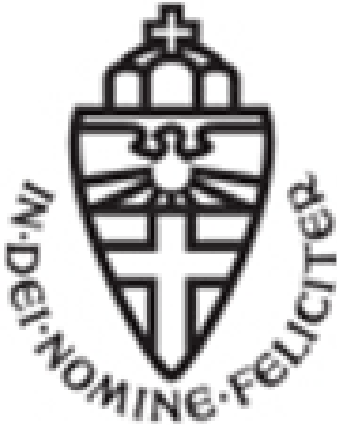


Bachelor's Thesis



Radboud University Nijmegen

The effect of French-English non-native accent and British-English native accent on the job hiring process evaluated by Dutch native listeners in relation to prejudice control

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Abstract

As the workplace becomes more global, multinational organizations are hiring more people from all over the world. This level of intercultural communication has led to accents being spoken in the workplace that are different from those of the local workforce. The aim of this study is to assess how native Dutch-speaking listeners evaluate a non-native and native accent in English in terms of hiring recommendation and what effect prejudice control has. A prejudice control intervention was used to make participants aware of the prejudices that are activated when hearing a non-native English speaker. The participants evaluated the speakers in terms of hiring recommendation, similarity, perceived accent strength, comprehensibility, status, solidarity and dynamism. The main conclusion of the research was that the prejudice control text did not have any effect on the hiring recommendation. Understanding the effect an accent has is relevant because it can be as important as gender, skin color and ethnicity and can lead to employment discrimination.

Keywords: prejudice control, non-native accent, evaluations, hiring recommendation

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Introduction

The United Nations published an article in which they stated that more than 244 million people do not live in their birth country due to migration (United Nations, 2018). As a result, many individuals live in countries in which the official language differs from their native language, thus, they communicate using a non-native language daily. Furthermore, because of globalization, contacts between people from different linguistic backgrounds are more frequent and they communicate often in a language that is a non-native for one person, or even for both of them. This is especially frequent in case of multinational companies in which employees communicate regularly with people from other countries (Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 2014). The fact that there are different linguistic backgrounds can negatively affect the dynamics in the workplace according to various research from organizational psychology, marketing, and management (Gluzek & Dovidio, 2010; Wang, Arndt, Singh, Biernat & Liu, 2013; Huang, Fridegro & Pearce, 2013). As a result, companies often introduce English as the lingua franca so that everyone can communicate with each other (Piekkari, Welch & Welch, 2014). This lingua franca can be a second language for many employees resulting in accentedness (Russo, Islam & Koyuncu, 2017). It has been argued that accentedness can lead to negative evaluations and prejudices which is why it is of great relevance that one has knowledge about the impact that accents can have in the business environment. The impact an accent has can be as important as gender, skin color and ethnicity and can lead to employment discrimination (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010).

The manner an accent is perceived depends on the perspective a listener takes when evaluating an accent since every listener has their own cultural and linguistic background. A key aspect of accents is that they are specific for one group of people and are linked to intonation, phonology, and pronunciation (Lippi-Green, 1997). For instance, residents of a particular region who were born and raised there will claim that their accent is 'local' and that residents of another region have a 'foreign' accent. In addition, it has been researched how non-native versus native accents in English are perceived in terms of how strong an accent is. In the study by Hendriks, van Meurs and Usmany (2021), English, international, and Dutch listeners evaluated lectures in which male speakers spoke with one of the three degrees of accentedness (moderate accent/ slight-Dutch accent/ Native British-English). It was discovered that speakers with a strong non-native accent were evaluated more negatively than native speakers. This can be explained because differences in the cultural and linguistic background of listeners and speakers can result in stereotyping. The concept stereotyping was explained by Florez, Schulenberg and Stewart (2016). They claimed that stereotyping is "the spontaneous activation of often-negative beliefs about a particular group of people".

Since speaking immediately tells something about someone's economic and social background (Campbell-Kibler, 2007), whether the listeners have those prejudices unconsciously or consciously, these linguistic patterns can lead to distinctions between groups (Campbell-Kibler, 2007). The study by Kraus, Park and Tan (2017) clearly demonstrated how fast people tend to categorize individuals into a group. Their results demonstrated that people can determine, when one is speaking in their

mother tongue, what the social background is of the speaker by only hearing seven words from a participant. This shows that speech is an adequate indicator of our socioeconomic backgrounds. As a result, social categorization can take place. Social categorization refers to the concept in which individuals are categorized into a specific group based on characteristics presumed meaningful by humankind (Campbell-Kibler, 2007; Barth, Mattan & Cloutier, 2017). Considering people associate characteristics to a specific group based on accents, prejudices and stereotypes can be formed which can result in accent discrimination.

Evidence of biased attitudes from native speakers towards speakers with a non-native accent has been reported in a wide range of studies. It has been argued that speakers with an accent are often discriminated. For instance, in the study by Kang and Rubin (2009), 730 university students evaluated an unseen speaker with a non-native English accent as less convincing, less interesting, and even less attractive regarding his physique than the unseen native English speaker. In the study by Brennan and Brennan (1981), it was examined that, in the context of the Mexican American English accent, the strength of the accent and the perceived status was inversely connected as evaluated by 80 English American speaking high school students. Furthermore, another study examined that Mexican American employees who speak English with an accent earn significantly less than their colleagues who speak with an English accent (Dávila, Bohara and Saenz, 1991). In the study by General Accounting Office (1990) it was discovered that Anglo-accented job applicants were preferred over Hispanic-accented job applicants even though the content of the interview was always the same. In addition, the study by Kalin and Rayko (1978) showed that 203 English Canadian speaking students evaluated speakers with a Canadian accent as more suitable for a high-status job than non-native English speakers.

