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Dutch Secondary School Students' Attitudes Towards English Teachers' Accents

Abstract:

As there are many English accents, both native and non-native, there are opinions about these accents. The current research investigated the attitudes of Dutch secondary school students towards native and non-native English speakers. The research found that native English accents are overall perceived most positively, with the Scottish accent scoring the lowest. Collectively, the non-native accents were quite positively, even though they were overall perceived less positive than the native accents. The research found a positive correlation between speaker professionalism and knowledgeability and their intelligibility. There was no correlation found between motivation and a student's accent preference.

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Introduction and theoretical background

A substantial amount of research has been done on attitudes towards accents, specifically English teachers' accents. These studies have found that both primary school and secondary school students prefer a native English-speaking teacher over a non-native teacher (Butler, 2007; Paunoviç, 2009; Buckingham, 2014). Interestingly, this preference appears to be independent of whether or not the teacher involved actually has a native pronunciation (Kelch & Williamson, 2002). In other words, a teacher can be non-native with a distinctive non-native accent and be perceived more positively than a non-native teacher with a native-like accent if they are believed to be native speakers (Kelch & Williamson, 2002). This might be connected to an accent's status, as accents such as British English evoke a more positive attitude than a Dutch English accent does (Nejjari & Gerritsen, 2012). This preference seems related to the conservativeness of learners, because more negatively viewed accents are described with words such as "foreign", whereas more positively viewed accents tend to be described with word such as "standard" and "correct" (Paunoviç 2009). On the other hand, some studies have shown that students overall did not have a strong negative attitude towards non-native teachers (Braine & Ling, 2007; Butler, 2007). Although these studies found that the students do not have a negative attitude, they still preferred the native teachers over the non-native teachers, as these teachers focus less on correctness and more on fluency and pronunciation (Butler, 2007).

In addition to native and non-native preferences, attitudes towards the accents appears to be influenced by the aims students have set for themselves. Students with a more instrumental motivation for learning English have been found to respond more positively to non-native English accents than students with a less instrumental motivation (Chiba, 1995; Buckingham, 2014). This is because, students with a more internal motivation aim to sound like a native

speaker, whereas this is not necessarily the case for students with a more instrumental motivation (Chiba, 1995; Buckingham, 2014). An example of this is someone's future career. This is because students, as well as professionals, desire a native 'prestigious' accent to avoid discrimination on the work floor or when applying for a job (Ballard & Winke, 2017).

Familiarity with various World Englishes also influences the attitude towards various accents, as students might believe an accent to be non-native, while it is indeed native (Kelch & Williamson, 2002). They just do not know the specific variety. The students also respond more positively if they are familiar with a non-native variety, so familiarity seems to increase acceptance (Alford & Strother, 1990; Chiba, 1995; Moussu, 2010; Sifakis & Sougari, 2005). There is some debate about whether this influences the preference, as a study found that more proficient speakers prefer a native teacher, despite having a great deal of knowledge of World Englishes (Choi, 2007).

Another fact that appears to influence students preferences is intelligibility. It seems to affect students' preference for their English teacher's accent, as accents voted easiest to understand were favoured by the students (Richards, Scales, Wennerstrom & Wu, 2006). This is connected to Ling and Braine's findings that students with a lower proficiency prefer a non-native teacher, as this teacher is easier to understand (2007). In addition to this is that students are familiar with the non-native teacher's style, as students experience anxiety when being taught by a native teacher, due to their different teaching styles and native accents (Ma, 2012).

Within the research discussed above there are still some things unknown, as those studies have focussed on learners with various nationalities and native languages or students at university level, while the current research focusses on Dutch learners of English, specifically secondary school students. This means that more is known about the attitudes of university

students than there is about secondary school students. The university students are often more familiar with non-accented or World Englishes than secondary school students, which might influence their perception of English teacher accents. In addition, the aspect of intelligibility as a reason for accent preference has not been researched extensively. Nor has it been researched in combination with secondary school students. These less researched areas provide the basis for the current research, as this focusses on secondary school students' attitudes towards native and non-native accents, where intelligibility is one of the criteria the students judge the accents on. Of additional interest is the combination of native and non-native accents, with a focus on a possible varying preferences for one native accent over another. The accents under investigation in the current study are; English, Irish, Scottish, Spanish, Dutch and French. Lastly, the current research will consider the intrinsic motivation of students for studying English and try to discover if there might be a connection between this motivation and their accent preferences.

The research question guiding the current research is:

What is Dutch secondary students' perception of the English proficiency and capabilities of an English teacher, based solely on the teacher's accent?

The research question is divided into the following sub-questions:

- Is there a difference between the preference for and perception of the non-native and native accents?
- Is there a difference between the preference for and perception of the native accents?

- Is there a difference between the preference for and perception of the non-native accents?
- Does students' motivation influence their preference for native and/or non-native accents?

Hypotheses

Based on the previous literature it appears likely that the secondary school students will prefer the native speaker accents over the non-native ones and will perceive them in a more positive manner than the non-native accents (Kelch & Williamson, 2002; Paunović 2009; Butler, 2007). The capability and proficiency of the native speakers will be perceived as higher, because of the status a British accent evokes (Nejjari & Gerritsen, 2012). An additional prediction is that intelligibility will play a considerable part in the preference for the native accents, as a Scottish accent is less intelligible than a Standard Southern British English accent to students who are not used to it (Bauer, 2002). It seems likely that the Dutch accent will be perceived more positively than the other non-native accents, as students are familiar with this accent and often find it easier to understand than the other accents (Ling and Braine, 2007). Students' own intrinsic motivation is expected to correlate with their native speaker preference (Chiba, 1995; Buckingham, 2014).

