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The Evaluations of Native English Speakers Toward Two Native and Two Non-native English Accents

A study of Language Attitudes Toward English Accents

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Abstract

This paper examined the language attitudes of native English speakers recruited from Reddit toward two native and two non-native English accents by applying the verbal-guise technique and using speech audio files from *The Speech Accent Archive* (Weinberger, 2017). The two native English accents are General American and Received Pronunciation. The two non-native English accents are German and Mexican-accented English. The discrepancy in results from previous research on accent evaluations was interesting and called for further investigation. The survey was constructed in Google Forms to assess native English speakers' language attitudes toward four English accents. Social attractiveness was assessed by two traits, which are friendliness and niceness. Intelligence, education, and competence are the traits used to assess social status. The traits were evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale. Social class and character roles are categorical variables, and they were assessed by using separate questions with multiple-choice answers. The participants were native English speakers from various English-speaking countries. The participants were recruited from three Reddit pages which are *r/SampleSize*, *r/ENGLISH*, and *r/SurveyExchange*. The findings revealed the participants' attitudes towards the different accents. There was an evaluation hierarchy among all four accents. Depending on the examined traits from the social attractiveness and social status dimensions, a standard accent received higher ratings than a foreign accent. However, when looking closely at the results, there is an evaluation hierarchy between all four accents, and both native accents did not receive the highest ratings. Instead, one of the native accents received the highest ratings, while the other ranked in the middle. The study results provide further evidence in support of the previous studies on language attitudes and evaluation of accents on the scales of social attractiveness and social status. The findings support the claim that, depending on the spoken accent, different attitudes are formed, and this showed up in the ratings by the participants.

Keywords: language attitudes, language attitudes toward English accents, stereotypes, native English speakers' accent evaluations, social attractiveness, social status, social class, character roles

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1. Introduction

Language attitudes toward various accents are present in our daily lives and interactions, although attitudes are usually not spoken publicly and speakers are not regularly conscious of the attitudes unless they are overt, where the accents are negative and spoken explicitly in public places such as the media or daily conversations (Garrett, 2010). The choice of accent can affect how other people see and evaluate us, both if the speaker's choice is consciously or unconsciously made. This has been shown in language attitudes research where the use of some accents can have both notable social and communication consequences for some speakers, in addition to trait characteristics and prejudice evaluations (Dragojevic et al., 2016). Additionally, accents in a language refer to variations at the pronunciation level. Dragojevic and Goatley-Soan (2020) conducted a study to examine the attitudes of American participants toward standard English accents and nine different non-Anglo foreign accents. The results revealed that participants rated speakers with non-stigmatized foreign accents (e.g., English, French, German) more favorably than the accents linked with stigmatized speakers (e.g., Latino, Chinese). Standard American English (SAE) received higher ratings in comparison with foreign accents (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). Foreign accents received less favorable ratings, although there is an evaluation hierarchy where German, for example, received favorable ratings while other foreign varieties were less favorable.

The goal of this essay is to study the language attitudes of native English speakers toward two native and two non-native English accents by applying the verbal-guise technique and using speech audios from *The Speech Accent Archive* (Weinberger, 2017). Language attitudes will be studied by looking at social attractiveness and social status and applying traits from semantic-differential scales. Social attractiveness will be examined by the traits of friendliness and niceness, and social status by the traits of intelligence, education, and competence. Further, attitudes will be studied by a separate social class evaluation question and if the accent from the speech audio files were to be used in an American movie. The English accents that will be examined in this study are the standard American (GA) and Received Pronunciation (RP), and the non-standard accents, German-accented and Mexican-accented English. Previous research has examined language attitudes with various methods, such as a recorded text read by a speaker and evaluating the speaker by different traits on the scales of status and solidarity. However, research on social class evaluations and character roles from listening to the recorded audio and hypothetically placing the

audio in a different context is limited. Previous research conducted on evaluating native English speakers in general by inviting participants from a social media website is also limited. Most participants in previous research were university or school students. By inviting my participants from social media, the participants would have a mixture of their backgrounds and their amount of previous knowledge of this topic.

The research questions targeted in this study are:

- What are native English speakers' evaluations of the social attractiveness (i.e., friendly, nice), social status (i.e., educational level, intelligence, competence), and social class of speakers with different accents?
- What are the native English speakers' attitudes toward certain accents if the accents were to be used in an American movie?

