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The Impact of Dutch-accented English and Whether a
Prejudice Control Works in a Job Interview

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Abstract

Globalization in the whole world has led to the need of using English as a lingua franca, and thus the number of non-native speakers of English has increased. International companies now can recruit international talents all over the world, however, non-native accentedness remains a factor of discrimination. To investigate more on the non-native listeners' evaluation of speaker hirability, especially when the listeners have a similar language background with the non-native accented speaker, this study aimed to first examine how Dutch listeners would evaluate Dutch-accented speaker and native AmE-accented speaker on their intelligence, comprehensibility, affect (likeability, status, competence) and hirability. The second aim was to test if prejudice control might lessen the degree of accentedness discrimination. Findings showed that Dutch listeners favored the American-accented speaker over the Dutch-accented speaker in the recruiting process. Moreover, interference of prejudice control seemed not to make a difference. An additional finding was that work experience does not seem to reduce Dutch listeners' accentedness bias towards the Dutch-accented speaker.

Keywords

Dutch-accented English, AmE accent, accent discrimination, prejudice control, intelligibility, comprehensibility, hirability, job interview

1. Introduction

Due to globalization, international interaction and communication using English have been increasing among individuals, communities, corporates, and countries. Among the growing population of English users, non-native speakers (NNS) from different cultures and backgrounds have various accents, which are derived naturally from their native languages and thus differ from the native accents. Accentedness is usually associated with a particular group of people and is different in phonology or intonation across geographic regions and communities (Lippi-Green, 1997). Also, accentedness is an utterance that sounds different in pronunciation from an expected standard norm (Derwing & Munro, 1997; Munro & Derwing, 1995; 1999). Since international talents are of more importance at this time of globalization, reducing potential accentedness biases becomes essential to international or multinational corporates and organizations.

Accentedness could be a problem, for its difference from the native speaker norm could be associated with a certain level of perceived disfluency, which leads to misunderstanding and discrimination (Fuertes, Gottdiener, Martin, Gilbert & Giles, 2012). Fuertes et al. (2012) also suggested that the standard of English fluency was subjective and might lead to many prejudices. Among previous studies, English native speakers were seldom evaluated worse than non-native speakers by non-native listeners (Fuertes et al., 2012; Hendriks et al., 2018; Nejjari, Gerritsen, Van der Haagen & Korzilius, 2012). Although Hendriks, Meurs, and Reimer (2018) suggested that the native listeners were not necessarily more critical in evaluating non-native accents, native speakers were still considered to have more status than non-native speakers (Nejjari et al., 2012).

Studies have shown that non-native speakers were evaluated by other non-native listeners as less intelligible, less likable, less competent, less hireable, and with lower status and comprehensibility (Fuertes et al., 2012; Hendriks et al., 2018; Nejjari et al., 2020; Nejjari, Gerritsen, Van der Haagen & Korzilius, 2012). Regarding non-native listeners, Nejjari et al.'s research (2020) mentioned that within specific Dutch contexts, negative perceptions might be specially assigned to Dutch-accented English by Dutch listeners. A moderate Dutch accented English could lead to negative criticism, such as Dutch university students evaluated Dutch lecturers with stronger English accents more negatively than slight-accented and native accents in the class lectures scenario (Hendriks et al., 2016).

Accentedness could lead to discrimination when the listeners identify the speakers' country of origin as non-native. Despite the speakers' actual origin, non-native listeners who identified the speakers as non-native tended to evaluate the speakers lower in status and dynamism than those who identified the speakers as native (Nejjari et al., 2020). This finding indicated that when the speakers' accent was recognized as native or near-native, they were likely to be evaluated more positively in certain measurements.

Accent discrimination could occur in different communication contexts. Nejjari et al. (2020) found that native accent was evaluated less positively in the lecture context than in the job pitch and audio tour contexts. Although the discrimination seemed less in a job pitch, it is still important to investigate the potential negative impact of accentedness in the hiring process. Accent discrimination might cause a misjudgment of the candidate's suitability and competence, and the company might lose the opportunity to recruit qualified international talents. Deprez-

Sims and Morris's research (2010) found that native American applicants were evaluated more positively than non-native applicants with Colombian or French accents by native American listeners in the interview for a human source manager position. Roessel et al., (2017) further suggested that in a job interview, applicants with strong non-native accents were more likely to be downgraded than applicants with native or native-like accents by non-native listeners even to the degree that the content of the pitch did not make a difference.

Accent discrimination could also occur among different listener groups. When the speaker has the same linguistic background as the listener groups, there could be two opposite reactions. Hendriks et al. (2021) suggested that comparing with international and native English listener groups, the Dutch listener group tended to evaluate accented-Dutch speakers more negatively. In contrast, the other non-native listener group (international group in this case) evaluated slightly Dutch-accented speakers more positively than the native speakers. In the rest of the introduction, additional variables investigated as independent variables in this study, which might lead to accentedness discrimination, will be further illustrated.

Understandability: Intelligibility and comprehensibility

When examining the importance of accentedness, it is also important to look at the understandability of the speaker. The reason is that when the speech is less understood, the speaker might be evaluated more negatively. The speaker's understandability can be measured from two aspects: *intelligibility* and *comprehensibility*. Intelligibility is about how the speaker's utterance is comprehended (Derwing & Munro, 1997) and it means to what degree oral utterances can be paraphrased by the listeners into words and sentences (Nejjari et al., 2020). Comprehensibility refers to the listeners' expectation of difficulty in understanding the speaker within a specific context (Munro & Derwing, 1995; 1999; Nejjari et al., 2020). Intelligibility and comprehensibility are two different yet closely related concepts to measure how the speaker is understood by the listener, and are usually done with separate measures. By combining intelligibility and the perceived comprehensibility, an overall understandability of the speaker can be thus evaluated.