Methodology

This study was conducted via survey, using the platform Qualtrics. In this survey, participants were asked to listen to sound files and asked to react to statements about these sound files, using a 7-point Likert scale. The statements are:

This person is approachable.

Deze persoon is makkelijk te benaderen.

This person is professional.

Deze persoon is professioneel.

This person is easy to understand.	<i>Deze persoon is makkelijk te begrijpen.</i>
This person knows a lot about the English language.	<i>Deze persoon weet veel van de Engelse taal.</i>
I would like to have the person with this accent as my teacher.	<i>Ik zou deze persoon graag als mijn docent willen.</i>

These statements were translated to their Dutch equivalents in the survey. These statements were answered using a 7-point Likert-scale, with *absolutely agree* on one side and *absolutely disagree* on the other side; throughout the survey the direction of the scale was varied to ensure trustworthy answers are given. These answers were translated to their Dutch equivalent for the survey (*helemaal mee eens, zeer mee eens, enigszins mee eens, neutraal, enigszins mee oneens, zeer mee oneens, helemaal mee oneens*).

The two final questions, inquired about the students' motivation for studying English and their gender. The categories chosen for motivation are: personal enjoyment of the language, mandatory subject at school, useful for hobbies, such as reading and gaming and lastly, English is one of the most important languages in the world.

The sound files contained recordings of the following accents: Standard English (London area), Irish English, Scottish English, Spanish English, French English and Dutch English. Each of these accents were represented by 2 speakers to try and prevent random preferences for a certain speaker. All speakers were female to eliminate the issue of a gender bias, as this is not the intended independent variable. All 12 speakers are either studying at university, graduated university or teach at university. All speakers recorded themselves saying the following:

Good morning students, today we are going to look at some rather interesting articles about housewarming gifts. Afterwards you are going to give your opinion on designs for the mouse's new home. Make sure to dress it up nicely, but I do not want to see any mousetraps. Now if there are no more questions, let's get to work.

This text was constructed to display a variety of different accent features: rhoticity, TH-pronunciation, diphthongs and short vowels. These features tend to vary across accents (Bauer, 2002). Rhoticity is a feature which varies within the native accents, as Irish and Scottish accents are rhotic, while English accents are usually not. For the Dutch accent the vowels /e/ and /æ/ are included, as they often pronounce both vowel sounds as /e/, which distinguishes them from native English speakers. Irish English have stop phonemes /t̪/, /d̪/ while speakers of other accents use fricative ones /θ/, /ð/ (Dialect Blog, 2021). Diphthongs tend to vary across different accents, as for example Irish diphthongs can be more fronted, rounded or centralised than a British accent (Dialect Blog, 2021). Such a difference is also expected with the non-native accents, as they have their own phonetic inventory, which is not identical to a native English accent. As there are two speakers for each accent, there are two separate surveys with the six different speakers. This is to ensure that the participants do not lose focus or become bored during the survey and fail to finish it.

A total of 203 students answered the questionnaires; 100 students answered survey 1 and 103 students answered survey 2. The participants were 98 males, 99 females and 6 other genders. They all ranged in age between 12 and 16 years old. They all follow the regular English track, which consists of a non-native English teacher, who teaches in both English and Dutch. The survey was filled in during class; this was to ensure that students take it seriously and did not rush through it, as well as to obtain the highest number of participants. The students were not

informed of the aim of the research beforehand to prevent intentional manipulation of the results, they were told after they finished the survey. Due to the issue of active consent, the only personal information asked about the participants was their gender. This is because the school refused to consent to the research if the survey answers could possibly be traced back to specific students.

As nearly all the students were under the age of 16, active consent by the parent or caregiver, as well as the student was necessary. Therefore, the students and their caregivers were e-mailed beforehand about the survey, to retract the institutional consent the school had given.

Because the research is quantitative, the data analysis made use of various SPSS tests. Firstly, the means for every speaker per survey questions were calculated using the means feature. Then, an independent samples t-test was conducted to determine the difference between the scores each accent receives for every question to see if there are significant differences between the accent and the (non-)native groups. Afterwards, two Pearson Correlation tests were performed to determine if there is a correlation between the motivation and the perception of the accents and if there is a correlation between the intelligibility and the preference for the accents.

Results

A total of 203 students filled in the survey. This sections starts with the description of the overall mean score every speaker received for the 5 questions and an average for both speakers to arrive at a 2-speaker mean per accent.

