Native-like English Accent Evaluation and Exposure Effects by Dutch-native L2 Speakers of English

Alieke Stijf

Radboud University
Abstract

This pilot study investigates the effect of exposure on native-like status evaluation of regional British accents by Dutch L2 speakers of English. Previous research has shown that both native and non-native listeners prejudge a person’s status and personal characteristics based on their accent (cf. Giles, Wilson & Conway, 1981; Alford & Strother, 1990; Coupland & Bishop, 2007; McKenzie, 2008b). An empirical experiment was conducted modelled after research by Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981) and accent evaluation data was collected from 30 Dutch-native L2 speakers of English. The results show that the participants in this study do not evaluate the social status of the English speaker in the same way that natives do and no significant linear effect of exposure was found. The paper concludes with a few suggestions for further research.
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Introduction

The way a person’s accent or dialect influences their social image, either by choice or unintentionally, has been a topic in linguistics for over 40 years now (cf. Giles, 1970; Alford & Strother, 1990; Ikeno & Hanson, 2007; Coupland & Bishop, 2007 and many others). A common assumption made in this type of research is that a person’s accent carries social (class) markers that are used by listeners to create an initial impression of the speaker’s status, intelligence and personal characteristics often in combination with the perceived regional and class background (cf. Krenn, Schreiter & Neubarth, 2017). The United Kingdom is a country with a clear social-class structure and many different regional accents which makes it a convenient place for research into social judgements based on accent (Crystal, 2008).

A leading research on the topic of accent prejudice in the United Kingdom was performed by Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981) and more recently by Coupland and Bishop (2007). They tested the perceived social status of two English accents and found that people rate a person with a standard, perceptively high status accent higher in terms of prestige and social standing than a person with a non-standard, perceptively low status accent. These findings of an individual’s accent influencing social judgements in listeners have not only been found in the United Kingdom. Research in Germany (Krenn, Schreiter & Neubarth, 2017), the United States (Alford & Strother, 1990) as well as the Netherlands (grondelaers, Hout & Steegs, 2010) shows similar social judgements based on perceived accent. Even second language learners of English seem to be able to differentiate between different English accents and make similar social judgments based on these accents to native speakers of English (McKenzie, 2008a; McKenzie, 2008b; Alford & Strother, 1990). They tested the attitude of Japanese students and general L2 English students respectively towards different English accents. They also found that the more exposure to and experience with English the participants had, the more native-like and strong these judgements became.

The present research investigates what the effect of exposure is on native-like status evaluation of regional British accents by Dutch L2 speakers of English. In the third chapter the experiment will be explained in detail. The research roughly replicates part of the experiment done by Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981) where participants were asked to judge a speaker’s suitability to perform four jobs increasing in status based on voice recordings obtained from a matched-guise technique. One speaker replicated two English accents, one
with a high perceived status and one with a low perceived status. The present research used a modified version of this matched-guise technique with five different people reading out a controlled script in their own native or near-native accent. Three participants groups contrasting in time of exposure to the English language and culture were then asked to judge the speaker’s suitability to perform jobs differing in perceived social status. I hypothesize that native speakers of Dutch show the same prejudice to the different British, non-standard accents as native speakers themselves do and, most importantly, that this ability becomes stronger with more exposure to the target language and culture.

In the fourth chapter the results will be presented and briefly explained. The hypotheses were tested using an individual t-test and a one-way ANOVA respectively. The t-test results, in which the data was compared to the native preferences found in previous research showed a significant effect which nullified the first hypothesis that Dutch L2 speakers of English judge the accent similarly to native speakers. The results of the one-way between groups ANOVA did not show a significant effect of exposure to the target language and culture which means that the second hypothesis was also nullified.

In chapter five, the unexpected results will be discussed in more detail as well as tentatively explained based on previous literature. Firstly, the adapted matched-guise technique used in this study might have interfered in the discernibility of the recordings used. It has been shown that listers can discern foreign accents more clearly and easily when they occur in Natural speech (Van Bezooijen & Gooskens, 1999). Additionally, Reading aloud in itself marks the recordings with unnatural prosodic choices and pronunciations (McKenzie, 2008b; Clark & Schleef, 2010) making it more difficult to discern accent features. Also, Grondelaers, Hout and Steegs (2010) have argued that, when an accent is difficult to identify for a listener, this listener will start using features of the individual speaker for their social evaluation instead of or alongside the features of the accent. Because this version of the matched-guise technique used five different speakers this could have cause additional interference. Secondly, the job categories used to represent the different social statuses in this study might have been outdated. Korsten (2017) found that all four of these categories have dropped considerably in prestige and social status over the last few decades. This might have caused a mis-match with the perceived status in the speakers and the perceived status in the job descriptions making it difficult for the participants to make a reliable judgement. The absence of a linear effect of exposure could be caused by the participants’ possibly insufficient (self-perceived) proficiency in the English language. It has been shown that the
more proficient and experienced a listener is in the targeted language or the higher they judge their own proficiency, the easier they discern the foreign accents (Flege, 1988; McKenzie 2008b). Lastly, a flaw in the present study was the small number of participants which made it impossible to look further or deeper into the possible causes of the unexpected results.

The sixth and last chapter will conclude this research as well as offer ideas for future research possibilities to further examine cross-cultural accent prejudice.

**Background**

**Accent and Dialect**

The words *accent* and *dialect* are used often in many different branches of linguistic research into accent prejudice although they are used broadly and with many differing and sometimes overlapping definitions. In order to establish a better and mutual understanding, the two terms will be discussed and evaluated. Accent and dialect are both associated with language variation and are commonly viewed as a linguistic feature that often indicates speaker identity and language background (Ikeno & Hanson, 2007). The terms are often used ambiguously and a clear distinction between the two is not always made in the literature. A contrast for the two terms can, however, be given by looking more closely at what they usually indicate. Alford and Strother (1990), for example, state that ‘accent’ is best suited for situations where the pronunciation of a language, be it phonological or phonetic marking, is centralized. The same type of differentiation can be found in Crystal (2008) who denotes that accent is the “auditory effect” of the pronunciation features in a language that carry characteristics indicative of a person’s regional or social background (p. 2). He further emphasizes that this focus on pronunciation only is what makes the difference between accent and dialect, the latter also encompassing vocabulary and grammar features. Important to note is that the different varieties of a language, thus the accents or dialects in a language, are mutually intelligible even though they carry different pronunciation features and, in the case of dialects, grammar features and vocabulary items (Hughes, Trudgill & Watt., 2005). Different languages, on the other hand, also have different grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation although they are almost always mutually unintelligible.
Social Class and Status

Before the link between accent and social standing is explored it would be wise to investigate the current situation of social class systems. It is widely known that the United Kingdom has known a clear social class system with a working class, a middle class and an upper class. Historically, these classes were undeniably linked to the economic status, education and social status of their members. Recent research, however, has established that the United Kingdom still has a defined class system which interacts and largely overlaps with its members’ social status although the stratifications of status in the individual classes is less defined than it used to be (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2004). This same study showed that a person’s education and income does not directly relate to their status although a slight overlap between status level and income level is noticeable. Not only the United Kingdom used to know a clear social class system in years past, most comparable western countries also had a clear class divide, the Netherlands, however, seems to be one of the exceptions. Very little literature about the relationship between social class, status and socio-economic status in the Netherlands exists. Kraaykamp, van Eijck and Eltee (2011), who examined the relationship between class, status and culture in the Netherlands, stated that class is not a very distinguishable social divide in this country and is almost impossible to name separately from status. Status scores, however, were awarded in the same way as in Chan and Goldthorpe (2004) and was directly linked to a person’s occupation. A comparison between status in the Netherlands and Great Britain thus seems possible when it is linked to occupation though it remains unclear whether the differences in class systems or the lack thereof have any influence on this.

