

**Non-humorous and humorous self-disclosure of accents:
their effects on the evaluations of French accented
speakers of English during a job interview**

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Abstract

The internationalization of companies has led to different nationalities at the workplace who often speak English with each other, hence different accents. Previous research has shown that a moderate foreign accent is perceived more negatively than a slight or native accent. This was proven to be a problem also during job interviews. The purpose of the present study was to investigate how humorous and non-humorous self-disclosure influence the negative evaluations of slightly and moderately French accented speakers of English in a hiring context in terms of hireability, comprehensibility and attitudinal evaluations. In an experiment, 168 people with a mother tongue other than English and French evaluated audio fragments recorded by a speaker with both a slight and a moderate French accent in English. The participants heard one of the two accent strengths and one of the three self-disclosing comments (no comment, humorous, non-humorous). Findings showed that the self-disclosing comments, both humorous and non-humorous, did not affect the evaluations of the French accented speaker of English for both the moderate and the slight accent. Only accent strength did have an effect on the evaluations of the speaker. The slight French accent was rated higher on comprehensibility and hireability than the moderate French accent, a finding with which previous findings can be extended to a listener group with a different mother tongue than the speaker and the language the speaker was talking in. Furthermore, a self-disclosing comment might work if listeners pay attention to the comment, which in the current study was not the case for all participants.

Introduction

As a result of globalization companies are getting more and more international. English often functions as a lingua franca, a common language between speakers whose native languages are different, in these international business settings. Different nationalities using English lead to different non-standard accents in the workplace. People with a non-standard accent pronounce a language in a distinctive way, based on the geographical region or social class they are from (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010). Just as age, gender, ethnicity and skin colour, accents may be a cause of employment discrimination (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010). Therefore, investigating the influence of non-native accents in the workplace is essential.

Non-standard accent discrimination is a common phenomenon. Fuertes et al. (2012) analysed existing literature on the impact of speakers' accents on interpersonal evaluations. The results showed that standard accented speakers were rated higher than non-standard accented speakers on dimensions as status (intelligence, social class), dynamism (degree of activity and liveliness) and solidarity (trustworthiness, in-group–outgroup-member). In-group-outgroup-member refers to whether listeners consider non-standard accented speakers to be part of the group the listener psychologically identifies with or not.

It is important to note that not all accents are discriminated against in the same way. Grondelaers et al. (2019) looked at the effect of accent strength on native speaker evaluations of regional accents within Netherlandic Standard Dutch. They found that the Limburgian accent, which generally has a lower prestige than Netherlandic Standard Dutch, was rated higher on superiority when it was mild compared to when it was strong, while the Randstad accent, which normally has a higher prestige, was rated lower on superiority when it was strong compared to when it was mild. Thus, accent strength influenced the evaluations, not the prestige of the accent. Degree of accentedness also plays a role in the evaluation of non-native English speakers. The findings by the study of Hendriks et al. (2018) revealed that the evaluations of lecturers with a slight Dutch or German accent were comparable to those of lecturers with a native English accent, while lecturers with a moderate Dutch or German accent were evaluated less positively than lecturers with a slight non-native or native English accent. The lecturers were evaluated on competence, likeability, teaching quality, intelligibility and understandability. Similar results were found when the speakers were judged only by listeners of the same mother tongue (Roessel et al., 2019). German accented speakers of English with a

strong accent were evaluated worse on hireability by German participants than German accented speakers of English with a slight accent.

Luckily, accent-based discrimination is not a fatality. Several studies investigated how to prevent accent discrimination by changing the behaviour of listeners. In a study by Weyant (2007) the participants listened to an audio recording of either a native speaker of English or a non-native speaker of English, in this case a Spanish accented English speaker. They were instructed to write a paragraph about the speaker, and the experimental group got additional instructions to take the perspective of the speaker. The results showed that the participants who took the perspective of the Spanish accented English speaker rated her higher on ability and accomplishment than the participants who did not take her perspective. However, the participants asked to take the perspective of the speaker could have rated her more positively because of social desirability. Since they were asked to take her perspective, they could have thought that they were expected to rate her positively. To avoid social desirability effects, Hansen et al. (2014) let the participants of the experimental group talk in a foreign language to a confederate before the experiment took place, while the participants in the control group did not talk in a foreign language beforehand. In the experiment the participants had to evaluate eight job candidates with either a native or a non-native accent. The results showed that the participants in the experimental condition did not discriminate against the non-standard accented job applicants, while the control group did.

Although the method of Hansen et al. (2014) is effective, it is difficult to apply to a real-life job interview. Therefore, it is important to look as well how accent-based discrimination can be reduced from the speakers' side. However, the existing methods are limited. One study tried to reduce prejudice against stuttering by altering the monologue of the speaker (Healey et al., 2007). The authors examined whether the evaluation of a male adult who stutters changed with the use of self-disclosure, thus making a remark beforehand or afterwards about his stutter. The results showed that self-disclosure did not make a difference in how the listeners perceived the speaker with regard to the characteristics likeability, sincerity, trustworthiness, character and emotional adjustment. It was only found that the speaker was perceived to be friendlier if he disclosed his stutter at the end of his monologue than if he did not disclose his stutter. These results might be due to the fact that only one speaker was evaluated. It could be that the stuttering speaker was not discriminated against in the first place, hence an absence of effect of the intervention. Although self-disclosure did not generally affect the evaluation of the stutterer, it is an interesting method to investigate with respect to accentedness. Speakers might be

perceived differently by listeners if they acknowledge beforehand that they have an accent. In this way accent discrimination could be reduced.

The potential positive effect of a self-disclosing comment could be reinforced by the use of humor. There are a number of studies that looked at how humor can be beneficial at the workplace, and some of them looked specifically at job interviews. Romero and Cruthirds (2006) defined organizational humor as “amusing communications that produce positive emotions and cognitions in the individual, group, or organization.” The main role of humor is to express solidarity and to convey a positive self-image (Rogerson-Revell, 2007). According to Grindsted (1997), another function of humor is to relieve tension. Job interviews can be stressful, especially when the applicant is nervous, for example about their accent. Making a joke about a stressful situation can create control over it (Henman, 2001). Bitterly et al. (2017) researched how the use of humor, whether it is successful or not, influences the perceived competence and confidence of the speaker who uses it. The results showed that jokes, even the unsuccessful ones, positively influenced perceptions of confidence. However, only the successful jokes positively influenced the perceptions of competence and status. The authors also discovered that unsuccessful humor attempts can harm competence and status, thus humor can also be risky to use. Besides stress relief, humour can have a different function in job interviews. Van de Mieroop and Schnurr (2018) looked at humor in a hiring context and examined if it can establish co-membership and create shared identities with the recruiter, since these are recognized as useful methods to increase hiring success (Kerekes, 2006; Lipovsky, 2008). The findings revealed that in case of self-defeating humor (making fun of oneself) the recruiters reacted positively to the use of humor in job interviews and that it helped to claim co-membership with them. However, in the case of boundary marking humor (making fun of an absent person/group) the use of humor failed, which could potentially have led to negative effects concerning the creation of shared identities.