One of the reasons that non-native accented speakers are evaluated more negatively than native speakers is due to social categorization. Social categorization can occur when listeners make personal evaluations about the speaker which can result in stereotyping and prejudices based on accents. These personal evaluations not only cover the accent itself but are also connected to the characteristics of the social group that the accent variety is linked to. When evaluating a speaker on their accent, it is possible that vocal cues such as pitch and speech rate will influence the assessment (Deprez-Sims and Morris, 2010). It is important to keep this in mind because these cues can bias the evaluation of the speaker (Giles, 1970). For instance, in the study by Deprez-Sims and Morris (2010), native English college students were asked to evaluate personal characteristics of a job applicant and to form a hiring recommendation. In the experiment, the speaker with a French accent had a slower pace and lower pitch than the two other job applicants with the Midwestern US and Colombian accent. This could have led to the fact that the French-accented job applicant was perceived differently by the participants, and these differences may have had an effect on the negative evaluation. Therefore, it could be concluded that when one hears an accent, one associates it with a group and activates the social categorization which can lead to all sorts of stereotyping (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990)

To examine how social categorization is put into practice and how it can cause accent stereotyping, Fiske and Neuberg (1990) created a model of impression formation that starts with categorizing the person that someone is speaking to. This implies that someone is presented with a lot of information about the individual characteristics of this person. As a result, people tend to categorize individuals to a group with corresponding stereotypes and prejudices. In a social conversation or interaction, accents are salient early in the conversation (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). Due to this, biases and stereotypes that are associated with the country or ethnic group are easily formed. As a result, employees speaking in their second language can be discriminated based on their accent since negative attitudes can be created towards a particular accent (Munro, 2003). One reason why negative attitudes are created is that prejudices are formed and activated when a person hears a linguistic pattern that is associated with a particular group. This concept is referred to as accent stereotyping (Brennan & Brennan, 1981).

The concept of in-group favoritism and the similarity-attraction theory are known to play a role in determining the reason why speaking with a non-native accent can cause negative evaluations in contrast to speaking with a native accent. Tajfel, Billig and Bundy (1971, p.151) discussed that: “there can be no intergroup behaviour without [...] categorizing [...] people into “us” and “them”, that is, into ingroups and outgroups”. In other words, individuals tend to associate themselves with a group that is viewed positively to maintain a positive self-image. The study by Brewer (1979) has established that people tend to evaluate the outgroups more negatively than the ingroups and attach greater rewards to an ingroup member than to an outgroup member. Thus, one might argue that a native speaker evaluates another native speaker more positively than a non-native speaker. A reason for this is that the non-native speaker is a member of the outgroup and the native speaker belongs to the ingroup. This effect is closely related to the similarity-attraction theory of Bryne (1971). This theory concludes that people tend to evaluate people with a similar attitude and background more favorable than people who are dissimilar to them.

Nevertheless, the effect of in-group favoritism and the formation of negative evaluations could be reduced by making the listeners aware of the prejudices that are formed when listening to non-native accents. In the study by Roessel, Schoel, Zimmermann and Stahlberg (2019), the researchers gave one group of the German students a prejudice control text in which it was made clear that research showed that accented speech can bias person perception. Furthermore, they were asked to not base the evaluations of the speaker on stereotypes that may be evoked when listening to the recording. The outcomes showed that the group of German students with the prejudice control text were able to overcome their prejudices and evaluate the non-native English speaker more positively than the group of German students without prejudice control. The study by Roessel, Schoel and Stahlberg (2020) elaborated on the study by Roessel et al. (2019) and discussed that, nowadays, being unbiased toward speakers with a non-native accent may be the social norm. This does not mean that discrimination does not take place in the workplace, but does show that, when people know there are prejudices

connected to non-native accents, they can reduce their initial prejudices and biases to non-native accented speakers.

An important factor to mention is that not only the formation of prejudices, but also the level of comprehensibility can cause negative evaluations of the speaker. Munro and Derwing (1999) suggested that since foreign accents have different speech patterns than local accents, it is probable that someone speaking with a foreign accent is more difficult to understand than someone with a local accent. Due to the fact that communication is an interactive and dynamic process, miscommunications cannot be blamed entirely to the one who is listening (Lippi-Green, 1997). To continue, Hendriks, van Meurs and Reimer (2018) examined how German and Dutch students evaluated lecturers' non-native accented English. They reported that non-native students address comprehensibility problems when attending a class with a non-native accented English lecturer. As the study was conducted in classroom settings, the generalizability of the findings to the hiring recommendation context and workplace may be limited.