Accent and Perceived Social Status

Accent and dialect are both seen as having close ties to someone’s background, social status and area of residence and could therefore be used to look for an effect on the speakers’ perceived social status. Crystal (2008) states that (social) accent is a class marker especially in countries with a clear social-class structure like Japan or the UK because their accent corresponds to a speaker’s cultural and educational background. This relation between accent and social background is so strong that in some cultures the name of the accent or dialect alone is enough to ascribe specific characteristics and value judgements to the people speaking this language variant. The reason for such a response would be the cultural and social partiality from someone’s own observations or those presented by stereotyping in the media for groups of speakers of a certain social or regional accent (Alford & Strother 1990).
Different approaches for researching the effect an accent might have on listeners exist in the realm of sociolinguistic research. The readiness to assign judgements to accents, spoken or simply named, causes a distinction to appear between two types of approaches; direct and indirect. In the ‘direct’ approach participants are openly asked to indicate what a specific accent means or what it is associated with. The ‘indirect’ approaches involve some method designed to expose the underlying and often unconscious judgements and preferences held by the participants pertaining to a certain accent or dialect (Coupland & Bishop 2007). The present study will examine the judgements made about a speaker of a certain accent by non-native listeners. Because the focus will be on the unconscious social judgements associated with different accents the latter, an indirect approach, would be most fitting.

The apparent social value connected to accents is not only visible in the way others perceive the speaker, the speakers themselves also use it to present themselves to the world around them. Campbell-Kibler (2010) argued that listeners continuously catalogue information on social and cultural aspects of the world around them and by doing so they create links in their minds that connect social ideas to certain linguistic variables. Speakers are also aware of these links and actively use them to create the social structures they are part of and relate to. These links and ideas about the connection between culture and accent are not necessarily the same for the speaker of an accent and the person listening to it (Campbell-Kibler 2010). Krenn, Schreiter and Neubarth (2017) not only confirm that there is a clear effect of accent on a speaker’s prestige and/or attractiveness but also that this effect remains even when the accent is synthetically produced. They studied the effect of accent on the perception of characters in a tourist guide with different German accents and found that the different accents rated more or less positively on level of education and profession among other characteristics with a clear preference for the standard accent. This suggests that there is something inherent in the accent that causes judgement besides the personal tone and voice of a speaker. Grondelaers, Hout and Steegs (2010) state to the same degree that language attitudes are not always caused by the “ethnic group” associated with an accent but also by features held by the accent in itself. The question remains whether these inherent accent features that influence listeners’ judgements also influence judgement by non-native listeners.

It seems that there are a number of personal and social factors that play a role in how a person judges and contextualizes an accent. Giles (1970) as well as more recently Coupland and Bishop (2007), for example, have found that judgements on accents vary greatly in severity and seem to be affected by the age, sex, social class and region of the person judging.
them. Coupland and Bishop (2007) analysed the results of a survey called ‘voices’ carried out in cooperation with the BBC and Greenfield with a sample size of 5000 participants with varying ages, sexes and habitat regions but all native to the United Kingdom. The participants were asked to evaluate 34 different regional and foreign accents of English on their prestige and pleasantness on a seven-point rating scale. The results show a clear linear effect of age on the prestige and on the social attractiveness ranking for ‘a standard accent of English’ and ‘Queen’s English’ with the older participants ranking this accent more positively for prestige than the younger participants. Although, the rating was still significantly positive from the latter as well. They also found that women are more likely to rate any given accent higher on both scales than their male counterparts. This effect of sex showed for both prestige and social attractiveness. Also, the participants own accent region showed significant positive effects on prestige, especially for the regions Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Participants from these regions evaluated their local regional accent relatively higher in prestige than participants from outside these regions. Since the participants in the present study were all born and raised in the Netherlands, an interfering effect on accent judgement based on place of origin of the listener similar to the one found in Coupland and Bishop (2007) is not expected.

**Accent Prejudice in the United Kingdom**

Before looking at the effect accents might have on listener’s perception a deeper understanding of the aspects that set them apart might be useful. The united Kingdom counts many different accents and each accent has its own recognisable features that set it apart from the rest of the English speaking world. Although each accent is different, a lot of accents share some features because they could have originated from the same accent or intermixed in the past. RP, short for Received Pronunciation, is the perceived standard accent and carries the highest perceived prestige even though hardly anyone actually speaks it naturally (Crystal, 2014). Most native speakers speak with a regional accent, however, RP will be taken as the standard accent in this paragraph and the rest of this paper because it is widely taught as the standard and desirable British accent.

Regional accents can differ from the standard in many different ways and a closer look at some of the accents that will be used in the present study will be used to illustrate this variability. Manchester, for example, as some other accents from the North-West Midlands pronounce the vowel both in *put* and *put* among other words with the same /ɔ/ sound instead
of using the /ʌ/ we find in RP pronunciations of the word *putt*. They also pronounce the /ŋ/ sound in words like *singer* with a distinct /g/ making the word sound more like *sing-ger* then we are used to from the standard pronunciation. The Birmingham accent, part of the black county accent group in the West Midlands, shares the former as well as the latter feature. In addition, the Birmingham accent has a prolonged pronunciation of the diphthongs in words like *gate* and *goat* as well as a long, final /i:/ or /ɔi/ sound in words like *money* and *city*. Speakers of this accent generally also do not pronounce the /ŋ/ in words ending in *-ing*, instead using /n/ in words like *singing* and *dancing*. The /h/ is mostly absent in this accent. The Edinburgh accent, spoken in the subsequent region in Scotland, differs a lot and very noticeably from other British accents. Speakers of this accent pronounce the postvocalic /r/ as well as the /h/ in words like *hotel* and *harm* which are eliminated in most other British accents. They usually don’t pronounce long mid-diphthongs in words like *gate* which can be very pronounced in the standard accent. For a more complete and broader analysis of the different accents in the United Kingdom, see Hughes, Trudgill and Watt (2005) and Trudgill (1999).

Leading research on the topic of accent prejudice in the United Kingdom was performed by Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981). They studied how people rated the job suitability and overall character traits in a matched-guise technique. This technique involves one speaker reading out a text in different accents, a standard accent (RP) and non-standard accent (Welsh) in the case of Giles, Wilson and Conway. For both accents two recordings were made, one with high lexical variety and one with low lexical variety. They provided their participants with 4 job description going from a low perceived status to a high perceived status. Their results show that participants have an overall preference to match high status jobs with a standard accent as well as high lexical variety. A Surprising find in the analysis of the character trait ratings showed, however, that participants judged speakers with a low lexical variety higher in terms of likability than they did the speakers with high lexical variety (Giles, Wilson and Conway 1981). This suggests that while having a standard accent will improve your perceived intelligence and ability, the same might not be true for your personality.

Another, more recent study into accent prejudice in the UK was done by Coupland and Bishop (2007). They found in their research that speakers of the standard accent are rated as having more prestige and social attractiveness, and that non-standard accents across the UK (such as Birmingham) are systematically downgraded on these accounts. Important to note is
that the results in this study show a high preference for the participants own regional accent which ended in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} places on social attractiveness and prestige respectively, only overrated by standard English and the Queen’s English (the latter for prestige only). What is more, Bishop, Coupland and Garrett (2005) established that the findings in Giles, Wilson and Conway’s research in 1981 and research done by Coupland and Bishop (2007) some 30 years later reveal little to no differences in their results. This indicates that although, socially and culturally, a lot may have changed in the past 30 years, non-standard accent prejudice was not, or hardly, affected by these changes. A clear link between the regional accent of a speaker and listener judgement of said speaker was found in these United Kingdom studies. However, the question still remains whether this link between speaker accent and listener judgement also occurs in different languages or even with non-native listeners.

This apparent preference for a certain, often standard, variety of a language could be explained by the concept of Standard language cultures discussed by Milroy (2001). A standard language culture is a community of people who speak a certain form of a language which is perceived as the right one, and all other forms or variations of this language are less correct or deviant (Milroy, 2001). Because The United Kingdom has a strict social class system and many regional accents and dialects it is likely that a concept like Milroy’s standards language cultures could be applicable here. This could explain why the United Kingdom is associated with and has shown such a great number of accent prejudices and stereotypes. Keeping Milroy’s standard language cultures in mind, it could be expected that, if non-native listeners judge speakers based on their accent, an effect of exposure to the English language and culture is present. The more exposure to the English language and culture the participants have had, the more native-like they are expected to evaluate the speakers.