Humor might also contribute to reducing accent-based discrimination. Bitterly and Schweitzer (2019) examined how humor can lighten the harmful effects of disclosing negative information on perceptions of warmth and competence. They mainly focused on a hiring context in which the job candidates had to disclose negative information. The findings demonstrated that the participants perceived the job candidates as warmer and more competent when humor was used to disclose negative information compared to when no humor was used or when giving negative information was refused. Although Bitterly and Schweitzer (2019) did not focus on accents, their method of using humor for disclosing negative information could also be useful for reducing accent discrimination, since having a stronger accent can be seen as

a negative trait (Deprez-Morris & Sims, 2010; Fuertes et al., 2012; Hendriks et al., 2018; Roessel et al., 2019; Spence et al., 2022).

As mentioned before, humor can also be risky if it is not perceived as funny. Therefore it is important to know what type of humor is beneficial to use during job interviews for people with a non-native accent in English. Romero and Cruthirds (2006) discussed different types of humor in the workplace and self-defeating humor would be the most applicable in job interviews. The other types of humor named by Romero and Cruthirds (2006) are more useful in the workplace to strengthen relationships with colleagues, hence they are less useful in a hiring context. With self-defeating humor people make fun of themselves in order to amuse and look for acceptance from others. With this type of humor people can neutralize negative information about themselves (Bitterly & Wood Brooks, 2020). People with an accent do not want to be negatively viewed and want to be accepted, therefore self-defeating humor could be a good tactic for reducing accent discrimination. In the present study we want to investigate if next to neutral self-disclosure, humorous self-disclosure can have an effect on the evaluations of job candidates with a non-standard accent.

Indeed, having a foreign accent in a job interview can lower the candidate's chance to get hired (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010; Roessel et al., 2019; Spence et al., 2022). Firstly, Deprez-Sims & Morris (2010) found that job applicants with a French accent were evaluated less positively on hireability than job applicants with a Colombian or Midwestern United States accent. Secondly, the results of the meta-analysis conducted by Spence et al. (2022) revealed that the standard accent influenced hireability more positively than the non-standard accent. Lastly, the findings of the study by Roessel et al. (2019) showed that the moderately accented speaker was rated lower on hireability than the slightly accented speaker. Having a job has certain benefits next to financial stability, such as obtaining societal status and recognition, socializing, having a work-life balance, contributing to a higher collective purpose and activation (Jahoda, 1982). Unemployment, and thus a lack of these benefits, affects the mental health negatively (Selenko et al., 2020). Accent discrimination during a job interview might lead to rejection of people with a non-standard accent and it could in general also influence their position in the job market and in life.

Besides hireability, a number of variables have been shown to be influenced by accentedness of the speaker. Previous research has shown that non-native accents may interfere with the comprehensibility of the speaker (Deprez-Morris & Sims, 2010; Hendriks et al., 2018; Roessel et al., 2019; Spence et al., 2022). Furthermore, the findings of the meta-analysis by Fuertes et al. (2012) revealed that speakers with a non-standard accent were rated lower on

status and dynamism than speakers with a standard accent. Spence et al. (2022) found that status even moderated the accent-based hiring bias. Thus, the more status the standard-accented job candidate was perceived to have compared to the non-standard-accented job candidate, the more hireable the standard-accented candidate was perceived to be compared to the non-standard accented candidate. Lastly, lecturers with a moderate non-native accent were evaluated more negatively by students on competence and likeability than lecturers with a slight non-native accent or native English accent (Hendriks et al., 2016, 2018). Since these dimensions and comprehensibility have been negatively affected by accent, they are interesting to investigate in the current study in order to see if self-disclosing comments can alter these negative evaluations.

In line with the considerations discussed above, the current study aims to answer the following research question:

RQ1: To what extent does a humorous disclosing speaker comment influence the negative evaluations of a slightly and moderately non-native French accented speaker of English in a hiring context in terms of perceived hireability, comprehensibility and attitudinal evaluations?

There has been no research on the effect of neutral self-disclosure on the evaluations of non-native accented speakers of English. Healey et al. (2007) examined if self-disclosure influenced the evaluations of stutterers, however the results showed that it did not make a difference in the evaluations compared to when no self-disclosure was used. Since neutral self-disclosure might not have an effect, we proposed the first research question on whether a humorous self-disclosing comment could have an influence on the evaluations of the speaker. However, given that previous research investigated stuttering and not accent-based discrimination, we cannot hypothesize about the effect of neutral self-disclosure. Therefore, we propose a second research question:

RQ2: To what extent does a non-humorous disclosing speaker comment influence the negative evaluations of a slightly and moderately non-native French accented speaker of English in a hiring context in terms of perceived hireability, comprehensibility and attitudinal evaluations?

Germanic accents such as German and Dutch have often been investigated (Hendriks et al., 2018; Nejjari et al., 2020; Roessel et al., 2019). In the study by Nejjari et al. (2020), Dutch accented English was evaluated as positively as British and American accented English on the

dimensions of status, affect and dynamism. This could be due to the fact that Dutch and English are both Germanic languages and that therefore they are more comparable in terms of accent properties such as phonetics and prosody. Since the French accent is investigated less frequently and since it is phonetically and prosodically more distant than English compared to Germanic languages, this accent will be used for the current investigation.

Regarding the listener group, the focus will be on participants with a mother tongue other than English and French. Firstly, Hendriks et al. (2021) found that the native English participants did not experience difficulties in understanding the moderate and slight non-native accent in English of the speakers. Furthermore, Hendriks et al. (2021) explained that the similar evaluations of the speakers' attitudes by the native English participants could be a result of their absence of comprehensibility problems. Since native English speakers might not differentiate between the moderate and slight non-native French accent in English, they are less suitable for the present study. Secondly, participants with the same mother tongue as the speaker are more likely to be biased towards the speaker (Hendriks et al. 2016). Therefore, native French speakers will also be excluded from the present research.

Additionally, two hypotheses were drawn up. Since moderately accented speakers are evaluated less positively than slightly accented speakers (Grondelaers et al., 2019; Hendriks et al., 2018; Roessel et al., 2019), the first hypothesis is as follows:

H1: The moderately non-native French accented speaker of English will be evaluated less positively on the dimensions hireability, comprehensibility and attitudinal evaluations than the slightly non-native French accented speaker of English when no self-disclosing comment is used.