Another factor that could cause negative evaluations is that non-native speakers are evaluated by listeners on status, solidarity, and dynamism when they are speaking English. To explain further, status is connected to education, intelligence and confidence. Solidarity is divided in attractiveness, trustworthiness, and reliability and lastly, dynamism is based on friendliness, talkativeness, and enthusiasm (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014). The meta-analysis of Fuertes, Gottdiener, Martin, Gilbert and Giles (2012) showed that non-native speakers were evaluated more negatively than native speakers across all of the dimensions. For instance, a non-native speaker tends to have a lower status position in a company than a native speaker, which draws to lower earnings for the non-native speaker (Bradac & Wisegarver, 1984). In addition, the study by Derwing (2003) discovered that non-native speakers believed that, if their speech did not have a non-native accent, they would be treated with more respect. Thus, when the accent of a non-native speaker is perceived, there is a bigger chance that negative evaluations are formed.

It has been argued that little attention has been paid to non-native English speakers evaluating non-native speakers in a business context (Roessel et al., 2019). In addition, prejudice control is an interesting factor to research since it can be used to reduce potential biases which are formed when evaluating a speaker and which can result in accent discrimination. Thus, the aim of this study is to test how prejudice control can influence an evaluation and how native Dutch listeners evaluate French-accented English and British-accented English speakers. In this study, two research questions will be answered. The first research question of this study is: *“What are the effects of prejudice control on the evaluation of non-native accented job applicants?”*. The second research question of this article is: *“What are the effects of accents (native versus non-native) on hireability?”*

The focus of the non-native accent will be on the French-accented English speaker and the focus of the native accent will be on the British-English speaker. The French accent is relevant since research shows that even though a French accent is seen as an attractive non-native English accent

(Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010), French-accented speakers also face discrimination and downgrading (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010; Mai & Hoffmann, 2014). In addition, the French language has a different sound system since it is a Romance language while Dutch and English are both a Germanic language. This could have a negative effect on the evaluation of the speaker with the French accent (Reiterer, Kogan, Seither-Preisler & Pesek, 2020). This can be explained by mentioning that Dutch and English speakers can be perceived as more similar to each other which makes them both in-group members. The French-accented speakers are then perceived as out-group members (Brewer, 1979). Also, in the study by Deprez-Sims and Morris (2010), the French-accented speaker was evaluated more negative on hireability than the Colombian-accented speaker by participants who had hiring experience. This leads to the question of if Dutch listeners will also evaluate the French accent more negatively than the British-English accent. Furthermore, the British-English accent is used as the native accent because British-English is the most dominant second language in Dutch education and British-English is integrated into Dutch society as in that it has a certain status connected to it (Nejjari, Gerritsen, van Hout & Planken, 2020). While British-English is a dominant second language in Dutch education, not many studies have examined what happens in a job hiring context. In addition, the job hiring process is interesting to research since positive and negative discrimination should not take place in the workplace.

As previously discussed, there are a lot of stereotypes and prejudices connected to accents. Based on the research by Roessel et al. (2019), it can be expected that non-native speakers should not be evaluated differently when prejudices are pointed out. Based on this conclusion, the following hypothesis is formed:

H1: The French-English accented speaker will be evaluated the same as the British-English accented speaker when prejudice control is used.

Based on the results of the study by Deprez-Sims and Morris (2010), the following hypotheses are formed. It can be predicted that the native speaker will be perceived as more similar to the participant because the English and Dutch language are both Germanic languages. In addition, it is expected that the British-English accent will be evaluated as more understandable because a non-native accent can fall victim to accent discrimination, and this can lead to a more negative evaluation.

H2: The British-English accented speaker will be more evaluated more similar to the participant than the French-English accented speaker.

H3: The British-English accented speaker will be more understandable than the French-English accented speaker.

Method

Materials

The independent variable in this study was prejudice control which has two levels, namely French-accented English without prejudice control and French-accented English with prejudice control. The group with the British-English accent was the control group in this experiment.

In this research, the native accent is British-English, and the non-native accent is French-English to determine if there is a difference between the evaluation of an interviewee in the job hiring process based on their accent (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010). To see if there is a difference between evaluations, participants have listened to voice-recordings of a job interview. Participants have either heard the non-native speaker with French-accented English or the native speaker with British-English. In the voice-recording, the interviewer does not have to be a native speaker of the English language but does need to be fluent in English since the listener does need to be able to understand the interviewer.

The recorded fragments were based on a job interview from the English learning resource British Council (2020) and this transcript was about a Human Resources position in a company. Half of the transcript was used since the recording should not be too long. This was done since one could lose concentration and may not finish the survey. The recordings were around two and a half minutes in total. In version one of the audio recordings, the interviewee was a female who is a native speaker of the English language. In version two, the interviewee had a French accent in English and was also female. The job applicant was speaking the most since the participant of the experiment evaluated the job applicant. This choice was made since the listeners of the interview were able to make a clear distinction between the interviewee and the interviewer. This is of relevance, because the experiment is about the evaluation of the interviewee and not the interviewer. The transcript can be found in appendix A.

As mentioned before, when talking with a ‘foreign’ accent, individuals can be evaluated differently. In this article, a prejudice control intervention was used to investigate whether the potential negative impact of non-native accent on speakers’ evaluations can be reduced by making listeners aware of the potential bias that accents can cause. Half of the group that listened to the non-native speaker recording were presented with the prejudice control text before the recording. The other half were not presented with the text. This text was based on the study by Roessel et al. (2019) and can be found in appendix B.