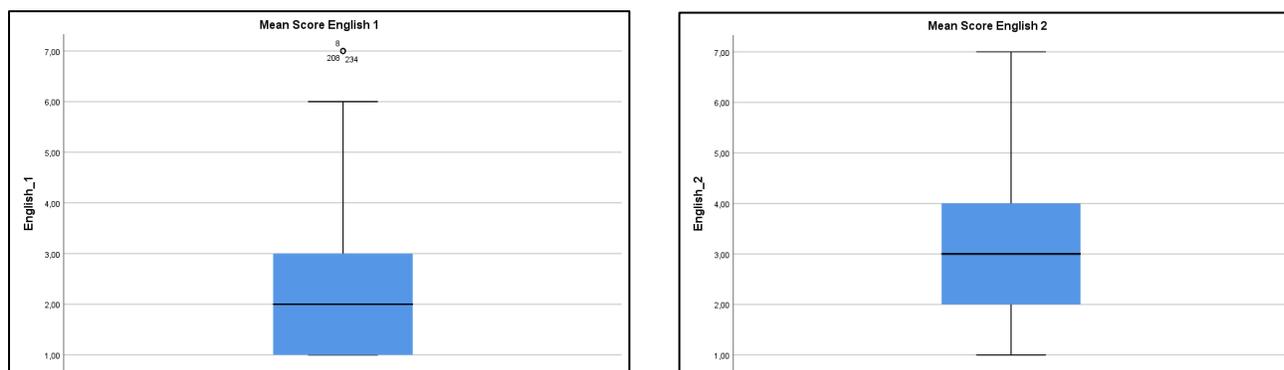


Figure 1: The overall mean score for English 1 and 2, presented with the mean, medians and quartiles. 1 is the most positive score and 7 the most negative score.

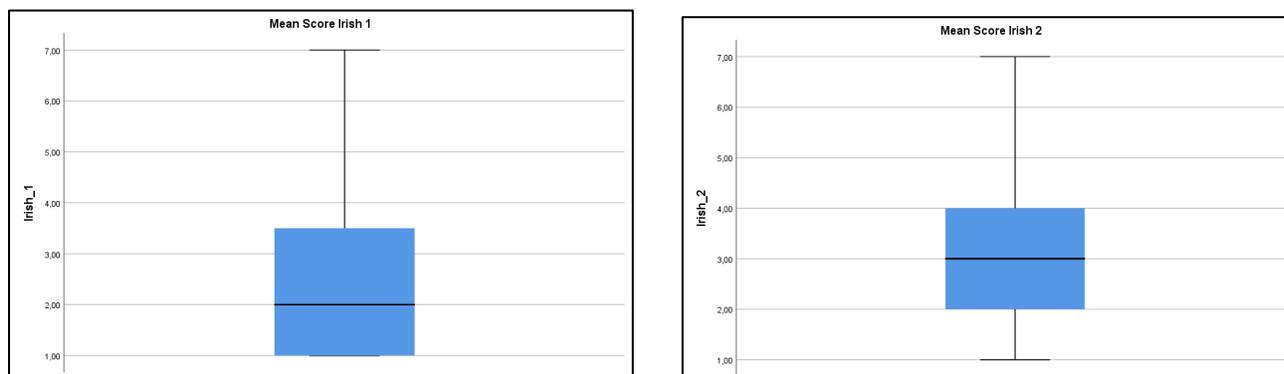


Figure 2: The overall mean score for Irish 1 and 2, presented with the mean, median and quartiles. 1 is the most positive score and 7 the most negative score.

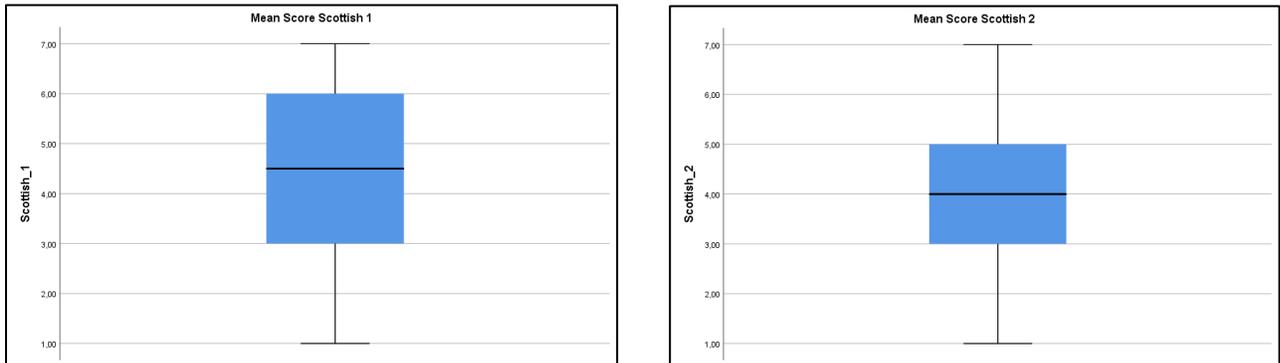


Figure 3: The overall mean score for Scottish 1 and 2, presented with the mean, median and quartiles. 1 is the most positive score and 7 the most negative score.