Moreover, humorous self-disclosure of negative information had a positive effect on perceptions of warmth and competence of the speaker (Bitterly and Schweitzer, 2019). Therefore, the thought is that humorous self-disclosure will help moderately accented speakers to be evaluated similarly as slightly accented speakers, which leads to the second hypothesis:

H2: For the dimensions hireability, comprehensibility and attitudinal evaluations, the humorous self-disclosing comment will have a positive effect on the moderately non-native French accented speaker, who will therefore be evaluated more positively in the humorous comment condition than in the no comment condition.

Method

Materials

Self-disclosure was operationalized by creating three versions of the interview text (Appendix A) that were read out loud in the audio files. The pitch text was the same for all three versions, except for the comment that was given at the beginning of the text. Version 1 had no comment at the beginning of the text, version 2 had a non-humorous disclosing speaker comment and version 3 a humorous disclosing speaker comment. In the job interview the applicant introduced herself and gave information about her previous work and study experience with respect to the human resource position she was applying for. The text was based on the materials by Deprez-Sims and Morris (2010) and Howard and Ferris (1996). Just as in the study by Deprez-Sims and Morris (2010), the speaker was applying for a human resource position. The disclosing speaker comments were as follows:

Non-humorous disclosing speaker comment: *“Firstly, I would like to say that I am originally French, so my English might sound a bit different.”*

Humorous disclosing speaker comment: *“Firstly, I know that I sound like I should be selling croissants, but give it a chance.”*

Accent strength was operationalized by letting the speaker read out the interview text in both a moderate and a slight accent of French. Also the comments were read out in both accent strengths and were edited in the audio files of the interview text. Therefore, there was a total of six audio files. Audio files were chosen so that the speaker could not be judged based on physical appearance.

The speaker for the experiment was selected with the use of a pre-test. For the pre-test, three female speakers were tested on whether their intended accent strength was perceived by the listeners. We used both a matched-guise technique, where the first speaker did both a moderate and a slight accent of French, and a verbal-guise technique, where the second speaker did a moderate accent of French and the third speaker a slight accent of French. The interview text of the actual experiment was also used for the pre-test, only this time the self-disclosing comments were tested separately. 33 people participated in the pre-test. Each participant had to listen to all four audio fragments in a randomized order. After each fragment they were

presented several questions about the audio (Appendix B). At the end of the questionnaire the participants answered two questions about the humorous and the non-humorous comment on whether the comments were perceived as funny or not.

To see who was the most appropriate speaker for the actual experiment, three repeated measures analyses of variance have been executed. The first repeated measures analysis of variance for perceived nativeness showed that the moderately accented speakers were perceived as less native than the slightly accented speakers. The speakers were rated on two 7-point Likert scales ('completely disagree' – 'completely agree') for the statements 'This speaker sounds like a native English speaker' and 'This speaker has a non-native accent in English'. Speaker 1 with a slight accent was rated higher than 4 on the Likert scale and speaker 1 with a moderate accent was rated lower than 4 on the Likert scale, while speaker 2 and 3 both were rated lower than 4 on the Likert scale. Furthermore, a Chi-square test showed a significant relation between accent strength and the perceived nationality of the speaker. Participants found the origin of the speakers with a moderate accent easier to guess than the origin of the speakers with a slight accent. In conclusion, the difference in perceived nativeness between the two accent strengths of speaker 1 was larger than the difference between speaker 2 and 3 and the nationality of the moderately accented speakers was easier to guess than of the slightly accented speakers. Therefore, speaker 1 with both accent strengths was chosen for the actual experiment.

From the second repeated measures analysis of variance for pleasantness of the speaker's voice it can be concluded that speaker 1 with a slight accent was considered to be more pleasant to listen to than speaker 1 with a moderate accent. Since speaker 1 performed both the moderate and the slight accent, there was no difference in voice characteristics and the evaluation of pleasantness was solely based on accent strength. Therefore, one speaker performing both accent strengths contributes the most to the purpose of the final experiment.

The last repeated measures analysis of variance was for how fast the speaker was perceived to be speaking. This showed that speaker 1 with a slight accent was not speaking significantly faster than speaker 1 with a moderate accent. Thus, perceived fastness of the speaker did not need to be tested in the final experiment.

Lastly, the two paired samples t-tests showed that the humorous comment was perceived to be significantly funnier than the non-humorous comment. Therefore, the two self-disclosing comments were appropriate for the final experiment.

Subjects

In the current study 186 people participated, of which 18 people were excluded. 12 people were excluded because their mother tongue was either English or French, 1 person was excluded because they were younger than 16 and 5 people were excluded because they had a score lower than 50 in the LexTALE English proficiency test. In the end, 168 participants were used for the analysis. The participants were randomly divided per condition, which led to the following numbers: for the moderately accented speaker, there were 28 participants in the no comment condition, 31 participants in the non-humorous comment condition and 29 participants in the humorous comment condition. For the slightly accented speaker, there were 28 participants in the no comment condition, 29 participants in the non-humorous comment condition and 23 participants in the humorous comment condition.

The participants were between 17 and 71 years old ($M = 29.88$, $SD = 12.42$). Age was equally distributed over all conditions ($F(5, 162) = 1.27$, $p = .278$). Of the 168 participants, 63 were male (37.5%), 104 female (61.9%) and 1 preferred not to say (0.6%). Also gender was equally distributed over all conditions ($\chi^2(10) = 12.26$, $p = .268$). 25 participants were currently in or have finished secondary school (14.9%), 77 participants are finishing or have finished their bachelor's degree (45.8%), 58 participants are finishing or have finished their master's degree (34.5%) and 8 participants are currently in or have finished another level of education (4.8%). Level of education was also equally distributed over all conditions ($\chi^2(15) = 7.86$, $p = .929$). 122 participants were from the Netherlands (72.6%), 19 participants from Germany (11.3%) and 27 participants from other countries (16.1%). Nationality was also equally distributed over all conditions ($\chi^2(10) = 9.25$, $p = .509$).

To ensure a certain level of English, participants had to fill in the LexTALE test (Lemhöfer & Broersma, 2012) and self-assess their level of English. As said above, participants who had a score lower than 50 were excluded from the investigation. The scores of the remaining participants ranged from 52.50 to 100 ($M = 77.50$, $SD = 10.88$). The LexTALE score was equally distributed over all conditions ($F(5, 162) = 1.01$, $p = .412$). Furthermore, the participants had to rate their level of English on a 7-point Likert Scale ('poor' – 'excellent'). The participants did not rate themselves lower than 3 on the 7-point Likert Scale ($M = 5.70$, $SD = 0.92$). Self-assessed English was also equally distributed over all conditions ($F(5, 162) = 1.28$, $p = .275$).

The participants were also asked to indicate whether they had previous hiring experience or not. 131 participants had no prior hiring experience (78%) and 37 participants did have prior

hiring experience (22%). Hiring experience was distributed equally over all conditions ($\chi^2 (5) = 4.29, p = .509$).