Intelligibility could be affected by the speaker's accent and could be evaluated as high or low. In several previous studies, native-accented speakers were judged more intelligible than non-native speakers (Hendriks et al., 2021; Nejjari et al., 2012;

2020). For example, Dutch accented group was evaluated as less intelligible than the native accented group in a telephone sales talk, which showed that accent could potentially affect how non-native listeners judged the non-native speakers' intelligibility (Nejjari et al., 2012). Another study suggested that non-native speakers might consider other non-native accents as more intelligible (Hendriks et al., 2021). Nejjari et al. (2012, 2020) also found that non-native listeners could understand other non-native speakers just as well as they could understand native speakers, so the benefit of a native speech regarding intelligibility may not exist in all situations.

Regarding perceived comprehensibility, several studies showed that non-native speeches were evaluated as less comprehensible, and the reduced comprehensibility might lead to negative attitudinal evaluations (Hendriks et al., 2018, 2021; Roessel et al., 2019). Poorer comprehensibility affected the Dutch listeners' evaluation of the non-native lecturers' teaching quality (Hendriks et al., 2021). In the same study, Dutch lecturers with a stronger accent were considered less comprehensible by the Dutch and other non-native listener groups. Higher comprehensibility could be connected with better communication skills in a job interview, and communication skills are key to judge if the speaker is suitable for a position (Roessel et al., 2019). In addition, better comprehension was confirmed to be associated with higher English proficiency (Beinhoff, 2014; Smith & Nelson, 2006), which may further result in more positive attitudinal evaluations on the speaker (Hendriks et al., 2018).

Attitudinal evaluations: likability, competence, status

Besides speech understandability, attitudinal evaluations were also used to measure how listeners feel about the speakers. For attitudinal evaluations, the participants expressed opinions about the assigned aspects of the speaker (e.g. status, competence, intelligence) on rating scales (Giles & Billings, 2004), which is associated with one's status, competence, intelligence, etc., and could impact to what degree the participants wanted to hire a candidate.

Regarding the speaker's status, both native and non-native listeners might generally evaluate strong-accented non-native speakers more negatively than how they evaluated naïve-accented speakers. Nejjari et al. (2012) discovered that native listeners considered native speakers with significantly higher status than non-native speakers. Not only native listeners but also non-native listeners evaluated non-native speakers more negatively on status. For instance, Nejjari et al.'s (2020) experiment

appeared to provide evidence on how listener's recognition of the speaker's origin may affect their evaluation of the speaker's status. For those German listeners who identified Dutch-accented English as a non-native accent, the speaker seemed to possess less status. For those German speakers who identified the Dutch-accented speakers as native English speakers, the speakers appeared to be of higher status.

The second variable for attitudinal evaluations in this study was competence, which could be associated with one's ability at work and thus influence the speaker's hirability. Fuertes et al. (2012) collected and synthesized several studies and found that non-native accents could lead to listeners' critical judgment on the speakers' competence. Hendriks et al.'s research (2018) also appeared to lead support to the assumption that non-native listeners evaluated stronger non-native accents more negatively than native accents on the speaker's competence.

The third factor for attitudinal evaluations in this study was likeability, which is associated with the listeners' stereotypes and subjective feelings towards the speaker. Likeability might therefore affect the listener's decision on whether to hire the speaker and could be either positively or negatively influenced by non-native accents. Hendriks, et al. (2018) indicated that a non-native accent could lead to a positive outcome when the non-native listeners felt familiar with the accent. In the study done by Hendriks et al (2018), German listeners evaluated moderate-accented Dutch speakers as more likable than slight-accented Dutch speakers. Due to German listeners' positive feelings towards Dutch speakers, they tended to evaluate more positively on attitudinal measures on Dutch speakers. However, a non-native accent could also negatively influence the listeners' feelings towards the speakers when they were familiar with the speaker's non-native accent. Nejjari et al.'s study (2012) showed that when the listeners were more familiar with a specific non-native accent, the attitudinal evaluations could be affected negatively. For the British English listeners who lived in the Netherlands for more than ten years and were thus more familiar with a Dutch accent, they tended to evaluate the Dutch speakers as less likable.

Hirability of the speaker

Another attitudinal variable for this study is hirability, which means to what degree the listener would like to hire the speaker and could be affected by accentedness. Both native and non-native listeners of English seemed to rate stronger-accented non-native

speakers of English more critical on their competence and hirability (Fuertes et al., 2012; Roessel et al., 2017; Hendriks et al., 2018).

The reason that native listeners rated native speakers more positively during the hiring process might be because of familiarity with the accent. The perceived similarity might lead to a positive decision in the hiring process (Deprez-sims & Morris, 2010). Would this suggest that non-native listeners might evaluate non-native speakers with the similar linguistic background more positively than native speakers? Roessel et al. (2017) found that for German listeners, native-accented speakers were still better rated by non-native German listeners on the evaluations of speaker hirability than German-accented speakers.

Communication context

Communication contexts should be considered as yet another vital factor, where a different level of accentedness discrimination occurs. Communication context was found to potentially strengthen the effect of accentedness (Nejjari et al., 2020). Within different contexts, speakers needed to adopt different patterns of language use, and listeners might evaluate based on the different communication models accordingly. Nejjari et al. (2020) suggested that context did influence how the listeners understand the speaker and their evaluation of their speech. The job pitch sampling speech was evaluated with lower comprehensibility and interpretability compared to the audio tour and the lecture. In addition, Dutch students' critical attitudes towards the lecturers' non-native accent might be connected to some specific communication expectations (Nejjari et al., 2020).