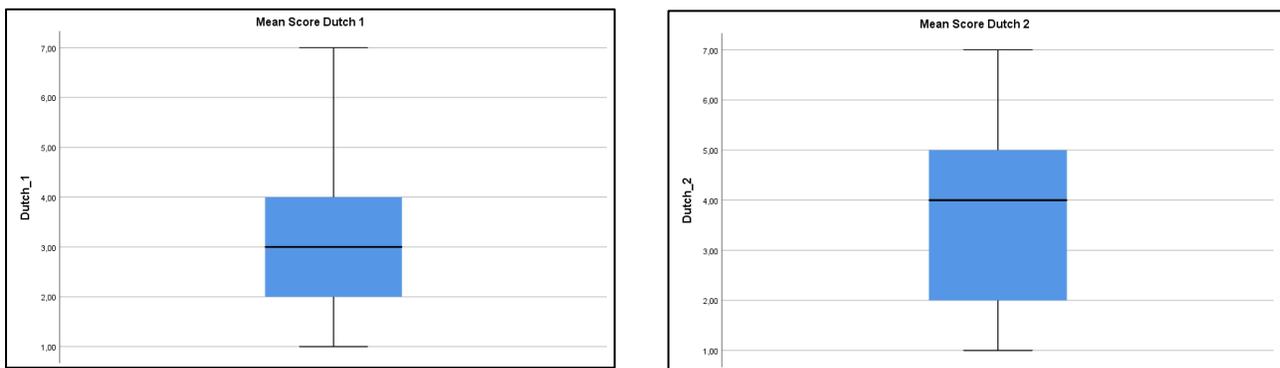


Figure 4: The overall mean score for Dutch 1 and 2, presented with the mean, median and quartiles. 1 is the most positive score and 7 the most negative score.

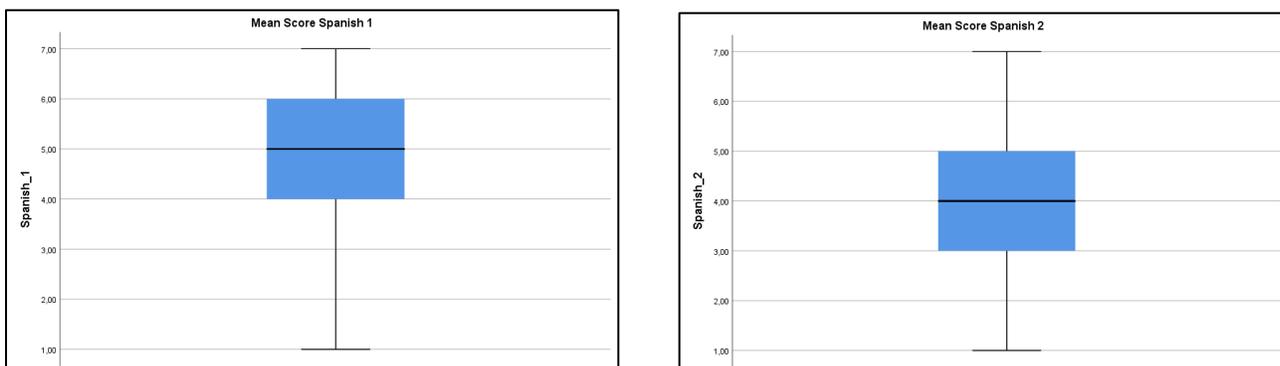


Figure 5: The overall mean score for Spanish 1 and 2, presented with the mean, median and quartiles. 1 is the most positive score and 7 the most negative score.

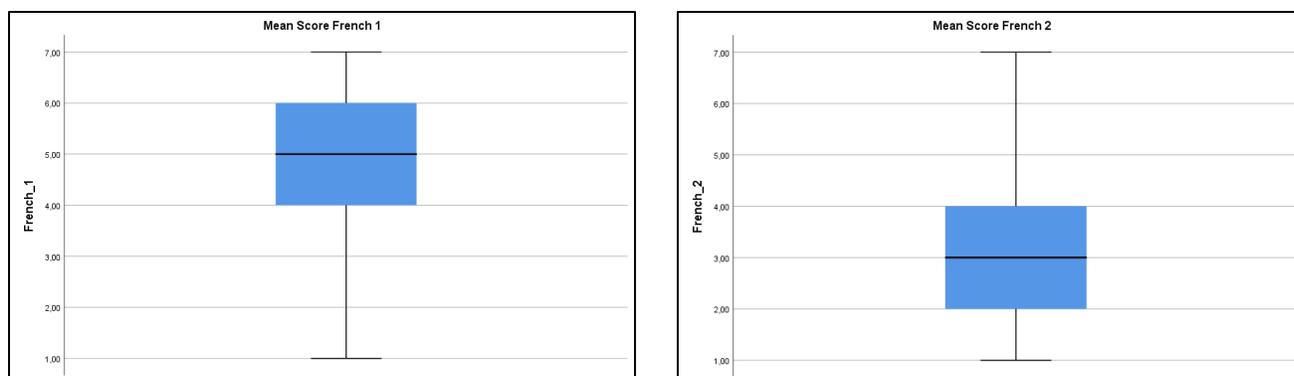


Figure 6: The overall mean score for French 1 and 2, presented with the mean, median and quartiles. 1 is the most positive score and 7 the most negative score.

Figures 1-6 show the speakers' overall scores in a more visual manner, while Table 1 shows the overall mean scores in a numeral manner. Table 1 shows that for the 2-speaker mean the Irish and English accents are perceived more positively, as they have a lower score than the other accents. Then Dutch, French, Scottish and Spanish follow. The order of preference for the speakers is: English 1, Irish 1, Irish 2, French 2, English 2, Dutch 1, Dutch 2, Spanish 2, Scottish 2, Scottish 1, Spanish 1 and French 1.

