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Bachelor's thesis

Native Dutch listeners' attitudes towards speakers of Dutch-accented English and Native British English: the influence of listener's language proficiency

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Abstract

Over the years, the English language has attained the role of a lingua franca, which led to an increased demand for non-native employees to communicate in English on a daily basis. However, communication between differently accented speakers can lead to judgment and potentially discrimination in a workplace, as native speakers are usually preferred over non-native speakers. This study investigated the effect of Dutch native listener's proficiency on attitudes towards British-accented English (standard) and Dutch-accented English (non-standard) speakers. In a verbal-guise experiment with two speakers and 125 Dutch student participants, the evaluations of the speaker on dimensions of perceived comprehensibility, hirability, status, solidarity, and dynamism were examined. No significant influence of listener's proficiency on the evaluations of accentedness in the job application context was found. However, the research yielded significant results for accentedness and the dependant variables. British-accented English was favored over Dutch-accented English regarding hirability, status, and perceived comprehensibility. These findings indicate that non-standard speakers have a higher possibility of facing workplace discrimination and have fewer hiring opportunities in comparison to Standard English speakers.

Keywords: accentedness, listener's proficiency, cross-cultural communication, perceived comprehensibility, hirability, status, dynamism, solidarity

Native Dutch listeners' attitudes towards speakers of Dutch-accented English and Native British English: the influence of listener's language proficiency

Over the years, the English language has surpassed fixed territorial, cultural and social functions and has become a significant language in many countries worldwide. More than 350 million people in the world speak English as their first language (Habeeb, 2017). English now functions as a lingua franca, a common language that is used by people whose native languages are different. It is widely used for economic, political, travel, and business relations. Nevertheless, it also acts as a contact or transit language for more than half a billion people who use English as a foreign language (Habeeb, 2017). With such large numbers of language users, English permits one to participate in the global conversation. Researchers also predict that the importance of English will only continue to grow due to globalization (Svartvik & Leech, 2013).

Even now, as stated by Crystal (2003), 99% of European international organizations already use English as a working language (meaning that all participants use a common/single language). Consequently, many companies also decide to use English as their primary corporate language. This policy allows international companies to maintain control and efficiency and facilitates communication between the headquarters and subsidiaries, which often operate in different countries (Truchot, 2013). Several researchers (Gritsenko & Laletina, 2016; Ehrenreich, 2010; Gerritsen & Nickerson, 2009) have suggested that the use of English in a global business context will only continue to expand in European countries, such as Germany, Finland, and the Netherlands.

ACCENTEDNESS

Due to these developments of English becoming the global language, non-native speakers of English have outnumbered the native speakers at a ratio of one to three (Crystal, 2003). Therefore most of the English communication in workplaces occurs between non-native speakers (Beinhoff, 2014). Employees might differ in their level of English competence, degree of accentedness, or types of accents (Beinhoff, 2014). Such variation might not only hinder communication but also negatively influence the listeners' attitudes towards the speaker, (Beinhoff, 2014).

In order to examine how employees are evaluated based on their English skills and what implications this might have in a business setting, Sliwa and Johansson (2014) conducted interviews with non-native English speakers. It was discovered that across all three dimensions of speaker evaluation (status, solidarity, and dynamism) native speakers were evaluated more positively than non-native speakers. Therefore, Sliwa and Johansson(2014) concluded that non-native speakers tend to be perceived as less competent, less intelligent, and less loyal. These findings are noteworthy, especially for international companies, as power and status inequalities can arise due to such perceptions (Sliwa & Johansoon, 2014)

These three dimensions (status, solidarity, and dynamism) were also analyzed in a meta-analysis by Fuertes, Gottdiener, Martin, Gilbert, and Giles (2012), which discussed findings from 20 previous studies concerning accentedness. In accordance with the study of Sliwa & Johansoon (2014), it was found that speakers with standard accents (i.e., the accepted accent of the majority population) tend to be evaluated higher than speakers with non-standard accents (i.e., accents considered foreign or spoken by minorities) across all three dimensions. It is noteworthy that these perceptions also applied across different settings such as education, employment, and sales. As explained by Giles and Billings (2004), such judgments have developed due to standard accents dominating the media and creating associations with power and prestige (Giles & Billings, 2004). As a consequence, a type of hierarchy has been created, where standard accents are perceived as more desirable (Giles & Billings, 2004).

The preference for native speakers also occurred in a verbal-guise experiment performed by De Nijs (2019), which compared the perceptions of German-accented English and Spanish-accented English to American English amongst Dutch listeners. The study used the exact main judgment dimensions as Fuertes et al. (2012) – status, solidarity, and dynamism. In order to analyze if these evaluations can influence hirability success, an additional variable of hirability was added. It was discovered that Dutch listeners evaluated the German-accented speakers significantly lower than both the American-accented speakers and the Spanish-accented speakers on dimensions such as status, dynamism, and hirability. In line with other previous research (Roessel, Schoel, Zimmermann & Stahlberg, 2019; Fuertes et al., 2012), these results indicate that even if all speakers share the same qualifications, non-native speakers can still be deemed as not fit for the job. However, no significant differences were found between the perceptions of American English and Spanish- accented English, which indicates that accent evaluations can also be influenced by other factors such as accent familiarity or voice pleasantness.

ACCENT STRENGTH

When investigating the perceptions towards non-native speakers, the degree of accentedness is frequently taken into account, as it can affect the comprehensibility, which, in turn, is linked to the main speaker judgment variables (Kraut & Wulff, 2013). Degree of accentedness can be defined as the perceived strength of an accent (Kraut & Wulff, 2013).

The degree of accent was researched by Nejjari, Gerritsen, Van der Haagen, and Korzilius (2012), in an experiment where British listeners evaluated Dutch-accented English speakers (slight and strong accents) and British English speakers. The findings suggested that a slight non-native accent and a native accent were both evaluated higher on affect when in comparison to the moderate non-native accent. Moreover, the finding that both the slight non-native accent and the native accent were evaluated similarly was extended to an educational setting, in research done by Hendriks, Van Meurs, and Reimer (2018). The aim of the experiment was to analyze the perceptions of Dutch and German students on lecturers speaking in moderate or slight non-native English accents. Overall, lecturers with slight accents were favored over the moderately-accented speakers. In fact, the slightly-accented lecturers received similar evaluations as the native English speakers.