**Accent Prejudice Outside of the United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom is not the only country in which these accent prejudices on status and prestige seem to occur. Research in the United States and Germany shows similar results (cf. Alford and Strother, 1990; Krenn, Schreiter and Neubarth, 2017). Another country in which language prejudice can be perceived is the Netherlands with her rich multi-cultural society and many regional accents and dialects. Grondelaers, Hout and Steegs (2010) researched the language prejudices in the Netherlands and presented participants of varying ages, sexes, regional backgrounds, economy and education with recordings of free-speech from speakers from four major regional accents in the Netherlands. The regional accents they chose to study
are; central (Randstad), south (Limburg), North (Groningen) and a standard accent with no distinguishable regional accent features. The results from this study were similar to those from the UK studies in that the Dutch listeners also rate the high status and standard accents higher than the non-standard accents. However, as opposed to the results from the UK the Dutch listeners do not show much difference in the rating of the accents between age groups, sexes and social upbringing and even in the Randstad, which is known for its social pride and solidarity, participants did not show favouritism for their own regional accent (Grondelaers, Hout & Steegs, 2010). This could suggest that accent prejudice in the Netherlands is even more nationally founded and static than it is in the UK where different ratings could be found for different types of listeners.

In order to control for the teaching or learning of language prejudice from social exposure, Van Bezooijen (1994) researched accent judgement in the Netherlands using kids (of ages 7 and 10) as well as adults to try and cancel out the social knowledge and connotation the adults might have. She presented these three groups with four regional accents of Dutch and found that the children were as able as the adults to differentiate between the four accents even though they had no previous exposure to them. Just like the results in the UK studies as well as research by Grondelaers, Hout and Steegs (2010), the results from this study showed a general preference for the standard language accent as the ‘most beautiful’ and the most regionally marked accents as the ‘ugliest’ of the four accents. Because all 3 groups (7 year olds, 10 year olds and adults) judged the accents in the same way this could suggest that an in depth understanding of the social connotations of an accent or language culture is not necessarily needed in order to judge an unknown accent. It could also be argued that the younger children had already been conditioned by society to judge these accents in this way which could be likely when the findings in studies are taken into account which focus on non-native listeners who have spent as little as 3 months in the targeted language culture. It has been established that accent prejudice also exists outside of the United Kingdom more specifically, and most importantly for the present study, in the Netherlands. The question remains, however, whether L2 listeners of English will evaluate British regional accents similarly to native listeners.

**Accent Prejudice by Non-native Speakers**

One study looking into non-native accent judgement has been realised by McKenzie (2008b) who studied the attitudes of 558 Japanese students towards six different accents of
English including standard and vernacular accents of British English (Glasgow), US east and west accents and two samples of non-native Japanese accented English speech. His results showed that Japanese learners of English generally prefer the more standard varieties of English in terms of status but the Japanese accented English in terms of solidarity. Furthermore, he found that students who have spent 3 or more months in an English-speaking country rated the standard Glasgow and US accent speakers, as opposed to the non-standard, regional accent speakers, higher in terms of status in comparison with speakers with less exposure. One issue with this study is the choice in accents used. McKenzie (2008b) used international varieties of the English language which differ more overtly from each other than regional accents. Using regional accents instead of international accents will test whether non-native listeners are also sensitive to the less noticeable, regional accent differences as was found to be the case for the native listeners.

One study that focused on regional accents being perceived by L2 listeners, as opposed to international accents of English, was conducted in the United States by Alford and Strother (1990). They studied the ability of L2 learners to differentiate between varying standard regional US accents and compared and contrasted their social perception of these accents to L1 learners. They asked both L1 and advanced L2 university students in Florida to evaluate the accents on different characteristics (such as intelligence, education, confidence, etc.) with the use of a Likert scale. They found that the advanced L2 learners were indeed able to differentiate between the different accents. They also found that the L2 ratings overall were very similar to the L1 ratings in general even though the L2 learners rated the individual characteristic differently where some features, like patience, were rated very low in one accent compared to the L1 data. These findings suggest that non-native listeners are able to differentiate between regional accents and will assign specific characteristics to these accents similarly to native listeners. However, it is not yet clear whether they will also assign social status to these speakers similarly to the native listeners.

The amount of experience and exposure to the language and accents in question seems to have some sort of influence on L2 performance in these types of judgment and perception tasks. Sumner and Samuel (2009) tested the effect that dialect exposure and experience has on speech perception and comprehension in two different dialects of American English. They found that speakers that are unfamiliar to a certain accent have trouble processing it. This was visible in both the recognition of an accent as well as in lexical activation which happens on a more subconscious level of language comprehension. They suggested that these processing
difficulties cause the incomprehensibility of an accent to a new or inexperienced listener. Also, the comprehensibility of an accent or the person speaking it seems to effect their perceived employability and personality evaluation. This has been suggested by Carlson and McHenry (2006) who tested the effect accent has on the employability of Spanish-influenced, Asian-influenced and African American accents of English speakers. The comprehensibility factor thus seems to be something that needs to be taken into account when identifying accent judgements.

A similar effect of comprehensibility as that in Carlson and McHenry (2006) has been found by Ikeno and Hanson (2007). They investigated the connection between listener accent experience and accent comprehension in two different tasks. One focussed on identifying accents as native or not and one focused on the level of understanding and comprehension of the accents. They suggest in their research that the more comprehensible the accent was the more often it was correctly identified as native. A similar effect was found by Bresnahan et al. (2002) who studied the effect accent comprehensibility may have on attitudes towards foreign English accents. They found that the more comprehensible the foreign accent was the more positive the attitude towards it appeared to be although they also found that the standard American accent was judged most positively. Keeping this in mind, the presence of an effect of exposure to the language in question on accent judgements by non-native listeners has become even more likely. Participants with more exposure to the English language and culture will likely have an easier time comprehending the accent recordings and are thus expected to perform more native-like.

Based on the literature reviewed in this chapter the following research question has been formulated. What is the effect of exposure on native-like status evaluation of regional British accents by Dutch L2 speakers of English? Should L2 speakers of English indeed show the same kind of prejudice to regional accents as native speakers do this could have socio-cultural effects on the speakers of these accents in an international context.

**Repercussions of Accent Prejudice**

For example, accent prejudice does not only have consequences on a sociolinguistic level, it has been found that social and prestige judgements based on one’s accent can have severe repercussions during, among other, school admittance processes, social integration processes and job interviews. Kayaalp (2015), who tested Turkish immigrant youth in Canada found
that the effect of the standard language culture caused people to devaluate an accent that was different form the nationally accepted French and English which in turn inhibits the social and educational identity and participation of the Turkish youth in Canada. This effect reaches all the way into society and causes inequality especially in the power structures present there. This could suggest that, based on accent alone, speakers of non-standard accents could start off with less profitable circumstances in education academics and society. Purkiss et al. (2006) researched the effect that accent and ethnic names have on perceived employability. They tested this by asking North-American students of a management study to evaluate mock job applicants’ suitability for hire. The results show that having an ethnic name and a corresponding accent makes a person the least suitable. It would be expected that having no accent and no ethnic name would make a person the most suitable, however, the results show that this was not the case. Purkiss et al. suggest that the ethnic name but no accent applicants were judged most positive because of the expectancy-violation theory, which proposes that the low expectations for minority groups cause a positive leap in evaluation when these expectations do not come true. For example, an applicant with an ethnic name triggers low expectations for themselves and when they do not adhere to these expectations, in this case because they do not have an ethnic accent, the judgements made for them are even more positive than in the case they had no ethnic name or accent. These results strongly suggests that having no (foreign) accent or an accent different from the perceived standard has a definite effect on employability. Furthermore, even though it has been suggested that predisposition about a certain accent grow with exposure to social structures (cf. Milroy, 2001; Campbell-Kibler, 2010) it has been prompted that even children show preferred judgements for certain accents. Van Bezooijen (1994) found that children associate the standard language varieties with people in high status jobs, people who are rich and people that are part of a higher social class and non-standard varieties with low profile jobs and social statuses.