Speaker	Overall mean score	2-Speaker mean
English 1	2.460	2.89
English 2	3.322	
Scottish 1	4.424	4.269
Scottish 2	4.114	
Irish 1	2.536	2.824
Irish 2	3.112	
Dutch 1	3.396	3.5392
Dutch 2	3.682	
Spanish 1	4.600	4,287
Spanish 2	3.974	
French 1	4.954	4.05
French 2	3.146	

Table 1: Mean Speaker Scores

To determine if the native accents are preferred over the non-native accents a mean score was computed. This resulted in a mean for the native speakers of: 3.3278, with a standard deviation of 1.74856. For the non-native speakers the mean score is: 3.9530, with a standard deviation of 1.67421. This shows that on the whole the native accents are preferred over the non-native accents. When doing an Independent-Samples T-test it showed that the scores were significantly important, with a significance score of $<.001$. Because of this a bivariate correlation was performed. This resulted in a Pearson Correlation with, $(r(6090) = .180, p < .001, \text{two-tailed})$, meaning that the difference in accent preference is significant. When looking at the mean scores each accent received, it becomes apparent that the Irish and English accents are perceived more positively than the Scottish accent. For the non-native accents, the Dutch accent is perceived more positively than the French and Spanish accents.

Teacher Preference Scores

All 12 speakers received scores on whether or not the students would like them as their teacher. These scores are noted down in Table 7 with the scores for the other questions. Table 2 shows if the accents are perceived more positively than the others. If a score has a – in front of it, then the accent on the left side is perceived less positively and the students prefer the accent on the top row, this is clarified with the colour red. If a score does not have a – in front of it, then the accent of the left is perceived more positively than the other accent.

	English 1	English 2	Scottish 1	Scottish 2	Irish 1	Irish 2	Spanish 1	Spanish 2	French 1	French 2	Dutch 1	Dutch 2
English 1	0	0.88	1.59	1.60	- 0.24	0.52	2.44	1.69	2.70	0.50	0.91	1.48
English 2	-0.88	0	0.71	0.72	- 1.12	- 0.36	1.56	0.81	1.82	- 0.38	0.03	0.6
Scottish 1	-1.59	-0.71	0	0.01	- 1.83	- 1.07	0.85	0.1	1.11	- 1.09	- 0.68	- 0.11

Scottish 2	-1.60	-0.72	-0.01	0	-1.84	-1.08	0.84	0.09	1.10	-1.10	-0.69	-0.12
Irish 1	0.24	1.12	1.83	1.84	0	0.76	2.68	1.93	2.94	0.74	1.15	1.72
Irish 2	-0.52	0.36	1.07	1.08	-0.76	0	1.92	1.17	2.18	-0.02	0.39	0.96
Spanish 1	-2.44	-1.56	-0.85	-0.84	-2.68	-1.92	0	-0.75	0.26	-1.94	-1.53	-0.96
Spanish 2	-1.69	-0.81	-0.10	-0.09	-1.93	-1.92	0.75	0	1.01	-1.19	-0.78	-0.21
French 1	-2.70	-1.82	-1.11	-1.10	-2.94	-2.18	-0.26	-1.01	0	-2.20	-1.79	-1.22
French 2	-0.50	0.38	1.09	1.10	-0.74	0.02	1.94	1.19	2.20	0	0.41	0.98
Dutch 1	-0.91	-0.03	0.68	0.69	-1.15	-0.39	1.53	0.78	1.79	-0.41	0	-0.57
Dutch 2	-1.48	-0.60	0.11	0.12	-1.72	-0.96	0.96	0.21	1.22	-0.98	-0.57	0

Table 2: Differences Between Accent Scores

Table 2 shows that the accents that are perceived most negatively, as shown by the red numbers, are French 1, Spanish 2, Spanish 1, Scottish 1 and Scottish 2.

Intelligibility

The sub-questions were not specifically about intelligibility, but this was part of the survey and might influence the speaker perception. Table 3 shows the mean score the speakers received.

Speaker	Mean	Standard Deviation
Irish 1	2.22	1.433
English 1	2.52	1.592
Irish 2	2.95	1.617
Dutch 1	2.95	1.648
French 2	2.96	1.692
Dutch 2	3.39	1.567
English 2	3.42	1.741
Spanish 2	4.00	1.495
Scottish 2	4.34	1.588
Spanish 1	4.62	1.427
Scottish 1	5.17	1.627
French 1	5.18	1.487

Table 3: Speaker Intelligibility

Professionalism and Knowledgeability

A significant part of this research revolves around the speakers' capabilities, as perceived by the students. This was included in the survey as: This person is professional (Professional) and This person knows a lot about the English language (Knowledgeable). Table 4 shows these results in a single table. Table 7 also includes the standard deviations.