However, the non-native speakers might be discriminated against not only by native listeners but also by fellow non-native listeners. The degree of the accent was researched by Roessel et al. (2019), in an experiment where German listeners evaluated job candidates who were either native English speakers or German-accented English speakers (a strong or a native-like accent). The findings indicated that speakers with a weak (almost native-like) accent were favored over the strong-accented speakers. Interestingly, the results did not change, and speakers with a strong German accent scored lower on hirability, even when the speakers presented higher-quality arguments. This downgrading of a candidate with a stronger accent occurred even if the listeners themselves were non-native.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Another factor that can influence the listener's attitude towards the speaker is the speaker's language proficiency. As suggested by Kraut & Wulff (2013) the speaker's proficiency level has an effect on perceived comprehensibility, communicative ability, and degree of accentedness. It is noteworthy to mention that, that a stronger accent is often seen as an indication of worse proficiency, regardless of the true competencies (Lindemann, 2002). However, accent strength is conceptually distinct from language competence (Deprez-Sims &

Morris, 2013). As explained by Deprez-Sims and Morris (2013) accent strength is the difference in the degree of stress patterns across languages. In contrast, language proficiency demonstrates how well a person understands the language and is able to use the correct grammar and vocabulary.

While these concepts are distinct, in practice they are still often linked together. Accent strength is frequently an important factor when evaluating language competence (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2013). For instance, the Interagency Language Roundtable Language Skill Level Scale (ILR scale) evaluates a person's language proficiency level by assessing grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. As a result, a person with a foreign pronunciation will be evaluated as having a lower proficiency level than a native speaker (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2013). Similarly, the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), a language proficiency assessment scale that has become a worldwide standard, was also based on the IRL scale model. Up to 2018, the CEFR scale evaluated "phonological control" with descriptors such as "pronunciation is generally clear…". Recently, due to criticism, the scale has been changed and the focus was set on the intelligibility rather than on accents when determining the speaker's overall proficiency (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2018).

Assuming that the strength of an accent determines a speaker's language proficiency can also be harmful in a workplace setting. It creates an obstacle for many employees since, the perceived lack of proficiency might lead to discriminatory behavior or affect employee evaluations and the chance of hirability (Fuertes et al., 2012).

THE LISTENER'S PROFICIENCY

While the speaker's proficiency can influence the accent perceptions, research concerning the influence of listener's language proficiency has been limited. However, two studies have presented significant findings, indicating that listener proficiency has an effect on accent evaluation (Hendriks et al., 2018; Beinhoff, 2014).

An experiment conducted by Hendriks et al. (2018) analyzed the listener's proficiency in an educational setting and based the perceptions on competence, likeability, teaching quality, intelligibility. It was found that the listener's English proficiency had a significant positive effect on intelligibility, comprehension, and affect. Meaning the higher their English proficiency, the more intelligible, comprehensible, and likable, participants evaluated the speakers to be.

These findings also corresponded to the results of the research by Beinhoff (2014), where participants of different English proficiency levels evaluated the perceived accentedness and intelligibility of non-native English speakers. Three languages, namely English, German and Spanish, and two proficiency levels based on the CEFR model (C2 which indicates an advanced level, and B1 which indicates an intermediate fluency) were utilized. It was found that the intelligibility and perceived accentedness of L2 varied according to the proficiency of the listener: Spanish-B1 and German-B1 listeners found the speaker of high accentedness level as more comprehensible than the Spanish-C2, native English, and German-C2 participants.

While the aforementioned studies of Hendriks et al. (2018) and Beinhoff (2014) have found an influence of listener proficiency on accentedness evaluations, the effect has still not been analyzed in a business context. As explained above, generally non-native speakers are at a disadvantage in comparison to native speakers (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014). The accentedness becomes a barrier to job candidates, as they might have a lower chance of getting hired (De Nijs, 2019). Moreover, the stronger their accent is, the more likely they are to experience discrimination and downgrading in the workplace (Fuertes et al., 2012). In addition, it was suggested by Nejjari, Gerritsen, Van Hout, and Planken (2020) that speaker evaluations are frequently stricter in a formal setting, like a business context. Considering all these arguments, the investigation on how a listener's proficiency influences the accent evaluations in a business context could result in contributory findings. The current study's results could help create and determine new tools and measures against discrimination and negative judgments in a workplace, concerning accent differences.

These aims led to the following research question:

- RQ: What is the influence of the English language proficiency of Dutch listeners on their evaluations (hirability, status, dynamism, solidarity, perceived comprehensibility) of Dutch-accented English and British-accented English?

The two languages were chosen for the research, due to the importance and the major use of English in the Netherlands. As found by Edwards (2014), even in 1987, the 800 largest companies in the Netherlands reported that the foreign language most frequently used was English. As a consequence, mastering the English language has come to be seen as a basic job requirement in the Netherlands. Employees with high English proficiency or even a native-like English level are sought after (Edwards, 2014).

Furthermore, British English was chosen over American English because this variant of English is much more common in the Netherlands. Even in secondary school, more and more children receive their education in Standard British English (Nejjari et al., 2012). Moreover, regarding a business context, the United Kingdom has always been one of the key trading partners to the Netherlands (Edwards, 2014).

As for the dependant variables, based on Carlson & McHenry (2006), perceived comprehensibility is one of the main elements in the evaluation of successful communication. It can be defined as the ability to understand the meaning and the intent behind the uttered words. As previously discussed, the study by Beinhoff (2014) found that listeners with a lower proficiency evaluated strongly-accented speakers as more comprehensible. In addition, the interlanguage speech intelligibility benefit (ISIB) might occur, where non-native listeners tend to find their own accent and the relevant standard accent to be equally intelligible (Stringer, 2015; Bent & Bradlow, 2003). Taking this into account, it can be assumed that similar results will occur in the present study. Consequently, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Dutch listeners with an advanced English proficiency will perceive standard-accented English as equally comprehensible as Dutch-accented English.
H2: Dutch listeners with an intermediate English proficiency will perceive Dutch-accented English as more comprehensible than standard-accented English.

