ] and RP [ɑ:]. In order for this shift to take place the [æ] has to occur before [s], [f] and [θ] or be followed by another consonant. It has been argued that this shift occurs more if the word is more common (Algeo, 2001; Labov et al., 2006). Furthermore, in GA, the British diphthong [əʊ] is often pronounced as [oʊ]. RP is also very fond of the phoneme [ɒ], when in GA a [ɑ:] or [ɔ:] is more common in this place. Yod-dropping, the omission of [j] before [u:], occurs both in RP and GA but it is a bit more extensive in GA, as further discussed in Gomez (2009).

3. Method

3.1 Questionnaire analysis

3.1.1 Participants

The participants were 34 native Dutch speakers (aged between 18 and 23, mean = 20.0), 7 men and 27 women, who graduated either this year or within the last 5 years (2016-2021) from a Dutch high school. This range was chosen so all participants had experienced a similar up-to-date English Education. The participants graduated from Dutch high schools on either Hoger Algemeen Voorgezet Onderwijs (HAVO) (44%) or Voortgezet Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (VWO) (56%) (the highest and middle level in Dutch high schools) level to ensure a decent level of English and a proper understanding of the language. They are experienced with speaking English and can note the differences among English speakers, such as accents and dialects.

To ensure the participants were not currently studying the English language explicitly, a question about whether the participants tertiary education was language related was included in the questionnaire.

3.1.2 Questionnaire

The participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire (See Appendix A). Q1 and Q2 regard the demographic information, their gender, and year of birth. Q3 and Q4 focus on which level of education they have had and which year they graduated to ensure their answers to the following questions are relevant to the research. Q5 to Q8 concern the English education they received in high school and participant's accent. Q9 and Q10 regard the amount and type of exposure in the participant's everyday life. Q11, Q12 and Q13 regard the participants tertiary education and the English they receive to ensure the answers are not influenced by tertiary education. If they do receive education in English only their answers were excluded from the results and analysis, for their tertiary education could thoroughly influence the accent they have now and influence the results while the questionnaire only aimed to measure the influence of secondary education. The last question asked whether participants are willing to provide a short recording which was phonetically transcribed and analysed for the main research. Considering the participants must all be Dutch; the questionnaire was made in Dutch. This was done both for their convenience and to ensure all participants understand the questions and are not influenced by the English used in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed through the online system Qualtrics. Before the questionnaire started,

participants all confirmed that their answers could be used in this research, they read the terms and conditions and gave consent.

The questionnaire was sent to the participants and was completely anonymous. It was encouraged that the participants share this questionnaire with peers to reach a maximal amount of responses. Participants were free to decide whether they wanted to participate in the follow-up part of the research by leaving their email address as contact information.

3.1.4 Analysis

The questionnaire provided background information about the participants and gave an insight about the self-perception of the participants and their accent and education.

First, the correlation between education and self-reported accent was calculated. The results of question 5 was analysed, despite the British English methods used in the Netherlands to teach English, there was no research carried out on whether or not speakers of Dutch were also required to conform to a British accent. This analysis was done by a descriptive comparison of the answers. Next, the correlation between questions 5 and 7 was calculated using Spearman's rho in SPSS. This calculation would reveal whether there was a correlation between whether or not participants were asked to adopt a specific accent in high school and the self-reported accent of the participant.

Second, the correlation between media exposure and self-reported accent was calculated. In order to accurately calculate the influence of media, first the average accent of the media the participants were exposed to should be known. This average was calculated by calculating the mean of the reported accents in their exposure (Q9). The participants rated the accent used in their English exposure on a Likert scale (1= Completely British, 3= half British, half American, 5=Completely American). Because of the Likert scale, a mean could be created to indicate the average accent of their media exposure, with 1 meaning completely RP, 3 meaning half RP half GA and 5 meaning completely GA. The mean was calculated using two decimals for accuracy. To find the correlation between this average of question nine and the participants' self-reported accent, Spearman's rho was used in SPSS. Lastly a Likelihood Ratio Test in SPSS was used to see if there was a correlation between the participants' self-reported accent, the amount of exposure in hours per day (Q8), the average accent of media exposure, and whether students had to adapt a British accent in high school.

