

**The effect of errors and Dutch-, English-, and
Arabic-sounding names in application letters written
in English (L2) on the evaluation of Dutch readers**

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Abstract

Errors in writing bother most people; the Dutch, for example, are very bothered by errors in writing. The Dutch are generally proficient in English, and errors may therefore bother them equally in their first as in their second language. As English is an important business language in the Netherlands, job applications may be written in English. Errors in application letters have been shown to lead to a negative evaluation of the text and the writer when the process is in Dutch. However, when the process is in a second language, errors may be evaluated differently. Furthermore, earlier research has demonstrated that applicants with a name that indicates an ethnic minority are hired less often than the minority population in the Netherlands, regardless of their letter or résumé. This study aims to determine whether errors in application letters written in a second language influence Dutch readers' evaluation of the writer and the text, and whether these evaluations differ when the applicant has a Dutch, English, or Arabic name. A total of 300 participants were given a questionnaire with one of six versions of an application letter containing errors or not and signed by a Dutch, English, or Arabic name, followed by 48 questions. The letters with errors resulted in a more negative evaluation of the writer and the text, and letters with an Arabic name were evaluated more positively on hirability than letters with an English name, and evaluated more positively on competence than letters with an English or Dutch name. In conclusion, Dutch readers are bothered by errors in a second language, yet they evaluate applicants with an Arabic name more favourably when the letter is in English. Applying in English rather than Dutch may therefore be something to consider for equalizing chances for applicants with Arabic-sounding names.

Keywords: Application letters, jobs, errors, nationality, names, discrimination, recruitment, evaluation, applicants, Arabic, English, Dutch, second language (L2)

Errors in writing are generally seen as bothersome by most people (Beason, 2001; Boettger & Moore, 2018; Gilsdorf & Leonard, 2001), though it seems to bother some more than others. The Dutch, for example, value the ability to write well greatly (Nederlandse Taalunie, 2005, 2007). In the 2007 survey of the Nederlandse Taalunie, nearly two-thirds of the Dutch participating adults stated they were very bothered by errors in writing. If the Dutch are bothered by errors that much in their native language, they may also be bothered by errors in a second language, such as English.

The use of English language in business contexts is increasing rapidly. The most used foreign language in business in the Netherlands (and other European countries) is English (Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2004). According to the 'English Proficiency Index' of Education First (2020), the Netherlands is the number one country in Europe when it comes to English proficiency. Some multinationals that originated in the Netherlands, such as Royal Dutch Shell, already use English as corporate language (Akkermans, Harzing, & Van Witteloostuijn, 2010). English is also frequently used in recruitment advertising (Van Meurs, Korzilius, & Den Hollander, 2006). Therefore, it is possible that English as a second language and the ability to write well in this language will also become more important in job recruitment and applications.

The currently available research proves that errors can be critical in job application letters, and that recruiters often attribute negative traits towards applicants whose letter contains errors (Jansen & Janssen, 2016; Martin-Lacroux, 2017; Van Toorenburg, Oostrom, & Pollet, 2015). However, most research on job application letters and errors in writing concentrates on native speakers as judge of the writing. Considering the growing importance of English as a business language, non-native readers' evaluation of (non-native) writing in job application letters is important to address. Royal Dutch Shell, for example, may very well have native Dutch recruiters and native Dutch applicants. Yet all communication would still have to be in English due to the corporate language.

Furthermore, people from different origins or nationalities may apply to work in the Netherlands. If the application process uses English as communication language, one can expect that people with nationalities other than Dutch may also apply for a job with a company such as Royal Dutch Shell. When all application letters are in English, the name of the applicant may be the only indicator for the nationality of the applicant. Whilst current research confirms that when the process is in Dutch, people with Arabic-sounding names are at disadvantage, regardless if they are native speakers of the Dutch language (Andriessen, Nievers, Faulk, & Dagevos, 2010; Blommaert, Coenders, & Tubbergen, 2014), it is unclear yet whether this disadvantage still exists when the application process is in a second language, whether this influences the perceptions of a reader when the letter contains errors, or whether a second language for all parties involved results in a more equal chances of getting hired for people from all backgrounds. It is true that an English native speaker may have the advantage of having more knowledge of the language used in this situation. However, this may also

work as a disadvantage if it increases the expectations of the reader regarding the writer and if the application letter contains errors.

The current study thus aims to determine whether errors in application letters written in English result in a negative evaluation of the applicant and the application letter, and whether this is influenced by whether the name of the applicant sounds Dutch, English, or Arabic.

Theoretical Framework

Any written text may contain errors, which may negatively influence the reader's attitude towards the text (Burgoon & Miller, 1985; Figueredo & Varnhagen, 2005; Jansen & Janssen, 2016; Luijkx, Gerritsen, & Van Mulken, 2019; Planken, Van Meurs, Maria, 2019), as well as the reader's perception of the writer (Burgoon & Miller, 1985; Beason, 2001; Jansen & Janssen, 2016; Kreiner, Schnakenberg, Green, Costello, & McClin, 2002; Martin-Lacroux, 2017). For example, Jansen (2010) found, in an experiment in which responses of reader on a direct-mail letter without errors were compared with letters that contained errors that errors had a strong negative influence on the evaluation of the text, and Everard and Galletta (2005) found that errors in writing on a website negatively influenced the perceived quality of the website.

Errors not only influence how a text is evaluated, but can even influence a reader's behaviour according to Martin-Lacroux (2017), who found that recruiters saw errors in job applications as reason not to select applicants. The findings of Martin-Lacroux are in line with results from Eyck and Van Hooren (2010), who found that Dutch managers judge job applicants on grammar errors in application letters, even if the job is in finance rather than, for example, communication or marketing. This would mean that job applicants are judged on grammar errors regardless of whether the job's main tasks include writing texts or not.

Errors in writing can thus lead to disadvantages for the writer; the reader often thinks more negatively about the writers abilities and personality when their writing contains errors than when it does not (Kreiner, Schnakenberg, Green, Costello, & McClin, 2002) due to underlying cognitive mechanisms. Kreiner, Schnakenberg, Green, Costello, & McClin (2002) state about such mechanisms "because language represents an important cognitive ability, we tend to make attributions about people's general cognitive abilities based on their language performance" (p. 6) and Flowerdew (2008) observed that "'non-standard' English may be perceived as indicative of some negative characteristics such as laziness, lack of education, low intelligence, etc." (p. 80). In more specific contexts, Jessmer and Anderson (2001) found that applicants whose résumés and application letters that did not contain errors were evaluated as more competent and more likeable, and Luijkx, Gerritsen, and Van Mulken (2019) and Planken, Van Meurs, and Maria (2019) found that errors in business letters led to a more negative evaluation of the writers intelligence.

Another example that explains underlying mechanisms that may influence the reader is Burgoon and Miller's (1985) language expectancy theory. Burgoon and Miller state that social and cultural norms result in certain expectations from readers. For instance, a reader will expect more from a teacher than from a teenager. The reader may form a negative attitude towards the writer when expectancies are violated. Kloet, Renkema, and Van Wijk (2003), as well as Jessmer and Anderson (2001), also found that image of the writer is negatively affected by violations of cultural and social expectancies. Language errors are an example of such a violation; a teacher is expected to make fewer mistakes than a student. Based on the knowledge a reader has of a writer, the reader may form certain expectations which may be violated by errors in their writing.

Beason (2001) states that business professionals expect writers to be representative of the company they work for in a professional way, and judge them accordingly. An example of business professionals that regularly judge people's writing are recruiters. Recruiters often use applicants' résumés and application letters for their first selection of suitable candidates (Arnulf, Tegner, & Larssen, 2010); they often see violations of their expectancies as predictor for job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), and may choose to exclude the applicant from their search solely based on the errors in their writing.

Though much research has been done on errors in writing and how they influence the text and the writer, most research concentrates on either only native readers and writers (Boettger & Moore, 2018; Boland & Queen, 2016; Brandenburg, 2015; Figuerdo & Varnhagen, 2005; Jansen & Janssen, 2016; Kreiner, Schnakenberg, Green, Costello, & McClin, 2002; Martin-Lacroux, 2017; Jansen, 2012; Van Toorenburg, Oostrom, & Pollet, 2015), or on non-native writers with native readers (Hendriks, 2010; Luijckx, Gerritsen, & Van Mulken, 2019; Wolfe, Shanmugaraj, & Sipe, 2016). However, no empirical research seems to have been done yet on how a non-native reader judges a non-native writer who appears to be of the same ethnic background as the reader (e.g. Dutch) or of a different ethnic background (e.g. Arabic). Furthermore, it has not yet been studied how a non-native reader evaluates a writer who appears to be a native speaker of the language. Though some studies have found evidence that native speakers may have a tendency to be more lenient towards errors in writing made by non-native speakers (Green & Hecht, 1985; Hughes & Lascaratou, 1982; Sheorey, 1986), there is no available research on whether this lenience is also present when a non-native speaker evaluates another non-native speaker from the same country, or whether this works the other way around (i.e. a tendency to be more critical) when a non-native reader evaluates a perceived native writer.

Another aspect that may influence the evaluation of readers of job application letters is the name of the applicant. Several studies found that a foreign name on a job application influences the perception of the reader. In Europe, ethnic minorities are less likely to get hired than the majority population; there are large differences and gaps in employment and wages (Bassanini & Saint-Martin,

2008; Heath, Rethon, & Kilpi, 2008). Studies on discrimination by recruiters regarding job applicants with an ethnic minority background have found that applicants with a name that might indicate an ethnic minority background received fewer call-backs or invitations for interviews than applicants with a native-sounding name (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; McGinnity, Nelson, Lunn, & Quinn, 2009; Oreopoulos, 2011; Cediey & Foroni, 2008). The reasons why these differences in callbacks and invitations exist range from the, on average, lower educational level of ethnic minorities and lower proficiency in the language of the host-country (Chiswick & Miller, 1995; Kanas & Van Tubergen, 2009; Van Tubergen & Kalmijn, 2005) to plain discrimination in recruitment. Ideas about the source of the latter stretch from “a taste for discrimination” (Becker, 1957), to fear of conflict with regard to limited (economic) resources (Blalock, 1967; Blumer, 1958; Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders, 2002).