To verify that the two accents are distinctly evaluated as native and non-native, a pre-test was conducted. In this pre-test, participants were asked to guess the native language and the mother tongue of the interviewee. These questions were both open questions. The participants of this pre-test were Dutch students who study at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. In total, 32 students participated. In this pre-test, the participants needed to answer a question about the origin of the participant to ensure

that the students were only native Dutch speakers from the Netherlands. All the 32 students listened to the British-English and French speaker. To ensure that the pre-test was successful, two British-English native speakers and two French-accented speakers were recorded. The researchers and two external researchers examined which English native speaker and French-accented speaker sounded similar on the dimensions like pitch, tone, and rhythm. The pre-test can be found in appendix C.

The pre-test was partially successful. 15 out of 32 times (46.9%) was the non-native accent recognized as a French accent. The other 17 times (53.1%) the non-native accent was recognized as, for example, an Eastern European, Indian or Spanish accent. One participant did recognize that it was a non-native speaker but did not know which language it was. The native British-English speaker was recognized as native for 23 times (71.9%). In addition, 3 times (9.4%) the participant did not know which language it was.

Subjects

In this study, a total of 122 participants took part. The participants had to be native Dutch speakers and had to make a hiring recommendation. In addition, it was necessary that the participants had experience with the job hiring process in a business setting. To confirm that the participants had hiring experience, a question was asked at the beginning of the survey. If they did not have any hiring experience, they were excluded from the experiment. It is important that the participant has experience with hiring someone since they know what qualifications a good applicant needs to have, and they can give a correct recommendation. In addition, it was necessary that the participant had a sufficient level of English since the participant needed to be able to understand what the content of the recording was about.

Gender

Of the 122 participants, 66 participants were males (54.1%), and 56 participants were females (45.9%). See table 1 for the percentages.

A chi-square test did not show a significant relation between Condition and Gender ($\chi^2(2) = .38, p = .826$). Thus, the distribution of the males and females between the three conditions was similar.

Table 1. The distribution of the males and females between the three conditions (British-English, French with prejudice control and French without prejudice control).

	Females n = 56	Males n = 66
British-English	32.1%	27.3%
French with prejudice Control	33.9%	37.9%
French without Prejudice control	33.9%	34.8%

Age

Most of the participants were around the age of 40 ($M= 41.76$, $SD= 14.42$). The minimum age was 19 and the maximum age was 68. Thus, this makes the age range 49. A one-way analysis of variance did not show a significant effect of Condition on Age ($F(2, 119) = 1.41$, $p= .248$). Thus, this means that there was no significant difference between the age of the participants and the three conditions.

Educational level

A chi-square test did not show a significant relation between Condition and Education Level ($\chi^2(10) = 10.72$, $p= .380$). This means that there was no significant difference between the level of education of the participants and the three conditions.

Design

In this study, a 3x1 between-subjects design was used. It was a between-subjects design because each participant was only exposed to one condition. A between-subjects design was chosen to ensure that the main goal of the experiment remained unknown by the participants. In this manner, the experiment remained valid. The 3x1 design explained that there was a group with no prejudice control who evaluate the French-accented speaker, a group with prejudice control who evaluated the French-accented speaker and a group who evaluated the British-accented speaker. The 122 participants were divided in 3 groups. Therefore, the first group of participants only listened to the French-English accented recording and have no prejudice control. The second group only listened to the French-English accented recording and had prejudice control. The last group only listened to the British-English accented recording. With the British-English accented recording, prejudice control is not

needed since the French accent has stereotypes related to it. Regarding the English accent, there are no stereotypes related to it, because it is the same language.

Instruments

The dependent variable in this study was the hiring recommendations which has evaluations of the speaker based on understandability and comprehensibility. This dependent variable was examined by conducting a questionnaire (see appendix D). The questionnaire was based on the questionnaire of Deprez-Sims and Morris (2015). The survey started with an explanation who the researchers are and the reason why the researchers are performing this experiment. Among others, the participant needed to be of Dutch nationality and needed to have the Dutch language as their native language. Furthermore, it was described that the answers of the survey were anonymous and that the outcomes of this research are only used for this study. After this introduction, the participant began to answer the questionnaire if the participant gives consent to these conditions.

Following the introduction, the recording was played, and the questions were asked. The subject could listen to the recording one time before continuing to the next page so that the ecological validity was correct. In other words, once the subject left the page with the recording, one cannot return to this page. This was to ensure that the participant cannot go back and change their answers if they figure out what the main aim of the experiment is. To continue, after the audiotape, the participant was asked to answer 18 questions. 10 of these questions covered the topic of hiring recommendation of the applicant and similarity, understandability and accentedness, and the other 8 question were about the subjects him/herself.

The survey started with the question about the hiring recommendation and continued with asking the participant to evaluate the applicant on different scales. In the first section of the questionnaire, the participant was asked to evaluate the job applicant on different scales. The scales were about (1) *The satisfaction level if the applicant is hired*, (2) *The favorability towards the applicant*, (3) *The desire to work with the applicant*, (4) *The thought if the applicant would be an asset to the company*, (5) *The likelihood that the subject would hire the applicant* and (6) *The relationship with other colleagues*. The scales were all answered with a 7-point Likert Scale (1= Strongly disagree-7= strongly agree). The reliability of the scale to examine hiring recommendation was good: $\alpha = .93$.