The results of the questionnaire (i.e. the participant's self-reflection on their accent) were compared with the results of the transcriptions. This showed whether the self-reported accent was similar to the participant's actual accent and helped determine whether people's

judgement about their own accent could be trusted. If a participant had said that they had a British accent, while through the phonetic analysis it was found that they lean more towards GA and vice versa, then it was clear that the participant's judgement could not be trusted. However, if most of the participants in the recording analysis were correct about their judgement, it is safe to say that the participants' judgement was trustworthy.

3.1.5 Results

Effect of Education on the participant's accent

Question one to four were screening criterion. Table 1 displays the responses to Question number five, which shows that only 23.5% of the participants were asked to speak English with a consistent British English accent (RP). 17.6% of the participants were asked to speak with either an American or British accent, and 58.8% declared they were not asked to have a specific accent during their English classes in high school.

Table 1: Requirement of English Accent in English Education

During your English lessons, did you have to adapt a specific accent?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes, we had to have a British accent	8	23,5	23,5	23,5
	Yes, but we got to choose whether we wanted to have an American or British accent	6	17,6	17,6	41,2
	No we did not have to have a particular accent	20	58,8	58,8	100,0
	Total	34	100,0	100,0	

Table 2 displays the correlation between the accent they were asked to have during the English lessons in High School (Q5) and the self-reported accent of the participants (Q7). As table 2 shows, $p=0.434$ (Sig. 2-tailed) which means there is no correlation between the two.

Table 2: Correlation Self-Reported Accent and English Education

		Correlations		
			Do you think you have an English accent when you speak English?	During your English lessons, did you have to adapt a specific accent?
Spearman's rho	Do you think you have an English accent when you speak English?	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,143
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,434
		N	32	32
	During your English lessons, did you have to adapt a specific accent?	Correlation Coefficient	,143	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,434	.
		N	32	34

Effect of media exposure on the participant's accent

Table 3 presents the correlation between self-reported accent of the participants (Q7) and the average of how British or American their exposure is to English.

Results of the Spearman correlation display that there is a significant positive correlation between the accent in their English Exposure and the accent the participants consider themselves to have, $r_s=0.37$, $p=0.037$ (Sig. 2-tailed).

Table 3: Correlation Self-Reported Accent and Accent used in Media Exposure

		Correlations		
			Do you think your accent is more American sounding or British sounding?	Average accent of media exposure.
Spearman's rho	Do you think your accent is more American sounding or British sounding?	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,370*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,037
		N	32	32
	Average accent of media exposure.	Correlation Coefficient	,370*	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,037	.
		N	32	34

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 displays that only the average accent of the exposure is of importance when examining the accent that the participants said they have. Which accent was expected of them

in high school (if any) and the number of hours of exposure are not significantly correlated to the participants judgement of their own accent.

Table 4: Likelihood Ratio Test Accent Media Exposure, Education and Exposure

Effect	Likelihood Ratio Tests			
	Model Fitting Criteria -2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept	93,647	13,565	5	,019
Average accent of media exposure.	91,307	11,225	5	,047
During your English lessons, did you have to adapt a specific accent?	84,560	4,478	5	,483
Do you come across a lot of English on average per day?	90,058	9,976	5	,076

3.2 Recording analysis

3.2.1 Participants

The participants in the recordings were a subset from those who filled in the questionnaire and are held to the same specifications as mentioned in 3.1.1. After filling in the questionnaire, the participants were asked to participate in the follow-up part of the research. Out of 34, 11 participants (3 men and 8 women) were willing to take part in the follow-up research (age between 18 and 23, mean = 21.0).