As mentioned before, several studies (De Nijs, 2019; Roessel et al., 2019; Fuertes et al., 2012) revealed how non-native speakers have a lower chance of hirability, in comparison to native-speakers, even if both candidates have the same qualifications. However, when listener proficiency is considered, an in-group effect might occur (Tajfel,1972). As explained by Chakraborty (2017), speakers with the same accent tend to cooperate and usually attribute more positive associations to their own accent. In addition, listeners with a high proficiency might perceive the standard accent as more desirable and will want to relate themselves more to that group.

Furthermore, a judgment cluster containing solidarity, dynamism, and status was be used to evaluate the listener's attitudes towards standard-accented or Dutch-accented speakers. Solidarity concerns the perceived attractiveness, trustworthiness, and benevolence of the speaker (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014). As mentioned before, standard accents are rated more positively than non-standard accents regarding solidarity (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014;

Fuertes et al., 2012). However, listeners with a high English proficiency are expected to identify more with the standard-accented speakers, due to the out-group effect and the desirability of a standard accent (Chakraborty, 2017). This is supported by the findings of Hendriks et al. (2018), which suggest that slight non-native accents are rated similarly on solidarity to standard accents.

The notion of dynamism concerns the perceived liveliness, talkativeness of the speaker (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014). Standard-accented speakers are usually attributed a higher score of perceived dynamism, than non–standard-accented speakers (Fuertes et al., 2012). Based on these assumptions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H3: Dutch listeners with an advanced English proficiency will evaluate standard-accented English more positively on hirability, solidarity, and dynamism than Dutch-accented English.

H4: Dutch listeners with an intermediate English proficiency will evaluate Dutch-accented English more positively on hirability, solidarity, and dynamism than standard-accented English.

The last examined factor is status, which concerns the perceived confidence, competence, and ambition of the speaker (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014). As it was suggested by Fuertes et al., (2012), non-native speakers were evaluated significantly lower than speakers of standard English regarding status. In addition, standard accents are frequently associated with higher economic status, prestige, and competence (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014). However, a relation between status and the perceived comprehensibility has also been found, which can influence the results of the present study (Nejjari et al., 2012). The study of Nejjari et al. (2012) suggested that higher perceived comprehensibility can lead to an attribution of a higher perceived status. As mentioned above, listeners of lower language proficiency tend to rate strong accents as more comprehensible (Beinhoff, 2014). In addition, it is expected for the listeners with high proficiency to perceive both the standard accents and the Dutch-accented English as equally comprehensible. Based on these arguments, the following hypotheses were defined:

H5: Dutch listeners with an advanced English proficiency will evaluate standard-accented English as equally high on status as Dutch-accented English.

H6: Dutch listeners with an intermediate English proficiency will evaluate Dutch-accented English higher on status than standard-accented English.

Methodology

In order to examine the effect of the English proficiency of Dutch listeners on their attitudes towards Dutch-accented English and British-accented English, two independent variables were created for the study design. Firstly, the accentedness of the speaker was manipulated through the conditions of a native British English speaker and a native Dutch speaker. The native British speaker represented the standard accent, whereas the native Dutch speaker was chosen for the non-standard accent. As slight and native accents tend to be rated very similarly, a moderate accent was adopted for this research with the expectation of a stronger effect on listener perceptions (Hendriks et al., 2018). A moderate accent was defined as the degree of accentedness when one can still determine which type of accent the person possesses, however not to the point of unintelligibility.

The second independent variable was the language proficiency of the listener, which was divided into levels of intermediate and advanced. The intermediate proficiency correlated to the B1-B2 CEFR level, whereas the advanced proficiency was defined by the C1-C2 CEFR level. Each proficiency level is explained in more detail in Figure 1.

	PHONOLOGICAL CONTROL
C2	As C1
C1	Can vary intonation and place sentence stress correctly in order to express finer shades of meaning.
B2	Has acquired a clear, natural, pronunciation and intonation.
B1	Pronunciation is clearly intelligible even if a foreign accent is sometimes evident and occasional mispronunciations occur.
A2	Pronunciation is generally clear enough to be understood despite a noticeable foreign accent, but conversational partners will need to ask for repetition from time to time.
A1	Pronunciation of a very limited repertoire of learnt words and phrases can be understood with some effort by native speakers used to dealing with speakers of his/her language group.

Figure 1. *CEFR proficiency levels (Council of Europe, 2018)*

Such proficiency degrees were chosen for the study since the Netherlands has become the top-English speaking country in Europe, which indicated the majority of the population possesses at least average English proficiency skills (Education First, 2020). Hence, the expected level of English for Dutch job candidates is usually intermediate or advanced. Utilizing the particular proficiency levels could make the present study more ecologically valid. In addition, in the research of Beinhoff (2014), a significant difference was found between these two proficiency levels.

Materials

As part of the experiment, the listeners heard a recording in English of either a native Dutch speaker or a native British speaker. A verbal-guise technique was used, where two female speakers, one speaking native British English and one speaking Dutch-accented English, with a moderate degree of the accent recorded the messages. Both recordings were produced by females, to exclude any gender biases. The speakers read the text, which can be found in Appendix D. This particular text was created, to portray an image of a professional and a qualified job applicant. Both recordings used the same text, in order to make sure that both speakers appear to be equally qualified. This allowed us to analyze the actual effect of accent, and avoid the intrusion of additional confounds like differences in skills and qualifications.

Pre-test

In order to ensure the validity of the materials and the recognizability of the accents, a pre-test was completed. The pre-test was based on Hendriks et al. (2018) and Nejjari et al. (2012). It included the recordings of two moderate-Dutch accented speakers and two standard British-accented speakers. Each recording was edited on the Audacity program, where the rate of speech and volume were equalized.

A total of 23 University students evaluated the four speech fragments by completing a Qualtrics questionnaire. Several 7-point Likert scales measured the perceived nativeness of the speaker and the level of foreign accentedness. The participants were also asked to identify the origin of the speaker and write down the country of origin. In addition, the comprehensibility of the speakers was measured with a 7-point Likert scale, which stated 'I think the speaker is easy/difficult to understand' (based on Munro & Derwing, 2006). The pre-test also analyzed the listener's perception of the speaker's voice characteristics, namely, pleasantness, naturalness, loudness, dynamism, speaker pace, and speaker age (based on Bayard, Weatherall, Gallois, & Pittam, 2001; Jesney, 2004; Nejjari et al., 2020).