**Methodology**

In order to test the hypotheses a short, quantitative pilot study was conducted which replicated parts of the previous studies by Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981) and Coupland and Bishop (2007). In these studies, participants were asked to judge the suitability of speakers of different accents to practice 4 professions differing in status. They were also asked to evaluate
social characteristics of the speakers. The recordings used in Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981) were acquired using the Matched-guise technique. This is a technique that requires one speaker to replicate multiple accents, two in the case of Giles, Wilson and Conway, while reading out a script controlled for lexical variety. As in Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981), a similar technique and method was used in the present study in order to generate data which will accurately reflect the participants’ evaluation of the perceived status in the different accents. However, in order to test the participants’ evaluation of more than two accents, one with a low status and one with a high status, as was the case in Giles, Wilson and Conway, the present study used five recordings of accents with increasing perceived status. Because it is near to impossible to find one speaker who can accurately and convincingly replicate five different accents it was chosen to adapt the matched-guise technique and ask five different native or near-native speakers to record five different controlled scripts. As Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981) found that lexical variety in the recordings had an effect on the listeners’ evaluation of the accents, a pre-test was conducted to test the scripts on lexical homogeneity. The same four jobs that were used by Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981) were also used in the present study. The participants were divided into three groups which were selected for the amount of time the participants spent in the United Kingdom in order to test the effect of exposure to the English language and culture. They were presented with a survey designed in Qualtrics which included the five short recordings of speakers of five different United Kingdom accents and the four detailed job descriptions. They were asked to select the speaker they judged most suitable for each job. The data was organised in accuracy scores compared to the preferences of a fictitious native speaker and analysed with a t-test and ANOVA tests in SPSS.

**Pre-test**

A pre-test was conducted to test the transcripts of the recordings on their equality in tone and vocabulary. The transcripts were designed to be as equal as possible in both tone and vocabulary use so that accent was the only true difference between the recordings. This allowed for a control on the personal identity and education of the speaker so that the only relevant difference between the recordings that could influence perceptions of identity was the identity of the accent as a whole.

Eight English Language and Culture students at the Radboud university were asked to rate the suitability of the five job applicants for the four available jobs by reading the
transcripts only. They were given the same job descriptions as the participants in the main experiment and were asked to rate each job 1-4, 1 being the most suitable job for this applicant and 4 being the least suitable. The results showed no pattern or bias for any of the participants for a specific job which suggests the transcripts are suitably equal in use of language. (see appendix 1 for pre-test and results)

Design

The independent variable used in this pilot study was the length of exposure to the language culture in the United Kingdom and included three conditions: less than three months, three months to seven months and more than twelve months. The dependent variable was the participants’ native accuracy score on the status evaluations of the different accents which was reflected, as in Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981), in their preferences in suitability of the speakers for the different status jobs.

Participants

The participants for this pilot study were thirty students or former students of varying higher educational institutes aged 18 to 69 (\(M=28.97, SD=10.84\)). All participants were born in the Netherlands and had Dutch as their mother tongue. None of them had had any relevant English education post-secondary school outside of short language courses comparable to those offered by INTO languages. No further specifics were included in selecting the participants due to the short time available and the difficulties in acquiring enough participants that met the exposure time requirements. The participants were divided into three groups representing their exposure to the language culture in the United Kingdom. Group one consisted of ten participants who spent one month or less in the United Kingdom (aged 18 to 40, \(M=24.9, DS=6.1\). Average time of exposure: 1.4 weeks), group two consisted of ten participants who spent three to seven months in the United Kingdom (aged 22 to 27 \(M=23.9, SD=1.52\). Average time of exposure: 20.35 weeks) and group three consisted of ten participants who spent a year or more in the United Kingdom (aged 20 to 69, \(M=38.1, SD=14.11\). Average time of exposure: 499.05 weeks). Only completed datasets were included in the analysis of the results and the number of datasets in each group was levelled.

Material
The accents used in the present study were chosen from a list compiled by Coupland and Bishop (2007) who tested the perceived status and perceived attractiveness of thirty-six different English accents. Their composed list roughly reflects what previous studies in perceived status of different accents have also found with the Manchester and Birmingham accents being associated with a relatively low status and RP being associated with a high status (cf. Giles, 1970; Giles, Wilson & Conway, 1981; McKenzie, 2008b). The rating for perceived status composed by Coupland and Bishop was used to select the accents used in this pilot study although only accents native to the United Kingdom were selected. The accents were chosen to reflect increasing status with Birmingham rated lowest in place 34 in the list and RP rated highest in place 2. The accents of Edinburgh (place 4), Northern Irish (place 17) and Manchester (place 21) were chosen to represent the middle group.

As opposed to Grondelaers, Hout and Steegs (2010), who used recordings of spontaneous speech to allow for the most natural occurrence of the different accents, it was decided to forgo spontaneous speech in order to control for accent as the only variable. The scripts read out in the recordings were designed to have an equal amount of three medium length sentences and an approximately equal amount of words. The topics discussed in each recording were also equal and part of a fictitious job interview. The vocabulary used differed but was chosen and tested to portray the least amount of differences in lexical variety and status. The transcript of the recordings can be found in appendix 2. A modified version of the matched guise technique was used where individual speakers of the different accents in question were asked to read out a couple of pre-set sentences instead of one person producing all accents. All speakers were adult men who were natives or near-natives to the accent they recorded. They were asked to study the script shortly and record the three sentences as naturally as possible. The recordings all lasted between 15 and 22 seconds and all were assumed sufficiently, overtly marked after analysis revealed that each accent was marked for at least four different characterising features.

The first of the five recordings used was of a speaker of the standard RP accent and lasted 20 seconds. RP was considered the standard accent here and posed as a comparison for describing the characteristic markings in the other accents. Because of this, only a few of the most characterizing features have been analysed here to check if the recording was suitably marked. To start with, a /j/ sound was inserted after the initial /n/ in the word newspaper which is common in RP. The /t/ was never pronounced after vowels except when used as a linking r in there are. The speaker appropriately aspirated /p, t, k/ sounds in both realisations
of the word *company* as well as in *teamwork*. Lastly, the speaker made a distinction between a dark /l/ for the word *well* and a light /l/ in words like *looked*, *believe* and *like* which is appropriate for the RP accent.

The second recording was of a speaker of the Edinburgh accent and lasted 15 seconds. The first characterising feature in this recording was the /r/ which was pronounced after vowels everywhere except on the second realisation of the word *for* and slightly less noticeable at the end of the word *future*. Furthermore, most /r/ sounds were pronounced with a distinct roll as is often the case in the Edinburgh accent. The speaker in the recording produced little variation in vowel length over the whole recording. Short vowels as in the first syllables of *job* and *project* were slightly elongated while vowels as in the first syllable of *working* and second syllable of the word *achieve* were shortened. Lastly, the final /l/ sound in the word *project* was hardly pronounces as is characterising for the Edinburgh accent.

The third recording was of a speaker of the Manchester accent and lasted 18 seconds. In this recording the /æ:/ sound in the word *task* was pronounced more like the /æ/ sound which characterises the Manchester accent. However, The /æ:/ sound in the word *part* was pronounced as in RP although with an unnatural pause at the end. The /ɛ/ sound in the word *company* was pronounced more like a /ʊ/ and the speaker sounded overall quite nasal while speaking which is also associated with the Manchester accent. The final /ŋ/ sound in *challenging* and in the second realization of *working* was pronounced with a more noticeable /ŋ/ which made it sound like /ŋg/ . On the other hand, The final /ʌ/ sound in *something* was pronounced as /šl/, both of these options are associated with a Manchester accent.

The fourth recording was of a speaker of the Northern Irish accent and lasted 22 seconds. The /r/ sound after vowels was consequently appropriately pronounced in this recording although it was not realized like a rolling r which was the case for the Edinburgh accent. The speaker of this recording realized a distinct raise in intonation, commonly associated with the accent, at the end of some utterances but not all. A raise could clearly be heard at the end of the utterances *I had heard... before* and *I also heard... firm offers*. The /au/ sound in *about* was pronounced with a less distinct /ə/ sound making it sound more like /ɔ/ or /ɒ/. The /ɔː/ sound in both realizations of the word *heard* was pronounced more like an /ɔː/ sound and lastly, the /ɔː/ sound in *most* was pronounced more like /ɔː/ which is characterising for a Northern Irish accent.
The fifth and last recording was of a speaker of the Birmingham accent and lasted 16 seconds. Firstly, the /aɪ/ sound was in this recording pronounced as [oy] in all but one of the realisations of the pronoun I and in the realisation of the pronoun my. The speaker also voiced final /s/ in the words fits and it’s slightly which is not the case in RP. The vowel /ʌ/ in it’s was slightly elongated which made it resemble /i:/ and also the vowels in two of the three pronunciations of job were elongated which caused the distinctive Birmingham brawl sound. The speaker in this recording produced little variation in pitch with downwards intonation at the end of all but two phrases. Furthermore, the speaker produced a lazy realisation of the /eɪ/ in aiming contrasting with the tightening of the lips to make the sounds more distinct we hear in RP. Lastly, the pronunciation of the vowel /ɑ:/ in part was shortened to resemble the vowel /ʌ/, a feature which is often associated with a Brummie accent.