Speaker	Professional	2-Speaker Mean	Knowledgeable	2-Speaker mean
English 1	2.37	2.715	2.04	2.465
English 2	3.06		2.89	
Irish 1	2.38	2.790	2.30	2.645
Irish 2	3.20		2.99	
Scottish 1	4.61	4.260	3.80	3.750
Scottish 2	3.91		3.70	
Dutch 1	3.57	3.690	3.61	3.575
Dutch 2	3.81		3.54	
Spanish 1	4.51	4.155	4.55	4.175
Spanish 2	3.80		3.80	
French 1	4.73	4.035	4.79	3.900
French 2	3.34		3.01	

Table 4: Mean Scores Professional and Knowledgeable

These results create the following orders, from most positive to most negative:

Professional	Knowledgeable	Intelligibility
English 1	English 1	Irish 1
Irish 1	Irish 1	English 1
English 2	English 2	Irish 2/ Dutch 1
Irish 2	Irish 2	Irish 2/ Dutch 1
French 2	French 2	French 2
Dutch 1	Dutch 2	Dutch 2
Spanish 2	Dutch 1	English 2
Dutch 2	Scottish 2	Spanish 2
Scottish 2	Scottish 1/ Spanish 2	Scottish 2
Spanish 1	Scottish 1/ Spanish 2	Spanish 1
Scottish 2	Spanish 1	Scottish 1
French 1	French 1	French 1

Table 5: Professionalism, Knowledgeability and Intelligibility

These sequences show that the most professional and most knowledgeable speakers are perceived to be the English and Irish speakers. French 2 is also ranked rather high. The Scottish

speakers are ranked to be among the least professional and knowledgeable speakers. French 1 is perceived to be the least professional and knowledgeable. Intelligibility was included in the ranking to determine if there are any connections between a speaker's intelligibility and their perceived capabilities. Intelligibility is similar to the other rankings, as French 1 is last, English 1 and Irish 1 are at the top. In addition, French 2 is ranked fifth and the Scottish accents are ranked quite negatively.

To determine if these similarities stem from a significant correlation, a bivariate correlation was done to calculate the Pearson correlation. For Intelligibility and Professionalism this resulted in $(r(1218) = .718, p < .001, \text{two-tailed})$. For Intelligibility and Knowledgeability this resulted in $(r(1218) = .692, p < .001, \text{two-tailed})$. Both of these correlations are significant, which makes it safe to assume that intelligibility influenced the students perception of the speakers' professionalism and knowledgeability.

Motivation

Motivation in connection with the teacher preference was researched by isolating two types of motivation; intrinsic and extrinsic. The motivations chosen were: *personal enjoyment of the language* and *mandatory subject at school*, the former being strongly intrinsically motivated and the latter being strongly extrinsically motivated. Table 6 shows for all speakers if they are preferred as a teacher by the students, split up by chosen motivation (1 is the best score, 7 is the worst).

Speaker	Motivation	Mean	Standard deviation
English 1	Like the Language	2.00	1.512
	Mandatory Course	2.62	1.932
Irish 1	Like the Language	2.37	1.302
	Mandatory Course	2.37	1.415

Irish 2	Like the Language	3.10	1.524
	Mandatory Course	3.54	1.620
English 2	Like the Language	3.70	1.418
	Mandatory Course	3.82	1.587
French 2	Like the Language	3.90	1.595
	Mandatory Course	3.26	1.618
Dutch 1	Like the Language	3.63	1.598
	Mandatory Course	3.85	1.708
Spanish 2	Like the Language	3.70	1.703
	Mandatory Course	4.79	1.824
Scottish 1	Like the Language	4.00	2.000
	Mandatory Course	3.94	1.851
Scottish 2	Like the Language	4.20	1.619
	Mandatory Course	4.72	1.450
Spanish 1	Like the Language	4.63	1.685
	Mandatory Course	5.46	1.350
Dutch 2	Like the Language	5.00	1.414
	Mandatory Course	4.77	1.842
French 1	Like the Language	5.13	1.727
	Mandatory Course	5.56	1.320

Table 6: Teacher preference mean score for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Table 6 shows that for most of the accents there is not a large difference between the intrinsically motivated students and the extrinsically motivated students. Only Spanish 1 and Spanish 2 show a large difference between the types of motivation. For the other speakers, the intrinsically motivated students tend to give a more positive rating. These differences are not as large as those seen in the Spanish ratings. It does need to be acknowledged that there is a difference in participants, as for survey 1 there were 8 intrinsically motivated students and 52 extrinsically motivated ones. For survey 2 there were 10 intrinsically motivated students and 39 extrinsically motivated ones.

To see if there is a significant correlation between the motivations, a bivariate correlation was performed, calculating Pearson's r . For Spanish 1 this resulted in; ($r(60) = -.043, p > .05$, two-tailed). For Spanish 2 this resulted in; ($r(49) = -.569, p > .05$, two-tailed). These results show that there is no significant correlation between the motivation and the students preference.

Discussion

The surveys have given an array of results. In this section these results are elaborated on. Firstly, the overall mean scores of the questions are discussed.

Overall Mean Scores

The most positive score a speaker could receive for a question is 1, the most negative is 7. Table 1 shows that none of the accents received extremely negative reviews, as the highest mean score is 4.954 out of 7. This indicates that overall the students were either hesitant to give out exceptionally negative scores, or that the more negatively viewed accents were not seen as severely unpleasant. Surprisingly, not all of the native accents (English, Irish and Scottish) scored better than the non-native accents (Spanish, French and Dutch), as Scottish was ranked more negatively than some of the non-native speakers. The Irish and English speakers were rated almost identically with 2 speaker mean scores of 2.824 and 2.89.