The outline of the essay is as follows: Section 2 presents the background literature. Section 3 includes the present study. Section 4 addresses the method. Section 5 includes the presentation of the results from the data collection and the discussion. The limitations of the study are addressed in Section 6. Section 7 presents the conclusion.

2. Background

2.1 Language attitudes and attitudes toward English accents

It is not easy to define the concept of attitude. As Garrett (2010) writes, Thurstone (1931) defines the concept of attitudes as something that has a positive or negative effect on a psychological object, highlighting the emotional response that attitudes express (Garrett, 2010). Another definition that Garrett (2010) cites by Allport (1954) is that attitudes are a learned outlook toward a speaker with different behaviors, thoughts, and feelings in a certain way (Garrett, 2010). Language attitudes are cognitive in a way that they include or consist of world opinions and relations between social meanings, such as evaluations of standard languages in connection with careers of higher status. Attitudes can generate different feelings toward different things, illustrating the positive and negative evaluations of something. An example is if one would either

mildly disapprove or despise something. Further, attitudes at the behavior level refer to the tendency to act in a specific manner (Garrett, 2010).

The studies on language and accent attitudes highlight the social effects of the various attitudes found in a language, such as by studying the participants' various reactions and evaluations toward the accents that they have listened to, such as the speech style and voice type. Thamer Ahmed and colleagues (2014) further write that accents are studied and analyzed to determine if speakers with different accents affect the listener's attitudes towards them. The results from these kinds of studies have illustrated that the use of various accents influences the listeners' opinions and attitudes toward the spoken accent (Thamer Ahmed et al., 2014). Further, Thamer Ahmed and colleagues (2014) write that various accents can be categorized as either standard or non-standard, which results in the accents having different ratings in connection to their traits. An example of an attitude is social attractiveness and status, where both refer to different traits. Social attractiveness and social solidarity are synonyms, which refer to whether the accent portrays someone as being friendly or trustworthy. It is further mentioned by Thamer Ahmed and colleagues (2014) that there have been several studies regarding this topic to investigate the attitudes of the listeners toward accents and their connection with the traits, which revealed that on the social status and intelligence level, the listeners had more favorable ratings toward standard accents, and on the other hand, non-standard accents were less favorable. Other studies regarding this topic have revealed that a speaker with a non-standard accent is evaluated on status and solidarity traits and judged as less favorable compared with standard-accented speakers (Thamer Ahmed et al., 2014). The language evaluations are grouped into two main groups or dimensions. The two main dimensions are status and attractiveness. The status dimension refers to the listener's judgments regarding the speakers' competence, while the attractiveness dimension refers to the judgments of the listeners toward the speakers' warmth (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). Speakers that speak English with a foreign accent usually tend to receive less favorable ratings on both solidarity and status dimensions compared with native speakers and speakers with a standard English accent (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). In the study conducted by Dragojevic and Goatley-Soan (2020), mentioned in the introduction, the foreign accents were: "Arabic, Farsi, French, German, Hindi, Hispanic, Mandarin, Russian, and Vietnamese" (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020, p. 171), where these accents were chosen based on the daily encounter that an American English speaker is likely to have, and the other reason was to include geographical

diversity. The methods were voice stimuli and the verbal-guise technique, where various prerecorded accent audios were applied from *The Speech Accent Archive* (Weinberger, 2017). The participants rated the speech audio on the traits of solidarity and status, processing fluency, and an indication of where the speaker was originally from. The status traits were the following: competent, intelligent, educated, and smart. The solidarity traits were the following: warm, friendly, nice, and pleasant (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). The researchers applied the 7-point scale. Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan (2020) write that according to Lippi-Green (2012), stereotypes toward various national out-groups (i.e., foreigners) are not consistent because, depending on the group, some are associated with less negative stereotypes and some with more negative stereotypes.