Blommaerts, Coenders and Tubergen (2013) found strong signs of discrimination towards Arabic-named job applicants in the Netherlands, when online résumé databases were used. They found that résumés of applicants with Arabic names were viewed less than résumés of applicants with Dutch names. Dutch applicants were 60 percent more likely to receive positive reactions to their résumé than Arabic-named applicants. In the Netherlands, applicants with an Arabic-sounding name are less likely to receive callbacks and positive reactions than applicants with a Dutch-sounding name (Andriessen, Nievers, Faulk, & Dagevos, 2010; Blommaert, Coenders, & Tubergen, 2014). An applicant with a foreign-sounding name thus has fewer chances of getting hired for a job than someone with a native-sounding name. However, these studies only concentrate on applications in the native language of the readers, rather than a second language such as English. As mentioned earlier, with the increasing use of English as business language, it is important to find if these differences still exist when the application process is in a second language.

Furthermore, there seem to be some contradictory findings on a possibly more lenient stance towards errors made by non-native writers versus native writers. There is some evidence that show non-native readers having a more lenient attitude in their judgement of non-native errors than native readers (Green & Hecht, 1985; Hughes & Lascaratou, 1982; Nairn, 2003; Rubin & Williams-James, 1997; Sheorey, 1986; Wolfe, Shanmugaraj, & Sipe, 2016), though Planken et al. (2019) found that native readers did not evaluate texts with errors any differently than did non-native readers, and Vignovic and Thompson (2010) found that when cues were given in an e-mail that the sender was from a foreign country, technical language errors were forgiven and did not influence the perceived intelligence. It is thus still unclear whether someone with a foreign-sounding name would have an advantage over someone with a name that sounds native to the reader when it comes to making errors in application letters in a second language. Someone with an English-sounding name may have an advantage here, as they will be writing in their native language, though they may also have a

disadvantage, as non-native writers of English are possibly judged less negatively due to the readers' perception that they are writing in their second language.

The current study therefore focusses on English job application letters that appear to be written by someone with either a Dutch-sounding name, an Arabic-sounding name, or English-sounding name, to find whether this influences the perception the reader has about the hirability and the personality in terms of competence, likeability and dynamism of the writer and the evaluation of the letter, and whether this evaluation differs when the letter contains errors or not. The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. *To what extent do errors in a job application in a second language (L2) influence how the writer is perceived by the reader on hirability and personality in terms of competence, likeability, and dynamism?*
2. *To what extent does the perception of the reader on hirability and personality in terms of competence, likeability, and dynamism of the writer differ between letters with a Dutch-sounding name, an Arabic-sounding name, and an English-sounding name?*
3. *To what extent does the evaluation of the letter differ between letters with or without errors, and a Dutch-sounding name, an Arabic-sounding name, and an English-sounding name?*

Method

Materials

The independent variables tested in this study were errors and names. Within the variable 'errors', a distinction between two levels was made: errors and no errors. As for the variable 'names', a distinction between three levels was made; Dutch-sounding name, English-sounding name, and Arabic-sounding name.

To determine if a reader's perception of the writer is influenced by whether an application letter contains errors or not and by the name of the applicant, six versions of an application letter were created: one with errors and one without, each of which was signed by three different names.

To create the initial application letter, twenty real application letters for real jobs or internships were collected in the author's network. These application letters were coded for errors by three different coders on four categories: grammatical, punctuation, vocabulary, and spelling. The errors found by at least two coders were collected and sorted on category. In total, 78 errors were found by

two coders, 16 of which were found by all three coders. By comparing the application letters and selecting meaningful sentences, a new application letter was constructed with components of nine application letters. A second application letter was then created by adding two or three errors from each category to the existing letter. Errors from each category were selected based on how well they would fit in the initially created application letter. Additionally, the initial application letter without errors was changed a few times to accommodate certain errors in the version with errors to ensure that the larger part of the application letter consisted of sentences and errors that were used in real letters. The application letter with errors contained 12 errors in total. An overview of the original errors from each category and how they were used in the application letter can be found in Appendix 1. Both versions of the application letter can be found in Appendix 2.

The companies mentioned in the application letter do not exist, as using existing companies may influence the reader and cause biased responses. The university mentioned in the application letter is an existing university, as this is not expected to influence the reader whilst it makes the application letter look and feel more realistic. The person the application letter is addressed to is the fictive Ms. de Jong. As this name is not part of the manipulation and is the same for all six versions, the surname that is most common in the Netherlands, De Jong, was used (Brouwer, 2010).

The Dutch-, English-, and Arabic-sounding names were all common names in that language in or around 1996, as people born in that year would be around the age of someone starting professional employment. For the Dutch-sounding name, 'Tim van Dijk' was used. In 1996, the first names 'Tim', 'Thomas', and 'Kevin' were most common in the Netherlands (Meertens Instituut, n.d.). The name 'Tim' did occur in Wales and England in 1996, yet it was not very popular (the name only occurred 26 times) (Office for National Statistics, 2016). The second most common name in the Netherlands, Thomas, was a very popular name in England and Wales in 1996 (the name occurred 9603 times, being respectively third most popular that year). The name 'Kevin' was less popular, with 250 occurrences in 1996 (Office for National Statistics, 2016). Due to the frequent occurrence in England and Wales, 'Thomas' or 'Kevin' were not used as the Dutch name. The last name, Van Dijk, is the fifth most common last name in the Netherlands (Brouwer, 2010). The first most common surname, De Jong, was already used as the person the letter is addressed to and could thus not be used again. The second and third most common surnames, 'Jansen' and 'De Vries', are so common in the Netherlands that they may look too anonymous for respondents, possibly resulting in the respondents not paying enough attention to the name. The fourth most used surname, Van Den Berg, could not be used because Tim van den Berg is a relatively well-known Dutch football player. Using that name may have resulted in biased responses and was therefore decided against.

The English-sounding name that was used is 'James Taylor'. In 1996, the names 'Jack', 'Thomas', 'Daniel', and 'James' were most common in England and Wales (Office for National

Statistics, 2016). As discussed earlier, ‘Thomas’ could not be used as English-sounding name because the name is also very common in the Netherlands and using this name would thus not create a name that is typically seen as English. Furthermore, the names ‘Jack’ and ‘Daniel’ are also used in the Netherlands and could therefore be seen by respondents as Dutch rather than English names. Though the name ‘James’ is also used in the Netherlands, it was not a very popular name in 1996 (Volkskrant, 2016). Furthermore, the name ‘James’ does not have a Dutch pronunciation as is the case with names as ‘Thomas’ and ‘Daniel’. The surname that was used, Taylor, is the fourth most common surname in England and Wales (National Statistics, 2002). The first and third most common names, ‘Smith’ and ‘Williams’, were not used due to having Dutch counterparts, e.g. ‘Smit’ or ‘Smid’, and ‘Willems’. Using one of those last names may result in a name that looks Dutch to respondents. Between the second and fourth most common surnames, Jones and Taylor, the name Taylor was chosen to avoid alliteration, which may evoke particular reactions such as positive evaluations or disbelief that it is a real name in the readers.

The Arabic name that was used, Murat El Hamdaoui, is based on the list of typically native Arabic first names and surnames in Blommaert and Coenders’ research (2013). The first name ‘Murat’ did occur in the Netherlands in 1996, but was rather uncommon (Volkskrant, 2016). The surname El Hamdaoui occurred over 250 times in the Netherlands in 2007 (CBG - Centrum voor familiegeschiedenis, 2000-2020).

Subjects

A total of 300 participants participated in this study. All participants were 18 years or older, had the Dutch nationality, and were native speakers of the Dutch language. The participants were recruited via the personal network of the author and via social media. Participation was voluntary and the participants were randomly selected. The average age of the participants was 34.83 ($SD = 13.85$). The oldest participant was 71 years old, and the youngest 18 years old; 67% of all participants were female. The education level of the participant ranged from Dutch ‘vmbo’ (preparatory secondary vocational education) to Dutch ‘hbo’ (university of applied sciences) and ‘wo’ (university); 75.4% of all participants were highly educated (university of applied sciences or university). The version with no error and a Dutch name was evaluated by 55 participants, the version with no error and an English name by 43 participants, and the version with no error and an Arabic name by 51 participants. The version with error and a Dutch name was evaluated by 57 participants, the version with errors and an English name by 56 participants, and the version with errors and an Arabic name by 38 participants.

On a seven-point scale ranging from one (very low) to seven (like a native), most participants self-assessed their English skills as very good, but not as good as a native speaker ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.13$), and most of the participants gave themselves an eight on a one (very low) to ten (very high) scale when asked to score their English proficiency ($M = 7.55$, $SD = 1.33$). On another seven-point

scale, ranging from one (fully disagree) to seven (fully agree), most of the participants stated when responding to statements such as ‘errors do not bother me’ they disagreed or fully disagreed ($M = 2.32, SD = 1.21$). On a seven-point scale ranging from one (fully disagree) to seven (fully agree), most of the participants disagreed or totally disagreed that background or heritage is important to consider ($M = 2.29, SD = 1.24$).

Across the six versions of the application letter, a one-way analysis of variance showed no significant difference among the conditions in participants’ mean age ($F(5,294) = 1.49, p = .192$). A chi-square test across the six versions of the application letter showed no significant relationship between the condition and the gender of the participants ($\chi^2(5) = 3.52, p = .621$). A second chi-square test across the six versions of the application letter showed no significant relationship between the educational level of the participants and the condition ($\chi^2(30) = 38.46, p = .138$).