Design

For the current study a 2x3 between-subjects design was used. The first independent variable was the self-disclosing speaker comment, which had three levels: no disclosing speaker comment (control group), non-humorous disclosing speaker comment and humorous disclosing speaker comment. The second independent variable was accent strength, which had two levels: moderate French accent and slight French accent. Each group heard an audio fragment with one of the two accent strengths (moderate or slight) and one of the three self-disclosing speaker comments (no comment, non-humorous and humorous). Thus, there was a total of 6 groups.

Instruments

Before the participants listened to the audio file and answered the corresponding questions, they answered some questions about themselves. First, a few demographic questions were asked, namely age (drop-down menu), nationality (drop-down menu) and mother tongue ('English', 'French' or 'Other'). Furthermore, the participants were asked to self-assess their level of English by letting them rate four 7-point Likert scales ('poor' – 'excellent') for the following skills: speaking, writing, reading and listening (based on Krishna & Alhuwalia, 2008). The reliability of 'self-assessed level of English' was good: $\alpha = .89$. Lastly, the participants had to indicate if they worked on a hiring panel before (yes/no question).

After this block of questions, the speaker was evaluated based on the following points: comprehensibility, attitudinal evaluations, and hireability. Perceived comprehensibility was measured by using various statements that were answered with six 7-point Likert scales ('completely disagree' – 'completely agree'). The statements were created by Hendriks et al. (2016), which are as follows: 'I have to listen very carefully to be able to understand the speaker', 'The speaker speaks very 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.' After recoding, the reliability of 'comprehensibility' was good: $\alpha = .80$.

For the attitudinal evaluations, the dimensions status, competence, dynamism and likeability were measured using several items per dimension. The items were rated with several 7-point Likert scales ('completely disagree' – 'completely agree'). The items were retrieved from the questionnaires created by Bayard et al. (2001), Grondelaers et al. (2019), Hendriks et

al. (2014; 2016) and Nejari et al. (2012). For status the items were ‘I think the speaker sounds: ‘Authoritative’, ‘Trustworthy’, ‘Self-confident’, ‘Influential’, ‘Has a powerful voice.’ The reliability of ‘status’ was good: $\alpha = .79$. For competence the items were ‘I think the speaker sounds: ‘Reliable’, ‘Intelligent’, ‘Competent’, ‘Hard-working’, ‘Educated.’ The reliability of ‘competence’ was good: $\alpha = .85$. For dynamism the items were ‘I think the speaker sounds: ‘Energetic’, ‘Talkative’, ‘Cheerful’, ‘Active.’ The reliability of ‘dynamism’ was good: $\alpha = .86$. And lastly, the items for likeability were ‘I think the speaker sounds: ‘Credible’, ‘Sympathetic’, ‘Warm’, ‘Humorous’, ‘Tactful’, ‘Polite’, ‘Irritating’, ‘Unfriendly.’ The reliability of ‘likeability’ was acceptable: $\alpha = .77$.

Hireability was tested by using the following statements designed by Deprez-Sims & Morris (2010): ‘I would recommend employing this speaker’, ‘I would feel satisfied if this speaker would be hired’, ‘I feel favourable towards this speaker’, ‘This speaker would be an asset to the company’, ‘There is a high likelihood of this speaker being hired.’ Here as well 7-point Likert scales were used (‘completely disagree’ – ‘completely agree’). The reliability of ‘hireability’ was excellent: $\alpha = .93$.

The questions about the speaker were followed by a manipulation check. The participants had to rate the accent of the speaker on two 7-point Likert scales (‘completely disagree’ – ‘completely agree’) based on Jesney (2004): ‘This speaker sounds like a native speaker of English’, ‘This speaker has a strong foreign accent in English.’ After recoding, the reliability of ‘nativeness’ was acceptable: $\alpha = .69$. Furthermore, the participants had to guess which country the accented speaker was from with the help of a drop-down menu.

After the manipulation check, the participants were asked to evaluate the voice characteristics of the speaker on four 7-point Likert scales (‘very unpleasant’ – ‘very pleasant’). The question for voice characteristics was as follows: ‘please indicate your opinion on the following characteristics of the speaker’s voice: ‘speed’, ‘tone’, ‘pitch’, ‘loudness.’ The reliability of ‘voice characteristics’ was acceptable: $\alpha = .73$.

Subsequently, the participants filled in the LexTALE test (Lemhöfer & Broersma, 2012), in which they were presented a list of existing and non-existing English words. They had to indicate whether the word exists in English or not. The test results gave a better indication of the English level of the participants, so that participants with a low English proficiency could be excluded from the results.

At the end of the questionnaire the gender of the participants (‘male’, ‘female’, ‘non-binary/third gender’ or ‘prefer to not say’) and the level of education (‘secondary school’, ‘bachelor’s’, ‘master’s’ or ‘other’) were asked.

Procedure

The questionnaire was created with Qualtrics and was available online. Participants were recruited by sharing a link of the questionnaire with people from the researchers' network. No reward was given for participating. By filling in the questionnaire the participants gave consent to participate in the investigation, which was addressed in the introductory page. The objective of the study was not given beforehand in order to guarantee that participants were not influenced during the experiment. The aim of the study was also not disclosed afterwards. There was a contact person the participants could go to in case of questions or complaints, which was also mentioned in the introductory page. The questionnaire was in English and was filled in on an individual basis.

The participants were divided in groups and were exposed to one of the six conditions, while the questionnaire was the same for everybody. First, the participants had to read the introductory page with instructions for the questionnaire and give consent to participate by filling in the questionnaire. Next, they answered a few demographic questions and they self-assessed their level of English. After this block of questions, the participants viewed a poster for the job opening they were in the imaginary hiring committee for. The poster was followed by one of the six audio files. Subsequently, the participants answered questions regarding the audio file they listened to in order to evaluate the speaker. Afterwards, they did a manipulation check in which they were asked to evaluate the voice characteristics of the speaker. At the end of the questionnaire they filled in the LexTALE test and were asked two more demographic questions. Lastly, they were thanked for their participation. Without factoring in the outliers, the questionnaire took on average 11.96 minutes to fill in.

Statistical treatment

Two-way ANOVA's were used to test how the self-disclosing speaker comments and accent strength influenced the dependent variables comprehensibility, attitude (competence, dynamism, status, likeability), hireability and voice characteristics. For the manipulation check, an independent samples t-test was used for the perceived nativeness of the speaker and a chi-square was used to identify the relationship between accent strength and recognition of nationality.

Results

Manipulation check

An independent samples t-test showed a significant difference between the slight and the moderate accent with regard to whether the speaker was considered to be a native speaker of English or not ($t(149.635) = 10.30, p < .001$). According to the participants, the moderate accent ($M = 1.71, SD = 1.04$) sounded less like native English than the slight accent ($M = 3.62, SD = 1.33$).