3.2.2 Materials

In order to accurately determine the accent of the participants, six example sentences were written to ensure enough differences between AmE and BrE occurred in order to accurately determine the accent of the speakers (see appendix B). These six sentences all contained the five main differences between AmE and BrE, as previously discussed. Each sentence contained one case of Rhoticity, Secondary Stress, Difference in Stress, a word focussing on ‘t’ pronunciation, and a word which displayed a difference in vowel pronunciations. The American and the British pronunciation of all six of these sentences were transcribed to further highlight the exact pronunciation difference.

3.2.3 Procedure

Due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, I was unable to record the participants in person, and thus participants were asked to record themselves on their phone or any other recording material. The participants were asked to record the sentences in a quiet area and speak clearly into the microphone to ensure the best analysis. Furthermore, the participants were given the opportunity to look over the sentences and read them as many times as they wanted, to ensure the speech did not contain stuttering or pauses. No issues or problems occurred during the recordings or the analysis of the recordings, thus all 11 recordings were successfully analysed.

3.2.4 Analysis

The recordings of the speech of the 11 participants were transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The canonical GA and RP transcriptions of the sentences were created by referencing the Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Each sentence contained the previously discussed five pronunciation differences among GA and RP. Through the comparison of the transcription of the speech versus the GA and RP model transcriptions, it was determined whether the participants leaned more towards an American or British accent.

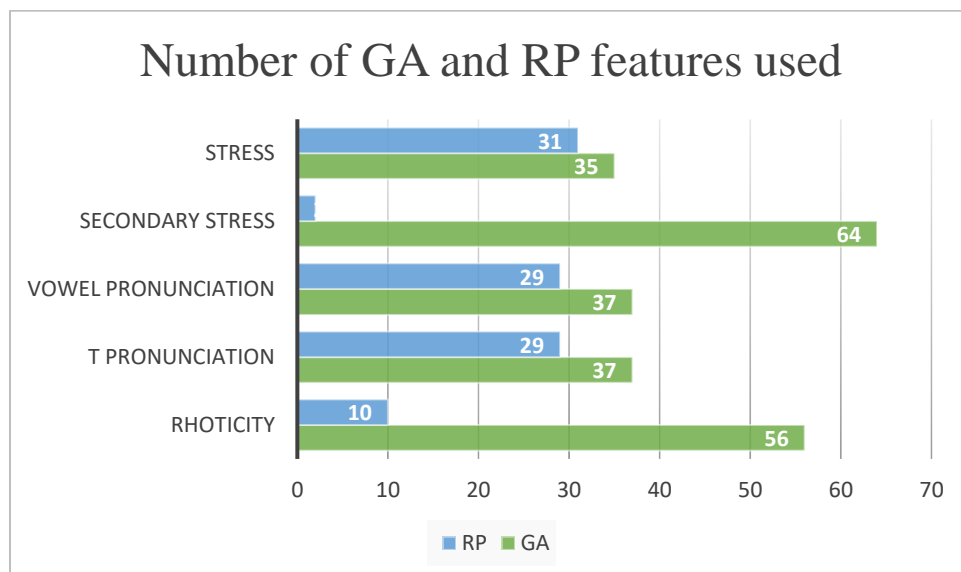
Lastly, the provided sentences gave participants the room to either keep a more American or more British accents. The differences and similarities between the participant's recording and the two accents gave an overview on which accent they tend to use. Furthermore, the use of GA and RP features were compared per category, this information showed us if there was a pattern in native speakers of Dutch preferring the GA or RP pronunciation within specific categories.

The analysis of the audio will be based on the differences between GA and RP mentioned in the literature review. All the words in the five categories can be pronounced in either GA or RP. It is possible that students do not necessarily align with a specific accent and tend to use aspect of both RP and GA. The results were also connected to the answers they gave in the questionnaire, to determine whether the participants were able to analyse and determine their own accent accurately to ensure the results of the questionnaire could be used for further research.