On the other hand, non-native accents might be beneficial in informal communication contexts such as in sports or a street playground (Fuertes et al., 2012). The general conclusion and statement of native accents more beneficial than non-native accents might seem meaningless without considering communication context as a variable. Thus, it is vital to distinguish in specific contexts, how native and non-native accents are viewed differently by native and non-native listeners.

Discrimination Control

An instruction for discrimination control provided before job interviews might help to reduce negative evaluations on non-native accents (Roessel et al., 2017). International companies especially need this effective solution to avoid discrimination in the hiring

process. Research by Roessel et al. (2017) has demonstrated that making listeners aware of possible accentedness discrimination led to more positive evaluations on speakers with non-native accents. An effective intervention was applied to the second experiment, and the result showed that discriminatory tendencies were thus reduced significantly. Under prejudice control instructions, the downgrading of the strong-accented speakers was much lessened than it was under regular instructions.

Furthermore, Hendriks et al. (2018) found it effective in reducing the negative effect of accentedness by providing a support view from English lingua franca researchers that the non-native speakers did not need to adapt to the native norm.

Work Experience

According to Daisy Wright (2020), unconscious bias could be gained with more working experience because people have this tendency to be part of the familiar “in group” (Tyner, 2019). This “in group” sense might lead to more bias after years of working. Therefore, it is also important and interesting to examine if the mentioned belief is true in the recruiting process for Dutch participants regarding the potential biased effect of accentedness.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

To raise awareness of employment discrimination caused by non-native accent and to facilitate job applicants’ equal opportunities in the recruiting process, the present study aims to answer the following two research questions: (1) Do Dutch listeners display more negative attitude on Dutch accented English regarding hirability than on native American English in a job interview? (2) To what degree could the possible effects of accentedness be reduced on hiring process by raising awareness of accentedness biases among non-native Dutch listeners?

Based on several studies about the effect of non-native accents at the workplace or the hiring process (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010; Nejari et al., 2012; Fuertes et al., 2012; Roessel et al., 2017), the first research question seemed to be confirmed that non-native accentedness could be evaluated more negatively in a job interview. If a non-native accent was evaluated less positively than a native accent in the context of a telephone sales talk (Nejari et al., 2012) and an interview for a human resource position (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010), it is very likely that Dutch listeners, who were suggested to be more critical towards Dutch-accented English than native listeners

(Hendriks et al., 2018; 2021), will evaluate the Dutch-accented applicant more negatively than the American-accented applicant in the recruiting process.

In addition to the first hypothesis featured on Dutch listener's evaluation on American native speaker and Dutch-accented speaker, the second hypothesis further tested whether interference of prejudice control would work functionally to reduce the participants' biased judgment on non-native speaker in the hiring process. Based on Roessel et al.'s study conducted in 2017, the hypothesis to our second research question is that with prejudice control, negative evaluations on the Dutch-accented speaker will be reduced effectively.

2. Method

To probe into the accent effect on the listener groups concerning speakers' comprehensibility, intelligibility, attitudinal evaluations (likability, status, competence), and hirability. In this experiment, Dutch listeners responded to one American-accented native speaker of English and one Dutch-accented speaker in a job interview under two conditions (With prejudice control/without prejudice control).

Materials

The stimulus materials of the present study accents were one questionnaire, one prejudice control text, and two sampling speeches of a job pitch. The speech samples had two different accentedness, an American-accented native English and a Dutch-accented English. A verbal-guise experiment (Garrett, 2010) was conducted for this study, which is a method of different speakers reading the same sample text. The reason we used this method is that it ensures that the research only focuses on the effect of accentedness other than different textual content.

The speech sample recordings for the pretest were all about 30 seconds in length. Four American-accented sample recordings and four Dutch-accented sample recordings were pretested and evaluated by 23 native Dutch listeners on the speakers' voice characteristics such as nativeness, foreignness, naturalness, confidence, and pleasantness. The speech fragments used for the pretest experiment were based on materials from Jesney (2004) and Hendriks et al. (2018). There were six items for speakers' voice characteristics at the pretest phase: 'This speaker sounds like a native speaker of English', 'This speaker has a strong foreign accent in English', 'This speaker sounds like a native speaker of American English', 'This speaker sounds confident', 'This speaker sounds natural', 'This speaker sounds pleasant'. After the

pretest, one American-accented speaker and one Dutch-accented speaker were selected. Both speakers were similar in speech rate and voice characteristics.

Design

The experiment had a between-subject 2 (accent: AmE accent / Dutch accent) × 2 (prejudice control: yes / no) verbal-guise experimental design.

Participants

A total of 142 Dutch listeners participated in this research (Age: $M = 29.73$ $SD = 14.09$; range 18-67; 65.5% female; 33.8% male; 60.6% working person; 19.7% currently not employed; 19.7% HR students). The Dutch students that participated in this experiment were enrolled in Bachelor's or Master's programs that are related to human resource management, some of them were on their internships. The working persons were that participated in this experiment were native Dutch who had work experience or with hiring experience. All of the participants were native Dutch speakers, and all had Dutch as their only native language. Bilinguals who were with two native languages were excluded from this study, which was a consideration based on Grosjean's study (1989) that bilinguals who have two mother tongues could be less sensitive to non-native accents and thus might respond differently to accentedness from those who have only one native language. By excluding those who have two mother tongues, we could focus on the evaluations from those Dutch listeners whose only native language was Dutch without considering the participants' different sensitiveness to accentedness.