A Chi-square test showed a significant relation between accent strength and origin of speaker ($\chi^2(5) = 66.07, p < .001$). Participants who listened to the moderate accent indicated the right country of origin of the speaker more often (Non-humorous: 96.8%; Humorous: 96.6%; No comment: 89.3%) than participants who listened to the slight accent (Non-humorous: 72.4%; Humorous: 60.9%; No comment: 17.9%). The independent samples t-test and the chi-square showed the expected results, hence the manipulation check was successful. However, despite the fact that the French accent was implicitly or explicitly mentioned in the non-humorous and humorous comment, not all participants indicated the right country of origin (see table 1). For the slight accent, 8 participants (27.6%) answered the question incorrectly for the non-humorous comment and 9 participants (39.1%) for the humorous comment. For the moderate accent, 1 participant (3.2%) who listened to the non-humorous comment and 1 participant (3.4%) who listened to the humorous comment indicated the wrong country of origin. In the no comment condition the French accent was not implicitly or explicitly mentioned. For the slight accent 23 participants (82.1%) answered the question incorrectly and for the moderate accent 3 participants (10.7%) answered the question incorrectly.

Table 1. Number (*n*) and percentage (%) of participants' identification of speaker origin in function of accent strength

| | n (%) | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| | Correct | Incorrect | Total |
| Slight non-humorous | 21 (72.4%) | 8 (27.6%) | 29 (100%) |
| Slight humorous | 14 (60.9%) | 9 (39.1%) | 23 (100%) |
| Slight no comment | 5 (17.9%) | 23 (82.1%) | 28 (100%) |
| Moderate non-humorous | 30 (96.8%) | 1 (3.2%) | 31 (100%) |
| Moderate humorous | 28 (96.6%) | 1 (3.4%) | 29 (100%) |
| Moderate no comment | 25 (89.3%) | 3 (10.7%) | 28 (100%) |
| Total | 123 (73.2%) | 45 (26.8%) | 168 (100%) |

Comprehensibility

A two-way analysis of variance with accent strength (moderate or slight) and self-disclosing comment (humorous, non-humorous or no comment) as factors revealed a significant main effect of accent strength on comprehensibility of the speaker ($F(1, 162) = 12.97, p < .001$) and no interaction effect between accent strength and the self-disclosing comment ($F(2, 162) = 1.24, p = .292$). The slight accent was comprehended better than the moderate accent (*see Table 2*). There was no significant main effect of self-disclosing comment on comprehensibility ($F(2, 162) = 1.96, p = .144$).

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and *n* for comprehensibility in function of accent strength and self-disclosing comment

| | Moderate | | | Slight | | | Total | | |
|--------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>n</i> |
| Non-humorous | 5.23 | 1.02 | 31 | 5.48 | 0.91 | 29 | 5.35 | 0.97 | 60 |
| Humorous | 4.61 | 0.96 | 29 | 5.43 | 0.88 | 23 | 4.97 | 1.01 | 52 |
| No comment | 4.79 | 0.97 | 28 | 5.35 | 1.06 | 28 | 5.07 | 1.04 | 56 |
| Total | 4.89 | 1.01 | 88 | 5.42 | 0.95 | 80 | 5.14 | 1.01 | 168 |

Hireability

A two-way analysis of variance with accent strength (moderate or slight) and self-disclosing comment (humorous, non-humorous or no comment) as factors revealed a significant main effect of accent strength on hireability ($F(1, 162) = 4.25, p = .041$) and the interaction effect between accent strength and the self-disclosing comment was not statistically significant ($F(2, 162) = 0.66, p = .518$). The slight accent was rated higher on hireability than the moderate accent (see table 3). There was no significant main effect of self-disclosing comment on hireability ($F(2, 162) = 2.25, p = .109$).

Table 3. Means, standard deviations and n for hireability in function of accent strength and self-disclosing comment

| | Moderate | | | Slight | | | Total | | |
|--------------|----------|------|-----|--------|------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| | M | SD | n | M | SD | n | M | SD | n |
| Non-humorous | 4.14 | 1.09 | 31 | 4.59 | 1.11 | 29 | 4.36 | 1.12 | 60 |
| Humorous | 4.52 | 1.03 | 29 | 5.06 | 1.27 | 23 | 4.76 | 1.16 | 52 |
| No comment | 4.63 | 0.99 | 28 | 4.71 | 1.15 | 28 | 4.67 | 1.06 | 56 |
| Total | 4.42 | 1.05 | 88 | 4.77 | 1.17 | 80 | 4.59 | 1.12 | 168 |

Status

A two-way analysis of variance with accent strength (moderate or slight) and self-disclosing comment (humorous, non-humorous or no comment) as factors showed no significant main effect of accent strength ($F(1, 162) = 0.31, p = .582$) nor self-disclosing comment ($F(2, 162) = 2.56, p = .080$) on status (see table 4). There also was no significant interaction effect between accent strength and the self-disclosing comment ($F(2, 162) = 2.95, p = .055$).

Table 4. Means, standard deviations and n for status in function of accent strength and self-disclosing comment

| | Moderate | | | Slight | | | Total | | |
|--------------|----------|------|-----|--------|------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| | M | SD | n | M | SD | n | M | SD | n |
| Non-humorous | 4.04 | 1.09 | 31 | 3.97 | 1.04 | 29 | 4.00 | 1.06 | 60 |
| Humorous | 4.07 | 0.85 | 29 | 4.63 | 0.90 | 23 | 4.32 | 0.91 | 52 |
| No comment | 4.45 | 0.78 | 28 | 4.19 | 0.77 | 28 | 4.32 | 0.78 | 56 |
| Total | 4.18 | 0.93 | 88 | 4.24 | 0.94 | 80 | 4.21 | 0.93 | 168 |

Competence

A two-way analysis of variance with accent strength (moderate or slight) and self-disclosing comment (humorous, non-humorous or no comment) as factors showed no significant main effect of accent strength ($F(1, 162) = 1.97, p = .163$) nor self-disclosing comment ($F(2, 162) = 1.53, p = .220$) on competence (see table 5). There also was no significant interaction effect between accent strength and the self-disclosing comment ($F(2, 162) = 0.34, p = .712$).