3.2.5 Results

Figure 1 displays the accent of the participants based on the five categories of differences between RP and GA. Overall, a general preference towards GA can be seen (as represented by the green bars). Stress, 't' pronunciation and Vowel pronunciation, though lightly more American, are roughly split in half. In case of Rhoticity and Secondary Stress, a very clear preference towards the American pronunciation can be seen.

Figure 1: The amount of GA and RP features used per category (all participants).

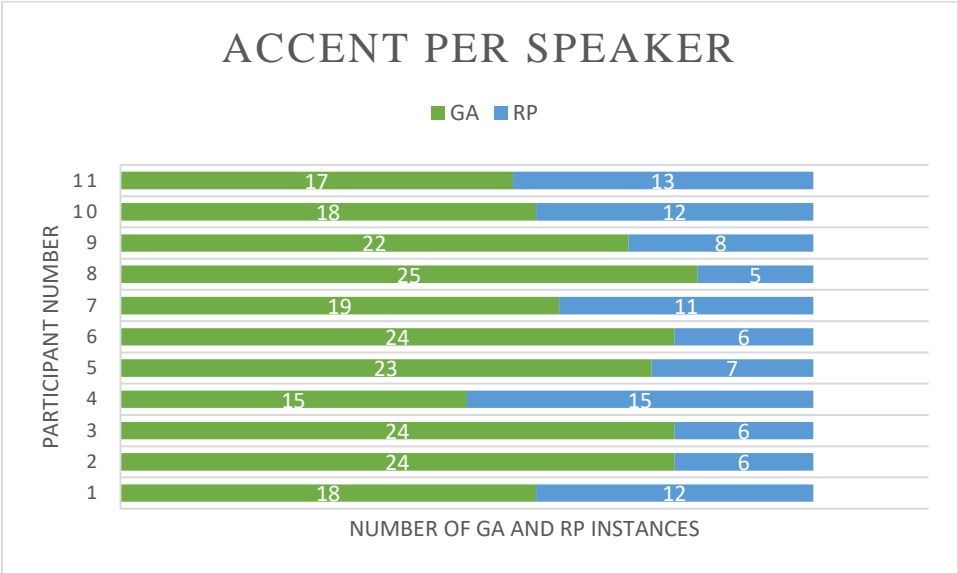


Out of 11 participants, only two judged their accent to be (slightly) British, while in reality they leaned more towards an American accent. Four participants reported that they did not know what accent they had and five of them correctly determined their own accent.

Only two participants were exposed to more British than American English, yet both still correctly judged their own accent to be American. The other participants were exposed to more American English and had accents corresponding to the American accent.

Graph 2 displays the average accent per speaker. The speakers were analysed on 30 utterances in total and the graph represents the amount of AmE utterances in green, and RP utterances in Blue. Speaker number four used GA and RP at the exact same rate, and by comparing their result to the others, it can be determined that all other speakers lean more towards GA, though some more than others.

Figure 2: Distribution of GA and RP features per speaker



4. Discussion

The study demonstrates a positive correlation between media and the accent of native Dutch speakers who graduated from high school in the past five years, supporting the first hypothesis. The data also indicates that only 23.5% of the people were asked to use a British accent while speaking, despite most of the English teaching methods being in British English. There was no correlation between the (or lack of) accent requirements in high school and the participant's self-reported accent. Furthermore, both Rhoticity and Secondary Stress were most commonly pronounced in an American manner. The data also shows that most speakers of Dutch lean towards an American accent while speaking English.

Thus despite most teaching materials in the Netherlands being in British English, less than a quarter of the participants reported being required to speak with a British accent. Because of this, it is not remarkable that education had no significant influence on the speakers' accents. Media exposure having a significant correlation with the speakers' accent further proves the concept of incidental learning (Pérez-Serrano et al., 2021; Muñoz, 2012). Speakers tend to pick up traits and learn from exposure and thus will also copy the pronunciations of words.