More one-way analyses of variance showed no significant differences between the condition and the participants’ self-assessed English skills ($F(5,294) = 1.48, p = .323$). A one-way univariate analysis of variance showed no significant relation between condition and how participants assessed their English skills on a one (very low) to ten (very high) scale ($F(5,294) < 1$). Other one-way analyses of variance showed no significant differences among conditions in how bothersome participants feel errors are ($F(5,294) = 2.26, p = .048$), and no significant differences among conditions in whether the participants thought background and heritage of the applicant matters in business contexts ($F(5,294) = 1.48, p = .196$).

Of all 300 participants, only four (1.3%) guessed what the full purpose of the study was. Most of the participants, 20.3%, only mentioned something related to applying for a job or applications letters in their answer, 17.6% of the participants guessed that the purpose had something to do with errors or writing skills, and 10.9% guessed the purpose of the study had something to do with names, nationalities, or background or heritage. Because only a very small number of participants guessed the full purpose of the study, all 300 participants were included in the analyses.

Design

For this study, a 2 (error: no errors, errors) x 3 (name: Arabic-sounding, Dutch-sounding, English-sounding) between-subjects design was used. All participants were exposed to only one level of the independent variable. All participants filled in an online questionnaire. The questions were the same for all versions and here was no control group.

Instruments

The dependent variables used in this study were hirability, evaluation of the writer (competence, likeability, and dynamism), evaluation of the letter, and the background variables

English proficiency, bothered by errors, and tendency to discriminate. The dependent variables were the same for all conditions. The questionnaire started with the application letter and name, followed by 48 questions in Dutch that measured the dependent variables. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3.

Hirability. Hirability was measured using three statements anchored by seven-point Likert scales ranging from ‘completely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’. The first statement, ‘I would invite this applicant for an interview’, was based on studies from Luijckx, Gerritsen, and Van Mulken (2015), Planken et al. (2019), and Van Toorenburg, Oostrom, and Pollet (2015), all of which used similar questions in their research. The second statement, whether the applicant is considered suitable, was based on statements used in studies from Krings and Olivares (2007) and Janssen and Jansen (2016). The last statement, ‘the applicant has a good chance of getting hired’, was based a statement that was used by Janssen and Jansen (2016) in their studies. The reliability of ‘hirability’ comprising three items was excellent: $\alpha = .92$. The mean of all three items was used to calculate the compound variable ‘hirability’, which was used in the analyses.

Evaluation of the writer. Evaluation of the writer was originally measured with three scales provisionally labelled ‘trustworthiness’, ‘ability’, and ‘personality’. Trustworthiness was measured using four statements anchored by seven-point Likert scales ranging from ‘completely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’. The first three statements were based on statements used in studies by Janssen and Jansen (2016), Krings and Olivares (2007), Luijckx et al (2019), and Planken et al. (2019). The statements all started with ‘the applicant seems ...’ followed by ‘honest’, ‘trustworthy’, and ‘credible’. The last statement, ‘the company would, without any trouble, be able to share sensitive information with this applicant’, was based on a statement that was used in a study by Vignovic and Thompson (2010). Ability was measured with four statements, anchored by seven-point Likert scales ranging from ‘completely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’. The first three statements all started with ‘the applicant seems ...’ followed by ‘highly educated’, ‘intelligent’, and ‘competent’. These statements are based on statements used in studies by Brandenburg (2015), Krings and Olivares (2007), and Luijckx et al (2019). The last statement ‘the applicant presents himself well’ is based on statements used in studies from Brandenburg (2015) and Janssen and Jansen (2016). Personality was measured with eight statements that were anchored by seven-point Likert scales ranging from ‘completely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’. The statements were based on statements used in studies from Boland and Queen (2016), Figuerdo and Varnhagen (2005), Janssen and Jansen (2016), and Krings and Olivares (2007). All statements started with ‘the applicant seems ...’ followed by ‘decent’, ‘serious’, ‘sensible’, ‘sincere’, ‘kind’, ‘attentive’, ‘enthusiast’, and ‘dynamic’.

The statements ‘honest’, ‘trustworthy’, ‘credible’, ‘highly educated’, ‘intelligent’, ‘competent’, ‘decent’, ‘serious’, ‘sensible’, ‘sincere’, ‘kind’, ‘attentive’, ‘enthusiast’, ‘dynamic’ were all combined

and mixed in one question block. Due to the number of items combined, a factor analyses was conducted. The principal component analysis with oblimin rotation revealed a three-factor solution, explaining 63.85% of the variance. The three factors were competence, likeability, and dynamism and each scale was found to be reliable (competence: $\alpha = .91$, likeability: $\alpha = .83$, dynamism: $\alpha = .62$). Although the reliability of the scale of dynamism was relatively low, it is deemed ‘moderate’ in studies by Taber (2018) and Van Griethuijsen et al (2015) and therefore seen as reliable. Additionally, a significant correlation between enthusiastic and dynamic was found ($r_s(300) = .42, p < .005$). The item ‘credible’ had too much overlap with two factors (competence and likeability) and was therefore omitted. In Table 2, an overview of which items belong to the factors identified can be found. The means of the three factors were used to calculate the compound variables ‘competence’, ‘likeability’, and ‘dynamism’, which were used in the analyses.

Table 2. Results of the principal component analysis with oblimin rotation

Items	Competence	Likeability	Dynamism
The participant seems highly educated	.88		
The participant presents himself well	.84		
The participant seems intelligent	.81		
The participant seems competent	.75		
The participant seems decent	.73		
The participant seems serious	.68		
The participant seems sensible	.67		
The participant seems credible	.58	.42	
The participant seems friendly		.79	
The participant seems sincere		.71	
The participant seems trustworthy		.69	
The participant seems attentive		.64	
The participant seems honest		.62	
The company could easily share sensitive information with this applicant		.45	
The participant seems enthusiast			.80
The participant seems dynamic			.68
Eigenvalues	7.63	1.44	1.14
% of variance	47.68	56.70	63.85
α	.91	.83	.62

Evaluation of the letter. The dependent variable evaluation of the letter was measured with seven statements, four of which were anchored by seven-point Likert scales ranging from ‘completely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’, one was anchored by a seven-point semantic differential scale ranging from ‘very negative’ to ‘very positive’, and two were measured by a one to ten number scale, in which one was ‘very low’ and ten was ‘very high’. The first four statements were seven-point Likert scales ranging from ‘completely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’ that all started with ‘the letter is ...’ followed by ‘well written’, ‘easy to read’, ‘attractive’, and ‘convincing’, based on statements used in studies by Figuerdo and Varnhagen (2005), Janssen and Janssen (2016), Krings and Olivares (2007), and Luijckx et al (2015). The fifth statement was formulated as the question ‘how would you score this application letter on a one to ten scale’ based on questions used by Janssen and Jansen (2016). The sixth statement, ‘my general evaluation of this application letter is ...’ was a semantic differential scale ranging from ‘very negative’ to ‘very positive’ that was based on statements used in Van Toorenburg et al. (2015). The last statement, ‘how would you score the writing ability of the applicant on a one to ten’, was based on statements used by Figuerdo and Varnhagen (2005) and Van Toorenburg et al. (2015). The reliability of ‘evaluation of letter’ comprising the four Likert-scale items and one semantic differential scale was excellent: $\alpha = .93$. The reliability of the two one to ten scale items was also excellent: $\alpha = .91$. Because the first four statements (the letter is well written, easy to read, attractive, and convincing) and the statement for which a semantic differential was used (my general evaluation of the letter is...) were seven-point scales and the remaining two statements (how would you score this application letter, how would you score the writing ability of the applicant) were ten-point scales, this variable was divided in ‘evaluation quality’ and ‘evaluation score’. The means of the five seven-point scale items were used to calculate the compound variable ‘evaluation letter - quality’, and the mean of the two ten-point scales were used to calculate the compound variable ‘evaluation letter - score’.

Background variables. English proficiency, bothered by error, and tendency to discriminate are background variables. The background variable ‘English proficiency’ was measured with five statements, of which four were anchored by seven-point Likert scales ranging from ‘completely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’, and of which one was anchored by a ten-point scale ranging from ‘very low’ to ‘very high’. The first four statements started with ‘in general, my English...’ followed by ‘reading skills are’, ‘listening skills are’, ‘speaking skills are’, and ‘writing skills are’, and were based on the study of Van Hooft, Van Meurs, and Schellekens (2017) where similar statements were used to measure participants’ self-assessed English proficiency. The last statement was ‘I would score my English proficiency as (one is low, ten is high)’, and is based on statements used by Janssen and Jansen (2016). The reliability of the seven-point scale was excellent: $\alpha = .94$. The mean of the four seven-point items was used to calculate the compound background variable ‘English proficiency’, which was used in the analyses.

The background variable ‘bothered by error’ was measured with four statements, of which three were anchored by seven-point Likert scales ranging from ‘completely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’, and one ranging from ‘very unimportant’ to ‘very important’. The first three statements were ‘errors in business letters do not bother me’, which was based on statements used by Janssen and Jansen (2016), ‘I am bothered by errors in general’ which was based on statements used by Boland and Queen (2016) and was recoded to ensure the answers mean the same as in the other scales, and ‘in this field of expertise (marketing), correct language use is more important than in certain others’ which was based on statements used by Krings and Olivares (2007) and was also recoded to ensure the answers mean the same as in the other scales. The last statement (ranging from very unimportant to very important) was ‘I think correct grammar is...’ was based on statements used by Boland and Queen (2016) and was also recoded to ensure the answers mean the same as in the other scales.

The reliability of the four seven-point scales was too low: $\alpha = .59$, however, when the statement ‘in this field of expertise (marketing), correct language use is more important than in certain others’ was deleted, the reliability was $\alpha = .69$. Although a reliability of $\alpha = .69$ is relatively low, it is deemed ‘moderate’ in studies by Taber (2018) and Van Griethuijsen et al. (2015) and therefore seen as reliable. Consequently, the statement ‘in this field of expertise (marketing), correct language use is more important than in certain others’ was omitted. The mean of the three seven-point items were used to calculate the compound background variable ‘bothered by error’.