Furthermore, attitudes can be described by the *inherent value hypothesis*, which is a hypothesis that Hiraga (2005) refers to and which describes the pleasing aesthetic characteristics that a standard dialect or an accent has. A standard dialect or accent like the Received Pronunciation accent is considered a more satisfying and appealing accent than a non-standard accent. The origin of the hypothesis is from Henry Wyld's (1934) argument where he states that if one were to compare all vowel sounds in RP with the same vowel sound found in the non-standard accents, then it would reveal that "no unbiased observer would hesitate to prefer RP as the most pleasing and sonorous form" (Hiraga, 2005, pp. 300). Accent stereotypes and judgments are an issue of taste or preference where a speaker listens and can separate a good accent from a bad one, similar to distinguishing between good and bad music (Hiraga, 2005). Because the less prestigious varieties, also known as the non-standard accents, have language irregularities, including an expression limitation, these accents are then seen as low-grade accents. Therefore, standard accents have obtained their prestige over other accents, such as non-standard accents, because of their higher status in terms of correctness (Hiraga, 2005). However, a standard dialect or an accent with prestige usually obtains a higher status from high-status social groups and assembles a group of speakers that speak with higher prestige. The accents with higher status are recognized as good and pleasant accents. Hiraga (2005) further mentions the *Imposed Norm Hypothesis*, which refers to the social pressures speakers face, which lead to the imitation of different accent varieties. On account of the social pressures that a speaker faces, the different prestigious varieties are then considered superior and desirable accents (Hiraga, 2005).

The results from the experiment that Hiraga (2005) conducted reveal that British participants had a prejudiced reaction toward various accents, where the participants expressed that there is a barrier toward American accents compared with other regional accents, such as the Birmingham accent. An explanatory reason for the reaction might be that the American accent is an accent variety that is spoken in a different country from where British participants reside. Therefore, this suggests that cultural, geographical, and national levels have differences. However, when the British participants were asked which accents they would choose to speak instead of their current accent and were presented with either choosing American English or a regional accent spoken in Britain, most participants chose an American accent (Hiraga, 2005). Furthermore, there might have been some considerations that the participants would choose a heavier American accent as an easy-to-understand accent instead of the British urban accent. Some of Hiraga's (2005) participants pointed out that the mass media's influence is notable. Most participants considered the American accent to be the accent that British people mostly hear on television and in films (Hiraga, 2005). The results further revealed that the British participants favored the American accent, although the people from Britain have limited exposure to a variety referred to as Network American, which is also known as the Standard American accent (Hiraga, 2005).

One of the functions that language attitudes have is to show the listener's ability to process fluency, which refers to whether there are obstacles in processing and understanding the spoken language by a speaker (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). According to Dragojevic and Goatley-Soan (2020), the concept of fluency in language attitudes is illustrated on the status scale, highlighting that the more difficult it is to process someone's speech, the more they tend to receive a negative evaluation (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). When the speech of a speaker, usually a foreign-accented speaker, is more difficult to understand, it results in the listeners, most of the time, evaluating the speaker by accusing them of their lack of competence and/or the speaker's goodwill to communicate, which is reflected in lower scores on the status and solidarity scale (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). The more processing difficulty the listener faces with the speaker's speech, the more the speaker receives negative evaluations. Processing fluency results in most native English speakers tending to have more difficulty understanding foreign-accented English than native English speakers, which increases difficulties with communication and negative evaluations in terms of prejudiced reactions (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020).

Furthermore, Giles (1970) conducted a study regarding the evaluations of young British participants to sixteen different English accents, such as Received Pronunciation, French-accented English, and Birmingham. The results illustrated that Received Pronunciation (RP) was the English accent that received the highest ratings for prestige and social attractiveness, while the vernacular accents received lower ratings on the same examined scales. The vernacular accents that received the lowest ratings were those spoken in London and Birmingham. Further, the study revealed that ethnic accents (e.g., Indian and West Indies) also received lower ratings and had lower prestige. However, other accents, such as U.S. English, German-accented English, and French-accented English, received higher ratings for prestige and were placed next to Received Pronunciation (Giles, 1970). The results from the study conducted by Bishop and colleagues (2005) reveal that in their collected data compared with Giles's (1970) study, the German-accented English received lower ratings and therefore was downgraded in the data collected by Bishop and colleagues (2005). The accent received a lower rating on the social attractiveness scale and prestige, which is the evaluation of the younger speakers. In the study by Giles (1970), the German-accented English had a rank in the mid-position, while in Bishop and colleagues' (2005) study, the accent was "the single least attractive accent for young people and [it ranked as the] second last [accent] for the whole sample" (Bishop et al., 2005, p. 141). In the study by Giles (1970), the American accent received a lower ranking, while in the new study, the ranking of the accent changed to a middle-ranking (Bishop et al., 2005).