During the Recording analysis, the results also showed that Dutch speakers preferred Rhoticity and Secondary Stress to be pronounced in an American way.

It is acknowledged that the pronunciation of the Dutch *r* could influence the way speakers tend to pronounce the *r* in English words. Furthermore, when speaking a non-native language speakers tend to pronounce every letter in the orthography as they may be unfamiliar with pronunciation rules. Overall, most self-reported accents matched with the results of the audio analysis. Therefore we can assume the participants who only filled in the questionnaire were also mostly accurate. Most speakers reported they had American- or American leaning accents. A possible explanation could be the Americanisation of the internet (Gonçalves et al., 2017; Svartvik & Leech, 2016). Out of the 34 participants, only five reported their media exposure as being more British than American.

The results of this research are in line with the research carried out by Van den Doe (2006) and Van der Haagen (1998), who both claimed Dutch speakers tend to use a combination of British and American English. These results build on existing evidence of research previously carried out by Kuppens (2010) and De Wilde & Eyckmans (n.d), who

both found positive correlations between exposure to English and acquisition, confirming that exposure helps with incidental learning.

The generalizability of these results is limited by the small sample size due to time requirements. Likewise, the limitations of the information regarding English education is partially due to the limited amount of research done on English teaching methods in the Netherlands. The methodological choices were constrained by the Covid-19 pandemic and thus having to rely on the participants to supply their personal recordings. This research was also only a snapshot based on the current situation which relied on the participant's judgement about their own media usage. Despite these factors, the results of this research still give a clear indication about the influence of education and media on the participants their accents.

5. Conclusion

As media is becoming increasingly more prominent in people's lives, it is meaningful to look into the influence of media exposure on second language learning; to further dive into incidental learning in comparison to high school education. By questioning speakers of Dutch who graduated high school in the past five years about their English education and media exposure, this research found a strong correlation between media and a learner's accent. Previous high school education had no significant relevance towards the participants' accents. Most of the participants mentioned having an American accent despite having a British curriculum. Utterances regarding Rhoticity and Secondary Stress were most often found to be pronounced with an American accent.

Further research is needed to establish the current situation of English education in the Netherlands. Having this information would further improve the current education system and makes conclusions of education-based research like this one more accurate.

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Appendix

A: Questionnaire

These questions are provided in Dutch on the questionnaire considering how the participants are Dutch Highschool graduates. For clarity the questions of the survey are listed below together with the translation.

LEGAL DISCLAIMER:

U bent uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan een online onderzoek naar Engels gebruik door Nederlanders. Dit is een onderzoek dat wordt uitgevoerd door Merel van den Broek, een student aan de Radboud universiteit. Het onderzoek duurt ongeveer 5 minuten.

DEELNAME

Uw deelname in dit onderzoek is vrijwillig. U kan elk moment stoppen en de vragenlijst afsluiten zonder consequenties. U bent vrij om vragen over te slaan voor welke rede dan ook.

Er staat niks tegenover het invullen van deze vragenlijst, maar uw antwoord helpt wel voor onderzoek naar Engels gebruik onder jonge Nederlanders.

RISICO'S

Het invullen van deze vragenlijst brengt geen risico's mee.

PRIVACY

Er wordt op een vertrouwelijke manier met uw antwoorden omgegaan. Informatie zoals naam, email adres of IP-adres worden niet verzameld en/of opgeslagen en uw antwoorden blijven daardoor anoniem.

Aan het eind van de vragenlijst wordt er gevraagd of u geïnteresseerd bent voor een nader onderzoek. Als u ervoor kiest om uw e-mailadres in te vullen zijn uw resultaten niet meer privé voor de onderzoeker. Desondanks worden er geen namen of identificerende informatie gepubliceerd gebaseerd op deze informatie, en uw antwoorden blijven vertrouwelijk.