Tendency to discriminate was measured with two statements, which were both anchored by seven-point Likert scales ranging from ‘completely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’. The first statement was ‘the background or heritage of applicants would influence my decision to hire them’, the second was ‘in this area of expertise, the background or heritage of the participant is important to consider’. The reliability of the seven-point scales comprising two items was acceptable: $\alpha = .74$. The mean of the two seven-point items were used to calculate the compound variable ‘tendency to discriminate’.

Manipulation checks. Manipulation checks were executed to see whether participants who read the letters with errors indeed found more errors than participants who read the letters without errors, to see how many errors the participants found, whether the applicant was a native speaker of English, and whether participants thought the nationality of the applicant was something other than Dutch when the letters contained an English or Arabic name. Whether the participants found errors was measured with one yes/no question, based on questions used by Boland and Queen (2016), Brandenburg (2015), Janssen and Jansen (2016), and Planken et al. (2019), stating ‘did you find any errors in the application letter’. How many errors participants found was measured with an open question, stating ‘how many errors did you find’. If they did not find any errors, participants were asked to not fill in any number. The answers to these questions were then divided in three categories; five or less errors, more than five errors, and no entry. To find if the participants thought the applicant

was a native speaker of English, the statement ‘the applicant is a native speaker of English’ was used, and was measured with a seven-point Likert scales ranging from ‘completely disagree’ to ‘completely agree’. The nationality the participants thought the applicant had was measured with an open question, stating ‘what do you think the nationality of the participant is’. The answers to this questions were divided in four categories; Dutch, English, Arabic, and other.

Procedure

Participants were invited to participate with an invitation link to the online questionnaire. The social media sites Facebook and LinkedIn were used to share the invitation links on the author’s personal page and in a large number of community groups. The invitation link was also shared among personal connections of the author, who, in turn, shared the invitation link in their personal networks. A small number of participants were approached via the websites SurveySwap and SurveyCircle. Participation was voluntary and on an individual basis.

In the Dutch text accompanying the invitation link, only the general topic of the study was mentioned by stating the author was researching applications for jobs in a second language (English), followed by a request for participants and the message that the questionnaire was short and that there would be a gift card raffle among the participants that filled in their email address. The participants were not told what the actual aim of the study was, to prevent participants giving socially accepted rather than honest answers.

Upon clicking the invitation link, participants would be directed to the online questionnaire where they were first given some information about the author, asked for permission to use their data and whether they were over 18 years old, and notified that they could stop and close the questionnaire at any given moment without any consequences. If participants had given permission and accepted the conditions, the actual questionnaire started by asking the participant to pretend to be working for a marketing company and looking for a suitable candidate for the position of marketing assistant. The corporate language was said to be English, and applicants would have to apply in English as well. Participants were then randomly given one of the six versions of the application letter and asked to read the letter carefully. Apart from the six versions of the application letters, the questionnaire was the same for all participants.

After reading the application letter, a series of questions about hirability, competence, likeability, and dynamism of the writer, the letter itself, the purpose of the study, errors, English proficiency, and demographics were presented to the participant. Participants could not go back to the application letter at this point. The last question asked the participants whether they wanted to leave their email address to be included in the gift card raffle. Each new block of questions was presented on a new page. The participants had to answer all questions before they could go to the next page. When

the participants completed the questionnaire, they were thanked for their participation and given the email address of the author with the notion that they were welcome to send the author a message when they had any questions or feedback, or when they would like to be notified of the results. The participants were generally not notified of the actual aim of the study after completing the questionnaire, to prevent other possible participants from the same or a similar source from detecting the aim of the study beforehand through participants that already completed the questionnaire. However, participants that asked for the aim of the study via an email or direct message were debriefed. The questionnaire took the participants approximately 12 minutes to complete.

The answers to the question ‘what do you think the purpose of the study is’ were coded by two different coders to determine whether participants realised what the actual purpose of the study was. A coding scheme consisting of 12 possible items was created. The coding scheme can be found in Appendix 4. The intercoder reliability of the variable ‘purpose of the study’ was satisfactory: $\kappa = .76$, $p < .001$.

Statistical treatment

Several two-way analyses of variance tests were conducted to determine the effects of the two independent variables (error/no error and applicant name) on the dependent variables (hirability, personality in terms of competence, likeability, and dynamism of the writer, and evaluation of the letter in terms of quality and general score). Additionally, chi-square tests were used to determine the relationship between the two independent variables (error/no error and applicant name) and the manipulation checks (errors found, number of errors found, native language of the applicant, and nationality of the applicant).

Results

The purpose of the study was to determine whether the presence or absence of errors in English application letters and the country or region the applicant seems to come from influence how the reader sees the writer regarding their hirability, personality in terms of competence, likeability, and dynamism, and how the writer evaluates the letter.

Manipulation checks

Errors found. A chi-square test showed a significant relation between error or no error and errors found ($\chi^2 (1) = 32.42$, $p < .001$). Participants who read letters with errors found relatively more often errors (72.8%) than participants who read letters without errors (40.3%). The observed count and percentages are shown in Table 3. A second chi-square test showed no significant relation between name and errors found ($\chi^2 (2) = 2.06$, $p = .357$).

Table 3. Observed counts and percentages errors found and error no error

Errors found	No error	Error
No		
Count	89 ^a	41 ^b
Percentage	59.7	27.2
Yes		
Count	60 ^a	110 ^b
Percentage	40.3	72.8

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Error_noerror categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.

Another chi-square test showed a significant relation between condition and errors found ($\chi^2(5) = 33.52, p < .001$). Participants who read letters without errors and Dutch name (60%), English name (58.1%), and Arabic name (60.8%) found relatively less often errors than participants who read letters with errors and a Dutch name (24.6%) or English name (34.2%). Vice versa, participants who read letters with errors with a Dutch (75.4%) or English name (75%) found relatively more errors than participants who read letters without errors and with a Dutch (40%), English (41.9%), or Arabic name (39.2%). Errors found in the Arabic letters with errors did not contribute to the significant relation between errors found and condition. The observed count and percentages are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Observed counts and percentages errors found and condition

Errors found	No error			Error		
	Dutch name	English name	Arabic name	Dutch name	English name	
No						
Count	33 ^a	25 ^a	31 ^a	14 ^b	14 ^b	13 ^{a,b}
Percentage	60	58.1	60.8	24.6	25	34.2
Yes						
Count	22 ^a	18 ^a	20 ^a	43 ^b	42 ^b	25 ^{a,b}
Percentage	40	41.9	39.2	75.4	75	65.8

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Condition categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.

Numbers of errors found. A chi-square test showed a significant relation between error or no error and number of errors found ($\chi^2(2) = 58.89, p < .05$). Participants who read letters with errors found relatively more often five or more errors (37.1%) than participants who read letters without errors (5.4%). Participants who read letters without errors relatively more often did not enter any number (64.4%) than participants who read letters with errors (27.2%). The participants who found

five or less errors did not contribute to the significant relation between error no error and error and number of errors found. The observed count and percentages are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Observed counts and percentages number of errors found and error no error

Errors found	No error	Error
Less than five		
Count	45 _a	54 _a
Percentage	30.2	35.8
More than five		
Count	8 _a	56 _b
Percentage	5.4	37.1
No number entered		
Count	96 _a	41 _b
Percentage	64.4	27.2

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Error_noerror categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.

A second chi-square test showed a significant relation between name and number of errors found ($\chi^2(4) = 10.26, p < .05$). Participants who read the letter with the English name found relatively more often more than five errors (30.3%) than those who read the letter with the Arabic name (11.2%). The participants who found more than five errors and read the letter with the Dutch name did not contribute to the significant relation between name and number of errors found. The observed count and percentages are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Observed counts and percentages number of errors found and name

Errors found	Dutch name	English name	Arabic name
Less than five			
Count	38 _a	28 _a	33 _a
Percentage	33.9	28.3	37.1
More than five			
Count	24 _{a,b}	30 _b	10 _a
Percentage	21.4	30.3	11.2
No number entered			
Count	50 _a	41 _a	46 _a
Percentage	44.6	41.4	51.7

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of NL, EN, AR categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.

Another Chi-square test showed a significant relation between condition and number of errors found ($\chi^2(10) = 81.22, p < .001$). Participants who read the letter with errors and an English name relatively more often found more than five errors (53.6%) than those who read the letter with errors and an Arabic name (15.8), or those who read the letter without errors and a Dutch (7.3%), English (0%), or Arabic name (7.8%). Participants who read the letter without errors and a Dutch (63.7%), English (65.1%), or Arabic name (64.7%) relatively more often did not enter any number than participants who read the letter without errors and a Dutch (26.3%) or English name (23.2). Participants who read the letter with errors and a Dutch name found relatively more often more than five errors than who read the letter without errors and a Dutch (7.3%), English (0%), or Arabic name (7.8%). Participants who read the letter with errors and an Arabic name (15.8%) found relatively less often more than five errors than participants who read the letter with errors and an English name (53.6%). Participants who read the letter with errors and a Dutch name (35.1%) found relatively more often more than five errors than participants who read the letter without errors and a Dutch (7.3%), English (0%), or Arabic name (7.8%). The participants who found more than five errors and read the letter with errors and a Dutch name or an Arabic name did not contribute to the significant relation between condition and number of errors found, and participants who did not enter any number and read the letter with errors and an Arabic name also did not contribute to the significant relation between condition and number of errors found. The observed count and percentages are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Observed counts and percentages number of errors found and condition

Number of errors found	No error		Error		Error	
	No error Dutch name	English name	No error Arabic name	Error Dutch name	Error English name	Error Arabic name
Five or less errors						
Count	16 ^a	15 ^a	14 ^a	22 ^a	13 ^a	19 ^a
Percentage	29.1	34.9	27.5	38.6	23.2	50
More than five errors						
Count	4 ^a	0 ^a	4 ^a	20 ^{b,c}	30 ^c	6 ^{a,b}
Percentage	7.3	0	7.8	35.1	53.6	15.8
No entry						
Count	35 ^a	28 ^a	33 ^a	15 ^b	13 ^b	13 ^{a,b}
Percentage	63.6	65.1	64.7	26.3	23.2	34.2

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Condition categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.