In other words, the difference between people's connections to social prestige, such as education and income, is referred to as a social class. For example, the speech of a lawyer and their defendant is usually not the same. Social class functions as a label for members that share similar social and economic statuses. In various countries, research regarding social dialects has illustrated a steady relationship between language patterns and social class, where there is a speech difference between the social classes (Holmes, 2013). There is a notable difference in vocabulary. For example, in England in the 1950s, some vocabulary was differentiated between upper-class and lower-class speech. According to Holmes (2013), the upper class said: *sitting room*, while other classes said *lounge* (Holmes, 2013). The pronunciation of post-vocalic [r] in English-speaking countries, such as in the word *car*, has previously been researched in sociolinguistic studies. For example, in an experimental study conducted by Labov in New York City, he studied the pronunciation effects by examining the post-vocalic [r]. In order to get the pronunciation of post-

vocalic [r], Labov asked a couple of people in different stores for an item that could be found on the store's fourth floor, and when his question was answered, he then asked again, pretending the answer was not heard. When the answer was repeated, the person carefully pronounced the words in order to make them clear. The results revealed that [r] was pronounced in higher quality stores and by socially superior supervisors (Holmes, 2013). Depending on where the pronunciation occurs, there are different pronunciations of the post-vocalic [r]. For example, in one city, the higher the speaker's social class, the more post-vocalic [r] the speaker would pronounce. In a different city, higher social class speakers pronounce post-vocalic [r] less frequently (Holmes, 2013). Most people are not conscious of speech and its connection to social class, but are aware of and notice other factors, such as the speaker's age or gender (Homes, 2013). Another example of how pronunciation varies depending on social class is the initial /h/. The initial /h/ is pronounced by all English-speaking countries and by speakers from all social classes. However, in some places, such as England, Wales, and parts of Norfolk, most working-class speakers do not pronounce the initial /h/. The pronunciation of the initial /h/, also known as h-dropping, can be heard in words like *house* and *hospital*. In the south of England, there has been a pronunciation change regarding the h-dropping where younger speakers are starting to pronounce the initial /h/, and younger speakers from the working class in London with backgrounds from either ethnic minorities or the inner-city have a higher rating of pronouncing the /h/, including residents from new towns (Kerswill, 2009).

For instance, Garrett (2010) writes that Ryan and Sebastian (1980) examined whether language attitudes would occur if some listeners were informed about the speaker's social class. Their results revealed that speakers of Standard English received more favorable evaluations than speakers of Mexican or Spanish-accented English, including a higher preference for middle-class speakers over lower-class speakers. Speakers with Mexican accents received the least favorable evaluations and were categorized as lower-class speakers (Garrett, 2010). Standard-accented speakers are categorized as speakers of higher social status and receive higher ratings (Garrett, 2010). According to Hiraga (2005), social class differences, including regional variations, are evident in the United States and Britain. One should also note, as Hiraga (2005) writes, that Wells (1982) mentions that it is exceedingly difficult to make definite predictions regarding a speaker's accent purely on the speaker's characteristics, such as regional and social characteristics.

2.2 Stereotypes and social categorization

The variations between the different English accents are frequently linked to the social variations, which lead to the result that the different accents function as the speaker's signal and hints regarding their social identities, such as their nationality. From an early age, young listeners are usually acquainted with language attitudes, and the listeners note the spoken accent by the speaker to figure out and conclude which social group or groups the speaker is associated with and belongs to (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). The variations between different accents and social variations where different accents can signal the speaker's social identity and make the listener aware of which social group the speaker is associated with describe the social categorization process (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020).

According to Dragojevic and Goatley-Soan (2020), when the categorization process occurs toward the speaker, then “stereotypes associated with the salient social category automatically become activated and influence [the] listeners' evaluations of speakers” (p. 168). The authors further argue that status stereotypes are based on judgments and understanding of the socioeconomic position, such as when socioeconomically dominant groups are likely connected with the stereotypes of a more positive status than the lower socioeconomic groups. The stereotypes that occur on the solidarity level, such as friendliness and niceness, are associated with “ingroup favoritism and perceptions of intergroup competition” (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020, p. 168). According to this research, ingroups, such as other native English speakers, are usually connected with stereotypes of positive solidarity to a greater extent than outgroups, specifically, if the latter is seen and identified as something competitive. On average, the stereotypes of the American speakers toward the national in groups, such as other American speakers, tend to have a higher positive rating regarding the status and solidarity dimensions compared to the stereotypes toward the outgroups, which are the foreign speakers, where these speakers receive fewer positive evaluations (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). Furthermore, speakers of American English are likely to link higher socioeconomic status with national ingroups rather than with some national outgroups. This leads to the results where speakers that speak English with a foreign accent, such as German-accented English, most of the time, receive a lower rating on traits from the status dimension scale and solidarity scale compared to the standard American English accent (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). Accordingly, the ratings on the mentioned scales and dimensions are frequently linked with and promoted through the use of