Speaker

Two female speakers were included as stimuli for recording samplings. The speakers were a native Dutch speaker and an American speaker of native English, both aged between 21 to 40 at the time of recording, and had at least a bachelor's degree. The pair of speakers were chosen because they had the most similar voice characteristics and speech rate. In addition, the sample recordings produced by them were both distinguished clearly as American-accented and Dutch-accented English speakers, proving that both sampling recordings were qualified.

Instrumentation

Participants were invited to fill in an online questionnaire, in which each listener evaluated job pitch samples in both American English and Dutch-accented English concerning speakers' intelligibility, perceived comprehensibility, attitudinal evaluations (status, competence, likability), and hirability, which were measured as follows:

- Strength of foreign/native accent was measured with seven-point Likert scales anchored by 'completely disagree – completely agree' following the statements 'This speaker sounds like a native speaker of English', 'This speaker has a strong foreign accent in English', and 'This speaker sounds like a native speaker of American English' (based on Jesney, 2004; Hendriks et al., 2018). The reliability of the three items was excellent: $\alpha = .90$.
- Voice character was measured with seven-point Likert scales anchored by 'completely disagree – completely agree' following the statements 'This speaker sounds confident', 'This speaker sounds natural', and 'This speaker sounds pleasant'. The reliability of the three items was satisfying: $\alpha = .76$.
- Identification of the speaker's origin was measured by the question: 'Please indicate which country you think the speaker is from'.
- Intelligibility was measured with a 7-point semantic differential scale based on Hendriks et al. (2018) and Munro et al. (2006). The scale was with a few sentences started with the statement "I think this speaker is..." anchored by the following statements: 'Very easy to understand - Very difficult to understand', 'Hard to understand - Effortless to understand', 'Uncomplicated to understand - Complicated to understand', 'Rather simple to understand - Rather tough to understand', 'Demanding to understand - Undemanding to understand'. The reliability of the five items was very good: $\alpha = .92$.
- Perceived comprehensibility was measured with a 7-point Likert scale from 'completely disagree' to 'completely agree' (based on Munro et al., 2006). The sub-criteria statements were based on Likert Scales introduced by Hendriks et al. (2016), Munro et al (2006), and Nejari et al. (2020): 'I have to listen very carefully to the speaker', 'The speaker speaks clearly', 'the speaker is barely intelligible', 'The speaker is difficult to

comprehend', 'I have problems understanding what the speaker is talking about', 'I do not understand what the speaker means'. The reliability of the three items was good: $\alpha = .83$.

- Attitudinal evaluations were with three sub-criteria, including likability, status, and competence. Each of the sub-criteria was measured with a 7-point Likert scale anchored from 'completely disagree' to 'completely agree' based on Bayard et al. (2001), Nejjari et al. (2012), Hendriks et al. (2018), and Nejjari et al. (2020). Each sub-criteria started with "In my opinion, the speaker sounds...". Likability was measured with eight adjectives: 'credible', 'sympathetic', 'warm', 'humoristic', 'tactful', 'polite', 'irritating' (reverse coded), 'unfriendly' (reverse coded) ($\alpha = .78$). Status was measured with five adjectives: 'authoritative', 'trustworthy', 'self-confident', 'influential', 'has a powerful voice' ($\alpha = .78$). Competence was measured with five adjectives: 'reliable', 'intelligent', 'competent', 'hardworking', 'educated' ($\alpha = .89$).
- Hirability was measured with a 7-point Likert scale, which was based on Roessel et al. (2017) and anchored from 'completely disagree' to 'completely agree'. The five items for sub-measurement were: 'I would recommend employing this job applicant', 'I have a very positive impression of the job applicant', 'I have a very negative impression of the job applicant' (reverse coded), 'The job applicant is professionally qualified', 'The job applicant is not professionally qualified' (reverse coded). The reliability of "hirability" comprising five items was good: $\alpha = .88$.

The self-assessed English proficiency of the listener was measured as one of the background variables to take into consideration while we conducted this research. Self-assessed English proficiency was measured with four 7-point semantic differentials anchored by 'poor - excellent' (based on Krishna & Alhuwalia, 2008; Beinhoff, 2014). The four items started with "Please indicate how proficient you are in..." and the following areas were 'reading English', 'writing English', 'speaking English', 'listening to English' ($\alpha = .86$).

Procedure

The questionnaire was delivered in English and was framed and implemented by using the online survey tools Qualtrics. The participants were approached through department emails and social media platforms and were randomly assigned into four groups. All listeners first read a brief introduction (Appendix A), in which they had to give consent for their data to be used in this research by stating 'I Agree'. Participants were informed to turn on the sound and preferably wear headphones. They were not informed of the main purpose of this study, nor did they know about the origin of the sample speaker. They were only told that they would listen to one job pitch recording (Appendix B), and they had to evaluate how much they would like to hire the speaker based on several criteria (Appendix C).

The overall procedure was no more than 10 minutes. All listeners were assigned randomly into four groups: (1) American-accent with prejudice control; (2) American-accent without prejudice control; (3) Dutch-accent with prejudice control; (4) Dutch-accent without prejudice control. After listening to the two fragments of the job pitch, the participants had to fill in the questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire, participants had to provide information about their age, gender, and nationality. They also had to confirm if they were HR-related working persons or students. If the participants were students, they had to mention if they have been doing a Bachelor, Pre-Master, or Master, year of study, whether they did an internship or not. Both working persons and students had to provide their self-assessed English proficiency before listening to samples.