Native language of the applicant. A two-way analysis of variance with error no error and name (Dutch, English, Arabic) as factor showed a significant main effect of error no error on whether the participants thought the applicant was a Native speaker of English ($F(1,294) = 21.32, p < .001$). More participants that evaluated the version with errors ($M = 2.18, SD = 1.33$) disagreed that English was the native language of the applicant than the participants who evaluated the version without errors ($p < .001, M = 2.94, SD = 1.48$). Name was not found to have a significant effect on whether participants thought the applicant was a native speaker of English ($F(2,294) = 2.55, p = .08$). An overview of the means and standard deviations can be found in Table 8. The main effect was qualified by a significant interaction between error no error and name ($F(2,294) = 3.03, p = .05$). The differences between whether the participants thought the applicant was a native speaker were only found among participants who read the Dutch letter ($F(1,110) = 5.17, p = .025$): participants who read the letters with errors ($M = 2.07, SD = 1.16$) disagreed more with the statement ‘the applicant is a native speaker of English’ than participants who read the letters without errors ($M = 2.62, SD = 1.38$). The difference was also found among participants who read the English letter ($F(1,97) = 17.71, p < .001$): participants who read the letters with errors ($M = 2.04, SD = 1.43$) disagreed more with the statement ‘the applicant is a native speaker of English’ than participants who read the letters without errors ($M = 3.35, SD = 1.68$). There was no difference between the participants who read the letter with errors or without errors and an Arabic name ($F(1,87) = 1.79, p = .185$).

Table 8. Means and standard deviations (between brackets) of whether participants agreed or disagreed (1 = totally disagree, 7 = totally agree) with the statement ‘English is the native language of the applicant’

	No error			Error		
	Dutch	English	Arabic	Dutch	English	Arabic
	n = 55	n = 43	n = 51	n = 57	n = 56	n = 38
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
English was the native language of applicant	2.62 (1.38)	3.35 (1.68)	2.94 (1.33)	2.07 (1.63)	2.04 (1.43)	2.55 (1.39)

Nationality of the applicant. A chi-square test showed a significant relation between condition and what the participant thought the nationality of the applicant was ($\chi^2(15) = 93.34, p < .001$). Participants who read the letter without errors and an Arabic name relatively less often thought the applicant was Dutch (47.1%) than participants who read the letter without errors a Dutch name (80%), just as the participants who read the letter with errors and an Arabic name relatively less often thought the applicant was Dutch (42.1%) than participants who read the letter with errors and a Dutch

name (84.2%). The participants who read the letter without errors and an Arabic name relatively less often thought the participant was from Arabic regions (64.7%) than participants who read the letter without errors and an English name (65.1%), and relatively more often than participants who read the letter without errors and a Dutch name (63.6%). The participants that read the letter with errors and an English name and the letter without errors and an English name did not contribute to the significant relation between condition and what nationality the participants thought the applicant had. The observed count and percentages are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Observed counts and percentages thoughts about nationality and condition

Perceived nationality	No error		Error		Error	
	No error Dutch name	English name	No error Arabic name	Error Dutch name	Error English name	Error Arabic name
Dutch						
Count	44 ^a	26 ^{a,b,c}	24 ^c	48 ^a	39 ^{a,b,c}	16 ^{b,c}
Percentage	80	60.5	47.1	84.2	69.6	42.1
English						
Count	4 ^a	5 ^a	2 ^a	2 ^a	6 ^a	1 ^a
Percentage	7.3	11.6	3.9	3.5	10.7	2.6
Arabic regions						
Count	1 ^a	0 ^a	19 ^b	0 ^a	0 ^a	12 ^b
Percentage	63.6	65.1	64.7	26.3	23.2	34.2
Other						
Count	6 ^a	12 ^a	6 ^a	7 ^a	11 ^a	9 ^a
Percentage	63.6	65.1	64.7	26.3	23.2	34.2

Each subscript letter denotes a subset of Condition categories whose column proportions do not differ significantly from each other at the .05 level.

Dependent variables

Table 10 shows the dependent variables hirability, evaluation writer in terms of competence, likeability, and dynamism, and evaluation letter in terms of quality letter and general score in function of error no error and name (Dutch, English, and Arabic).

Table 10. Means and standard deviations (between brackets) of hirability, evaluation writer, and evaluation letter in function of error no error and name (1 = low, 7 = high; 1 = low, 10 = high).

	No error	Error
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	Dutch	English	Arabic	Dutch	English	Arabic
	n = 55	n = 43	n = 51	n = 57	n = 56	n = 38
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Hirability	5.1 (1.11)	5 (1.27)	5.18 (1.1)	3.99 (1.41)	3.59 (1.55)	4.42 (1.36)
Evaluation writer – competence	5.11 (.99)	5.16 (1.01)	5.46 (.84)	4.15 (1.4)	4.08 (1.29)	4.56 (1.18)
Evaluation writer - likeability	4.75 (.77)	4.86 (.86)	5.08 (.81)	4.69 (.85)	4.58 (.84)	4.88 (.79)
Evaluation writer - dynamism	4.92 (1.04)	4.98 (1.26)	5.14 (.93)	4.95 (1.11)	4.68 (.82)	5.22 (.86)
evaluation letter - quality	4.84 (1.22)	4.89 (1.32)	4.94 (1.20)	3.6 (1.38)	3.44 (1.44)	4.28 (1.44)
Evaluation letter – score 1-10	6.84 (1.43)	6.93 (1.46)	6.99 (1.25)	5.4 (1.67)	5.04 (1.89)	6.05 (1.66)

Hirability. A two-way analysis of variance with error no error and name (Dutch, English, Arabic) as factors showed a significant main effect of error no error on hirability ($F(1,294) = 50.98, p < .001$) and a significant effect of name on hirability ($F(2,294) = 3.44, p = .033$). The interaction effect between error no error and name was not statistically significant ($F(2,294) = 1.41, p = .247$). Letters without errors ($M = 5.10, SD = 1.15$) were shown to score higher on hirability than letters with errors ($M = 3.95, SD = 1.48$), and letters with an Arabic name ($M = 4.86, SD = 1.27$) were shown to score higher on hirability than letters with an English name ($p = .002$, Bonferroni correction; $M = 4.20, SD = 1.59$). However, the letters with a Dutch name ($M = 4.54, SD = 1.38$) did not significantly differ from the letters with an English name ($p = .191$, Bonferroni correction; $M = 4.20, SD = 1.59$), or Arabic name ($p = .264$, Bonferroni correction; $M = 4.86, SD = 1.27$).

Evaluation writer. To determine whether error no error and name had any effect on the evaluation of the writer in terms of competence, likeability, and dynamism, several two-way analyses of variance were conducted. The first two-way analysis of variance with error no error and name (Dutch, English, Arabic) as factors showed a significant main effect of error no error on competence ($F(1,294) = 60.2, p < .001$) and a significant effect of name on *competence* ($F(2,294) = 3.91, p =$

.021). The interaction effect between error no error and name was not statistically significant ($F(2,294) < 1$). Letters without errors ($M = 5.25, SD = .95$) were shown to score higher on competence than letters with errors ($M = 4.23, SD = 1.22$), and letters with an Arabic name ($M = 5.08, SD = 1.09$) scored higher on competence than letters with a Dutch ($p = .010$, Bonferroni correction; $M = 4.62, SD = 1.17$) or English name ($p = .003$, Bonferroni correction; $M = 4.55, SD = 1.29$). However, the letters with a Dutch name ($M = 4.62, SD = 1.17$) did not significantly differ from the letters with an English name ($p = 1$, Bonferroni correction; $M = 4.55, SD = 1.29$).

A second two-way analysis of variance with error no error and name (Dutch, English, Arabic) as factors showed no significant main effect of error no error on *likeability* ($F(1,294) = 3.66, p = .057$) and no significant main effect of name on likeability ($F(2,294) = 2.98, p = .052$). The interaction effect between error no error and name was also not statistically significant ($F(2,294) < 1$).

The third two-way analysis of variance with error no error and name (Dutch, English, Arabic) as factors showed no significant main effect of error no error on *dynamism* ($F(1,294) < 1$) and no significant main effect of name on dynamism ($F(2,294) = 2.91, p = .056$). The interaction effect between error no error and name was also not statistically significant ($F(2,294) = 1.01, p = .367$).

Evaluation letter. To determine whether error no error and name had any effect on the evaluation of the letter in terms of quality of the letter and general score, two two-way analyses of variance were conducted. The first two-way analysis of variance with error no error and name (Dutch, English, Arabic) as factors showed a significant main effect of error no error on quality of the letter ($F(1,294) = 51.42, p < .001$). Name was not found to have a significant main effect on quality of the letter ($F(2,294) = 3, p = .052$). The interaction effect was not statistically significant ($F(2,294) = 2.18, p = .115$). Letters without errors ($M = 4.89, SD = 1.24$) were shown to score higher on quality of the letter than letters with errors ($M = 3.71, SD = 1.45$).

The second two-way analysis of variance with error no error and name (Dutch, English, Arabic) as factors showed a significant main effect of error no error on general score of the letter ($F(1,294) = 59.3, p < .001$). Name was not found to have a significant main effect on general score of the letter ($F(2,294) = 2.86, p = .059$). The interaction effect was not statistically significant ($F(2,294) = 2.11, p = .124$). Letters without errors ($M = 6.92, SD = 1.37$) were shown to score higher on general score of the letter than letters with errors ($M = 5.43, SD = 1.79$).