media and the portrayals in media, including educational practices and general opinions of the language (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020).

Dragojevic and Goatley-Soan (2020) further show that there are stigmatized and non-stigmatized national outgroups. Stigmatized national outgroups are linked with negative stereotypes and are speakers like Latino or Chinese. The non-stigmatized national outgroups are foreigners, who are linked with fewer negative stereotypes compared to stigmatized national outgroups. For example, in the U.S., non-stigmatized speakers are from core Anglosphere countries, which refers to countries with the majority having English as their native language, such as Canada. Non-stigmatized national outgroups also include speakers from Western European countries such as France. The solidarity and status stereotypes toward the mentioned group are then less stereotypical than the stigmatized group. Some of the Western European and Anglosphere countries have “the world’s strongest economies and tend to be associated with a high developmental index and standard of living, all of which promote relatively positive status stereotypes” (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020, p. 170), where the positive stereotypes are mainly promoted in the media as the favorable social groups. Therefore, the speakers with a foreign accent belonging to the non-stigmatized group receive positive evaluations on the status and solidarity scale than foreign speakers belonging to the stigmatized group. Non-stigmatized foreign groups lead to positive evaluations, and stigmatized groups lead to negative evaluations (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). In a study conducted by Lindemann (2005), the researcher examined the attitudes of Americans toward a couple of foreign accents by having labels for the accents, such as French-accented English, and it revealed that spoken English in Western European and Anglosphere countries received favorable ratings on traits for solidarity and status compared to the ratings for English spoken in other foreign countries.

2.3 Language attitudes from movies and media

The media can play a role in the portrayal of language and language attitudes by influencing the viewers and listeners that the speaker’s characteristics, such as roles and traits, are associated with distinct linguistic groups and increase the ability to remember stereotypically consistent information (Dragojevic et al., 2016). Empirical research has frequently revealed the influence of television imagery exposure linked with social discriminations and stereotypes (Dragojevic et al.,

2016). Exposure to media can shape a person's beliefs that certain features, such as traits, are associated with speakers of various linguistic groups, which later forms stereotypes based on language variations. In a way, individuals are good at unconsciously noticing differences between accents and roles, which then leads to promoting stereotypical information regarding the accent and its link with individuals and speakers. Therefore, the media can influence others, especially if the person has limited or has not encountered real-world interactions with the target group (Dragojevic et al., 2016). Speakers with standard accents usually have more influence on society than speakers with nonstandard accents. Further, speakers with standard accents are likely members of socioeconomic and ethnic dominant groups (Dragojevic et al., 2016). According to Lippi-Green (2012), language portrayed in media is usually not randomly or accidentally chosen. Instead, accent functions as portraying ethnicity and other categorizations.

Dragojevic and colleagues (2016) further write that research suggests that language attitudes connected with standard and non-standard accents on the status scale are well developed by the age of nine to ten. Most language attitudes are formed through face-to-face socialization and other individual interactions where a speaker might be criticized for their accent. They mention a theory called the *cultivation theory*, which states that constant exposure to TV that has certain messages will affect the audience's social understanding of a version of reality that is present on television, and therefore this exposure is seen as a socializing agent that shows information regarding the world. As Dragojevic and colleagues (2016) mention, empirical research has illustrated that heavy viewers evaluate different social groups differently based on their knowledge of stereotypical portrayals on TV. According to Dragojevic and colleagues (2016), the portrayal of accents in media is prejudiced when other accents, such as foreign-accented English, are less heard, resulting in the accents being rated as less favorable on status traits such as intelligence.