One-way ANOVA tests were conducted between accent condition as the independent variable and each dependant variable.

To find the most comparable recordings for both conditions, the similarity in scores had to be investigated. As a result, the second British English recording and the first Dutch-English recording were chosen for the experiment, as the other pairs had more significant differences (results in detail can be found in Appendix E).

The identifiability of the accents was evaluated by asking the respondents to write down the speaker's country of origin. For the first British-English recording, 91.4% of participants recognized the correct origin, for the second British-English audio 87.1% of respondents identified the origin. As for the Dutch recordings, both recordings received a 100% correct score of identification.

Participants

A total of 125 native Dutch listeners participated in the study. University students were chosen as the participant group, in order to make the present study more comparable to previous research (Hendriks et al., 2018; De Nijs., 2019). 51 participants had to be excluded since they did not fulfill the required characteristics concerning age, education status and, mother language, thus 125 valid respondents remained.

The participant's age ranged between 18 and 25 ($M = 21.40$, $SD = 1.79$). Gender was divided as following: 70.4% female, 28% male and 1.6% other. The participants were not experienced in conducting job interviews ($M = 0.52$, $SD = 1.87$), but were experienced in being interviewed as job applicants ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 2.65$).

The respondents rated their own English proficiency quite high ($M = 5.98$, $SD = 0.78$). As for the actual English proficiency, evaluated by the LexTale test, the participants scored an average of 80% ($M = 80.64$, $SD = 10.82$). This score corresponds to the B2 CEFR level (Lemhöfer & Broersma, 2012).

In order to see if English proficiency had an influence on comprehensibility and speaker evaluations, a new variable was computed from the listeners' scores on the LexTALE test. The participants were divided into groups of advanced proficiency and intermediate proficiency in English. The division of groups was based on the calculated median of their LexTALE scores (Dutch condition median = 80.63, British condition median = 81.88). Hence, the group of intermediate proficiency included participants from the Dutch-English condition who scored lower than 80.63 and participants from the British-English condition who scored lower than 81.88 on the LexTALE test. In turn, respondents in the Dutch-English condition who scored higher than 80.63, and respondents in the British-English group who scored higher than 81.88 were both appointed to the advanced proficiency group.

In order to validate equal distribution of respondents' gender, age, job interview experience level for the accent and language proficiency conditions, the following analyses were conducted.

An independent samples t-test showed no statistical difference regarding the age of the participants (t (112.46) = 0.26, p = .795), actual proficiency (t (121.88) = 1.96, p = 0.51) self-perceived proficiency (t (119.02) = 1.24, p = .217) across the two accentedness conditions. A Chi-square test showed no significant relation between gender and the two accentedness conditions ($\chi2$ (2) = 0.39, p = .981). Similarly, a chi-square test showed no significant differences for respondent's HR course experience across the two accentedness conditions ($\chi2$ (1) = 1.17, p = .280). One-way ANOVA analyses concluded that there was no significant differences for participant's experience conducting job interviews (F (1,123) < 1, p = .343) and being interviewed (F (1,123) < 1, p = .938). It was therefore assumed that the distribution of HR and job interview experience was equal across the accentedness conditions.

An independent samples t-test showed no statistical difference regarding the age of the participants across the two proficiency levels (t (69.20) = 0.57, p = .569). Furthermore, a chi-square test revealed no significant relation between gender and the proficiency levels ($\chi2$ (2) = 4.120, p = .127). A chi-square test showed no significant differences for respondent's HR course experience across the two proficiency levels ($\chi2$ (1) = 0.03, p = .871). One-way ANOVA analyses concluded that there was no significant differences for participant's experience conducting job interviews (F (1,123) < 1, p = .713) and being interviewed (F (1,123) < 1, p = .795). It was therefore assumed that the distribution of HR and job interview experience was equal across the two proficiency levels.

Design

The experiment was conducted with a 2x2 between-subject design, in which the independent variable "language proficiency of the listener" had two levels, namely an average or a high proficiency. The second variable "type of accent", also had two conditions, which were native British English and Dutch-accented English. An analytical model containing the independent and dependant variables can be seen in Figure 2.

[1]A chi-square analysis on all four groups was not possible due to the low number of cases
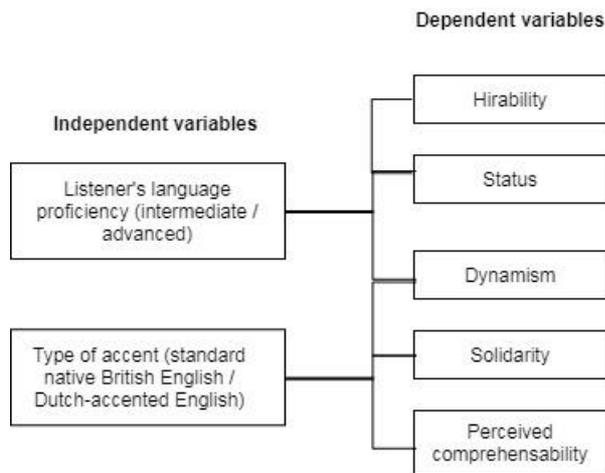
Figure 2. *An analytical model of the research design*

The participants were divided across the different conditions as follows: 32% (N = 40) of respondents with intermediate proficiency listened to the Dutch-accented English recording, 24.8% (N = 31) of advanced proficiency participants listened to the Dutch-accented English recording, 17.6% (N = 22) of intermediately proficient participants heard the British English audio, and 25.6% (N = 32) of advanced proficiency respondents heard the British English speech fragment.

Instruments

Five dependent variables measured the effects of language proficiency on the evaluations of accentedness in a job context. These consisted of perceived comprehensibility, status, dynamism, solidarity, and hirability.