The jobs chosen matched those used in the original study by Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981) and were selected for their associated level of prestige and status. The four job descriptions were merged from the information found on multiple career sites. The first job, with the least perceived status, was Industrial plant cleaner followed by the functions of Production assembler, Industrial mechanic and last, with the highest perceived status was Foreman. The descriptions were evaluated on the account that the basic information needed to get an understanding of what is involved and needed to practice these jobs was present. All jobs with their individual job descriptions can be found in appendix 3.

**Procedure**

The participants were tested at a location of their choosing and the survey was designed in such a manner that the presence of an experimenter was not necessary. Each participant was sent a link to an online survey designed in Qualtrics. On the first slide they were given a short introduction to the experiment together with a thank you message from the author. The second slide was a detailed instruction to the experiment in which the participant was asked to take the role of a Human resources employee with the task to hire 4 new employees. It was also suggested to continue the experiment in a calm space where they could concentrate well on the task (both texts can be found in appendix 4). The participants were instructed to listen to each recording carefully. They were also warned that each position could only be filled once and each applicant could only be hired once. The next slide indicated the start of the experiment. The participants were first presented with 5 separate recordings labelled ‘participant 1’ to ‘participant 5’ which they could listen to at their leisure and as many times
as needed to make their decision. Then followed 4 questions, each containing a different job description in which the participants were asked to choose which participant they found most suitable for the described job. The recordings remained available throughout the entirety of the question portion of the experiment. All questions in the survey had to be answered before the participants could continue to the next section. The participants were able to change their answer to the four questions until they continued to the next section of the experiment. The next part of the experiment consisted of a short questionnaire in which the participants were asked to fill in their gender, age, the approximate and precise time spent in the United Kingdom and whether they enjoyed any subsequent education in English past secondary school. Lastly the participant was asked to fill in what they thought the experiment was about in order to control for this possibly interfering knowledge. The last slide indicated the end of the experiment and offered the opportunity to fill in an email address in case the participant wanted any further information about the present study or results.

Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>job status</th>
<th>Birmingham</th>
<th>Manchester</th>
<th>Norther Irish</th>
<th>Edinburgh</th>
<th>RP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-middle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: native accuracy score-sheet*

Before the acquired data could be analysed it had to be organised in such a way that it could be compared to the preferences of a native speaker of English. As this native speaker data was not accessible for the present study a scoring system was created based on the native speaker preferences found by Coupland and Bishop (2007) as well as others (cf. Giles, 1970; Giles, Wilson & Conway, 1981). The results from these studies suggest that native speakers would judge the RP speaker as the most suitable for the high status job followed by the speakers of the Edinburgh, Northern Irish and Manchester accents for the middle-high and low-middle status jobs and lastly, the speaker of the Birmingham accent for the low status job. The participants in the present study were awarded accuracy points by comparing their suitability judgements to this hypothetical native speaker preference which provided the score sheet in table 1. Participants that accurately evaluated the most suitable speaker were awarded
with five points, four, three or two points were awarded the less native-like the participants evaluated the speakers and one point was awarded when the participant preferred the least suitable speaker for the job. The full data-set used in the analysis can be found in appendix 5.

The results from this quantitative pilot study were organized in and analysed with the SPSS data analysis program. A t-test was conducted to compare the overall mean accuracy score with the hypothetical native preference score in order to test the first hypothesis. Levene’s test was used to test the Homogeneity of variance and the normality of distribution was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test.

The second hypothesis was tested by conducting four separate one-way between group ANOVAs. Previous research revealed that native like preference in L2 speakers of English is most likely to begin to show on the most marginal accents which is why the ANOVAs were conducted for each job category separately (Clark & Schleef, 2010).

Results

A one-sample t-test was conducted on the sum of the score of native like preference to test the null hypothesis that Dutch natives do not prejudge native speakers of English based on their accent. This sum was compared to the native speaker assessment that was established in previous research which would be a maximum accuracy score of 20. There was a significant difference in the scores for the Dutch natives ($M=13.03$, $SD=2.41$) and the hypothetical native speaker; $t(-15,808)=29$, $p=0.00$ (see table 2). This suggests there is significant evidence to accept the null-hypothesis and conclude that Dutch natives do not prejudge native speakers of English based on their accent like English natives have been reported to do.

One-Sample Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Value = 20</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-15,808</td>
<td>-7,8680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: t-test results
A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted for each job separately to test the hypothesis that accent evaluation becomes more similar to native speaker assessments the longer the participant was exposed to the English language and culture. The independent variable of time of exposure was divided in three groups: group 1 had less than 3 months of exposure (Mean time of exposure=1.4 weeks, SD=1.07, n= 10), group 2 had between three and 11 months of exposure (Mean time of exposure= 20.35 weeks, SD=5.43, n=10) and group 3 had more than twelve months of exposure (mean time of exposure=499.05 weeks, SD=588.99, n=10). The descriptive statistics related to the native like accent evaluation over the three participants groups are reported in tables 3 to 5 and 7 for each job individually. The normality of distribution was evaluated using the Shapiro-Wilk test and was validated for all three groups. The homogeneity of variance was similarly tested using Levene’s test and was validated for all four jobs (low status F(2, 27)=2.496, p=0.10; low-middle status F(2, 27)=0.375, p=0.69; middle-high status F(2, 27)=1.601, p=0.22; high status F(2, 27)=3.111, p=0.61.)

For the first job, the low perceived status job of Industrial plant cleaner (table 3) it can be seen that group 1 was associated with the numerically lowest mean score of native like judgement (M=2.4, SD=1.07) and group 3 was associated with the numerically highest mean score of native like judgement (M=2.9 ,SD= 1.52). Even though this slight linear effect of exposure was found (see figure 1) the ANOVA failed to produce a significant effect F(2, 27)=0.475, p=0.63 , η²=0.034. Only 3.4% of the variance in accent prejudice was justified by time of exposure.

For the second job, the low-middle perceived status job of Production assembler (table 4) it can be seen that group 2 showed a slight numerical difference in mean score (M=3.8, SD=1.03) in comparison with the other two groups (both M=4.0, SD=1.05). However, no linear effect of exposure is visible (see figure 2). The ANOVA also failed to produce a significant effect of exposure F(2, 27)=0.122, p=0.89, η²=0.009. Only 0.9% of the variance in accent prejudice for this job was justified by time of exposure.
**Descriptives**

**Low_status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
<th>Minimun</th>
<th>Maximu m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>group 1 (&lt;3m)</td>
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<td>1,07497</td>
<td>,33993</td>
<td>1,6310</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>,30732</td>
<td>1,8048</td>
<td>3,1952</td>
<td>2,00</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group 3 (12&lt;m)</td>
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<td>1,52388</td>
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<td>1,8099</td>
<td>3,9901</td>
<td>1,00</td>
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*Table 3: Statistical descriptives of the ANOVA for the low-status job.*

*Figure 1: visualized ANOVA results for the low-status job*
Descriptives
Low-middle_status

<table>
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<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
<th>Minimu m</th>
<th>Maximu m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>group 1 (&lt;3m)</td>
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<td>4,000</td>
<td>1,05409</td>
<td>0,33333</td>
<td>3,2459</td>
<td>4,7541</td>
<td>3,00</td>
<td>5,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group 2 (3-11m)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3,800</td>
<td>1,03280</td>
<td>0,32660</td>
<td>3,0612</td>
<td>4,5388</td>
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<td>5,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>1,05409</td>
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<td>3,2459</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3,5544</td>
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</table>