From an early age, children frequently observe the daily behaviors of humans, and research reveals that children imitate the things they see, such as evaluating others. Therefore, animated movies can function as a source for language attitude portrayal, which is connected to the various accents spoken by different characters in animated movies. Animated movies produced by various companies, such as Disney, manipulate and use different portrayals of language variations to develop characters, which is a practice that is long-standing in storytelling (Lippi-Green, 2012). Before the portrayal of language variation and accents began in animated movies, stage actors used

different accents to quickly form characters connected with various aspects such as ethnicity or economic status (Lippi-Green, 2012). Sometimes different accents are used to portray the origin of the character or speaker. For example, as Lippi-Green (2012) explains, if a plot is set to take place in France, then it would logically be expected that all characters would speak with a French accent to remind the viewer of where the story is taking place, although this does not occur in animated movies or live performances, because in most movies having plots outside of an English-speaking country, there might be limited sources for portraying specific accents. Lippi-Green (2012) illustrates this by providing an example from the Disney movie *Beauty and the Beast*, where the major characters speak with an American accent while the other three characters, such as the cook, butler, and maid, speak French-accented English.

In a study conducted in English-speaking countries by Bayard and colleagues (2001) in the U.S., New Zealand, and Australia, the results revealed that Standard American had an almost higher rating than Received Pronunciation on nearly all the status dimensions. In other countries, such as Denmark, the Received Pronunciation is considered the unsurpassed prestige English variety. This accent has been used as an English pronunciation model, illustrating a socially favorable accent compared to Standard American in classes for English as a foreign language (Ladegaard & Sachdev, 2006). According to the Ladegaard and Sachdev (2006) study, conducted in an English as a foreign language class in Denmark, the participant evaluation revealed that American English ranked second, and RP ranked first. American English ranked second on three of five dimensions. This accent evaluation in Denmark can illustrate the influence of media culture where younger speakers are evaluating the American accent more positively than RP and other English accents and choosing the American pronunciation as the preferred or ideal accent. An example of media culture is advertisements, movies, and television (Ladegaard & Sachdev, 2006). Ladegaard & Sachdev (2006) refer to a different study conducted by Poulsdatter Larsen (2000), where the participants were given questions to evaluate their attitudes toward American and British movies and shows, and they were also asked to what degree they thought the various kinds of media had affected their stereotypical judgments.

3. The present study

In the study by Giles (1970), the American accent received a lower ranking, while in the new study, the ranking of the accent changed to a middle-ranking (Bishop et al., 2005). The discrepancy in results was interesting and called for further investigation. The chosen accents in my study are based on previous research, which illustrates that different accents receive different evaluations on various traits (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan 2020; Dragojevic et al. 2016; Garret 2010; Hiraga 2005). The accents are General American (GA), Received Pronunciation (RP), German-accented English, and Mexican-accented English. The short passage read by the speakers can be found in Appendix B. The language attitudes of native English speakers will be examined by applying the verbal-guise technique. Further, language attitudes will be studied by social attractiveness and social status, applying traits from semantic-differential scales. Social attractiveness will be examined by the traits of friendliness and niceness, and social status by the traits of intelligence, education, and competence. In addition, language attitudes will be studied by a separate social class evaluation question and a question to measure the participant's evaluation of a character role in an American movie. The question regarding character roles and their definitions is based on previous research by Dragojevic and colleagues (2016), where the roles were coded as main, minor, or background characters. The speech audios were downloaded from *The Speech Accent Archive* (Weinberger, 2017) and linked in each survey accent section after uploading them to Google Drive and using them as a YouTube video. The links to the used speech audios can be found in Appendix C.

The research questions targeted in this study are:

- What are native English speakers' evaluations of the social attractiveness (i.e., friendly, nice), social status (i.e., educational level, intelligence, competence), and social class of speakers with different accents?
- What are the native English speakers' attitudes toward certain accents if the accents were to be used in an American movie?

Based on previous research, I hypothesize that similar findings in terms of social status and social attractiveness evaluations will be found in this study, where the evaluations will differ depending on the heard accent. Furthermore, I hypothesize that the results of this study will reveal more positive evaluations toward native English accents and more negative attitudes toward non-native English accents in terms of the variables of social attractiveness, social status, and social class. I expect that native English accents will receive higher ratings on social status and attractiveness than non-native English accents. Further, standard accents will have higher evaluations in terms of social class and how likely they are to appear in a movie after listening to recorded accent audio.