CONTACT

Als u na of tijdens de vragenlijst vragen of opmerkingen heeft, kunt u contact opnemen met mijn onderzoeksbegeleider, Dr C. Zhang via email op cong.zhang@ru.nl.

Als u vindt dat u niet bent behandeld volgens de beschrijvingen in dit formulier, of dat uw rechten als deelnemer aan onderzoek niet zijn gehonoreerd in de loop van dit project, of als u vragen, zorgen of klachten heeft die u wilt adres aan iemand anders dan de onderzoeker, kunt u contact opnemen met de Radboud Universiteit via info@communicatie.ru.nl.

ELEKTRONISCHE TOESTEMMING: Vul hieronder uw keuze in. Als u op "Akkoord" drukt geeft u aan dat:

- U de bovenstaande informatie gelezen hebt
- U deze vragenlijst vrijwillig invult
- U ouder bent dan 18

LEGAL DISCLAIMER:

You have been invited to participate in an online survey on the use of English by native Dutch speakers. This is a study conducted by Merel van den Broek, a student at Radboud University. The examination takes approximately 5 minutes.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can stop at any time and close the questionnaire without consequences. You are free to skip questions for any reason.

Nothing comes in return for completing this questionnaire, but your answer will help research into the use of English among young Dutch people.

RISKS

There are no risks involved in completing this questionnaire.

PRIVACY

Your answers will be treated confidentially. Information such as name, email address or IP address is not collected and/or stored and your answers therefore remain anonymous.

At the end of the questionnaire you will be asked if you are interested in further research. If you choose to enter your email address, your results will no longer be private to the researcher. However, no names or identifying information will be published based on this information, and your responses will remain confidential.

CONTACT

If you have any questions or comments after or during the questionnaire, please contact my research supervisor, Dr C. Zhang, via email at cong.zhang@ru.nl.

If you feel that you have not been treated as described in this form, or that your rights as a research participant have not been honoured during the course of this project, or if you have any questions, concerns, or complaints that you would like to address to someone other than the researcher, you can contact Radboud University via info@communicatie.ru.nl.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Enter your choice below. By pressing "Agree" you indicate that:

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily fill in this questionnaire
- You are older than 18

Q1

- Geslacht: Vrouw, Man, Anders, Zeg ik liever niet
- Gender: Female, Male, Other, prefer not to say

Q2

- Geboortjaar: 2006-1995
- Year of birth: 2006-1995

Q3

- Welk jaar ben je geslaagd op de middelbare school? 2016-2021
- Which year did you graduate high school? 2016-2021

Q4

- Op welk niveau ben je geslaagd? VMBO-HAVO-VWO
- What level of high school did you graduate from? VMBO-HAVO-VWO

Q5

- Tijdens je Engels lessen, moest je van je docent(en) perse een bepaald accent aanhouden? Ja, we moesten een Brits accent aanhouden, Ja, we moesten een Amerikaans accent aanhouden, Ja, maar we mochten zelf kiezen of we een Amerikaans of Brits accent wilden aanhouden, Nee we hoefden geen bepaald accent aan te houden, Weet ik niet, Ik weet het verschil niet tussen een Brits en Amerikaans accent, Ik wist niet dat er een verschil was tussen een Brits en Amerikaans accent toen ik op de middelbare school zat.
- During your English lessons, did you have to adapt a specific accent? Yes, we had to have a British accent, Yes, we had to have an American accent, Yes, but we got to choose whether we wanted to have an American or British accent, No we didn't have to have a particular accent, I don't know, I don't know the difference between a British and American accent, I didn't know there was a difference between a British and American accent when I was in high school.