Individual differences of the speakers recordings need to be taken into account, as Scottish 1 and French 1 had a less clear recording. This was because of the recording equipment they used. This less audible recording might have influenced the student responses for French 1, as the mean score is significantly less positive than the French 2 score. In addition, French 2 is a more proficient speaker than French 1, with a less strong accent. This does not appear to be the case for the Scottish 1 audio, as the mean scores in Table 7 show that only *easy to understand* differs much from the Scottish 2 mean score. The other scores are quite similar. As the 2 speakers were judged by different groups of students, this shows that regardless of the audio quality, the Scottish accent was perceived more negatively than the Irish and English ones.

When rating the accents on their mean score, the sequence of which can be found in the results section, some interesting findings emerge. What is noticeable is that the Scottish speakers

are rated more negatively than some non-native speakers. This might be connected to the speakers' intelligibility, as Table 5 shows that the accents that were rated as more difficult to understand, received a more negative mean score. This is visible as Spanish 2, Scottish 2, Scottish 1, Spanish 1 and French 1 received scores above 4 on their intelligibility and were viewed as the least preferred accents of the 12 present in the surveys.

Differences between (Non)Native Speakers

When solely looking at the native accents, it is clear that the Irish and English accents are perceived more positively than the Scottish ones. The Scottish speakers are perceived as less knowledgeable and professional than the Irish and English speakers. This appears to be connected to the speakers' intelligibility, in which the Scottish speakers also do not perform well according to the students. It is difficult to determine which accent is perceived most positively, English or Irish. Irish 1 and English 1 are perceived most positively out of the native speakers.

When solely looking at the non-native accents, it shows that there are some differences between the perception of the 3 accents. French 2 is seen as rather professional, knowledgeable and intelligible. The speaker is also the only non-native accent that scored higher than some of the native accents with regard to the teacher preference. This is the opposite of French 1, which was ranked most negatively in all categories. After French 2 the Dutch speakers are perceived as most positive, overall Dutch 1 comes first and then Dutch 2. The Spanish accents come after the Dutch accents. Spanish 2 is rated more positively than Spanish 1. As mentioned before, French 1 is rated most negatively. The difference between French 1 and French 2 can partly be explained through the varying audio quality and English proficiency. The degree to which the English is influenced by features from the L1 of the Spanish and Dutch speakers could be seen as nearly identical, which is why it is difficult to explain the difference in perception. An explanation

could be that students are more familiar with the Dutch accent and perceive it more positively because of that (Alford & Strother, 1990; Chiba, 1995; Moussu, 2010; Sifakis & Sougari, 2005).

Capabilities

A significant aspect of this research is the perception of the speakers' English capabilities. The orders of professionalism and knowledgeability are quite similar, with the English and Irish accents being perceived as most professional and knowledgeable. French 2 is also ranked highly. The Dutch speakers are ranked in the middle and the Spanish and Scottish accents, together with French 1, are perceived most negatively. In the theoretical framework it is stated that accents which are easier to understand are preferred by students (Richards, Scales, Wennerstrom & Wu, 2006). To see if this is connected to the speakers' perceived capabilities Table 5 displays Professionalism, Knowledgeability and Intelligibility from most positive to most negative. This shows that the order of Intelligibility is similar to those of Professionalism and Knowledgeability. The Spanish, Scottish and French 1 speakers are ranked least intelligible. The difference from the other rankings is that Dutch 1 is perceived as very intelligible, while English 2 is perceived as less intelligible than French 2, Dutch 1 and Dutch 2. Because of the correlation between Professionalism, Knowledgeability and Intelligibility it seems safe to assume that a speaker is perceived as more professional and knowledgeable if they are easier to understand and less professional and knowledgeable if they are less intelligible.

Motivation

The connection between the students' motivation and their preference for native or non-native accents has been researched for sub-question 4. Table 6 presents the scores for the 2 selected motivations for every speaker. The results show that the motivations per speaker are similar, apart from the Spanish speakers. After calculating the Pearson Correlation, it becomes apparent that motivation is not significantly correlated with their preference scores.

Sub-Questions

Because of these findings, the following conclusion can be reached for the sub-questions:

Is there a difference between the preference for and perception of the native accents?

This research has shown that there is a difference between the native accents. This manifests itself in the form of a strong preference and more positive perception of the English and Irish accents, with very similar scores. The Scottish speakers are perceived as less professional and knowledgeable than the Irish and the English speakers. This appears to be related to the speakers' intelligibility.

Is there a difference between the preference for and perception of the non-native accents?

On the whole there is a clear order in the perception of and preference for the non-native accents. French 2 is seen as the most professional, knowledgeable and most preferred non-native accent. Dutch 1 and Dutch 2 follow French 2, as they are perceived quite positively. The Spanish accents and French 1 are perceived most negatively. This seems related to their intelligibility, as they are not easy to understand, according to the students. It needs to be addressed that French 1's audio is not as audible as the other sound files and French 1 is not as proficient in English as French 2, which might have influenced the perception.

Is there a difference between the preference for and perception of the non-native and native accents?

The research has shown that there are differences between the perception of and preference for native and non-native accents. Overall the native accents are perceived more positively than the non-native accents, with the exception of the Scottish speakers. This shows that the students perceive Irish and English speakers most positively than the non-native accents.

Does students' motivation influence their preference for native and/or non-native accents?

This research focussed on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The results show that for 10 of the speakers the students with varying motivations rated the speakers nearly the same. The Spanish speakers were rated with a large difference between the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These differences turned out to be insignificant, so no correlation was found between a student's motivation and their accent perception.