4. Method

4.1 Participants

The survey received 67 total responses. The participants were native English speakers from various English-speaking countries. The participants were recruited from Reddit after posting the survey in three subreddits. Three participants were non-native English speakers, and three indicated that they were native speakers, but on the English-speaking country question, they answered non-English-speaking countries. The answers from these participants were excluded from the survey. The final survey sample included 61 total responses from only native English speakers. Although the participant criteria were clearly listed in each post, the survey still received 6 answers from non-native participants. The participant genders were 28 female (45.9%), 27 male (44.3%), and 6 other (9.8%). The age range of the participants was from 17 to 64 years old ($M = 27.44$). Table 1 illustrates which English-speaking countries the participants were from and how many participants were from each listed country.

Table 1. The participants’ English-speaking countries of origin and how many of them were from each listed country.

English speaking country	The participants’ amount from the English-speaking countries
The United States	44 (72%)
The United Kingdom and England	10 (16%)
Canada	4 (6%)
Scotland	1(2%)
Australia	1 (2%)
South Africa	1 (2%)

Note. The total number of participants ($N = 61$).

4.2 Materials and design

This research study applied the verbal-guise technique, where the verbal-guise technique refers to recorded speech audios of various English accent varieties by different speakers from any geographical area (Garrett, 2010). The recorded accent audios in my study are collected from *The Speech Accent Archive* (Weinberger, 2017), which is an online repository hosted by George Mason University. *The Speech Accent Archive* includes speech audio files from many speakers with different accents from all around the world, all reading the same English passage (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020). The speaker’s gender was not a variable, and therefore, I have included both male and female speakers. The accents were selected after listening to a couple of recorded audios and finding audio files with clear pronunciation and short recorded duration in order to ensure the participants listened to the full audio. The audio files range from 21 to 29 seconds. The survey was posted on the following three Reddit pages: *r/SampleSize*, *r/ENGLISH*, and *r/SurveyExchange*.

The language attitudes were examined by applying some of the semantic-differential scale traits from previous studies (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan 2020; Hiraga 2005). Social attractiveness was assessed by 2 traits, which are friendliness and niceness. The applied traits to assess social status are intelligence, education, and competence. For the ratings, a 5-point Likert scale was used. In this study, the 5-point Likert scale endpoints were labeled with 5 being the positive or agreeable

option and 1 being the negative or disagreeable option. For the niceness trait, for example, the scale endpoints were labeled as follows: endpoint 5 was labeled as *nice*, and endpoint 1 was labeled as *not nice*. As Buttle (1996) writes, the purpose of using a 5-point Likert scale is to minimize and reduce the participants' frustration level when participating in a survey, and the 5-point Likert scale would also improve the quality and ratings of the responses. Instead of only having the options to agree or disagree, using an odd-numbered Likert scale, such as five points, would allow participants to select a middle option (i.e., 3) that functions as a neutral point on the scale. The social class trait was assessed by a separate question with three different answer options mentioned in (Thamer Ahmed et al., 2014). The question regarding character roles and their definitions is based on previous research by Dragojevic and colleagues (2016), where the roles were coded as main, minor, or background characters. Microsoft Excel was used to analyze the data.

This research project has one independent variable and three dependent variables. The independent variable is the selected English accents, where the manipulation of this variable will be studied to see if changing this variable will result in different accent evaluations from the participants. The dependent variables are social attractiveness (i.e., friendly, nice), social status (i.e., intelligence, education, and competence), and social class. Social attractiveness and status are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, while social class is a categorical variable measured by using a question with three different answer options. The three options are upper-class, middle-class, and working-class. The character role question is also a categorical variable measured by using a question with different choice options. The survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

4.3 Procedure

The survey was constructed in Google Forms, and it was divided into 8 different sections. The participants were informed that their participation was anonymous and free and that they could stop and close the survey at any moment. The first section of the survey included one question inquiring whether the participant was a native English speaker or a non-native English speaker. Native English speakers then proceeded to the second section, which had three broad questions about age, gender, and country of origin. The purpose of the last question in this section was to make sure that the participant was a native speaker of English, in order to receive as accurate answers as possible. Before the participants proceeded to the accent sections, section 3 included

information regarding the upcoming sections and a few guidance tips on what to do in each section. Each of the four accents was introduced in a separate section, sections 4 to 7. Section 8 included a reminder for the participants about their participation and a confirmation part where they marked a box stating that they had read and provided consent for their voluntary participation in the survey. Seven questions were formulated in order to target and measure the three factors under study, namely, social status, social class, and social attractiveness. For each accent, these same questions were repeated in a separate section. The questions can be found in Appendix A. The survey was first posted on a Reddit page called *r/SampleSize* on April 9, 2022. The survey was first reposted on *r/SampleSize*, *r/ENGLISH*, and *r/SurveyExchange*, and it was closed on late April 15, 2022. The survey took approximately 5 to 7 minutes to complete.