Firstly, perceived comprehensibility was measured with 7-point Likert scales "I think the speaker is easy to understand", "I think the speaker is difficult to understand" and "I think the speaker is clear to understand" anchored by *(1) strongly disagree to strongly agree (7)*(based on Munro & Derwing, 2006; Hendriks et al., 2018). The reliability of perceived comprehensibility comprising two items was excellent: α = .93

Furthermore, the variable of status was measured with 7-point Likert scales containing the statements "The speaker sounds…" with different characteristics of status, based on Nejjari et al., (2020): "competent, educated, having authority, intelligent and cultured" (α = .85). The variable of dynamism was measured similarly to status, with the characteristics like "energetic, enthusiastic and confident" (α = .86). It was decided to use a 7-point Likert scale instead of a 5-point Likert scale because it covers more insights into the speaker evaluations (Nejjari et al., 2020).

To measure solidarity, 7-point Likert scales with the statements "The speaker sounds…" were used. The characteristics of solidarity were „attractive, benevolent, similar to me, trustworthy", which was based on Sliwa and Johansson (2014). The reliability of solidarity containing four items was acceptable: (α = .73).

Lastly, to measure hirability, 7-point Likert scales were used, which contained statements about the suitable characteristics, recommendations of employment, and the general impression of the candidate (α = .94). The Likert scales were based on the research of Huang and Frideger (2013). The first characteristic was measured with the statement "If I were hiring for the position of ..., I would consider this person the following type of candidate for the job: *1 very poor; 2 poor; 3 weak; 4 neutral; 5 good; 6 very good; 7 excellent."* The second scale included the statement "I would recommend employing the candidate for this position" with the anchor points*(1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.* Lastly, the statement "my general impression of the candidate was…" was anchored by *(1) very negative and (7) very positive.*

The questionnaire also contained demographical questions about the participant's age, gender, education, and HR experience. The questionnaire was presented in Dutch, because of the anchor contraction effect, which describes the fact that respondents tend to choose more extremes on the Likert scales when the survey is displayed in their second language (De Langhe, Puntoni, Fernandes, Van Osselaer, 2011). The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

Consecutively, to measure the language proficiency of the listeners, a LexTALE test was used (Lemhöfer & Broersma, 2012; Appendix C). According to Lemhöfer and Broersma (2012), the LexTALE test is a valid measure of English language proficiency. The test assesses proficiency in a language and knowledge of vocabulary. It contains a table with words and participants have to indicate if the words are words that exist in English or if they are pseudowords. Based on the results, the participants of each condition were divided into two groups, creating four groups in total.

Procedure

All of the participants were recruited through social media and researchers' acquaintances. Their participation was voluntary and anonymous. An incentive was offered, where each participant had a chance of winning a coupon for online shopping.

The questionnaire was disclosed through the Qualtrics program, an online questionnaire tool. Firstly, the participants were given an introductory text (Appendix A) with an explanation of the hiring position. An executive job position was chosen since the study of Huang and Frideger (2013) found that this has an effect on employability in regard to accentedness. To be more precise, the text described the position of an International Communication Officer. It implied not only that it is an executive position, but also the fact, that communicating in English is essential for this type of job.

After reading the introductory text, the participants were asked to answer questions about their perceived English proficiency, which was done using 7-point Likert scales based on Hendriks et al. (2018). Then each participant was randomly assigned with either the recording of a non-standard accented English speaker or the standard accented English speaker. The full text of the recording can be found in Appendix D.

Afterward, the participants completed the questionnaire, with the previously mentioned scales about comprehensibility, hirability, status, dynamism, and solidarity.

Statistical treatment

The research used two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests to measure the effect of the listener's proficiency and accentedness on the evaluations of the speaker. In addition, independent t-tests, univariate ANOVAs, and chi-square analyses were used to further examine the found differences. Moreover, to find a correlation between the LexTALE scores and self-perceived proficiency scores, Spearman's correlation test was used.

Results

A Spearman's correlation test was run to examine whether a correlation exists between the LexTALE score and the self-evaluated proficiency of the participants. A significant positive relation was found between the two variables (r_s (125) = .47, $p < .001$). This indicated that the self-evaluated level of English moderately corresponded to the level of English proficiency measured by the LexTALE test. Based on previous research (Bonvin & Berthele, 2021; Izura, Cuetos & Brysbaert, 2014) a higher correlation between the two variables was expected. The use of the LexTALE test might not have been an optimal choice in the present study, as the experiment included a listening task, whereas LexTALE is vocabulary-oriented.

Perceived comprehensibility

A two-way ANOVA with the factors accentedness and language proficiency displayed a significant effect of accentedness on perceived comprehensibility (F (1, 121) = 6.49, p =.012). The respondents who listened to a standard British accent perceived the speaker as more comprehensible (M = 5.95, SD = 1.19) in comparison to the respondents who listened to the moderate Dutch accent (M = 5.35, SD = 1.16). The analysis also showed that language proficiency did not have a significant main effect on perceived comprehensibility (F (1, 121) = 2.21, p =.139). No statistically significant interaction effect was found between accentedness and language proficiency (F (1, 121) = 1.43, p =.233).

Hirability

A two-way ANOVA with factors of accentedness and language proficiency revealed a significant main effect of accentedness on hirability (F (1, 121) = 17.03, $p < .001$). Participants who heard the standard British accent evaluated the speaker higher on hirability (M = 5.22, SD = 1.33) than participants who were presented with a moderate Dutch accent (M = 4.22, SD = 1.25). Language proficiency did not have a significant effect on hirability (F (1, 121) < 1, p = .445). No statistically significant interaction effect was found between accentedness and language proficiency (F (1, 121) < 1, p = .352).

Status

Another two-way ANOVA with status as the dependant variable and both accentedness, language proficiency as the factors showed a significant main effect of accentedness on status (F (1, 121) = 33.15, $p < .001$) Respondents who listened to a standard British accent scored the speaker higher on status (M = 5.65, SD = 0.82) than those who listened to a moderate Dutch accent (M = 4.68, SD = 0.99). No significant main effect was found of language proficiency on status (F (1, 121) = < 1, p =.984). The interaction effect between accentedness and language proficiency was also statistically insignificant (F (1, 121) = 2.26, p =.135).

Solidarity

The two-way ANOVA with solidarity as the dependant variable and both accentedness, language proficiency as the factors concluded in an insignificant effect of accentedness on solidarity (F (1, 121) = 4.07, p= .046). The analysis did not show a significant main effect of language proficiency on solidarity (F (1, 121) < 1, p= .849). The interaction between accentedness and language proficiency was also statistically insignificant (F (1, 121) = 3.37, p= .069).