Table 5. Means, standard deviations and n for competence in function of accent strength and self-disclosing comment

| | Moderate | | | Slight | | | Total | | |
|--------------|----------|------|-----|--------|------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| | M | SD | n | M | SD | n | M | SD | n |
| Non-humorous | 5.04 | 0.95 | 31 | 5.21 | 0.91 | 29 | 5.12 | 0.93 | 60 |
| Humorous | 5.17 | 0.94 | 29 | 5.48 | 0.71 | 23 | 5.30 | 0.85 | 52 |
| No comment | 5.36 | 0.54 | 28 | 5.41 | 0.77 | 28 | 5.38 | 0.66 | 56 |
| Total | 5.18 | 0.84 | 88 | 5.36 | 0.81 | 80 | 5.27 | 0.83 | 168 |

Dynamism

A two-way analysis of variance with accent strength (moderate or slight) and self-disclosing comment (humorous, non-humorous or no comment) as factors showed no significant main effect of accent strength ($F(1, 162) = 2.26, p = .135$) nor self-disclosing comment ($F(2, 162) = 2.19, p = .115$) on dynamism (see table 6). There also was no significant interaction effect between accent strength and the self-disclosing comment ($F(2, 162) = 2.69, p = .071$).

Table 6. Means, standard deviations and n for dynamism in function of accent strength and self-disclosing comment

| | Moderate | | | Slight | | | Total | | |
|--------------|----------|------|-----|--------|------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| | M | SD | n | M | SD | n | M | SD | n |
| Non-humorous | 4.27 | 1.09 | 31 | 4.27 | 0.99 | 29 | 4.27 | 1.03 | 60 |
| Humorous | 4.29 | 0.97 | 29 | 5.03 | 1.00 | 23 | 4.62 | 1.04 | 52 |
| No comment | 4.46 | 0.78 | 28 | 4.42 | 1.05 | 28 | 4.44 | 0.92 | 56 |
| Total | 4.34 | 0.95 | 88 | 4.54 | 1.05 | 80 | 4.44 | 1.00 | 168 |

Likeability

A two-way analysis of variance with accent strength (moderate or slight) and self-disclosing comment (humorous, non-humorous or no comment) as factors showed no significant main effect of accent strength ($F(1, 162) = 0.69, p = .406$) nor self-disclosing comment ($F(2, 162) = 0.89, p = .414$) on likeability (see table 7). There also was no significant interaction effect between accent strength and the self-disclosing comment ($F(2, 162) = 0.07, p = .935$).

Table 7. Means, standard deviations and n for likeability in function of accent strength and self-disclosing comment

| | Moderate | | | Slight | | | Total | | |
|--------------|----------|------|-----|--------|------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| | M | SD | n | M | SD | n | M | SD | n |
| Non-humorous | 4.60 | 0.96 | 31 | 4.76 | 0.73 | 29 | 4.67 | 0.86 | 60 |
| Humorous | 4.83 | 0.93 | 29 | 4.91 | 0.80 | 23 | 4.87 | 0.87 | 52 |
| No comment | 4.69 | 0.58 | 28 | 4.76 | 0.75 | 28 | 4.72 | 0.67 | 56 |
| Total | 4.70 | 0.84 | 88 | 4.80 | 0.75 | 80 | 4.75 | 0.80 | 168 |

Voice characteristics

A two-way analysis of variance with accent strength (moderate or slight) and self-disclosing comment (humorous, non-humorous or no comment) as factors showed no significant main effect of accent strength ($F(1, 162) = 0.14, p = .711$) nor self-disclosing comment ($F(2, 162) = 0.16, p = .851$) on voice characteristics (see table 8). There also was no significant interaction effect between accent strength and the self-disclosing comment ($F(2, 162) = 0.05, p = .952$).

Table 8. Means, standard deviations and n for voice characteristics in function of accent strength and self-disclosing comment

| | Moderate | | | Slight | | | Total | | |
|--------------|----------|------|-----|--------|------|-----|-------|------|-----|
| | M | SD | n | M | SD | n | M | SD | n |
| Non-humorous | 4.81 | 1.08 | 31 | 4.93 | 0.97 | 29 | 4.87 | 1.02 | 60 |
| Humorous | 4.97 | 1.00 | 29 | 4.98 | 1.04 | 23 | 4.98 | 1.00 | 52 |
| No comment | 4.90 | 0.86 | 28 | 4.95 | 0.77 | 28 | 4.92 | 0.81 | 56 |
| Total | 4.89 | 0.98 | 88 | 4.95 | 0.91 | 80 | 4.92 | 0.95 | 168 |

Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate how non-native accent discrimination in job interviews can be reduced by the use of humorous and non-humorous self-disclosure. The focus was specifically on moderately and slightly French accented speakers of English and how they are evaluated in terms of hireability, comprehensibility and attitudinal evaluations.

The first hypothesis stating that the moderately non-native French accented speaker of English will be evaluated less positively on the dimensions hireability, comprehensibility and attitudinal evaluations than the slightly non-native French accented speaker of English can be partly supported. Accent strength did have an influence on comprehensibility and hireability of the French accented speaker. The speaker was understood better when she spoke in a slight accent compared to when she spoke in a moderate accent. The speaker was also considered to be more hireable in a slight accent than in a moderate accent. These results were also found in the studies by Hendriks et al. (2018) and Roessel et al. (2019). In the study by Hendriks et al. (2018), the Dutch and German accented speakers were evaluated by Dutch and German students. Furthermore, in the study by Roessel et al. (2019), the German accented speakers of English were evaluated by listeners with German as their mother tongue. Since the participants of the current study had a different mother tongue than the speaker and the language the speaker was talking in, the current findings extend the findings of Hendriks et al. (2018) and Roessel et al. (2019) to a different listener group.

Accent strength did not have an influence on the dimensions status, dynamism, competence and likeability, while in previous studies these dimensions were affected by accent strength. Speakers with a non-standard accent were evaluated less favourably on status and dynamism than speakers with a standard accent (Fuertes et al., 2012; Spence et al., 2022). Moreover, lecturers with a moderate non-native accent were rated lower by students on competence and likeability than lecturers with a slight non-native or native English accent (Hendriks et al., 2016, 2018). This could be explained by the fact that for this study specifically the French accent in English was investigated, whereas Fuertes et al. (2012) and Spence et al. (2022) conducted a meta-analysis in which a wide variety of non-native English accents were included and Hendriks et al. (2016, 2018) focused on Dutch and German accented English. It might be that the French accent in English, regardless of accent strength, has less impact on these dimensions than other non-native accents in English.

The first research question was to what extent a humorous disclosing speaker comment influences the negative evaluations of a slightly and moderately non-native French accented speaker of English in a hiring context in terms of hireability, comprehensibility and attitudinal evaluations. The results showed that the humorous disclosing speaker comment did not influence these evaluations. Bitterly and Schweitzer (2019) found that job candidates were perceived as more warm and competent when humor was used to disclose negative information compared to when no humor was used or giving negative information was declined. However, in our study, no difference was found in the perceptions of competence when humor was used to disclose the non-native accent in English. A possible explanation for these diverging findings could be that Bitterly and Schweitzer (2019) used a more effective type of humor that influenced the attitudinal evaluations of the speaker. Consequently, the second hypothesis stating that for the dimensions hireability, comprehensibility and attitudinal evaluations, the humorous self-disclosing comment will have a positive effect on the moderately non-native French accented speaker, who will therefore be evaluated more positively in the humorous comment condition than in the no comment condition cannot be supported. The speaker was not evaluated differently by the participants when she used a self-disclosing comment, both humorous and non-humorous, compared to when she used no self-disclosing comment.