In addition, the questions: “How similar is this person to you?”, “How understandable is the job applicant’s accent?” and “To what extent is the applicant’s speech non-natively accented?” were asked and answered with a 7-point Likert scale but all with different labels. Respectively, not similar at all (1)-very similar (7), very understandable (1)-not understandable (7) and native (1)-strongly accented (7).

In the following section, questions were asked about speaker evaluations and were divided into three different dimensions: status, solidarity, and dynamism. This was measured with a 7-point Likert scale. The questions about status involved education, intelligence, and confidence.

Respectively, Educated (1)- Uneducated (7), Intelligent (1)- Dull (7) and Confident (1)- Insecure (7). The reliability of the scale to measure status was good: $\alpha = .90$. The questions about solidarity involved honesty, and reliability. Respectively, Dishonest (1)- Honest (7), Boring (1)- Interesting (7) and Unreliable (1)- Reliable (7). The reliability of the scale to measure solidarity was acceptable: $\alpha = .75$. The questions about dynamism had the scales Friendly (1)- Unfriendly (7), Strong (1)- Gentle (7) and Talkative (1)- Restraint (7). The reliability of the scale to measure dynamism was unacceptable: $\alpha = .41$. After removing Strong (1)- Gentle (7), the reliability of the scale was still poor: $\alpha = .49$, but better so the researchers could still measure the solidarity dimension. It is interesting to research dynamism because this dimension has been neglected in research (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014).

After this part, the demographic questions were presented. For instance, “What is your age?”, “What is your gender?” and “What is your nationality?”. To read them all, see appendix D. The closing questions were about the experience the participant has with the hiring process. At the end of the questionnaire, the participant was thanked for their participation. By asking these questions, similarity, perceived accent strength and speaker evaluations were measured.

Procedure

The questionnaire was shared via WhatsApp, Facebook and LinkedIn and was conducted through the Qualtrics program. The survey took approximately 7 minutes to complete. In this study, one participant was excluded from the data since it did not meet the conditions for the analysis. There was no reward or other incentive since the researchers hoped that people want to participate on their own. In addition, the questionnaire was filled in individually. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions. The aim of the research was not revealed since the participant was only told that the study focuses on job applicants' evaluations. In addition, the results of the questionnaire were not shared with the participants and the procedure was the exact same for all the respondents.

Statistical treatment

Statistical treatment was applied for this research. Descriptive statistics were performed to measure the means and standard deviations. To answer the research questions, several one-way ANOVA were performed. In addition, several chi-squares were performed to measure the relation between the conditions and gender, age, and educational level. Also, several correlations were performed to measure if there is a correlation between hiring recommendations and comprehensibility, similarity, and perceived accent strength. The Spearman's Rho correlation was used because there was an ordinal variable.

Results

Hiring Recommendation

A one-way analysis of variance did not show a significant effect of Condition on Hiring Recommendation ($F(2, 119) = 2.82, p = .063$).

Perceived Accent Strength

A one-way analysis of variance showed a significant effect of Condition on Perceived Accent Strength ($F(2, 119) = 15.68, p < .001$). The Perceived Accent strength of British-English ($M = 3.92, SD = 1.44$) was lower than for French with prejudice control ($p = .001$, Bonferroni-correction; $M = 4.95, SD = 1.26$) and French without prejudice control ($p < .001$, Bonferroni-correction; $M = 5.48, SD = 1.02$). There was no difference between French with prejudice control and French without prejudice control on Perceived Accent Strength ($p = .161$, Bonferroni-correction). See table 2 for the means and standard deviations.

There was no significant negative correlation found between perceived accent strength and hiring recommendations ($\rho(122) = -.10, p = .294$). Thus, perceived accent strength did not have an influence on the hiring recommendation evaluations. See table 3 for the correlations.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations (between brackets) for the effect of Condition on Perceived Accent Strength (1= Native, 7= Strongly accented)

	French with Prejudice Control n = 44 M (SD)	French without Prejudice Control n = 42 M (SD)	British English n = 36 M (SD)
Perceived Accent Strength	4.95 (1.26)	5.48 (1.02)	3.92 (1.44)

Similarity

A one-way analysis of variance did show a significant effect of Condition on Similarity ($F(2, 119) = 3.37, p = .038$). A significant positive correlation was found between similarity and hiring recommendation ($\rho(122) = .45, p < .001$). However, the positive correlation was weak which means the level of similarity had only a slight influence on the hiring recommendation evaluations. See table 3 for the correlations.

Comprehensibility

A one-way analysis of variance did not show a significant effect of Condition on Comprehensibility ($F(2, 119) = 1.65, p = .196$).

There was no significant positive correlation found between comprehensibility and hiring recommendation ($\rho(122) = .09, p = .320$). Thus, comprehensibility did not influence the hiring recommendation evaluations. See table 3 for the correlations.