Dynamism

Lastly, a two-way ANOVA with accentedness and language proficiency as factors showed a significant main effect of accentedness on dynamism (F (1, 121) = 45.80, $p < .001$). The participants evaluated the standard British accent ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.32$) higher on dynamism than the moderate Dutch accent ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.21$). Furthermore, language proficiency did not have a significant main effect on dynamism (F (1, 121) < 1, $p = .786$). The interaction between accentedness and language proficiency was also statistically insignificant (F (1, 121) = 1.20, $p = .276$).

All of the discussed results are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Means and standard deviations (between brackets) for the dependant variables across the four experiment conditions and the accentedness conditions (1 = low evaluation, 7 = high evaluation)*

	British accent condition and listener's advanced proficiency $n = 38$ *M (SD)*	British accent condition and listener's intermediate proficiency $n = 16$ *M (SD)*	Dutch accent condition and listener's advanced proficiency $n = 30$ *M (SD)*	Dutch accent condition and listener's intermediate proficiency $n = 41$ *M (SD)*	Total British accent condition $n = 54$ *M (SD)*	Dutch accent condition $n = 71$ *M (SD)*
Perceived comprehensibility	6.19 (1.05)	5.61 (1.33)	5.39 (1.12)	5.33 (1.20)	5.95 (1.19)[1]	5.35 (1.16)[1]
Dynamism	4.94 (1.36)	4.62 (1.27)	3.11 (1.36)	3.31 (1.09)	4.81 (1.32)[1]	3.23 (1.21)[1]
Solidarity	4.84 (1.14)	4.55 (0.78)	4.15 (1.13)	4.51 (0.84)	4.88 (0.93)	4.07 (1.05)
Status	5.76 (0.84)	5.50 (0.78)	4.54 (1.14)	4.79 (0.86)	5.65 (0.82)[1]	4.68 (0.99)[1]

Hirability	5.39 (1.38)	4.98 (1.25)	4.19 (1.40)	4.23 (1.13)	5.22 (1.33)[1]	4.22 (1.25)[1]

[1] Significant main effect

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of the present study was to examine the effects of a listener's language proficiency on the evaluations of standard and non-standard accents. Four judgment clusters, namely hirability, status, solidarity, and dynamism were chosen as the variables that concern the evaluation of the accented speakers. In addition, the perceived comprehensibility was taken into account as it was expected that it might have a relation with listener proficiency. To answer the research question, no statistical differences indicating that the level of listener's proficiency influences the evaluations towards the speaker have been found. However, in compliance with previous research, it was found that standard accents are favored over non-standard accents concerning status, dynamism, hirability, and perceived comprehensibility (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014; Roessel et al., 2019; Fuertes et al., 2012; De Nijs, 2019; Nejjari et al., 2012).

Contrary to the first and second hypotheses, the level of listener's proficiency did not play a role in the judgment of the speaker's perceived comprehensibility. The lack of a main effect of the level of listener proficiency is different from the results found by Beinhoff (2014). The research by Beinhoff (2014) noted that a lower proficiency might lead to a better comprehension of speakers who have a stronger accent. The present research did not confirm these findings. One of the factors that might have affected these results is the overall high level of the listener's English proficiency. The participants all scored an average of 80% in the LexTale test, which corresponds to the upper intermediate level of English proficiency (Lemhöfer & Broersma, 2012). Therefore it is possible that the overall high level of listeners' English proficiency might have reduced the effect of accentedness on perceived comprehensibility.

Furthermore, an effect of accentedness on evaluations of perceived comprehensibility indicated that the British accent was scored higher in comparison to the Dutch accent. This goes in line with the findings of Nejjari et al. (2012), where The Standard British English accent was rated higher on comprehensibility than both slightly and moderately Dutch-accented English. In addition, similarly to the findings of the study by Hendriks et al. (2018), the effect of interlanguage speech intelligibility benefit (ISIB) was

contradicted. The native speaker was perceived as more comprehensible than a non-native speaker, even if the non-native speaker and the listener shared the same mother language.

Contrary to the third and fourth hypothesis, there was no significant interaction between the listener's proficiency level and the evaluations of speaker's hirability, solidarity, and dynamism. According to Chakraborty (2017), speakers who share the same accent are more likely to identify with each other and attribute positive associations to their accent. An expectation of an in-group effect was formed, where the Dutch listeners with intermediate proficiency would prefer the Dutch-accented English speaker regarding the mentioned dependant variables. In addition, it was hypothesized that Dutch listeners with advanced English proficiency would identify more with the out-group. This expectation was formed due to the potential desirability of a standard accent. However, the present research did not confirm these hypotheses. Nonetheless, similarly to the findings by Roessel et al. (2019), non-native speakers received lower scores across almost all judgment dimensions, despite the fact, that the listeners themselves were non-native speakers of English. In addition, the downgrading occurred even if both speakers recorded the same text, indicating the same qualities and qualifications of a job candidate. Hence, this result suggests that non-native speakers can be discriminated against even if they have the same qualifications as the native English speakers. Native English speakers are perceived to be more confident, competent, ambitious, lively, and comprehensible in comparison to non-native speakers. An explanation for this result can be found in the study of Fuertes et al. (2012), who discussed that a formal setting can lead to a stronger effect, favoring the standard-accented speakers. The present experiment created a scenario of a job application, which can be considered as a formal and a high stake setting. In addition, regarding the variable of dynamism, Śliwa & Johansson (2014) suggested that a less fluid speech acts as an indicator of decreased enthusiasm and liveliness. The less fluid speech of the Dutch-accented speaker could explain the significant differences between native and non-native speakers found in the present study.

It is noteworthy, that the effect of accentedness was found on all dependent variables except for solidarity. As discussed by Fuertes et al. (2012), previous research has presented a smaller effect of solidarity on speaker evaluations. Additionally, solidarity has been linked to the in-group effect, as listeners tend to identify more with similarly sounding speakers and perceive them as more trustworthy (Fuertes et al., 2012). The results of the present study indicate that no effect of social identity occurred and that the Dutch listeners did

not prefer their in-group (Dutch-accented speaker) over their out-group (British-accented speaker).