To what extent a non-humorous disclosing speaker comment influences the negative evaluations of a slightly and moderately non-native French accented speaker of English in a hiring context in terms of hireability, comprehensibility and attitudinal evaluations was the second research question. The non-humorous disclosing speaker comment also did not affect the evaluations of the moderately and slightly French accented speaker of English. In the study by Healey et al. (2007), self-disclosure also did not influence the listeners' perceptions of the speaker. However, self-disclosure was used for stuttering instead of having a non-native accent in a job interview. Furthermore, Healy et al. (2007) only examined the use of self-disclosure by a severe stutterer. It could be that the stuttering speaker was not discriminated against to begin with, thus there was no effect of self-disclosure. In the current study both a moderate and a slight accent of French were investigated. As was mentioned above, a difference in comprehensibility and hireability was found between the two accent strengths, confirming that the moderately accented speaker was discriminated against. Therefore, the self-disclosure for comprehensibility and hireability was not effective.

Naturally, the current study had some limitations. The first limitation is that not all the participants actively paid attention to the self-disclosing comment. A chi-square showed that 19 participants did not correctly identify the origin of the speaker, while they listened to either

the non-humorous or the humorous comment in which the French nationality was explicitly or implicitly stated. Since the self-disclosing comment was mentioned at the beginning of the job interview, they might have missed the comment. Another possibility is that participants did notice the comment, but forgot about it towards the end, since the comment was made at the beginning. Furthermore, the participants could have missed the comment as it was quite short. A longer comment might attract more attention. In future research the most effective placement and length of the comment could be measured in a pre-test before using it in the experiment. Secondly, for the present study self-defeating humor was used for the humorous self-disclosing comment. The humorous self-disclosing comment might not have led to the desired effect because the joke was not obvious or funny enough. In future research a different type of humor could be used or the joke can be made more obvious. In a pre-test different jokes could be tested to see which one is perceived to be the funniest. In the current study only the non-humorous and the humorous comment were compared in the pre-test in terms of funniness. Another limitation is that the majority of the participants were students. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to a wider population. For recruitment of the participants network sampling was used. A suggestion for future research is to use a different sampling method in order to create a diverse group of respondents. Lastly, French is considered to be a prestigious language (Weber, 2008). The moderate accent of languages studied in previous research might have led to more negative evaluations than the French moderate accent, since they might be considered as less prestigious. Future research could include languages that are viewed as less prestigious, in order for the self-disclosure to have a greater effect.

Conclusion

In conclusion, accent discrimination in job interviews is a crucial topic to investigate. Because of globalization, companies more often hire employees with different nationalities, thus different accents. Studies have shown repeatedly, including the present one, that accent discrimination is a continuing problem in these international business settings. The findings of the present study demonstrated that a moderate non-native accent was rated lower on comprehensibility and hireability than a slight non-native accent, with which the previous findings can be extended to a new listener group. However, the method in the current study that tried to reduce this difference by using humorous and non-humorous self-disclosing comments was not as effective as anticipated. Therefore, future research is needed to investigate if self-disclosure could have an effect on the evaluations of job candidates with a non-native accent. Resulting from the current method is that multiple self-disclosing comments should be measured in a pre-test in terms of placement, funniness and length before putting them to practice in the actual experiment. In case a positive effect of self-disclosure on non-native accents in job interviews is found, self-disclosure might function as a tactic for job candidates in order to minimize accent discrimination.

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Appendix A

Script for the audio file

Hello, my name is Anna, and I am 25 years old. (SELF-DISCLOSING SPEAKER COMMENT¹). Right now, I'm finishing my master's degree in human resource management. I am interested in that area, and I think that I have a really firm grasp of the subject matter. My summer internship with Union Carbide provided me with exposure to training, creating an advantage for me of learning about it in a work setting, in addition to the classroom training I received. My bachelor's degree is in organizational behaviour. I chose this field because I like to solve problems, and in organizational behaviour I am exposed to many different aspects of a business as they relate to people and their many challenges. I believe I really understand how to solve organizational problems, and that I could effectively demonstrate those skills in your company. I chose to study human resource management because I find solving problems of how to best utilize workers to the company's advantage a challenge that I am capable of meeting. I believe that human resource management is the area that will determine the success of a company and satisfaction of workers. Also, there are so many areas within human resources, such as training and development, compensation and benefits, and staffing and selection that an individual can begin as a generalist, and then specialize in an area. The combination of opportunities is large and very challenging, and these are not only challenges that I want, but challenges I feel I am capable of handling.

I do not yet know in what field exactly I want to specialize but my internships gave me exposure to some aspects such as compensation and training. I'd like to begin as a generalist and develop my skills further. Then after I see what opportunities exist, along with my interest, specialize in an area that will maximize the fit between the company and myself; in particular, an area in which the company has distinct needs for improvement, that will also utilize my skills and abilities at a level that will challenge myself.

I hope this gives you enough information about me and I hope to hear from you soon.

¹ Non-humorous disclosing speaker comment: *"Firstly, I would like to say that I am originally French, so my English might sound a bit different."*

Humorous disclosing speaker comment: *"Firstly, I know that I sound like I should be selling croissant, but give it a chance haha"*

Introduction

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking part in this study, carried out by students of Radboud University. Please read the following carefully:

You will be asked to listen to audio recordings of a job pitch for a position in Human Resources. Therefore, please make sure your speaker volume is working. Subsequently, you will be asked to answer questions about the recordings. Filling out this questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. All answers will be confidential and will be processed anonymously.

The research data we collect during this study will be used by scientists as part of data sets, articles, and presentations. The anonymised research data is accessible to other scientists for a period of at least 10 years. When data is shared with other researchers, these data cannot be traced back to you. All research and personal data are safely stored following the Radboud University guidelines.

By continuing to the next page, you start the survey and indicate that:

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in this study, please decline participation by closing this page. For any other concerns, please contact merel.vanthof@ru.nl

Please listen to the recording and answer the questions by:

- marking the bullet that best reflects your opinion
- selecting your answer from the drop-down list

There are no wrong answers.

In my opinion ...

| | Completely disagree (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Completely agree (7) |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| This speaker sounds like a native English speaker (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This speaker has a non-native accent in English (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This speaker's voice is pleasant to listen to (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The speaker's voice is irritating to listen to (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This speaker sounds lively (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This speaker sounds natural (6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The speaker speaks fast (7) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Please indicate your opinion on the following characteristics of the speaker's voice.

| | Very unpleasant (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Very pleasant (7) |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Speed (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Tone (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Pitch (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Loudness (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Where do you think the speaker is from?