Conclusion

In conclusion, students perceived the native speakers, with the exception of the Scottish ones, as more professional and more knowledgeable than all the non-native speakers. They also show a stronger preference to have the Irish and English speakers as their teachers, than they show for the non-native speakers. This is in line with previous research, as most accents did not receive an enormously negative rating, but the native accents, Irish and English, were preferred (Braine & Ling, 2007; Butler, 2007; Butler, 2007; Paunović, 2009; Buckingham, 2014). The finding that on the whole the native accents are perceived more positively is also in line with previous research, as it has been shown that secondary students prefer native English-speaking teacher over a non-native teacher (Butler, 2007; Paunović, 2009; Buckingham, 2014). As the current research has not found any significant differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, it does not resemble previous research, as those found a more instrumental motivation to contribute to a more positive perception of non-native accents (Chiba, 1995; Buckingham, 2014). When considering the aspect of intelligibility and its influence on an accent's perception, the current research has shown, through significant correlations, that it most likely has an influence on accent perception. This is in line with previous research (Richards, Scales, Wennerstrom & Wu, 2006).

The hypotheses made for the current study were almost all validated by the results, as on the whole the native accents were preferred over the non-native accents, intelligibility plays a considerable role in an accent's perception and Dutch is generally perceived more positively than the other non-native accents. The only differences are that it was not possible to identify that native accents were perceived more positively, because of the status a British accent evokes and that there was no correlation between motivation and a native speaker preference.

Despite the positive findings the study has produced, there are some limitations. The audio quality of the speakers was something that might have influenced the results of the study, as 2 of the speakers had less audible sound files. In addition, the level of proficiency the non-native speakers portrayed was in the case of the French accents not identical, as French 2 was a more proficient English speaker than French 1. This most likely influenced the perception of French 2. Lastly, the participants only provided their gender and no other personal information. This made it impossible to research if there were differences in accent preference between students of different ages.

Further research should ensure a clear sound file, to eliminate unwanted influence on the perception of the speakers. They could also include more accents, as the current study focussed on British and European accents. It would be interesting to research the attitudes towards Asian or African accents, as students are less familiar with these varieties. It would also be interesting to discover if familiarity would influence the perception and intelligibility of the Scottish accent and the non-native accents. An additional factor could be the influence teachers have on accent intelligibility. Further research could also include male speakers, to research a possible gender preference, as well as an accent preference. Lastly, further research should find participants who are able and willing to share more personal information than just their gender. The current research was not able to do this, due to active consent, but it might have given some interesting findings. Despite the fact that these aspects were not present in the current study, it does contribute to current research by confirming the previous findings that native accents are preferred, non-native accents were not perceived terribly negatively and that intelligibility plays a considerable part in an accent's perception.

Appendix

Speaker	Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
English 1	Approachable	2.45	1.344
	Professional	2.37	1.331
	Easy to understand	2.52	1.592
	Knowledgeable about English	2.04	1.286
	Person as a teacher	2.92	1.830
English 2	Approachable	3.35	1.480
	Professional	3.06	1.467
	Easy to understand	3.42	1.741
	Knowledgeable about English	2.89	1.508
	Person as a teacher	3.80	1.700
Scottish 1	Approachable	4.03	1.856
	Professional	4.61	1.582
	Easy to understand	5.17	1.627
	Knowledgeable about English	3.80	1.645
	Person as a teacher	4.51	1.872
Scottish 2	Approachable	4.10	1.600
	Professional	3.91	1.585
	Easy to understand	4.34	1.588
	Knowledgeable about English	3.70	1.720
	Person as a teacher	4.52	1.565
Irish 1	Approachable	3.10	1.508
	Professional	2.38	1.462
	Easy to understand	2.22	1.433
	Knowledgeable about English	2.30	1.418
	Person as a teacher	2.68	1.510
Irish 2	Approachable	2.98	1.350
	Professional	3.20	1.353
	Easy to understand	2.95	1.617
	Knowledgeable about English	2.99	1.492
	Person as a teacher	3.44	1.576
Dutch 1	Approachable	3.02	1.557
	Professional	3.57	1.335
	Easy to understand	2.95	1.648
	Knowledgeable about English	3.61	1.413
	Person as a teacher	3.83	1.621

Dutch 2	Approachable	3.27	1.300
	Professional	3.81	1.495
	Easy to understand	3.39	1.567
	Knowledgeable about English	3.54	1.500
	Person as a teacher	4.40	1.822
Spanish 1	Approachable	3.96	1.663
	Professional	4.51	1.439
	Easy to understand	4.62	1.427
	Knowledgeable about English	4.55	1.395
	Person as a teacher	5.36	1.396
Spanish 2	Approachable	3.66	1.512
	Professional	3.80	1.367
	Easy to understand	4.00	1.495
	Knowledgeable about English	3.80	1.543
	Person as a teacher	4.61	1.750
French 1	Approachable	4.45	1.445
	Professional	4.73	1.441
	Easy to understand	5.18	1.487
	Knowledgeable about English	4.79	1.452
	Person as a teacher	5.62	1.405
French 2	Approachable	3.00	1.386
	Professional	3.34	1.550
	Easy to understand	2.96	1.692
	Knowledgeable about English	3.01	1.445
	Person as a teacher	3.42	1.636

Table 7: Mean Scores for the Survey Questions

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