Conclusion and discussion

The aim of the study was to determine whether errors in English job application letters, and whether the applicants' name is Dutch-, English-, or Arabic-sounding influence how the reader

perceives an applicant regarding their hirability, personality in terms of competence, likeability, and dynamism, and how they evaluate the application letter.

The results of this study showed that errors in a job application letter in a second language influence how the applicant is perceived by the reader of the letter. Overall, the participants who read the letters with errors evaluated the applicant more negatively on hirability and personality in terms of competence. The presence or absence of errors did not significantly influence the perceived likability and dynamism of the applicant. These findings are in line with findings of Beason (2001), Burgoon and Miller (1985), Janssen and Jansen (2016), and Van Toorenburg et al. (2015) that errors in written text negatively influence the reader's perception of the writer. More specifically, these findings are in line with Martin-Lacroux (2017), who found that errors in application letters were seen by recruiters as a reason not to select participants, and with Jessmer and Anderson (2001), Kreiner et al. (2002), Luijkx et al. (2019), and Planken et al. (2019), who found that readers often think more negatively about the competence in terms of intelligence and abilities of a writer when their writing contains errors. However, previous research concentrated mainly on native readers and writers or non-native writers and native readers. This study therefore adds to the theory in the sense that it shows similar results occur when a non-native reader evaluates a non-native writer as were found in earlier studies in which native readers evaluated a native or non-native writer.

As for the perceived nationality of the applicant, the results of this study showed that the name of the applicant influences how the applicant is perceived by the reader of the application letter. Participants who read the letters with an Arabic name (with and without errors) found fewer errors than those who read the letter with the English name. Application letters in which the applicant had an Arabic-sounding name were evaluated more positive on hirability than application letters in which the applicant had an English-sounding name, regardless of the letter contained errors or not. There were no significant differences in evaluation of hirability between letters with a Dutch-sounding name and letters with an Arabic-sounding name. Application letters in which the applicant had an Arabic name were evaluated more positively on personality in terms of competence for letters with and without errors than application letters in which the applicant had an English-sounding name. There was no significant difference in evaluation of the competence of the applicant between the application letters with a Dutch or an English name. These results are in contrast with previous studies, as previous studies showed the majority population had an advantage over ethnic minorities, as the latter are less likely to get hired (Bassanini & Saint-Martin, 2008; Heath, Rethon, & Kilpi, 2008), and that applicants with a name that possibly indicated an ethnic minority background were called back or invited for an interview less often than people with a name that sounded native (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; McGinnity, Nelson, Lunn, & Quinn, 2009; Oreopoulos, 2011; Cediey & Foroni, 2008). More specifically, studies conducted in the Netherlands by Blommaerts et al. (2013) found that Dutch

applicants were much more likely to receive positive reactions on their résumé than Arabic-named participants, which is in contrast to the results of the current study.

A possible explanation for these results may be that the participants were more forgiving towards an applicant who appears to be from a foreign country, in line with Vignovic and Thompson's (2010), findings that when the writer appears to be from a foreign country, errors were forgiven more easily than when the writer appears to be a native speaker. The letter with the Arabic-sounding name may for this reason have been evaluated more positively on hirability than the letter with the English-sounding name, as the latter is seen as a native speaker of the language that was used. Since the English proficiency of the Dutch is generally high (Education First, 2020), participants may have been more critical in their evaluation of personality in terms of competence towards applicants that appeared to be native speakers of English and applicants that appeared to be Dutch than towards applicant that appeared to be Arabic, as a high English proficiency for Dutch and English people is seen as more 'normal' whereas for Arabic people this may be less so. Perhaps expectations regarding English proficiency are simply lower for applicants with an Arabic-sounding name, possibly resulting in a more positive result for application letters with errors and without errors and an Arabic name. The possibility of better results due to lower expectations would be in line with Burgoon and Miller's (1985) expectancy theory as well as studies by Jessmer and Anderson (2001) and Kloet et al. (2003), as they state social and cultural norms form certain expectations and when such expectations are violated, the reader may form a negative attitude towards the writer. Such an effect may also work the other way around; when expectancies are surpassed, the reader may form a more positive attitude towards the writer. A final possible explanation may be that people realise that discrimination in application processes occurs frequently and forms a social issue in the workplace and in society, and due to this realisation some form of overcompensation may have taken place when evaluating an application letter with an Arabic name. The participants may have given more socially acceptable answers for the letter with an Arabic name than the letters with a Dutch or English name.

The results of the study show that the presence of errors in an application letter influences the evaluation of the letter. Overall, letters without errors were evaluated as having a higher quality and were scored higher than letters with errors. This is in line with findings by Burgoon and Miller (1985), Figuerdo and Varnhagen (2005), Jansen and Janssen (2016), Luijkx, Gerritsen, and Van Mulken (2019), and Planken et al. (2019) that errors in writing may negatively influence how the text is evaluated by the reader. The name of the applicant did not significantly influence the evaluation of the letter. Whilst there is some research on the effect of foreign language cues (e.g. a name) on the evaluation of the writer (Vignovic & Thompson, 2010), no research has been done on the effect of foreign names on the evaluation of the text. Previous research concentrated mainly on native readers and writers or non-native writers and native readers; this study therefore adds to the theory in the sense

that it found similar results when a non-native reader evaluates a non-native or native writer as were found in earlier research when a native reader evaluates a native or non-native writer.

Limitations and further research

The current study has a number of limitations that should be addressed in future research. Firstly, the current research is limited to an English application letter, meaning a letter that is not written in a readers' native language but in a, for them, foreign language. Most research that has been done on errors in writing and how they influence the reader concentrated on native writers and readers (Boettger & Moore, 2018; Boland & Queen, 2016; Brandenburg, 2015; Figuerdo & Varnhagen, 2005; Jansen & Janssen, 2016; Kreiner, Schnakenberg, Green, Costello, & McClin, 2002; Martin-Lacroux, 2017; Jansen, 2012; Van Toorenburg, Oostrom, & Pollet, 2015), or native readers and non-native writers (Hendriks, 2010; Luijckx, Gerritsen, & Van Mulken, 2019; Wolfe, Shanmugaraj, & Sipe, 2016). However, no research has compared texts that were written in the native language of the reader with texts that were written in a second language of the reader. Readers may be influenced differently by a text in their native language versus a text in their second language as they have a better proficiency in their first language than their second, and may therefore be more aware of errors and perhaps be more critical towards errors in their native language versus their second due to heightened language awareness (Derwing, Rossiter, & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2002). It would therefore be interesting to compare the perceptions of Dutch natives who read a Dutch letter with a Dutch, English, or Arabic name to the perceptions of Dutch natives who read an English letter with a Dutch, English, or Arabic name.

Furthermore, the current study is limited to mostly female participants. Previous research has found that there is a difference in evaluation of errors between men and women; women tend to be more bothered by errors and more precise in distinguishing them than men (Gilsdorf & Leonard, 2001; Gray & Heuser, 2003; Hairston, 1981; Kantz & Yates, 1994). A replication of the current study that compares evaluations of female and male groups may find whether men evaluate errors in application letters differently than women. Another limitation is that the current study did not take age into account. Age may influence the evaluation about errors, as previous research suggests that older participants are more bothered by errors than younger participants (Gilsdorf and Leonard, 2001). To find whether this is also the case with application letters that are written in a second language, the current study could be replicated with different age groups. Additionally, most research on discrimination in the application process did not take the gender or age of the readers into account. Replications of the current study that take gender and age into account could thus provide a broader insight in the evaluations of errors in a second language and foreign applicant names.

Another limitation is that the participants were not asked what their field of expertise or current job was, and in the work field of the application letter; marketing. Although research found

that application letters are judged on errors in various work fields, e.g. finance (Eyck & Van Hooren, 2010), marketing, and the building industry (Charney & Rayman, 1989; Charney, Rayman & Ferreira-Buckley, 1992), other studies found that applicants with a foreign accent were evaluated more negatively when applying for a job with a high communication demand than a job with a low communication demand (Hosada & Stone-Romero, 2009) and for jobs that included facing costumers (Timming, 2017). However, it has not been researched whether the work field influences the perception the reader has of the writer when the application letter is in English, nor whether discrimination based on the applicant's name occurs more, less, or not at all in different work fields. A replication of the current study in which different groups are made based on job type of the participants may provide insights into whether there is a difference in evaluations regarding errors in application letters and discrimination based on names of participants among different job types. Such a replication could generate more specific results and practical implications than the current study.

Contribution to theory

The current study adds to the research in the sense that it fills a research gap of how non-native readers evaluate non-native writers by reading an application letter that is written in a second language that does or does not contains errors, and how English, Dutch, and Arabic names influences this evaluation. The study found important differences between previous research and the results of the current research in the sense that, in contrast to previous research (Andriessen, Nievers, Faulk, & Dagevos, 2010; Blommaert, Coenders, & Tubergen, 2014), application letters with Arabic names are evaluated more positively than application letters with English names and no different than letters with a Dutch name on hirability and more positively than letters with Dutch and English names on competence, regardless of whether the letter contained errors or not. Additionally, the current study adds to the research in the sense that the results when a non-native reader evaluates a non-native writer are similar to findings in earlier studies in which native readers evaluated a native or non-native writer (Beason, 2001; Burgoon and Miller, 1985; Janssen and Jansen, 2016; Jessmer and Anderson, 2001; Kreiner, Schnakenberg, Green, Costello, and McClin, 2002; Luijkx, Gerritsen, and Van Mulken, 2019; Martin-Lacroux, 2017; Planken, Van Meurs, and Maria, 2019; Van Toorenburg, Oostrum, and Pollet, 2015).