▼ Afghanistan (1) ... Zimbabwe (1357)

Humorous

Script: 'Firstly, I know that I sound like I should be selling croissants, but give it a chance'

In my opinion ...

| | Completely disagree (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Completely agree (7) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This comment is funny (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This comment is not funny (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Non-humorous

Script: 'Firstly, I would like to say that I am originally French, so my English might sound a bit different'

In my opinion ...

| | Completely disagree (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Completely agree (7) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This comment is funny (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This comment is not funny (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking part in this study, carried out by students of Radboud University. Please read the following carefully:

You will be asked to listen to the audio recording of a job pitch for a position in Human Resources. Therefore, please make sure your speaker volume is working. Subsequently, you will be asked to answer questions about the recording. Filling out this questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. All answers will be confidential and will be processed anonymously.

The research data we collect during this study will be used by scientists as part of data sets, articles, and presentations. The anonymized research data are accessible to other scientists for a period of at least 10 years. When data are shared with other researchers, these data cannot be traced back to you. All research and personal data are safely stored following the Radboud University guidelines.

By continuing to the next page, you start the survey and indicate that:

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are at least 16 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in this study, please decline participation by closing this page. For any other concerns, please contact merel.vanthof@ru.nl

Age

What is your age?

▼ 16 or younger (1) ... 100 (85)

Nationality

Where are you from?

▼ Afghanistan (1) ... Zimbabwe (1357)

Mother tongue

What is your mother tongue? / What is your first language?

English (2)

French (3)

Other (4)

Self-assessed English

Please indicate how you would assess your English for the following skills:

| | Poor (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Excellent (7) |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Speaking (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Writing (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Reading (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Listening (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Hiring experience Have you ever worked as a member of a hiring panel?

No (1)

Yes (2)

Imagine you are on a hiring committee at an international company and have been asked to evaluate new candidates to fill the position of a human resource manager. For reasons of internationalization, the application procedure is in English, and the human resource manager will also be required to use English in the workplace.

**WE ARE
HIRING!**

APPLY NOW

OPEN POSITION :

- ✓ HUMAN RESSOURCE MANAGER

Requirements:

- ✓ High education diploma
- ✓ Excellent written and spoken English skills
- ✓ Experience in Customer Service

Send Us Your Resume:
info@debonair.com

We are Hiring

Please now listen to the following fragment which the candidates were asked to submit as part of their job application. Afterwards there will be questions about the fragment.

Please note that while filling in the questionnaire, you cannot return to the audio sample.

Comprehensibility

Please answer the questions by marking the bullet that best reflects your opinion. Since we are interested in your first impression, there are no wrong answers.

| | Completely disagree (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Completely agree (7) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| I have to listen very carefully to be able to understand the speaker (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The speaker speaks very clearly (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The speaker is barely intelligible (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The speaker is difficult to comprehend (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I have problems understanding what the speaker is talking about (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I do not understand what the speaker means (6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Status

In my opinion, the speaker sounds...

| | Completely disagree (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Completely agree (7) |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Authoritative (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Trustworthy (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Self-confident (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Influential (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Has a powerful voice (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Competence

In my opinion, the speaker sounds...

| | Completely disagree (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Completely agree (7) |
|------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Reliable (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Intelligent (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Competent (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Hard-working (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Educated (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Dynamism

In my opinion, the speaker sounds...

| | Completely disagree (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Completely agree (7) |
|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Energetic (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Talkative (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Cheerful (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Active (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Likeability

In my opinion, the speaker sounds...

| | Completely disagree (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Completely agree (7) |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Credible (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sympathetic (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Warm (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Humorous (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Tactful (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Polite (6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Hireability

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:

| | Completely disagree (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Completely agree (7) |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| I would recommend employing this speaker (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I would feel satisfied if this speaker would be hired (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel favourable towards this speaker (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This speaker would be an asset to the company (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| There is a high likelihood of this speaker being hired (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Speaker accent

In my opinion...

| | Completely disagree (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Completely agree (7) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| This speaker sounds like a native speaker of English (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This speaker has a strong foreign accent in their English (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Origin of speaker

Where do you think the speaker is from?

▼ I don't know (1) ... Zimbabwe (580)

Voice Characteristics

Please indicate your opinion on the following characteristics of the speaker's voice.

| | Very Unpleasant (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) | 5 (5) | 6 (6) | Very pleasant (7) |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Speed (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Tone (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Pitch (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Loudness (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

LexTALE test

This test consists of about 63 trials, in each of which you will see a string of letters. Your task is to decide whether this is an existing English word or not. If you think it is an existing English word, you click on "yes", and if you think it is not an existing English word, you click on "no".

If you are sure that the word exists, even though you don't know its exact meaning, you may still respond "yes". But if you are not sure if it is an existing word, you should respond "no".

In this experiment, we use British English rather than American English spelling. For example: "realise" instead of "realize"; "colour" instead of "color", and so on. Please don't let this confuse you. This experiment is not about detecting such subtle spelling differences anyway.

You have as much time as you like for each decision. This part of the experiment will take about 5 minutes.

If everything is clear, you can now start the test.

| | |
|--|---------|
| | No (1) |
| | Yes (2) |

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Platery (1) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Denial (2) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Generic (3) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Mensible (4) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Scornful (5) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Stoutly (6) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ablaze (7) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Kermshaw (8) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Moonlit (9) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Lofty (10) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Hurricane (11) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Flaw (12) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Alberation (13) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Unkempt (14) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Breeding (15) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Festivity (16) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Screech (17) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Savoury (18) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Plaudate (19) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Shin (20) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Fluid (21) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Spaunch (22) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Allied (23) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Slain (24) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Recipient (25) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Exprate (26) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Eloquence (27) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Cleanliness (28) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Dispatch (29) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Rebondicate (30) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ingenious (31) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Bewitch (32) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Skave (33) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Plaintively (34) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Kilp (35) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Interfate (36) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Hasty (37) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Lengthy (38) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Fray (39) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Crumper (40) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Upkeep (41) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Majestic (42) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Magrity (43) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Nourishment (44) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Abergly (45) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Proom (46) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Turmoil (47) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Carbohydrate (48) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Scholar (49) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Turtle (50) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Fellick (51) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Destription (52) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Cylinder (53) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Censorship (54) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Celestial (55) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Rascal (56) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Purrage (57) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Pulsh (58) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Muddy (59) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Quirly (60) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Pudour (61) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Listless (62) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Wrought (63) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Gender

What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Non-binary / third gender (3)
- Prefer not to say (4)

Level of education

What is your current or highest level of education?

- Secondary school (1)
- Bachelor's (2)
- Master's (3)
- Other (4)

Appendix D

Statement of own work

Student name: Merel van 't Hof

Student number: s1044663

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

Signature:



Place and date: 09-01-2023