Table 4: Statistical descriptives of the ANOVA for the low-middle-status job

Figure 2: visualized ANOVA results for the low-middle-status job
For the third job, the middle-high perceived status job of Industrial mechanic (table 5), it can be seen that group 1 was associated with the numerically highest mean score of native like judgement ($M=3.6, SD=1.65$) and group 3 was associated with the numerically lowest mean score of native like judgement ($M=2.0, SD=1.05$). The means for this job shows a negative, linear effect of exposure (see figure 3). What is more, the ANOVA for the middle-high status job produced a significant effect of exposure $F(2, 27)=4.205, p=0.03, \eta^2=0.238$. This means that the null-hypothesis in this case was rejected, and 23.8% of the variance in accent prejudice was justified by the time of exposure. In order to evaluate and identify the effect and differences found between the three group means, the statistical analysis was continued by conducting Fisher’s LSD post-hoc test (see table 6). The difference in means between the low exposure group and the high exposure group tested as statistically significant, $t(18)=2.588, p=0.01, d=1.16$. The difference in means between the low exposure group and the centremost exposure group did not test as statistically significant, $t(18)=0.305, p=0.74, d=0.14$. Lastly, the difference in means between the centremost exposure group and the high exposure group tested as statistically significant as well, $t(18)=2.689, p=0.03, d=1.20$. The effect sizes (Cohen’s d) affiliated with the significant effect measured between group 1 and group 3 is deemed large based on Sawilowsky (2008) and the significant effect measured between group 2 and 3 is deemed very large based on the same scale.

For the fourth and last job, the high perceived status job of Foreman (table 7), it can be seen that both group 1 ($M=3.5, SD=1.58$) and group 2 ($M=3.4, SD=1.78$) scored lower on a numerical level then group 3 ($M=3.6, SD=1.17$). However, no linear effect of exposure was found as can be seen in figure 4. The ANOVA also failed to produce a significant effect $F(2, 27)=0.043, p=0.96, \eta^2=0.003$. Only 0.3% of the variance in accent prejudice for this job was justified by the time of exposure.
### Descriptives

#### Middlehigh_status

<table>
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<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
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<th>Upper Bound</th>
<th>Minimu m</th>
<th>Maximu m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>1,2459</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Table 5: Statistical descriptives of the ANOVA for the middle-high-status job.

Figure 3: visualized ANOVA results for the middle-high-status job.
Multiple Comparisons
Dependent Variable: Middlehigh_status
LSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(l) exposure (J) exposure</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>group 2 (3-11m)</td>
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<td>group 3 (12&lt;m)</td>
<td>group 2 (3-11m)</td>
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<td>2.6336</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 6: results of the post-hoc analysis for the middle-high-status job.

Descriptives
High_status

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
<th>Minimu m</th>
<th>Maximu m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

Table 7: Statistical descriptives of the ANOVA for the high-status job.
Based on the results presented above the following conclusions regarding the research question can be made. The Dutch participants did not show native-like accent prejudice in judging the applicants’ suitability for either high or low status jobs based on their accent. Furthermore, no significant, linear effects were found for exposure for the low, low-middle or high status jobs. The only significant, linear effect was found for the middle-high status job, however, this effect proved to be the opposite what was hypothesised, a negative, linear effect of exposure.

**Discussion**

The results from the job suitability survey recorded above (see the t-test results in table 2) suggest that Dutch L2 speakers of English do not prejudge job suitability for speakers of different regional United Kingdom accents in the same manner that Native speakers of English do. Further analysis of the results (see tables 3 to 5 and 7) suggest that there is no effect of exposure to the language and culture of The United Kingdom although a beginning of such an effect could be tentatively argued. Both the hypotheses made in this pilot study have thus been nullified by the results and there are multiple explanations as to why the results do not resemble those found in previous research into accent prejudice.
These first three possible explanation will be mostly based on possible comprehension difficulties of the stimuli used and will try to explain the discrepancies between the expected native-like evaluation and the contradicting, actual results. Firstly, The unexpected overall results in this study could be explained by the participants inability to discern the accents in the recordings. Some specific accent markings might not have been available to them due to the use of the adapted version of the Matched Guise Technique. The Matched Guise Technique (MGT) was chosen in this study over techniques using more natural speech like the Verbal Guise Technique to control for lexical variety as discussed in the methodology. Although the MGT has advantages like controlling for lexical variety, it also has one flaw: It omits possibly important accent markers like morphology, grammar and prosody. The MGT asks the speaker to read out a text in a specific accent and, no matter how often they practice, reading aloud is not the same as natural speech. Firstly, it has been found that participants have an easier time recognising and identifying regional accents when listening to recordings of spontaneous speech rather than recordings of a speaker reading out a scripted text (Van Bezooijen & Gooskens, 1999). When reading aloud, a speaker is likely to make different choices in the morphological and syntactic field that could mark for regional origin as well as produce more regulated stress-patterns. They are also likely to use more and often unnatural pauses at the end of syntactic phrases (McKenzie, 2008b; Clark & Schleef, 2010). McKenzie (2008b) also names another prosodic feature that is likely to change or decrease accent markings while reading aloud, namely, a higher chance of ‘spelling pronunciation’. Especially this last one could be part of an explanation for the unexpected results in this study. Since accent pronunciation is one of the only and most important factors on which the participants based their judgements in the present study, the chance of accent markings being left out due to spelling pronunciation could impact this judgement.

Even though evidence has been found for the apparently minor role these morphological and syntactic markings have in accent identification in comparison to pronunciation, it is still unclear which features, and to what extent these features, truly influence accent identification and, more importantly, social perception. To start with, Van Bezooijen and Gooskens (1999) tried to investigate which linguistic features are used by listeners to identify regional language varieties. They found that the role of pronunciation in regional accent identification seems more pronounced than the role of prosody. They conclude, however, that the precise role the features of pronunciation play in this context still needs to be researched in more detail before any type of conclusion can be made. McKenzie
Alieke Stijf S4530888/

(2015) discusses his previous research in 2008 and argues similarly to Van Bezooijen and Gooskens. McKenzie (2008a) researched Japanese L2 learners of English in their ability to accurately identify different accents of English. He found that the Japanese students could identify the standard American English more easily than the regional varieties. He states, in 2015, that further analysis of the results revealed that the Japanese students used the speakers’ pronunciation over their use of morphological and syntactical features when identifying the speakers’ origin. Foulkes and Docherty (2006) wrote an article on sociophonetic variation in speech in which they discussed the perceptual evaluation of these accent features in speakers. They state that very little is known about the extent of a listener’s ability to use these features while making social judgements beyond the actuality that they are used. They also state that many questions about this topic remain unanswered.

A second explanation based on comprehension difficulties closely ties into the previously mentioned prosodic features of speech and examines more closely the part they play in accent evaluation. This second explanation questions whether the recordings of the different speakers might have been different in other aspects besides those tied to the accents themselves on a more individual level. Grondelaers, Hout and Steegs (2010) have argued that, when an accent is difficult to identify for a listener, this listener will start using features of the individual speaker for their social evaluation instead of or alongside the features of the accent. Van Bezooijen (1988) conducted two experiments testing the role of prosody, voice quality and pronunciation in the evaluation of social status and personality of speakers. She tested both Dutch and non-Dutch participants and asked them to rate personality traits of speakers based on specific aspects of their speech in a masking experiment. This task was designed to present different speech features in isolation and in different combinations. Van Bezooijen found that a person’s prosody has a strong influence on their perceived strength of personality and other personality traits like ‘dominance’, ‘self-confidence’ and ‘willpower’. Intellect and status were influenced the most by the speaker’s pronunciation. Because different speakers were used in the present study, each with their own manner of speaking, it is possible that these speech features have influenced the participants’ judgements. Sadly, the participants in this study were not asked to rate the speakers on different personality traits which makes it impossible to analyse if something and what might have influenced their judgement on the speakers’ suitability for the jobs in question.