Practical implications

In conclusion, errors in application letters in a second language can result in a lower evaluation of the reader in terms of hirability and competence, and in a lower general score and evaluation of quality of the letter. A high English proficiency may therefore be something Dutch students and starters on the job market need to invest in, as an application letter without errors may result in a more positive evaluation of the writer and a higher chance of getting hired, even when English is also not the native language of the reader of the letter. Another important piece of advice for

people applying for an international job (or in general) may be to ensure the letter is proof-read and corrected, to ensure a minimal number of errors in the application letter and therefore to increase the chances of getting hired. Additionally, when applying for a job with an Arabic name, applying in English may result in an advantage over applicants with a Dutch or English name. Though the current study found that discrimination based on the applicant's name still occurs when the application letter is in English, as applicants with a Dutch or English name rather than an Arabic name suffered from more negative evaluations, applying in English may lead to less discrimination based on their name for applicants with an Arabic name. People in HR positions might need sensitivity training in regard to names, to ensure equal chances for every applicant and to decrease discrimination (be it negative or positive) based on an applicant's name.

While this study does not offer a direct solution for discrimination in application processes and additional research is required, applying in English rather than Dutch may be something companies could consider to somewhat equalize the chances for participants who have names that sound Arabic and decrease discrimination based on ethnic background in the application process. However, regardless of name or background, applicants would do well to double-check their application letters for errors and send letters that are without any errors, as this would increase their chances of getting hired at what may be their dream company.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The original errors and how they were used in the application letter (errors are underlined)

Category	Original error	Error used
Grammatical	The job seems to be <u>perfect fit</u> for me	I would be <u>perfect fit</u> for ...
	I am <u>used to communicate</u>	Tasks <u>include communicate with</u> clients
Punctuation	To guide teams in their <u>change.</u> <u>Especially</u> at the new...	Clients and projects <u>teams. Which</u> improves my ...
	Because of my organizational sensitivity and <u>enthusiasm I get</u> people...	Because of my strong communication <u>skills I have</u> recently...
	When I <u>study abroad</u> I will be living...	After I <u>graduated I interned</u> at...
Vocabulary	I am available <u>within short</u> <u>Activities as marketing</u>who is available <u>within short</u> Tasks include <u>activities as</u> <u>communicate</u> ...
	I am <u>citing you to</u> my cv	I am <u>citing you to</u> my curriculum vitae...
Spelling	<u>Internatial</u> Student Network	given more <u>respobilities</u>
	<u>A</u> ICT system	<u>An</u> large marketing company
	My suitability for the role <u>a</u> [company or function]	Working <u>a</u> marketing assistant trainee for... Developing web pages <u>an</u> assisting in...

Appendix 2

The application letter without errors and the letter with errors:

Dear Ms. de Jong,

I am writing to apply for the position of marketing assistant with IFGT Marketing, as advertised on your career webpage. I believe I would be a perfect fit for this position, due to my education and work experience.

The foundation for my marketing skills was laid during my study Marketing and Communication in Nijmegen. After I graduated, I interned at a large marketing company to expand my marketing skills. My tasks included developing web pages and assisting in creating social media content for clients.

In the last 6 months of working as marketing assistant trainee for XSD Marketing Group, I was responsible for keeping client information up-to-date and assisting with two large marketing projects and public relations. Day-to-day tasks include activities such as communicating with clients and projects teams, which improves my interpersonal skills every day. Because of my strong communication skills, I have recently been given more responsibilities regarding public relations.

I believe my skills and experience make me an excellent candidate for the position. I am a hardworking person with a lot of passion for marketing, who is available on short notice.

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please find attached my curriculum vitae and a letter of recommendation from XSD Marketing Group.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,

[NAME NL] [NAME AR] [NAME EN]

Dear Ms. de Jong,

I am writing to apply for the position of marketing assistant with IFGT Marketing, as advertised on your career webpage. I believe I would **be perfect fit** for this position, due to my education and work experience.

The foundation for my marketing skills was laid when I studied Marketing and Communication at Nijmegen University. After I graduated **I** interned at **an** large marketing company to expand my marketing skills. My tasks included developing web pages **an** assisting in creating social media content for clients.

In the last six months of working **a** marketing assistant trainee for XSD Marketing Group, I have been responsible for keeping client information up-to-date and assisting with two large marketing projects and public relations. Day-to-day tasks include **activities as communicate** with clients and projects teams. **Which** improves my interpersonal skills every day. Because of my strong communication skills **I** have recently been given more **responsibilities** regarding public relations.

I believe my skills and experience make me an excellent candidate for the position. I am a hardworking person with a lot of passion for marketing, who is available **within short**.

Thank you very much for your consideration. **I am citing you to** my curriculum vitae and a letter of recommendation from XSD Marketing Group.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,

[NAME NL] [NAME AR] [NAME EN]

Appendix 3

Questionnaire job application letter

INFORMATIE EN TOESTEMMING

Bedankt dat u wilt deelnemen aan een onderzoek naar Engelse sollicitatiebrieven. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd door Annemarie de Kroon, masterstudent International Business Communication aan de Radboud Universiteit te Nijmegen.

Meedoen aan het onderzoek houdt in dat u een online vragenlijst gaat invullen. De vragen hebben betrekking op een korte, Engelse sollicitatiebrief. Het invullen van de vragenlijst kost ongeveer 10 minuten.

U doet vrijwillig en anoniem mee aan dit onderzoek. U kunt op elk moment tijdens het onderzoek uw deelname stopzetten en uw toestemming intrekken. U hoeft niet aan te geven waarom u stopt. Als u meer informatie over het onderzoek wilt hebben, kunt u contact opnemen met Annemarie de Kroon via a.dekroon@student.ru.nl.

Wanneer u klikt op het pijltje rechtsonder in het scherm geeft u aan dat u: - Bovenstaande informatie heeft gelezen- Vrijwillig deelneemt aan deze studie - 18 jaar of ouder bent- Het eens bent met de voorwaarden

Als u niet mee wilt doen, kunt u het venster sluiten.

Onder de deelnemers die hun mailadres achterlaten aan het eind van de vragenlijst verloot ik een Bol.com cadeaubon ter waarde van € 10,-

Stel je voor dat je bij een marketingbedrijf (IFGT Marketing) werkt en op zoek bent naar iemand voor de functie 'marketing assistant'. De voertaal van het bedrijf is Engels en er moet ook in het Engels gesolliciteerd worden. Lees de onderstaande sollicitatiebrief goed door.

Dear Ms. de Jong,

I am writing to apply for the position of marketing assistant with IFGT Marketing, as advertised on your career webpage. I believe I would be a perfect fit for this position, due to my education and work experience.

The foundation for my marketing skills was laid when I studied Marketing and Communication at Nijmegen University. After I graduated, I interned at a large marketing company to expand my marketing skills. My tasks included developing web pages and assisting in creating social media content for clients.

In the last six months of working as marketing assistant trainee for XSD Marketing Group, I have been responsible for keeping client information up-to-date and assisting with two large marketing projects and public relations. Day-to-day tasks include activities such as communicating with clients and

projects teams, which improves my interpersonal skills every day. Because of my strong communication skills, I have recently been given more responsibilities regarding public relations. I believe my skills and experience make me an excellent candidate for the position. I am a hardworking person with a lot of passion for marketing, who is available on short notice. Thank you very much for your consideration. Please find attached my curriculum vitae and a letter of recommendation from XSD Marketing Group.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,

Tim van Dijk

Beantwoord de volgende vragen

Stel je voor dat je bij een marketingbedrijf (IFGT Marketing) werkt en op zoek bent naar iemand voor de functie 'marketing assistant'. De voertaal van het bedrijf is Engels en er moet ook in het Engels gesolliciteerd worden. Lees de onderstaande sollicitatiebrief goed door.

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Best regards,

Murat El Hamdaoui

Beantwoord de volgende vragen

Ik zou deze sollicitant uitnodigen voor een gesprek

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Een beetje oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
(1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Deze sollicitant lijkt me een aanwinst voor het bedrijf

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Een beetje oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
(1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Deze sollicitant maakt een goede kans om aangenomen te worden

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Een beetje oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
(1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

De sollicitant lijkt me:

	Helemaal mee	Oneens (2)	Een beetje	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens
--	-----------------	---------------	---------------	-----------------	---------------	-----------------	----------------------

	oneens (1)		mee oneens (3)		mee eens (5)		(7)
Eerlijk (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Verstandig (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hooggeschoold (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attent (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Betrouwbaar (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Netjes (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Geloofwaardig (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enthousiast (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oprecht (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dynamisch (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deskundig (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Serius (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intelligent (13)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Vriendelijk
(14)

Het bedrijf zou zonder enig probleem gevoelige informatie met deze sollicitant kunnen delen

Helemaal Oneens Een beetje Neutraal Een beetje Mee eens Helemaal
oneens (1) (2) oneens (3) (4) mee eens (5) (6) mee eens
(7)

(1)

De sollicitant presenteert zichzelf goed

Helemaal Oneens Een beetje Neutraal Een beetje Mee eens Helemaal
oneens (1) (2) oneens (3) (4) mee eens (5) (6) mee eens
(7)

(1)

De brief is

Helemaal Oneens Een Neutraal Een Mee eens Helemaal
oneens (1) (2) beetje (4) beetje Mee eens Helemaal
oneens (3) mee eens (5) (6) mee eens
(7)

Goed
geschreven
(1)

Makkelijk te
lezen (2)

Aantrekkelijk
(3)

Overtuigend
(4)

Wat voor rapportcijfer (1 is laag, 10 is hoog) zou je deze sollicitatiebrief geven?

1 (1)

2 (2)

3 (3)

4 (4)

5 (5)

6 (6)

7 (7)

8 (8)

9 (9)

10 (10)

Mijn algemene beoordeling van deze sollicitatiebrief is

Zeer negatief (1)	Negatief (2)	Een beetje negatief (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje positief (5)	Positief (6)	Zeer positief (7)
-------------------------	-----------------	-------------------------------	-----------------	-------------------------------	-----------------	-------------------------

(1)

Wat voor rapportcijfer (1 is laag, 10 is hoog) zou je de **schrijfvaardigheid van de sollicitant** geven?