Q6

- Vind jij dat je een Engels accent hebt als je Engels praat? Een Brits accent, Een Amerikaans accent, Nee, Ik weet ik niet wat voor accent ik heb.
- Do you think you have an English accent when you speak English? Yes, a British accent, Yes an American accent, No I do not have a British or American accent, I don't know what accent I have.

Q7 (Likert scale)

- Klinkt jouw accent meer Brits of Amerikaans? 1) Volledig Brits 2) Grotendeels Brits 3) een beetje Brits 4) neutraal 5) een beetje Amerikaans 6) Grotendeels Amerikaans 7) Volledig Amerikaans

- Do you think your accent is more American sounding or British sounding? 1) Completely British 2) Quite British 3) A little British-like 4) Neutral 5) A little American like 6) Quite American 7) Completely American

Q8 (Likert scale)

- Kom je veel Engels tegen gemiddeld per dag? (Denk aan series, YouTube, social media, nieuws, websites, boeken, muziek etc.) 1) Nooit (0 uur) 2) Af en toe (0-3 uur) 3) Vaak (3-6 uur). 4) Regelmatig (6-12 uur) 5) De hele tijd (12-24 uur)

- Do you come across a lot of English on average per day? (Series, YouTube, social media, the news, websites, books, music etc.) 1) Never (0 hour) 2) Occasionally (0-3 hours) 3) Often (3-6 hours) 4) Frequently (6-12 hours) 5) All the time (12 - 24 hours)

Q9

- Hier onder komen een paar vormen voorbij waarin je Engels tegen kan komen. Als je gebruik maakt van deze vorm, geef dan aan welk Engels je vooral tegenkomt. Op het einde kan je zelf nog iets toevoegen als je iets mist.

YouTube video's, Social Media, Nieuwsuitzendingen, (Kranten) artikelen, Academische artikelen, Websites, Boeken, Muziek, Games, Gesprekken met mensen buiten Nederland, Opleiding, Werk, Sociale kringen, Series, Documentaires, Podcasts, anders:

Bijna allemaal Brits Engels, Meer Brits dan Amerikaans Engels, Half Amerikaans half Brits Engels, Meer Amerikaans dan Brits Engels, Bijna allemaal Amerikaans Engels, Ik heb niet op de accenten gelet, Ik maak hier geen gebruik van.

- Below are a few forms in which you can encounter English. If you use this form, indicate which English you encounter most. At the end you can add something yourself if you miss something.

YouTube videos, social media, News broadcasts, (Newspapers) articles, Academic articles, Websites, Books, Music, Games, Conversations with people outside the Netherlands, Education, Work, Social circles, Series, Documentaries, Podcasts, other:

Almost all British English, More British than American English, Half American half British English, More American than British English, Almost all American English, I didn't pay attention to the accents, I don't use this.

Q10

- Volg je nu een vervolgopleiding? (MBO, HBO of universiteit)? Ja en mijn opleiding is in het Engels, Ja en mijn opleiding is deels in het Engels, Ja en mijn opleiding is in het Nederlands, Nee.

- Are you currently continuing your studies at a MBO or university (of applied sciences)? Yes and the courses are in English, Yes and some courses are in English, Yes and the courses are in Dutch, No.

Q11

- Krijg je momenteel Engelse les? Ja op mijn vervolgopleiding, Ja via een cursus of via mijn werk, nee.

- Do you currently follow English lessons? Yes at my tertiary education, Yes through a separate course or through my job, no.

Q12 (only shown if answered yes to previous question)

- Als je momenteel Engels volgt, word je geacht een bepaald accent aan te houden? Ja, Brits, Ja Amerikaans, Ja maar we mogen kiezen, Nee, Weet ik niet.

- If you are currently receiving English education, are you expected to adapt a certain accent? Yes, British, Yes American, Yes but we can choose, No, I don't know.

Q13 (optional)

-Heb je verder nog opmerkingen over de antwoorden die je hebt gegeven, of overige informatie die je nog toe wil voegen?

-Do you have other comments to any of the answers you gave, or any other information you would like to add?