One last explanation that is based in comprehension difficulties could be that the job descriptions used were not comprehended in the way that was expected and intended. The job
descriptions used in this study were directly taken from previous, leading research into accent prejudice in employment suitability ratings by Giles, Wilson and Conway (1981). However, more recent studies have suggested that the job descriptions used in this and similar studies are outdated and are no longer suitable in modern times (Cargile, 2000). Dirk (2017) reported a list of professions which were rated by Dutch natives on perceived job prestige which supports this suggestion. The ratings of job categories similar to the ones used in this experiment all fall in the lower regions of this list of perceived status. ‘Ploegbaas’, the Dutch equivalent of ‘Foreman’, ended in place 82 of 102 and ‘fijnmetaalbewerker’ the Dutch equivalent of ‘metalworker’ which is similar to ‘mechanic’ in place 95. All these job categories have dropped in perceived prestige since the 1960s with the Dutch equivalent of ‘production assembler’ dropping off the list entirely to place 136 (Korsten, 2017). This could suggest that all four job categories are associated with a lower status which would make it more difficult for the participants to pick a suitable candidate to fill the position, especially when they associate one or more of the accent speakers with a higher status.

The following two explanations focus more specifically on the absence of a linear effect of exposure and consider the participants’ proficiency in and exposure to the English language. Although no significant linear effects were found two non-significant effects could indicate a possible start of an exposure effect. A small linear effect could be witnessed in the ANOVA results of the low-status job as can be seen in figure 1 (low exposure \( M=2.4 \), middle exposure \( M=2.5 \), high exposure \( M=2.9 \)). Clark and Schleef (2010) found in their study that L2 participants are most likely to start behaving more native-like in these types of accent evaluation tasks in their evaluation of the most marginal accents. This would suggest that a similar, although not necessarily significant, effect could be expected in the evaluation scores of the high status job. Although another non-significant but also non-linear effect of exposure could be found in the results of the high-status job this effect was even smaller than the one found for the low-status job with a maximal mean score difference of .20 (see figure 4).

To start with, participants were not asked about or tested on their proficiency in English, the only accessible information about their enjoyed exposure to English is the amount of time they spent in the United Kingdom. It could be the case that the participants tested were simply not all proficient enough in the English language to be able to make a reliable judgement on the speakers based on their spoken English and four job descriptions in English. Flege (1988) states that the more experienced the second language learner is, in the English language in this case, the more able they are to discriminate between and perceive
accents. What is more, McKenzie (2008b) investigated Japanese L2 English learners’ social evaluations of different English accents. He found an effect of self-perceived proficiency in English on the participants’ evaluation of the speakers’ competence. Students with more self-perceived proficiency showed a stronger preference for the standard accents than the students with lower self-perceived proficiency. Secondly, it has been suggested that participants are more sensitive to and more favourable towards accents that are similar to the ones they have had most experience or contact with. Both Clark and Schleef (2010) and McKenzie (2015) found that first language speakers as well as second language speakers who live in the United Kingdom were better able to accurately identify and perceive accents that were the most ‘local’ to them. because the participants in the present study were only asked after the amount of time spent in the United Kingdom and not after the place of residence there it is not possible to analyse if there was an effect of this sort at work. Participants could have simply had too little experience with the accents tested here and especially the low exposure participants would have had trouble rating the accents if that was the case. Also, a lot of previous research into non-native perception of accents has been done within the general area where the accent is spoken (cf. Alford and Strother, 1990; Sumner and Samuel, 2009). These two suggestions could not only explain the unexpected lack of a linear effect but also the negative linear effect found for the middle-high job. Here, participants with the least amount of exposure performed the most native-like and participants with the most exposure performed the least native-like. The participants in this study might not have been proficient or confident enough in the English language to reliably evaluate the speakers. It could also be the case that the exposure needs to be more specific to the targeted accent in order for the evaluations to be more reliable.

Lastly, the present study has one undeniable limitation, namely the very low number of participants in comparison to other research on this general topic. Most of the studies mentioned here had access to data collected from hundreds of respondents and the hypotheses made in this study are based on their documentation. One other study with a smaller participant group was conducted by Clark and Schleef (2010). They tested whether Polish adolescents in England are able to identify different regional accents and evaluate social characteristics of the speakers in the same manner as native English adolescents do. They found that the non-native listeners are not yet able to correctly identify the regional accents although they start to show tendencies to evaluate the most marginal varieties of English (RP and Birmingham accents) in a native like manner. Clark and Schleef state in their conclusion
that, due to the small number of participants, their empirical analyses cannot be seen as facts but rather as possible suggestions for further research. Taking into consideration that Clark and Schleef (2010) used data from double the number of participants as was used in the present study, similar caution has to be taken when considering the results here. Furthermore, the participant group used in the present study portrays a high degree of variability in age, sex, level of education, profession and place of residence (cf. Giles, 1970, Giles, Wilson & Conway, 1981; Coupland & Bishop, 2007). This made it difficult to analyse the data on a deeper level because parallels between subjects did not go beyond time of exposure. All analyses and conclusions can thus not be taken as fact or truth without extensive further research. It could also be argued that the length of the recordings was not sufficient enough. However, no literature could be found that indicates how long sound samples need to be for second language learners to distinguish accent markers or how many of these markers need to be present in the recording as is also stated by Foulkes and Docherty (2006).

**Conclusion**

This paper set out to investigate the effect of exposure on native-like status evaluation of regional British accents by Dutch L2 speakers of English. The following two hypotheses were made based on existing literature. Firstly, Native speakers of Dutch will evaluate speakers of British accents with different perceived statuses similarly to their native English peers. Secondly, exposure to the English language and culture will have a linear effect where more exposure equals a more pronounced and more native-like judgement.

The results from this experiment showed that Dutch natives do not evaluate British accents like Native speakers of English do. A significant difference was found between the accuracy scores from the Dutch participants and the targeted native speaker score used for comparison. The results from a one-way between-groups ANOVA also nullified the second hypothesis as no significant linear effect of exposure was found. This indicating that the participant group with more exposure did not evaluate the accents more native-like than the participants with less exposure. However, a small, non-significant linear effect of exposure was found for the low-status job which could indicate that the participants were starting to evaluate the low perceived status accents more native-like. The high exposure group also
judged the suitability of the different speakers more accurately for the high-status job which would be expected although this effect was not linear nor was it significant.

The results in this study were subject to a few limitations and when these limitations are avoided in future research the results could be significantly different. To start with, the accent markings in the recordings were limited to mostly pronunciation markings due to the use of controlled scripts that were read aloud. Furthermore, the participants could have been influenced by more individual markings of speech due to the modifications made to the matched-guise technique. Future research into cross-cultural accent prejudice using more naturally obtained accent recordings could shed more light on the ability of Dutch L2 speakers of English to evaluate British accents like native speakers would.

A third limitation pertains to the job categories used in the present study which have been suggested to be outdated and no longer carry the perceived statuses they were first selected for. Any future research of the kind documented here should aim to use more up to date job categories that carry the higher and lower statuses more overtly. Another explanation for the unanticipated results could be that the participants used in this study did not have enough proficiency or confidence in the English language. Also, the exposure to the English language they had could not have been accent specific enough. Future studies that control for either proficiency or accent specific exposure could change the results more favourably to the hypotheses. Lastly, the small participant group as well as the high variability within the groups meant that any conclusions made here cannot be taken as fact without extensive further research. It also made it next to impossible to analyse the data on a deeper level beyond exposure effects. This could have given a more informed picture of the judgements made by the participants so larger, more controlled participant groups are suggested for future research.
References


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Appendix

Appendix 1: pre-test and results

Wie zou jij aannemen?

Instructies:

Stel je voor, je werkt bij personeelszaken bij een internationaal bedrijf. Jullie zijn op zoek naar een aantal nieuwe werknemers. Onder jouw persoonlijke informatie vind je 4 beschrijvingen van de banen die beschikbaar zijn A t/m D, lees ze goed door. Op de volgende pagina staan 8 korte tekstjes gesproken door de sollicitanten, allemaal mannen rond de 30-35 jaar oud. Het is jouw taak om voor elk van deze sollicitanten te beslissen hoe geschikt ze zijn voor de beschikbare banen. Ik wil je vragen dit aan te geven door de cijfers 1-4 te schrijven naast de letter van de betreffende baan, 1=meest geschikte baan voor deze persoon 4=minst geschikte baan voor deze persoon.

(voorbeeld)

Participant X:
Ik wil graag werken voor een leuk bedrijf dat... Enz.