The results also concluded that the British-English accent was evaluated to have a higher status than the Dutch-accented English. These findings are in line with a study by Coupland and Bishop (2007), which suggested that the 'Standard English' accent evokes the highest social attractiveness and the second most prestige. In addition, as discussed by Giles and Billings (2004), standard accents are often associated with high socioeconomic status and power due to this type of accent being frequently used in the media. Another explanation could be the lower evaluation of the Dutch-accented speech on perceived comprehensibility, as previous research has found a link between perceived comprehensibility and status (Nejjari et al. 2012). Regarding the effect of the listener's proficiency on the evaluations of speaker's status, no significant results were found. Therefore the fifth and sixth hypotheses were not confirmed. Overall, Dutch listeners assigned standard English a higher status but still could have felt connected to their in-group which eliminated a significant effect of listener's proficiency on status judgment.

Limitations

Firstly, the present research utilized the system of Qualtrics to create and share the questionnaire with the participants. In hindsight, this choice could have had implications, as it was not possible to check the surroundings in which the completion of the questionnaire took place. The participant could have listened to the recordings several times, which might have positively influenced the results regarding perceived comprehensibility. Furthermore, as the participant groups of this research were university students, the majority have not yet had a lot of experience with job interviews. This might have affected the evaluations of the speakers, as the respondents could not give a professional judgment.

Considering these limitations, future research could analyze the effects of accentedness and listener's proficiency, by ensuring that the participants possess more experience with HR or conducting job interviews. This would allow one to note if the differences in experience could have influenced the results. In addition, some of the explanations for insignificant research results and hypotheses were related to the desirability of a standard accent. As a suggestion for future research, the variable of desirability and its influence on accent evaluations could be examined. Lastly, future studies should further

investigate the effect of accentedness between non-native speakers and non-native listeners who share the same native language, as the research on this topic has been scarce.

Conclusion

The present study contributes to the previous research about the judgments of non-native speakers, by analyzing the scarcely researched influence of the listener's level of proficiency. Contrary to previous studies (Beinhoff, 2014), no significant results regarding the listener's level of proficiency and the evaluations of the speaker were found. Several reasons could have caused this result, such as the overall high English proficiency of the participants or methodological choices. In addition, the results regarding the preference of native-speakers over non-native speakers on the dimensions of perceived comprehensibility, status, hirability, and dynamism were in line with previous research (Sliwa & Johansson, 2014; Roessel et al., 2019; Fuertes et al., 2012; Nejjari et al., 2012). Overall, the findings confirm that the issue of non-native speakers being discriminated against and downgraded in a job context prevails. In addition, it is noteworthy that the downgrading can emerge even between two non-native speakers who share the same native language. The findings of the present research could be used to establish new measures in the recruitment system and tools against workplace discrimination. As discussed by Roessel et al. (2019), it is effective to make listeners aware of the prejudices and biases they have towards non-native speakers. Consequently, HR employees could be presented with prejudice control instructions and materials regarding communication with non-native speakers with different degrees of accentedness. Such measures could encourage employees to reflect on their biases, which would lead to more equality in the recruitment process.

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Appendix

<u>Statement of own work</u>

Student name: Emilija Mantrimaite

Student number: s1023700

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/rules/fraud-plagiarism/) and with Article 16 "Fraud and plagiarism" in the Education and Examination Regulations for the Bachelor's programmeof 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 an 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: Emilija Mantrimaite

Place and date: 06.06.2021 Nijmegen

Appendix A: Introductory text to the experiment

Beste deelnemer,

Hierbij bent u uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan het onderzoek naar de beoordeling van verschillende sollicitanten. Dit onderzoek wordt gedaan door studenten aan de Radboud Universiteit die momenteel werken aan hun scriptie over het zojuist genoemde onderwerp.

Deelname aan dit onderzoek betekent dat u een online enquête zult invullen. De vragen in   de enquête zullen gaan over een korte opname van een sollicitant, die u zult beoordelen op basis van verschillende stellingen over deze sollicitant. Daarom is het belangrijk dat het geluid van het apparaat waarmee u meedoet aan dit onderzoek AAN staat. Na de stellingen over de sollicitant, zult u nog gevraagd worden een korte vocabulaire test te maken. Het invullen van de enquête zal ongeveer 10-15 minutenduren.

Daarnaast is het belangrijk om te weten dat u specifiek sollicitanten zult horen voor de positie van een International Communication Officer. Taken die bij deze functie horen zijn onder andere het coördineren van interne en externe communicatie en het behouden van internationale relaties.

De resultaten van het onderzoek zullen worden gebruikt voor onze scripties. Vanzelfsprekend zullen uw antwoorden compleet anoniem blijven en zal er discreet met de resultatenwordenomgegaanvolgensderichtlijnenvandeRadboudUniversiteit.

Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is volkomen vrijwillig. Dat betekent dat u uw deelname op elk moment kan stopzetten tijdens het experiment. Alle data die tot dat punt verzameld is, zal dan later worden vernietigd.

Als dank voor uw deelname, maakt u kans op een bol.com cadeaukaart t.w.v. € 20 Voor verdere vragen over het onderzoek kunt u contact opnemen met Yuri Segers (yuri.segers@student.ru.nl)

Als u de hierop volgende enquête invult, betekent dat u bevestigt dat u:

- 18 jaar of ouder bent
- Vrijwillig deelneemt aan het onderzoek
- Akkoord gaat met de voorwaarden
- Alle informatie hierboven gelezen hebt

Met vriendelijke groet,

Emilija, Femke, Liina, Tamar, en Yuri

1. Ik zou mijn Engelse schrijfvaardigheid beoordelen als

   Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Zeerslecht	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Zeergoed

2. Ik zou mijn Engelse spreekvaardigheid beoordelen als

   Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Zeerslecht	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Zeergoed

3. Ik zoumijn Engelse leesvaardigheid beoordelen als

   Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Zeerslecht	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Zeergoed

4. Ik zou mijn Engelse luistervaardigheid beoordelen als

   Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Zeerslecht	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Zeergoed