Table 3. Correlations (ρ) between hiring recommendation and perceived accent strength, similarity and comprehensibility ($N = 122$)

	hiring recommendation
Perceived accent strength	-.10
Similarity	.45
Comprehensibility	.09

Speaker Evaluations

A one-way analysis of variance did not show a significant effect of Condition on Status ($F(2, 119) = 2.72, p = .070$).

A one-way analysis of variance showed a significant effect of Condition on the dimension Solidarity ($F(2, 119) = 3.79, p = .025$). The Solidarity dimension of French with prejudice control ($M = 3.08, SD = .99$) was lower than French without prejudice control ($p = .021$, Bonferroni-correction, $M = 3.75, SD = 1.23$). There was no difference between the Solidarity of British-English and French with prejudice control ($p = .491$, Bonferroni-correction). In addition, there was no difference between the Solidarity of British-English and French without prejudice control ($p = .669$, Bonferroni-correction).

A one-way analysis of variance showed a significant effect of Condition on the Dynamism dimension ($F(2, 119) = 4.71, p = .011$). The Dynamism dimension of French with prejudice control ($M = 3.09, SD = 1.12$) was lower than French without prejudice control ($p = .022$, Bonferroni-correction; $M = 3.73, SD = 1.11$) and British-English ($p = 1.000$, Bonferroni-correction; $M = 3.10, SD = 1.00$). There was no difference between the dynamism dimension of British-English and French with prejudice control ($p = 1.000$, Bonferroni-correction). This suggests that the British-English and French with prejudice groups were identical. See table 4 for the means and standard deviations for the effect of Condition on Status, Solidarity and Dynamism.

Table 4. Means and standard deviations (between brackets) for the effect of Condition on Status, Solidarity and Dynamism (1= very positive, 7 = very negative)

	French with Prejudice	French without Prejudice	British English
	Control	Control	
	n = 44	n = 42	n = 36
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Status	2.39 (0.82)	2.97 (1.45)	2.77 (1.13)
Solidarity	3.08 (.99)	3.75 (1.23)	3.44 (1.14)
Dynamism	3.09 (1.12)	3.73 (1.00)	3.10 (1.00)

Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this study was to assess whether prejudice control influences the way speakers with a non-native accent in English are evaluated. Non-native and native speakers were evaluated by non-native Dutch-speaking listeners in terms of hiring recommendation, status, solidarity, dynamism, comprehensibility, perceived accent strength and similarity in a job interview. This study contributes to research within international business and offers critical insights on accents and prejudices. It draws attention to the biases and prejudices that may be activated when hearing a non-native English speaker during a job interview.

The general picture that emerged when answering the first research question is that the use of a prejudice control text did not influence hiring recommendation. A prejudice control intervention does not, therefore, influence the hiring recommendation of the job applicant regardless of the perceived type of accent (non-native/ native). In answer to the second research question, comprehensibility, perceived accent strength and status did not influence the hiring recommendation. However, similarity, dynamism and solidarity did affect the hiring recommendation.

To elaborate further, there was a hypothesis that the British-English accented speaker would receive the same evaluation as the French-English accented speaker when a prejudice control intervention was used. However, this first hypothesis was not supported. In fact, the non-native speaker was not perceived as less hireable than the native speaker. This outcome conflicts with the findings of Roessel et al. (2019), who found that the use of a prejudice control text did help the participants to overcome their prejudices and evaluate the non-native English speaker more positively than the group without the prejudice control text. However, in the study by Roessel et al. (2019), the participants were told what the speaker's origin was before they proceeded to the audio recording. The result in this study may be explained by the fact that participants did not correctly identify the origin of the French accent in the audio recording which may mean that the stereotypes and prejudices associated with the French accent were not activated.

Another interesting finding was that the French-accented speaker was evaluated as having a stronger non-native accent than the British speaker. However, since there was no significant correlation, participants would hire the applicant with the stronger accent as well as the native speaker with the less stronger accent. This result differs from the study by Hendriks, van Meurs and Usmany (2012), as their outcomes showed that strongly accented speakers were evaluated more negatively than native speakers. A possible explanation for this could be that participants in the study by Hendriks, van Meurs and Usmany (2012) had a more linguistically and culturally diverse background. In other words, participants had either a Dutch, international (44 different nationalities) or native English (19 different nationalities) linguistic and cultural background. This could have led to more negative evaluations for a non-native accent and more stereotyping. In this study, the participants were all native Dutch speakers and had similar linguistic backgrounds, which may have resulted in fewer prejudiced being activated. This may have led to similar evaluations in relation to hiring

recommendation being given for the non-native and native accents.

Furthermore, this study partially supports the evidence off the previous observations regarding similarity (Bryne, 1971; Brewer 1979). In other words, there was a significant positive correlation between similarity and hiring recommendation. Consequently, the second hypothesis is partially supported. This finding demonstrates that when a subject considers him/herself to be more similar to the speaker, they give a more positive evaluation. This is consistent with the concept of in-group and out-group members and the similarity-attraction model. That is to say, the native Dutch listener, like the French applicant, is an out-group member, since they are both non-native English speakers (Brewer, 1979). Moreover, English is often the lingua franca in multinational companies, so many Dutch native speakers hear English regularly in daily communication (Bryne, 1971).