3. Results

The main purpose of this study is to investigate if non-native accentedness will lead to a more negative hiring decision compared with a native American accent. The second purpose is to observe if the biased effect of non-native accentedness might be reduced on Dutch HR-related listeners should prejudice control is provided at the beginning of a job pitch. An additional investigation on listeners' age as a background variable was conducted to find out if more working experience would result in more biased hiring decisions towards the non-native Dutch-accented speaker.

3.1 Recognition of accentedness: Manipulation check

An independent samples t-test showed a significant difference between the American speaker and Dutch-accented speaker concerning foreign accentedness in

their pitch recordings ($t(135.94) = 19.94, p < .001$). As shown in Table 1, the Dutch-accented speaker ($M = 1.71, SD = 0.98$) was evaluated as having a stronger foreign accent than the American speaker ($M = 5.38, SD = 1.20$). The Dutch-accented speaker was in turn evaluated as having a stronger foreign accent than the native speaker.

Table 1. Means, SDs, and N for perceived foreign accentedness in AmE and Dutch-accented English sample recordings (1= strong foreign accent; 7 = no foreign accent)

	AmE	Dutch
M (SD)	5.38 (1.20)	1.71 (0.98)
N	72	70

3.2 Identification of the origin of the speaker

As recognition of a speaker's country of origin can affect how the speaker is evaluated, listeners were asked to point out the origin of the speaker. A T-Test was conducted and showed that most listeners identified the speakers' country of origin correctly. More than half of Dutch listeners correctly identified the country of origin of the American speaker (59.7%), many identified the speaker as from other native English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland (12.5%). The majority of Dutch listeners correctly identified the origin of Dutch-accented speakers (97.1%).

Table 2. Absolute and relative frequencies for Dutch Participants' identification of speaker origin

Dutch			AmE		
Correct	Incorrect	Total	Correct	Incorrect	Total
N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
68 (97.1%)	2 (2.8 %)	70 (100%)	43 (59.7%)	29 (41.3%)	72 (100%)

3.3 Evaluation of speakers

In general, the data overview of this research showed that the native speaker was evaluated more positively than the non-native Dutch-accented speaker on all variables, including hirability, understandability, and attitudinal evaluations.

3.4 Understandability

Actual intelligibility of the speakers. A two-way ANOVA with accentedness and the presence of a prejudice control text as factors showed a significant main effect of accentedness ($F(1, 138) = 44.14, p < .001$) on perceived comprehensibility. The American English accent ($M = 5.48, SD = 0.88$) was perceived to be significantly more comprehensible than the Dutch English accent ($M = 4.39, SD = 1.12$). There was no significant main effect of the presence of a prejudice control text ($F(1, 138) = 2.70, p = .103$) on perceived comprehensibility. The interaction effect between accentedness and the presence of a prejudice control text was not significant ($F(1, 138) < 1$). The reliability of “intelligibility” comprising five items was satisfying: $\alpha = .83$.

Perceived comprehensibility of the speakers. A two-way ANOVA with accentedness and the presence of a prejudice control text as factors showed a significant main effect of accentedness ($F(1, 138) = 4.87, p = .029$) on perceived intelligibility. The American English accent ($M = 4.60, SD = 1.29$) was judged as significantly more intelligible than the Dutch English accent ($M = 4.15, SD = 1.38$). There was no significant main effect of the presence of a prejudice control text ($F(1, 138) = 1.55, p = .215$) on perceived intelligibility. There was no interaction effect between the two independent variables ($F(1, 138) = 1.70, p = .194$). The reliability of “comprehensibility” comprising six items was good: $\alpha = .92$.

Table 3. Means, SDs, and number for perceived comprehensibility and intelligibility in the function of accent type and presence of a prejudice control text (1 = low, 7 = high)

	Prejudice control measure			No prejudice control measure			Total		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	n
<i>Comprehensibility</i>									
American English	5.71	0.79	31	5.30	0.91	41	5.48	0.88	72
Dutch English	4.45	1.16	40	4.30	1.09	30	4.39	1.12	70

Total	5.00	1.19	71	4.88	1.10	71	4.94	1.14	142
<i>Intelligibility</i>									
American English	4.93	1.08	31	4.36	1.39	41	4.60	1.29	72
Dutch English	4.14	1.24	40	4.15	1.57	30	4.15	1.38	70
Total	4.48	1.23	71	4.27	1.46	71	4.38	1.35	142

3.5 Impressions of the speaker

There were three two-way ANOVA conducted for the three attitudinal variables: Likability, Status, and competence. The first two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of type of accent on the likeability of the speaker with the type of accent ($F(1, 138) = 13.49, p < .001$), but there was no main effect on the likeability of the speaker concerning the presence of prejudice control ($F(1, 138) = 1.06, p = .306$). The interaction effect between the two independent variables was not significant ($F(1, 138) < 1$). The American-accented speaker ($M = 4.84, SD = 0.91$) was judged significantly more likeable than the Dutch-accented speaker ($M = 4.33, SD = 0.77$). The reliability of “likeability” comprising eight items was adequate: $\alpha = .78$.

The second two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of type of accent on the status of the speakers ($F(1, 138) = 109.09, p < .001$). There was no main effect of the presence of prejudice control on the status of the speakers ($F(1, 138) < 1$). The interaction effect between the two independent variables was not significant ($F(1, 138) < 1$), either. The American English speaker ($M = 5.05, SD = 0.79$) was judged to have significantly more status than the Dutch English speaker ($M = 3.63, SD = 0.80, p < .001$). The reliability of “status” comprising five items was adequate: $\alpha = .78$.