5. Wat is je leeftijd?

   _____

6. Wat is je geslacht?

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

( ) Man

( ) Vrouw

( ) Zeg ik liever niet

( ) Anders: _____

7. Heb je ooit een vak gevolg dover Human Resource Management?

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

( ) Ja

( ) Nee

8. Heb je ervaring met het aannemen van personeel?

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

( ) Ja

( ) Nee

9. Ik vind de spreker makkelijk te begrijpen

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal nietmeeeens	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	Helemaal meeeens

10. Ik vind de spreker moeilijk te begrijpen

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal niet mee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal mee eens

11. Ik vind de spreker duidelijk te begrijpen

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal niet mee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal mee eens

12. De spreker klinkt competent

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal mee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal niet mee eens

13. De spreker klinkt geschoold

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal nietmee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal mee eens

14. De spreker klinkt gezaghebbend

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal nietmee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal mee eens

15. De spreker klinkt intelligent

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaalmee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemala niet mee eens

16. De spreker klinkt ontwikkeld

Markeer slechts éé novaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal nietmee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal mee eens

17. De spreker klinkt energiek

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal nietmee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal mee eens

18. De spreker klinkt enthousiast

Markeer slechts éé novaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal nietmee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal mee eens

19. De spreker klinkt zelfverzekerd

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal mee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal niet mee eens

20. De spreker klinkt aantrekkelijk

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal niet mee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal mee eens

21. De spreker klinkt welwillend

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal mee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal niet mee eens

22. De spreker klinkt zoalsik

Markeer slechts éénovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal mee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal niet mee eens

23. De spreker klinkt betrouwbaar

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal mee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal niet mee eens

24. Als ik iemand zou moeten aannemen voor de functie "International CommunicationOfficer"dan zou ik deze persoon als een volgendes oort kandidaat beschouwen

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Zeer goed	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Zeer slecht

25. Ik zou aanbevelen om de kandidaat aantenemen als"International Communication Officer"

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Helemaal niet mee eens	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Helemaal mee eens

26. Mijn algemen eindruk van de kandidaat was

Markeer slechts één ovaal.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Heel positief	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯		Heel negatief

27. Dank u wel voor het meedoen aan dit onderzoek. Het doel van het onderzoek was om in kaart te brengenof het niveau van de Engelse taal van de luisteraar een invloed heeft op het beoordelen van sollicitanten die met een bepaald accent spreken, en of er dus sprake is van discriminatie. Als u kans wilt maken op debol.comcadeaukaartterwaarde van €20,-, dan kunt u hieronder uw e-mailadres achterlaten. Heeft u geeninteresse?

Appendix C: LexTALE test

Vocabulaire Test

Deze test bestaat uit ongeveer 60 vragen, bij elke vraag zult u een combinatie van letters zien. Uw taak is om te beslissen of deze combinatie van letters een bestaand Engels woord is of niet. Als u denkt dat het een bestaand woord is, dan mag u een X in de kolom "Woord?" zetten, en als u denkt dat het NIET een bestaand woord is, dan laat u de kolom leeg.

Als u zeker weet dat het woord bestaat, al kent u de precieze betekenis van het woord niet, dan mag u nog steeds met 'ja' antwoorden/ een X in de "Woord?" kolom zetten. Maar, als u niet zeker weet of het woord bestaat, dan hoeft u GEEN "X" in de "Woord?" kolom te zetten.

In dit experiment, gebruiken we de Brits Engelse spelling in plaats van de Amerikaans Engelse spelling. Bijvoorbeeld, "realise" in plaats van "realize"; "colour" in plaats van "color", enzovoorts. Laat dit u alstublieft niet verwarren. Het doel van het experiment is toch niet om zulke subtiele verschillen in spelling op te merken. U heeft voor elke beslissing zo veel tijd als u wilt. Ditonderdeel van het experiment kostongeveer 5 minuten.

Stimulus	Woord?	Stimulus	Woord?	Stimulus	Woord?
platery		spaunch		magrity	
denial		allied		nourishment	
generic		slain		abergy	
mensible		recipient		proom	
scornful		exprate		turmoil	
stoutly		eloquence		carbohydrate	
ablaze		cleanliness		scholar	
kermshaw		dispatch		turtle	
moonlit		rebondicate		fellick	
lofty		ingenious		destription	
hurricane		bewitch		cylinder	
flaw		skave		censorship	
alberation		plaintively		celestial	
unkempt		kilp		rascal	

breeding		interfate		purrage	
festivity		hasty		pulsh	
screech		lengthy		muddy	
savoury		fray		quirty	
plaudate		crumper		pudour	
shin		upkeep		listless	
fluid		majestic		wrought	

Appendix D: Text used for the recording

"It's my ambition to work as an international communication officer for an internationally operating insurance agency, which provides various forms of insurance to businesses and other organizations. I'm highly motivated to make sure that all communication between the company, the subsidiaries and the clients, domestically as well as globally, runs smoothly. It appeals to me that I often get to travel to other countries, attend meetings, and give presentations. What I like most about this job is its diversity. I believe that every workday is different from the other and that I will regularly get to meet new, interesting people, especially when traveling to other countries. Generally speaking, I really enjoy jobs in which you get to deal with many different types of people, particularly because I'm a very adaptable person, although sometimes, it can be quite demanding. There are always many deadlines that need to be met, which can be really challenging. However, I really like to be challenged since it gives me lots of satisfaction, which is in my opinion, the most essential aspect of a job. I'm convinced that I'm suitable for the position of international communication officer because of my experience in communication, my knowledge about insurance policies, my high degree of adaptability and my hands-on mentality. I'd be honored if you considered me for the job".

Appendix E: Pre-test results

The second British English recording had no significant differences in comparison to the first Dutch-English recording, regarding the perceived nativeness ($F_{(2, 3)} = 2.76$, $p = .209$). Concerning the voice characteristics, the two recordings were comparably similar in voice pleasantness ($F_{(3, 66)} = 10.96$, $p = 1.00$, Bonferroni correction) , naturalness ($F_{(3, 66)} = 7.54$, $p = 1.00$, Bonferroni

correction), voice loudness (F (3, 66) = 6.77, p = .270, Bonferroni correction), dynamism (F (3, 66) = 12.87, p = .516, Bonferroni correction) and pace (F (3, 66) = 1.87, p = 1.00, Bonferroni correction).