1 (1)

2 (2)

3 (3)

4 (4)

5 (5)

6 (6)

7 (7)

8 (8)

9 (9)

10 (10)

Wat denk je dat het doel van dit onderzoek is?

Ben je fouten tegengekomen in deze sollicitatiebrief?

Nee (1)

Ja (2)

Als je bij de vorige vraag 'ja' hebt geantwoord, welke fouten ben je tegengekomen en heb je onthouden? (wanneer je 'nee' hebt geantwoord bij de vorige vraag mag je deze vraag onbeantwoord laten)

Als je fouten tegen bent gekomen in deze brief, hoe veel waren het er dan ongeveer?

Ik vind taalfouten in zakelijke brieven niet erg

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Een beetje oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
(1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Ik stoor me aan taalfouten

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Een beetje oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
(1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Correcte grammatica vind ik

Heel onbelangrijk (1)	Onbelangrijk (2)	Een beetje onbelangrijk (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje belangrijk (5)	Belangrijk (6)	Heel belangrijk (7)
-----------------------------	---------------------	-----------------------------------	-----------------	------------------------------------	-------------------	---------------------------

(1)

In het vakgebied van deze sollicitatie (marketing) is correct taalgebruik belangrijker dan in sommige andere vakgebieden

Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Een beetje oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
------------------------	---------------	--------------------------	-----------------	-------------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

(1)

De sollicitant heeft Engels als moedertaal

Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Een beetje oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
------------------------	---------------	--------------------------	-----------------	-------------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

(1)

Wat denk je dat de nationaliteit van de sollicitant is?

De afkomst van de sollicitant zou mijn keuze beïnvloeden

Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Een beetje oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens
------------------------	---------------	--------------------------	-----------------	-------------------------------	-----------------	----------------------

(5) (7)

(1) ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Het is in dit vakgebied (marketing) belangrijk om te kijken naar de afkomst van een sollicitant

	Helemaal oneens (1)	Oneens (2)	Een beetje oneens (3)	Neutraal (4)	Een beetje mee eens (5)	Mee eens (6)	Helemaal mee eens (7)
(1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Mijn algemene leesvaardigheid in Engels is

	Heel erg laag (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Als een moedertaalspreker (7)
(1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Mijn algemene luistervaardigheid in Engels is

	Heel erg laag (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Als een moedertaalspreker (7)
(1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Mijn algemene spreekvaardigheid in Engels is

	Heel erg laag (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Als een moedertaalspreker
--	----------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	------------------------------

(7)

(1)

Mijn algemene schrijfvaardigheid in Engels is

Heel erg
laag (1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

(6)

Als een
moedertaalspreker

(7)

(1)

Ik zou mijn vaardigheid in Engels het volgende cijfer geven (1 is laag, 10 is hoog)

1 (1)

2 (2)

3 (3)

4 (4)

5 (5)

6 (6)

7 (7)

8 (8)

9 (9)

10 (10)

Wat is je geslacht?

Vrouw (1)

Man (2)

Anders, namelijk: (3) _____

Zeg ik liever niet (4)

Wat is je leeftijd?

Wat is je nationaliteit?

Nederlands (1)

Anders, namelijk: (2) _____

Wat is je moedertaal?

Nederlands (1)

Anders, namelijk: (2) _____

Wat is je huidige opleidingsniveau of hoogst genoten opleiding?

geen (1)

vmbo (2)

havo (3)

vwo (4)

mbo (5)

hbo (6)

wo (7)

anders: namelijk: (8) _____

Wilt u kans maken op een Bol.com cadeaubon ter waarde van € 10,-? Alleen wanneer u de bon gewonnen heeft, zult u een mail ontvangen. Uw mailadres zal nergens anders voor gebruikt worden.

Nee (1)

Ja, mijn mailadres is: (2) _____

Appendix 4

The answers to what the participants thought the purpose of the study was were coded using the following coding scheme:

1 = Job applications or application letters

2 = Job application letters and English language

3 = Job application letters and heritage/background applicant

4 = Job application letters, English language, and heritage/background applicant

5 = Only English language

6 = Only heritage/background applicant

7 = Errors and writing skills

8 = Job application letters, and Errors and writing skills

9 = Job application letters, Errors and writing skills, and English language

10 = Job application letters, Errors and writing skills, English language, and heritage/background applicant

11 = Other

12 = 'I don't know' or no entry

Appendix 5

Checklist Ethics Review

Name: Annemarie de Kroon

Student number: s1012684

Title of the thesis: The effect of errors and Dutch-, Arabic-, and English-sounding names in application letters written in English (L2) on the evaluation of Dutch readers

Primary supervisor and responsible researcher: Frank van Meurs

Date on which checklist was completed: 05-04-2020

Answer the questions by clicking the box for the answer that applies to your proposed research

*When you click on a box, a check will appear automatically **Note: it does not. Instead, 'X' was used.***

Medical-ethical study

1. Is a healthcare facility involved in the research project in one of the following ways?

This is the case if one of the situations a / b / c below apply to the proposed research:

a) one or more employees of a healthcare facility are involved in the study as a client or a provider/performer.

b) the study is done within the walls of the healthcare facility and, due to the nature of the study, it should normally not be done outside of the healthcare facility.

c) patients/clients of the healthcare facility participate in the study (in the framework of treatment).

X No, not in the manner of a / b / c → continue with checklist

Yes, in the manner of a / b / c (circle the applicable answer)

→ Has a Medical-Ethical Review Committee (METC) already tested and approved the proposed research? [WMO = Social Support Act]

Yes, and the research was approved by the METC → continue with checklist and submit your supervisor's statement to this effect together with your research proposal

No → This request must be submitted to a recognised Medical-Ethical Review

Committee (METC), for example the CMO Region Arnhem Nijmegen ([cmo-regioarnhem-nijmegen](#)) → end checklist → see [ccmo.nl](#)

2. Does this project involve a medical-scientific study that could involve possible health risks to the persons participating?

X No → continue with checklist

Yes → This request must be submitted to a recognised Medical-Ethical Review

Committee(METC), for example the CMO Region Arnhem Nijmegen ([cmo-regio-arnhemnijmegen](#))→ end checklist → see [ccmo.nl](#)

Standard research methods

3. The Ethics Assessment Committee Humanities (ETC-GW) has determined and described a

number of [standard research methods](#) (after opening link, see the right-hand column for a PDF) → Does the method / approach of the proposed research project fall under one of the ETC's standard research methods?

X Yes → 12. Standard questionnaire research

(fill in name and number of standard) → continue with checklist

No → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

Participants

4. Will the proposed research involve a population that is in good health?

X Yes → continue with checklist

No → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

5. Will the proposed research involve minors (younger than 18) or people regarded as legally incompetent?

X No → continue with checklist

Yes → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

Nature of the research

6. Will a research method be used that can create a situation in which the researcher may inadvertently find out about the health of a participant, and about which that participant should then be informed in a manner *not* described in the applicable standard methods (as defined by ETC-GW)?

X No → continue with checklist

Yes → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

7. Will participants have to undertake or undergo actions or behaviours that could cause discomfort in a manner that is *not* described in the applicable standard methods?

X No → continue with checklist

Yes → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

8. Are the estimated risks of the research for participants greater than described in the applicable standard methods?

X No → continue with checklist

Yes → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

9. Will participants be offered compensation other than the customary compensation described in the applicable standard methods?

X No → continue with checklist

Yes → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

10. If any misleading information is given to respondents, does the related procedure about deception (e.g. providing debriefing) comply with the requirements outlined in the ETC-GW protocol? (see Protocol, under [deception](#))

X Yes → continue with checklist

No → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

11. Will the standard regulations on anonymity and privacy as outlined in the ETC-GW protocol be observed in the proposed research? (see Protocol, under [anonymity](#))

X Yes → continue with checklist

No → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

Doing the research

12. Will the research be done at an external organisation (e.g. school, hospital)?

X No → continue with checklist

Yes → Do you have written permission from this organisation?

Yes → continue with checklist (add document with permission)

No → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

13. Have the following four requirements been complied with for the proposed research?:

1. Will there be a contact person for participants who have questions about the research, and will participants be informed of this?

X Yes → continue with checklist

No → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

2. Will participants be clearly informed about to whom they can voice complaints about their participation and how these complaints will be dealt with?

X Yes → continue with checklist

No → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

3. Will participants be completely free to participate in the study and to stop participating at any moment they want to and for whatever reason?

X Yes → continue with checklist

No → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

4. Prior to the study, will participants and/or their representatives be informed about the goal, nature, length, risks of and objections to the study? (see [explanation about information and permission](#) and [sample documents](#))

X Yes → continue with checklist

No → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

If you have answered 'yes' to all four requirements, continue the checklist (submit: the **document of consent** you will be using, e.g. as part of your proposed survey or questionnaire)

No → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

14. This checklist is about research involving the participation of people as sources of data. Nowadays, many studies are conducted using internet data. If the proposed research uses data that is available publicly on the internet, then in principle you do not need permission from the people who posted this data online to use it. But you must still consider whether or not making such data available or public through your research could disproportionately

harm the interests of the people that posted the data online in the first place. Is this the case in the proposed research?

Yes → review by ETC-GW is necessary, end checklist → [go to review procedure](#)

No → checklist completed

Appendix 6

Statement of own work

Student name: Annemarie de Kroon

Student number: s1012684

PLAGIARISM is the presentation by a student of an assignment or piece of work which has in fact been copied in whole or in part from another student's work, or from any other source (e.g. published books or periodicals or material from Internet sites), without due acknowledgement in the text.

DECLARATION:

a. I hereby declare that I am familiar with the faculty manual (<http://www.ru.nl/stip/english/rules-regulations/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:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Place and date: Didam, 26-10-2020