Q14 (optional)

- Zou je geïnteresseerd zijn om mij verder te helpen met mijn onderzoek door middel van een (informeel) 1 op 1 gesprek met mij (via telefoon of Zoom)? Ja: Emailadres, Nee.

- Would you be interested in helping me with my research through an (informal) one-on-one interview (through a phone call or Zoom)? Yes: Email adress, No.

B: Sentences for Pronunciation

(1) The **baker** used **glitter** for **half** of the **mandatory** cakes at the **buffet**.

GA: ðə 'beikər ju:st'glɪtər fɔr hæf əv ðə 'mændə,tɔ:ri keɪks æt ðə 'bə'feɪ

RP: ðə 'beɪkə ju:st 'glɪtə fə: hɑ:f əv ðə 'mændətəri keɪks æt ðə 'bʊfeɪ

Baker: Rhoticity

Glitter: The pronunciation of the 't'

Half: Differences in vowel pronunciation.

Mandatory: Over articulation in Secondary Stress

Buffet: Difference in Stress

(2) I **donate** **four** **imaginary** **tunes** to the **little** **DJ**.

GA: aɪ 'doʊneɪt fɔr ɪ'mædʒə,neri tu:nz tu ðə 'lɪtəl di: 'dʒeɪ

RP: aɪ dəʊ'neɪt fɔ:r ɪ'mædʒɪnəri tju:nz tu: ðə 'lɪtl 'di:'dʒeɪ

Donate: Difference in Stress

Four: Rhoticity

Imaginary: Over articulation in Secondary Stress

Tunes: Differences in vowel pronunciation.

Little: The pronunciation of the 't'

(3) A **career** **path** to give **commentary** to a **new** performance from the **British** **Ballet**.

GA: ə kə'rɪr pæθ tu gɪv 'kəmən,teri tu ə nu: pər'fɔ:rməns frɑ:m ðə 'brɪtɪʃ bæ'leɪ

RP: ə kə'rɪə pɑ:θ tu gɪv 'kɒməntəri t: ə ŋju: pə'fɔ:məns frəm ðə 'brɪtɪʃ 'bæleɪ

Career: Rhoticity

Commentary: Over articulation in Secondary Stress

New: Differences in vowel pronunciation.

British: The pronunciation of the 't'

Ballet: Difference in Stress

(4) The **water** from the **cafe** was **necessary**.

GA: ðə 'wɑ:ər frəm ðə kə'feɪ wəz 'nesə,seri

RP: ðə 'wɔ:tə frəm ðə 'kæfeɪ wəz 'nesəsəri

Water: The pronunciation of the 't', Rhoticity, Differences in vowel pronunciation.

Cafe: Differences in Stress

Necessary: Over articulation in Secondary Stress

(5) The **branch secretary** said his **address** was **later** sent to **more** people.

GA: ðə bræntʃ 'sekrə,teri sed hɪz 'ædres wɑ:z leɪtə sent tu mɔr 'pi:pəl

RP: ðə brɑ:nʃ 'sekrətəri sed hɪz ə'dres wɒz leɪtər sent tu: mɔ: 'pi:pəl

Branch: Differences in vowel pronunciation.

Secretary: Over articulation in Secondary Stress

Address: Differences in Stress

Later: The pronunciation of the 't'

More: Rhoticity

(6) **Somebody** on the **grass** **hated** the **rotating** car.

GA: 'sʌm,bɑ:di ən ðə græs 'heɪtɪd ðə 'rəʊteɪtɪŋ kɑr

RP: 'sʌmbədi ɒn ðə grɑ:s 'heɪtɪd ðə rəʊ'teɪtɪŋ kɑ:

Somebody: Over articulation in Secondary Stress

Grass: Differences in vowel pronunciation.

Hated: The pronunciation of the 't'

Rotating: Differences in Stress

Car: Rhoticity