The third two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of type of accent on the competence of the speakers ($F(1, 138) = 107.89, p < .001$), but there was no main effect of the presence of prejudice control on the competence of the speakers ($F(1, 119) < 1$). The interaction effect between the two independent variables was not significant ($F(1, 138) < 1$). The American English accent ($M = 5.76, SD = 0.69$) was judged to have significantly more status than the Dutch English accent ($M = 4.21, SD = 1.04, p < .001$). The reliability of “competence” comprising five items was good: $\alpha = .89$.

Table 4. Means, SDs, and number of participants for likeability, status, and competence concerning type of accent and prejudice control

	Prejudice control measure			No prejudice control measure			Total		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	n
<i>Likeability</i>									
American English	4.94	1.00	31	4.77	0.85	41	4.84	0.91	72
Dutch English	4.39	0.78	40	4.26	0.77	30	4.33	0.77	70
Total	4.63	0.92	71	4.55	0.85	71	4.59	0.88	142
<i>Status</i>									
American English	5.12	0.64	31	5.00	0.89	41	5.05	0.79	72
Dutch English	3.58	0.86	40	3.70	0.73	30	3.63	0.80	70
Total	4.25	1.10	71	4.45	1.04	71	4.35	1.07	142
<i>Competence</i>									
American English	5.81	0.69	31	5.72	0.69	41	5.76	0.69	72
Dutch English	4.24	0.99	40	4.19	1.12	30	4.21	1.04	70
Total	4.92	1.17	71	5.07	1.17	71	5.00	1.17	142

3.6 Hirability

A two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect on the hirability of the speakers with regards to type of accent ($F(1, 138) = 29.60, p < .001$). There was no main effect of the presence of prejudice control on the hirability of the speakers ($F(1, 138) < 1, p = .998$). The interaction effect between the two independent variables was not significant ($F(1, 138) < 1, p = .664$). The American English accent ($M = 4.14, SD = 0.42$) was judged to have significantly more status than the Dutch English accent ($M = 3.78, SD = 0.34, p < .001$). The reliability of “hirability” comprising five items was good: $\alpha = .88$.

Table 5. Means, SDs, and number of participants for hirability concerning type of accent and prejudice control

Hirability	Prejudice control measure			No prejudice control measure			Total		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	n	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	n
American English	4.12	0.35	36	4.15	0.46	36	4.14	0.42	72
Dutch English	3.80	0.37	35	3.77	0.29	35	3.78	0.39	70
Total	3.94	0.40	71	3.99	0.45	71	3.96	0.42	142

3.7 Work Experience

A two-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect on the hirability of the speakers with regards to work experience ($F(1, 138) = 45.26, p < .001$). There was no main effect of the presence of work experience on the hirability of the speakers ($F(1, 138) < 1, p = .998$). The interaction effect between accentedness and work experience was not significant ($F(1, 138) < 1, p = .67$). The American English accent ($M = 5.29, SD = 0.94$) was judged to have significantly higher hirability than the Dutch English accent ($M = 4.15, SD = 1.08, p < .001$).

4. Conclusion and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how American and Dutch-accented English speakers can be evaluated differently in the hiring process by their accents. The second aim was to see if prejudice control may work as a functional device to reduce the potential bias caused by accent. The third purpose was to suggest if listeners with more working experience were possibly less affected by accentedness during a job interview. From the results, a conclusion can be drawn that the native American speaker was evaluated generally more positively than Dutch-accented speaker on attitudinal scores: competence, status, likeability, hirability. For the second hypothesis, prejudice control was somehow not making a difference to the results on all variables. The third hypothesis was not proved, either, for there was no significant difference on all dependent variables concerning less or more working experience.

4.1 Recognition of Accentedness

The Dutch listeners were able to recognize both the American and the Dutch speaker's accents. AmE speaker was evaluated as having a less strong foreign accent than the

Dutch-accented speaker. Since a previous study suggested that non-native listeners with a relatively higher English proficiency were better at recognizing the varying levels of non-native English accents (Hendriks et al., 2021), this study manipulated the variable “English proficiency” and ensured there was no difference concerning English proficiency among four groups of Dutch listeners.

4.2 Identification of the origin of the speaker

Regarding the identification of the origin of the speaker, findings showed that most participants were able to accurately identify the origin of both speakers. The Dutch-accented speaker was recognized more correctly as from the Netherlands than the American speaker being recognized as from the US. The exceeding rate of recognizing Dutch-accented English might be due to Dutch listeners' familiarity with the accent. This finding is following Hendriks et al. (2021), who found that Dutch listeners were better at identifying speakers with a similar linguistic accent.

This “similar-to-me” effect was indicated to impact the evaluation of the speakers in the employment interview (Goldberg, 2005; Sears & Rowe, 2003), so this study tried to exclude this mediator from the listeners' group by selecting only native Dutch listeners. Although reducing the impact on the listener groups, similarity might still play a role in the evaluation of the speaker in the current study. The finding showed that Dutch-accented speaker was evaluated generally less positively than the native AmE speaker was by Dutch listeners. The similarity led to better recognition of the speaker's origin, yet it could lead to negative results due to “vicarious shame”, which was suggested by Schmader and Lickel (2006).

4.3 Evaluation on accented speaker

The findings showed that Dutch-accented speaker was evaluated more negatively than American speaker on intelligibility, comprehensibility, and the attitudinal evaluations (competence, status, likeability, hirability). The findings were in line with what Fuertes et al. (2012) found: even in different L2 speaking countries, native-accented speakers were rated significantly higher than the non-native accented speakers. Although non-standard accents could have “covert prestige” (Trudgill, 1974) in informal occasions such as sporting activities or a street playground, native standard accents were more favored within more formal settings such as recruiting situations (Fuertes et al., 2012).