A = 4
B = 3
C = 1
D = 2

Persoonlijke informatie

Leeftijd:____

Geslacht: M/V/Anders

Studierichting: ____

Banen

A. Industrial plant cleaner:
An industrial cleaner cleans large facilities, such as a factory, plant, warehouse or other industrial setting. This job requires on-the-job training and safety knowledge. Industrial cleaners may be required to use special equipment or chemicals to complete their cleaning duties. An industrial cleaner performs both light and heavy janitorial duties in industrial settings, such as manufacturing facilities, warehouses and processing plants. Although basic cleaning tasks are included, the work differs from janitorial responsibilities in office buildings, retail outlets, residential buildings and schools in that it is often performed under uncomfortable or hazardous conditions, sometimes requiring the use of specialized machinery and safety equipment.

B. Foreman
Foremen take the lead on construction projects, holding daily meetings with employees, reminding them of safety protocols and resolving problems and conflicts that may arise. They coordinate with other crew supervisors to ensure progress is happening on schedule. A foreman needs organizational, communication and interpersonal skills and oversees staff,
finance and equipment administration. A foreman reads and interprets plans, regulatory frameworks and the latest OSHA, building and environmental codes.

C. Industrial mechanic
Industrial mechanics troubleshoot, repair and move heavy pieces of machinery. Typical tasks include disassembling equipment to locate the issue and then reassembling. These mechanics also need to know how to test and calibrate machinery to ensure it is operating at maximum efficiency. Industrial mechanics need training in the field. This can be acquired through postsecondary training in electronics, computer programming and mechanical drawing. These professionals need to have great manual dexterity to work with small parts. Mechanical skills are also necessary to effectively troubleshoot to determine the root cause of a machine’s problem.

D. Production assembler
Assembly technicians, also called team assemblers or fabricators, are manufacturing workers who use tools, machines and their hands to put together components on products like cars, aircraft and computers. They often work in teams, rotating through different smaller tasks, and when demand is down and some are laid off, the remaining assembly technicians take over a larger variety of tasks. Assembly technicians may also spot defective parts, advise engineers and designers about the length of time needed to perform a certain assembly and decide how tasks should be distributed. Working conditions vary by industry; some workers deal with high levels of grease, harmful chemicals and noise, but some electro-mechanical assemblers work in factories that must be kept exceptionally clean and dust free.

Sollicitanten:

1. I am looking for a secure job with a lot of potential. I believe this job fits my interests and will provide me with a little bit of a challenge. I also like to work with a team of likeminded people where we will work on a task together.
   A=
   B=
   C=
   D=

2. I found the job in an online database and I believe the description suits me well. I love working with a group of colleagues to accomplish something together. I also liked that this job offers a lot of possibilities for the future.
   A=
   B=
   C=
   D=

3. A friend of mine alerted me to the vacancy in this company and thought the job would be something I could be interested in and she turned out to be right. I like working on a challenging task with my co-workers and be a part of that process. I can see myself working here today and in the future.
   A=
   B=
   C=
   D=
4. I am looking for a job where I will be a part of and working with a team of people aiming to achieve something. I believe the job description fits me and works well with my interests. I think it’s important that a job offers opportunities for the future and I think I will find them here.

5. My brother has worked for your firm in the past and told me I would like working here. The work is often done in groups or with partners which I find very enjoyable, to work in a team. He also told me about the possibilities for growth within the company which is something I am looking for in a job.

6. I read about your company in the newspaper a few weeks ago and it immediately got my attention. I like that the work involves a lot of teamwork and that there are so many options to grow within the company. I looked closely at the job description and I believe it suits me well.

7. I had heard about your company before so when I saw the add I decided to apply. The job description really appeals to me and the way most of the work is team based suits my interests well. I also heard a lot of things about the potential internal job opportunities your firm offers.

8. I am looking for a job that can offer me good opportunities for the future. I like working in teams or with partners on a project in order to achieve the best outcome. The characteristic described in the add apply to me pretty well.
Einde test. Heel erg bedankt voor je hulp!

Results:

aantal stemmen per baan en rating (dus 0 personen kozen cleaner als beste baan voor kandidaat 1)

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Appendix 2: Transcripts

**RP:** I read about your company in the newspaper a few weeks ago and it immediately got my attention. I like that the work involves a lot of teamwork and that there are so many options to grow within the company. I looked closely at the job description and I believe it suits me well.

**Edinburgh:** I am looking for a job that can offer me good opportunities for the future. I like working in teams or with partners on a project in order to achieve the best outcome. The characteristics described in the add apply to me pretty well.

**Northern Irish:** I had heard about your company before so when I saw the add I decided to apply. The job description really appeals to me and the way most of the work is team based suits my interests well. I also heard a lot of things about the potential internal job opportunities your firm offers.

**Manchester:** A friend of mine alerted me to the vacancy in this company and thought the job would be something I could be interested in and she turned out to be right. I like working on a challenging task with my co-workers and be a part of that process. I can see myself working here today and in the future.

**Birmingham:** I am looking for a job where I will be a part of and working with a team of people aiming to achieve something. I believe the job description fits me and works well with my interests. I think it’s important that a job offers opportunities for the future and I think I will find them here.
Appendix 3: Job descriptions

Industrial plant cleaner

An industrial cleaner cleans large facilities, such as a factory, plant, warehouse or other industrial setting. This job requires on-the-job training and safety knowledge. Industrial cleaners may be required to use special equipment or chemicals to complete their cleaning duties. An industrial cleaner performs both light and heavy janitorial duties in industrial settings, such as manufacturing facilities, warehouses and processing plants. Although basic cleaning tasks are included, the work differs from janitorial responsibilities in office buildings, retail outlets, residential buildings and schools in that it is often performed under uncomfortable or hazardous conditions, sometimes requiring the use of specialized machinery and safety equipment.

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Assembly technicians, also called team assemblers or fabricators, are manufacturing workers who use tools, machines and their hands to put together components on products like cars, aircraft and computers. They often work in teams, rotating through different smaller tasks, and when demand is down and some are laid off, the remaining assembly technicians take over a larger variety of tasks. Assembly technicians may also spot defective parts, advise engineers and designers about the length of time needed to perform a certain assembly and decide how tasks should be distributed. Working conditions vary by industry; some workers deal with high levels of grease, harmful chemicals and noise, but some electro-mechanical assemblers work in factories that must be kept exceptionally clean and dust free.

Industrial mechanic

Industrial mechanics troubleshoot, repair and move heavy pieces of machinery. Typical tasks include disassembling equipment to locate the issue and then reassembling. These mechanics also need to know how to test and calibrate machinery to ensure it is operating at maximum efficiency. Industrial mechanics need training in the field. This can be acquired through postsecondary training in electronics, computer programming and mechanical drawing. These professionals need to have great manual dexterity to work with small parts. Mechanical skills are also necessary to effectively troubleshoot to determine the root cause of a machine’s problem.

Foreman

Foremen take the lead on construction projects, holding daily meetings with employees, reminding them of safety protocols and resolving problems and conflicts that may arise. They coordinate with other crew supervisors to ensure progress is happening on schedule. A foreman needs organizational, communication and interpersonal skills and oversees staff, finance and equipment administration. A foreman reads and interprets plans, regulatory frameworks and the latest OSHA, building and environmental codes.
Appendix 4: Instruction experiment

Slide 1:

First of all, thank you so much for participating in my BA thesis experiment. Following this introduction will be a detailed instruction and the experiment itself. Please read the instructions carefully and fill in all the necessary information.

Make sure that you do this experiment in a quiet place where you feel comfortable and without too many distractions. You will need headphones or sufficient volume and/or sound quality from your laptop/PC/tablet.

The experimental data from this experiment will be anonymous so I will not be able to give you details on your own performance. I can, however, inform you on the overall results of my experiment. If you want me to send them to you after the experimental stage is finished, please fill in your email address at the end of this letter. The experiment itself will take about 10 minutes to finish.

Good luck!

Slide 2:

I would like you to imagine yourself in the shoes of an employment manager at an international firm. The firm has 4 job openings and you are looking for the suitable persons to hire.

Included you will find audio files with a short recording of a small part of the job interviews with the applicants. On the next page you will find 4 job descriptions.

Open the audio files with the applicants' recordings one by one and listen to them carefully. If you want/need you can listen to them multiple times or listen to them again later on in the experiment. Decide for each of the jobs available which participant you would hire. You can only fill each opening once and each applicant can only be hired once.

Appendix 5: Data-set