In addition, the results of this study did not show that comprehensibility and status affected hiring recommendation. This means that none of the participants encountered any comprehensibility problems when listening to the two audio recordings. Consequently, the third hypothesis was not supported. This shows that the findings of this study and of the study by Hendriks, van Meurs and Reimer (2018) could not be generalized for the job hiring context and demonstrates that the participants did not have difficulties understanding a 'local' or a 'foreign' accent. With respect to the outcome of status, the study was unable to demonstrate that condition had an effect on status. This result may be partly explained by the French accent being regarded as an attractive non-native accent according to Mai and Hoffmann (2014), which might give it a status on its own.

Finally, the results for dynamism and solidarity are consistent with those of Sliwa and Johansson (2014). Specifically, the condition of French with prejudice control had a lower score on both dimensions than the condition of French without prejudice control. A possible explanation would be that a listener may perceive a speaker to be non-dynamic because the speaker lacks enthusiasm in his/her speech, but this perception may also occur with non-native speakers who have not yet mastered the language. This can therefore have a negative impact on how a speaker is evaluated on a professional level. By making the participants aware of the prejudices, they evaluated the French-accented English speaker more positively with respect to both dimensions (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014).

However, this study has several limitations. First, only participants who took an extremely long time to answer the survey questions were removed. The participants who completed the survey in less than 1 minute were not removed, even though the duration of the audio recordings alone was more than 1 minute. This may mean that participants did not listen to the audio recordings fully, which could indicate that the answers given were rushed. Second, this survey did take into account the usefulness of the participants' hiring experience. Some may have hired an employee once in their lifetime, whereas others may hire an employee every week. This is a significant difference because participants with adequate hiring experience are more likely to give better hiring recommendations. Moreover, the audio recordings had various limitations. In the first place, there were two different speakers, which always means there will be differences in voice characteristics. It is possible that one

speaker was perceived as more natural or friendly, which might be responsible for differences in evaluations instead of the type of accent. This problem could be solved by having the same bilingual speaker make both recordings. However, there might be risk of the bilingual speaker using different vocabulary from a native speaker, given that bilingual speakers are influenced by both of the languages they speak. Added to this, the job interview was not as natural as the researchers would have wanted, as the speakers read their lines from a document.

This discussion concludes with some suggestions for further research. First, while this study has been conducted in a European context with the focus on the English language, carrying out studies with a similar approach in a non-European context, should be encouraged. For example, Chinese-accented English has become increasingly common in a business context. It would be very interesting to research Chinese-accented English, as when Chinese people speak English, this non-native accent may be associated with different prejudices. Such studies could have great significance for the international business community. Second, the study should be repeated using a real job interview, so that the conversation is more natural and has a better flow. As a result, the non-native speaker may be evaluated more positively on the dimensions solidarity and dynamism. The audio recording should also be longer, as it is difficult to decide whether you would hire someone based on a recording lasting less than 2 minutes. Such research will be more effective in identifying when an accent leads to biases and when it does not.

This research contributes to the international business research field because it shows that the way an employee speaks can have a significant effect in the workplace. The impact of an accent can be just as important as gender, skin color or ethnicity and can cause employment discrimination.

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Appendix A: Interview transcript

Interviewer: Hello, Thanks for coming in for the interview.

Interviewee: It's my pleasure. Thanks for inviting me.

Interviewer: Well, as you know, the company has been expanding and we have an opening in our HR department. We're creating a new role for someone to lead our training and development team.

Interviewee: Yes, I very much think that my skills and experience are a good fit for the current position.

Interviewer: That sounds great. So, your CV looks strong, though it would be good if you could give us an overview of what you've been doing over the past four years or so.

Interviewee: Well, in my first job I was working for a small HR services provider which offered HR services to corporate clients.

Interviewer: Right, and it says here you left that company about three years ago.

Interviewee: Yes, that's right. I was looking for more stability and also to be part of a larger organisation. So I joined a company with one hundred staff and a small HR team. As there are only a few of us, we each deal with a range of HR topics. In addition to payroll, one of the areas I was responsible for was learning and development.

Interviewer: Well, that sounds good. And I can see you have an L&D qualification.

Interviewee: Yes, I got a diploma two years ago. I am also currently working on a further diploma with a specific focus on learning and performance management.

Interviewer: Well, it looks like you have the qualifications and experience we're looking for. What do you think will be the challenges of coming to a much larger company?

Interviewee: I can see that it might be a weakness to not have experience in an organisation of this size, though I see that it could be a benefit. I won't be bringing many preconceived and inflexible ideas with me to the role.

Interviewer: Yes, that would be a good thing.

Interviewee: Also, I'm used to taking a personal approach to employee development. I realise that with 2,000 staff members this will have to happen in a different way, but I have many ideas that can be replicated on a larger scale.

Interviewer: I see what you mean. Do you have any questions left?

Interviewee: No, all the information was clear to me.

Interviewer: Great. So, thanks again for coming in. We'll discuss all candidates next week and then I'll get back to you to let you know the outcome.

Interviewee: Thank you for your time. I'd welcome the opportunity to continue discussing this role with you.

Appendix B: Prejudice control text

Before you listen to the recording, we would like to point out that the applicant does not speak in her native language. Research has shown that speaking with an accent can cause bias in evaluating individuals. Therefore, we would like to ask you to not base your judgment on feelings or stereotypes that may be evoked.