4.4 Perceived intelligibility (understandability) and actual comprehension

The findings showed that the native American speaker was considered more intelligent and more comprehensible than the Dutch-accented speaker. The findings echo with Lippi-Green's study (1997) that speakers with a non-native accent might result in a negative judgment on the person's communication skills, which is about expressing ideas clearly to the listener. The speaker's communication skills mentioned by Lippi-Green is what we defined as "perceived intelligibility" in this study. Several previous research discoveries had different views and suggested there was not necessarily a difference between native and non-native accents concerning intelligibility (Hendriks et al., 2021), and that native speech does not benefit in intelligibility (Nejjari et al., 2012; 2020).

In addition to the speaker's intelligibility, non-native listeners' perceived comprehensibility on the non-native speakers were also considered in this study. Native AmE speaker was evaluated as more comprehensible and non-native Dutch-accented less comprehensible. This finding is in line with what Hendriks et al. (2021) found, who suggested that Dutch listeners evaluated the non-native speakers lower in comprehensibility. When the non-native accented speakers were less understood, they were thus evaluated more negatively on the attitudinal scores by Dutch listeners. Several previous studies also mentioned that especially for non-native speakers, people tended to exaggerate the negative connection between comprehensibility on the speakers and the speaker's disfluency in English (Dovidio & Gluszek, 2012; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Thus it seems that non-native Dutch-accented speaker was considered by Dutch listeners as less understandable in either intelligibility or perceived comprehensibility.

4.5 Attitudes towards the speaker

The current findings indicated that for Dutch listeners, native American speaker was evaluated higher and more positively on competence, status, likability, and hirability when the recording contexts are given were the same and when the voice characteristics were controlled. As mentioned previously, a non-standard accent might be favored in informal settings, but in formal situations such as a job interview, a non-native accent can be less valued. In the research conducted by Roessel et al. (2017) on German listeners, it was sadly concluded that accent did matter to the degree that the speech content was not important. Deprez-Sims and Morris (2010) also proved that

for native listeners, the hirability of native-accented applicants was rated higher than the non-native applicants. This study further confirmed what was found by Fuertes et al.(2012) that in an employment situation, non-native listeners prefer to hire speakers with native accents more. Also, compared to the non-native Dutch accent, the native AmE accent was proved to be viewed as more competent, with higher status, and more liked by Dutch listeners.

4.6 Prejudice Control

The second aim of this study is to investigate if prejudice control could reduce the negative effect on non-native accentedness in the recruiting process. There was no significant difference found on any of the dependent variables regarding the presence of prejudice control. This finding is very different from what was shown in the previous studies that prejudice control could effectively reduce discriminatory tendencies on effect and competence and thus reduced biased judgment on hirability (Roessel et al. 2012; 2017).

One of the possible reasons for the contrasting findings might be the fact that the participants were mostly German students from Psychology and Social Science majors, but this study focuses more on Dutch students from Human Resource majors and working persons. The more specific major and more emphasized focus on the recruiting industry in this study provides a different viewpoint on the effect brought by accentedness. Since the Netherlands has been considered as the most international country in Europe, Dutch have likely been confident about their non-biased judgment. However, this confidence might be overconfidence. Dutch listeners might be so confident that they would not be biased by accents and thus paid less attention to the prejudice control.

4.7 Effects of Working Experience

An additional variable was examined to discover if more working experience leads to a stronger effect of accent in the hiring process. To categorize the listener groups based on their working experience, the listeners' were split into two groups based on their data of age. Listeners under 23 were included in one group, which is the age that most Dutch university students graduate or at least with only one or two-year actual full-time working experience. Listeners older than 23 were included in another group, which is the age that most Dutch have gained more working experience or have

accumulated some recruiting experience. The third hypothesis was not confirmed since there was no significant difference in the effect of accent between the group with less working experience and the group with more working experience. Both groups evaluated the native American speaker higher in hirability than the non-native Dutch-accented speaker. The finding seemed to suggest that more working experience may not be beneficial for reducing potential bias regarding non-native accents in the hiring process.

4.8 Contribution of this study

The first contribution of this study is that for native Dutch HR students and working persons, the non-native Dutch accent was evaluated more negatively than the American speaker of native accent. It further confirmed that in the recruiting process, the American accent was generally preferred and considered to have more opportunity to be hired by Dutch listeners, who are themselves one of the English user groups with a non-native accent. The second contribution of this study is that regardless of the presence of prejudice control, non-native Dutch-accented speaker was evaluated less positively compared to the native-accented American speaker. Dutch people's negative evaluation of the Dutch accent might be so solid that even the prejudice control could not make a difference. The third contribution is that working experience does not make a difference in the negative effect on the Dutch-accented speaker. It can be suggested, sadly, that working experience does not reduce the bias on non-native accents in the recruiting process.

4.9 Practical Implications

This study confirmed that Dutch listeners tended to evaluate the Dutch-accented speaker more negatively than the American-accented speaker in the recruiting process. One possible reason might be the Dutch people are more sensitive to the non-native accent, especially critically sensitive to the Dutch accent (Hendriks et al., 2017). Another possible reason for this finding could be that Dutch listeners have generally positive feelings towards Americans than towards Dutch people. This positively biased feeling towards Americans could be based on their experience encountering Americans. Most Americans living or working in the Netherlands might be more friendly, more tolerant, and more of a team player, for they have to learn to adapt to a foreign environment in work. They might be more patient in communicating with Dutch people and are more willing to understand Dutch culture. Compared with the

positive experience working with Americans, Dutch people might experience more negative experiences with other native Dutch speakers in their life. Thus, the Americans might be generally viewed better than the average Dutch people.