Appendix C: Pre-test

Dear participant,

We are students of Radboud University in Nijmegen and for our bachelor thesis we are conducting research on accentedness in the job application process. In order to do so, we are looking for Dutch students, with Dutch as their native language, that are willing to participate in our short survey. The survey is anonymous, and the results will only be used for this study. This questionnaire takes a maximum of 5 minutes.

If you have read the information above and you give consent to participate in the study, please press Continue.

<Continue button>

In the next section you will listen to a part of a job interview recording. The job applicant is a woman, and the interviewer is a man. Please focus on the job applicant, as you will be asked questions about her. You can listen to the recording as many times as you wish, however, it is not possible to go back to the recording once you proceed to the next section.

<Section 1>

<Recording>

<Section 2>

On the basis of the recording, please answer the questions below.

1. Do you think the job applicant is a native or non-native speaker of English?

Answers:

- a. native
- b. non-native

2. What do you think is the nationality of the job applicant?

Open question

<Section 3>

Thank you for participating in our survey!

If there are any follow-up questions or uncertainties, you can get in contact with us via:

lisa.laponder@student.ru.nl

Appendix D: Questionnaire

Dear participant,

We are students of Radboud University in Nijmegen and for our bachelor theses we are conducting research on evaluations of job applicants. To achieve this goal, we are looking for participants of Dutch nationality, with Dutch as their native language, who have experience in the job hiring process, more specifically, have previously hired someone or conducted a job interview. The survey is anonymous, and the results will only be used for this study. This questionnaire takes a maximum of 10 minutes

If you have read the information above and you give consent to participate in the study, please press Continue.

<Continue button>

<Section 1>

What is your nationality?

- a. Dutch
- b. Other

What is your native language?

- a. Dutch
- b. Other

Have you ever conducted a job interview/hired someone?

- a. Yes
- b. No

<If the participants answer to questions 1 and 2 are Dutch and the answer to question three is yes, they will continue with section 2b; otherwise, they will be redirected to section 2a>

<Section 2a>

Unfortunately, you do not meet the criteria for our study. Therefore, this is the end of the survey. Thank you for your time and we wish you a nice day!

<Section 2b>

In the next section you will listen to a job interview recording. The job applicant is a woman, and the interviewer is a man. We are asking you to focus on the job applicant as you will evaluate her later on in this questionnaire. You can listen to the recording as many times as you wish, however, it is not possible to go back to the recording once you proceed to the next section.

<Only applicable to French accented speech with prejudice control>

Before you listen to the recording, we would like to point out that English is not the applicant's native language. Research has shown that speaking with a non-native accent can cause bias in evaluating

individuals. Therefore, we would like to ask you to not base your judgment on feelings or stereotypes that may have been evoked by the accent.

<Section 3>

<Recording>

<Section 4>

On the basis of the recording, please answer the questions below.

1. Would you recommend hiring this applicant?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Please choose the answer that you identify with the most:

(All questions 7 points Likert scale with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 7 strongly agree.)

2. I would be satisfied if the applicant was hired
3. I feel favourable toward the applicant
4. I would want to work with the applicant
5. I think that the applicant would be an asset to the company
6. It is likely that I would hire the applicant
7. I think that the applicant would have good relationships with other employees

(Following questions also 7 points Likert scale, however, scales with different labels)

8. How similar is this person to you?
(*not similar at all*), 7 (*very similar*)
9. How understandable is the job applicant's accent?
1 (*very understandable*), 7 (*not understandable*)
10. To what extent is the applicant's speech accented?
1 (*native*), 7 (*strongly accented*)

In the following section you will find a few demographic questions, as well as some questions about your experience in the job hiring process.

11. What is your age?
(Open question)
12. What is your gender?
 - a. Male

- b. Female
 - c. Other/prefer not to say
13. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
- a. Secondary education
 - b. Bachelor's degree (HBO, WO)
 - c. Master's degree
 - d. Doctorate
 - e. Other/prefer not to say

How would you describe your level of English proficiency?

(7 points Likert scale; 1(*low*), 7 (*high*))

Have you ever hired someone/conducted a job interview with someone of a different cultural background?

- a. Yes
- b. No

<Section 5>

This is the end of the survey. Thank you for your participation!

If there are any follow-up questions or uncertainties, you can get in contact with us via:

lisa.laponder@student.ru.nl

Appendix E Statement of own work

Sign this Statement of own work form and add it as the last appendix in the final version of the Bachelor's thesis that is submitted as to the first supervisor.

Student name: Sing van Schaijk

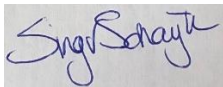
Student number: 1021354

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DECLARATION:

- a. I hereby declare that I am familiar with the faculty manual (<https://www.ru.nl/facultyofarts/stip/rules-guidelines/rules/fraud-plagiarism/>) and with Article 16 "Fraud and plagiarism" in the Education and Examination Regulations for the Bachelor's programme of Communication and Information Studies.
- b. I also declare that I have only submitted text written in my own words
- c. I certify that this thesis is my own work and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation, whether they be books, articles, reports, lecture notes, and any other kind of document, electronic or personal communication.

Signature:



Place and date: 07-06-2021