Other interesting discoveries were that neither prejudice control nor work experience could reduce Dutch listeners' unconscious bias towards strong Dutch accents. The unfunctional of prejudice control on Dutch listeners could occur that most Dutch speakers consider themselves as open-minded and are overconfident that they do not fall into the trap of prejudice. This study implies that that HR training in the Netherlands might need to include more practices to raise awareness of prejudice and on reducing accentedness bias. Concerning work experience, it is somehow surprising to find that inexperienced HR students could make decisions not significantly different from experienced working persons. This finding seems to suggest that work experience neither increases nor reduces the accentedness bias in recruiting process.

4.10 Limitation and suggestions for future research

There are several limitations to this study, which are discussed as follows. First, our sample recordings were limited to native Dutch-accentedness and American-accentedness. A previous research result showed that the Dutch accent was considered more favorable than the German accent (Hendriks et al., 2018) and was as comprehensible and likable as native accents (Hendriks et al., 2021). This implies that other non-native accentedness might be evaluated even more negatively than the Dutch speaker in this study. In addition, American accentedness was evaluated as more preferred than British accentedness (Bayard et al., 2001; Fuertes et al., 2012;). Given the evidence that there was a potential difference between an American accent and a Dutch accent and that the Dutch-accented speaker was evaluated more negatively in the recruiting process, future studies should investigate further into the potential different evaluations between British accentedness and Dutch accentedness in a job interview.

A second limitation was that the voice characteristics of the paired speakers in the actual questionnaire were not equal. As the stimulus materials for the pretest consisted of relatively shorter audio fragments, the fragments in the pretest might be judged more comprehensible. Therefore, the difference between the paired speakers was not as significant as it could be in the longer fragments in the actual questionnaire. Jensen and Thøgersen's research (2017) indeed found that non-native speakers could

be judged as intelligible as native speakers in shorter speech fragments than in longer fragments.

A third limitation was the application of prejudice control only in the recruiting context. Roessel et al. (2012; 2017) found that prejudice control worked on German listeners effectively, but why is it not effective on Dutch listeners? Could it be because Germans are more aware of prejudice because they are often criticized as with prejudice and bias, while Dutch people may not be aware of their stereotypes because they are generally considered as less prejudiced? This research gap between German listeners and Dutch listeners concerning the function of prejudice control is also interesting to probe further. Also, the implementation of prejudice control might work differently when applying to other non-native speakers from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds, or when applying to other communication contexts. The potential advantages and disadvantages were not yet widely discussed in the current researches, hence it is a research gap to be investigated further in future research.

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Appendix A.

Instruction

We are interested in the evaluation of human resource students on job pitches. It is important that you turn on the sound of your device to make sure you are able to hear the audio fragment. Furthermore, it is advised to wear headphone. You can listen to the audio fragment only once.

Cover story (Roessel et al. 2019): *Position is Retail manager (based on Nejjari et al. 2020)*

You will be listening to an audio recording of a job applicant, who is applying for a Retail Manager position at a multinational with its headquarters in the Netherlands. For reasons of internationalisation, the process was conducted in English.

Appendix B

Text Job Pitch

I am a seasoned Retail Manager with lots of experience in the development of employee training programs and loss prevention techniques which have resulted in savings of over 3 Million during the past decade of my career. The greatest strengths I possess are my endurance and willpower. I never give up. In the many years I have worked in this industry, I found that my work is most successful when I am involved in every step of the product cycle, from the initial contact, to the closing speech and congratulatory handshakes at the end of a project. In my previous positions, I have always tried to be as involved with the project as I am with the employees that contribute to it. However, one could say that a weakness of mine is that I have the tendency to overanalyze a situation or product. Sometimes, I take too much time trying to find the right strategy for a sale, and in the end, find that my initial plan was the one to go for. I am rather enthusiastic about your company and the position that has become vacant, as I think I could learn a lot as well as add a lot to your company.

Appendix C.

Questionnaire

Informed consent text

Prejudice control for 2 out of 4 conditions

Attention: The following organization stresses a diverse workforce and working environment. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, gender identity or expression, ethnicity and accentedness. Please consider this when listening to the following audio recording and try not to base your evaluations on feelings or stereotypes that might be evoked during the audio fragment.

Background variables

Age

Gender

Mother tongue

Confirmation HR student

Indication bachelor or master student

Year of study

Indication internship

Self-assessed English proficiency level (7-point semantic differentials)

Reading

1. Poor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Excellent

Writing

2. Poor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Excellent

Speaking

3. Poor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Excellent

Listening

4. Poor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Excellent

Audio recordings

Understanding of the message

Intelligibility (7-point semantic differentials)

‘I think this speaker is...’

1. Very easy to understand 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very difficult to understand

6. Polite
7. Irritating
8. Unfriendly

Status

Completely disagree, Mostly, Somewhat, Neutral, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely agree

‘In my opinion, the speaker sounds...’

1. Authoritative
2. Trustworthy
3. Self-confident
4. Influential
5. Like they have a powerful voice

Competence

Completely disagree, Mostly, Somewhat, Neutral, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely agree

‘In my opinion, the speaker sounds...’

1. Reliable
2. Intelligent
3. Competent
4. Hardworking
5. Educated

Hirability (7-point Likert scales)

Completely disagree, Mostly, Somewhat, Neutral, Somewhat, Mostly, Completely agree

1. 'I would recommend employing this job applicant.'
2. 'I have a very positive impression of the job applicant.'
3. 'I have a very negative impression of the job applicant'
4. 'The job applicant is professionally qualified.'
5. 'The job applicant is not professionally qualified.'