4.4 Analysis

In the evaluation of social attractiveness traits, two traits were measured, namely friendliness and niceness, and in the survey, the traits were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale. The evaluation of social status traits was measured by rating three different traits on a 5-point Likert scale. The social status traits are intelligence, education, and competence. The mean for each trait was calculated from the survey results and used to measure the evaluations of the social attractiveness dimension from the traits of friendliness and niceness. The mean value and standard deviation were calculated in Microsoft Excel. The mean for each trait was calculated from the survey results and used to measure the social status dimension from the traits of intelligence, education, and competence. The mean value was also calculated in Microsoft Excel. The inferential statistics analysis was calculated by conducting five one-way repeated measures ANOVA tests in Microsoft Excel. The five different ANOVA tests were for each measured trait in the survey for the independent variable, which is the four accents. The four accents are GA, RP, German-accented English, and Mexican-accented English.

5. Results and discussions

This section will present the results and discussion of my research study. The analysis of the survey data results can be found in subsection 4.4 Analysis.

5.1 Evaluation of social attractiveness

The social attractiveness factor was measured by ratings of two traits on the friendliness and niceness scales. The results revealed that GA received the highest ratings on the friendliness scale ($M = 4.00$), followed by Mexican accent ($M = 3.59$), RP ($M = 3.44$), and German accent ($M = 3.05$), respectively. The results further revealed that GA received the highest ratings on the niceness scale ($M = 4.07$), followed by Mexican accent ($M = 3.67$), RP ($M = 3.59$), and German accent ($M = 3.09$), respectively. The evaluation results of friendliness and niceness revealed that the four accents scored similarly on both traits. GA and Mexican-accented English received higher ratings on both traits than RP and German-accented English. In terms of evaluations of standard and non-standard, the standard variety received higher evaluations compared to non-standard. Table 2 below illustrates the average and dispersion measure ratings for the two traits associated with social attractiveness, namely, friendliness and niceness.

Table 2. The average and dispersion measure ratings for friendliness and niceness for all four accents.

Measures	GA	RP	German accent	Mexican accent
Friendly	$M = 4.00$ ($SD = 0.85$)	$M = 3.44$ ($SD = 0.99$)	$M = 3.05$ ($SD = 1.02$)	$M = 3.59$ ($SD = 0.92$)
Nice	$M = 4.07$ ($SD = 0.79$)	$M = 3.59$ ($SD = 0.96$)	$M = 3.09$ ($SD = 0.96$)	$M = 3.67$ ($SD = 0.87$)

Note. The total number of participants ($N = 61$).

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on the 61 participants to determine whether there is a significant variation in the friendliness trait used to assess social attractiveness across the study's independent variable, which is the four different English-accented speakers. The ANOVA test revealed that the variable accent, with four levels, is a significant predictor of how participants rate the speaker's friendliness, $F(3, 180) = 14.73, p < .001$. As seen in Table 3, the friendliness ratings for GA ($M = 4.00$) accent are higher than Mexican-accented English ($M = 3.59$), RP ($M = 3.44$) and German-accented English ($M = 3.05$), respectively. The evaluation and

the results from the ANOVA test reveal that the used accent does have an influence on the participant's friendliness ratings.

Table 3. ANOVA test results on the friendliness trait.

Anova: One-way repeated measures ANOVA (within-subjects design)						
SUMMARY						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Friendly – (GA)	61	244	4.00	0.73		
Friendly – (RP)	61	210	3.44	0.98		
Friendly – (German)	61	186	3.05	1.05		
Friendly – (Mexican)	61	219	3.59	0.85		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F-crit
Rows	101.65	60	1.70	2.65	< .001	1.39
Columns	28.24	3	9.41	14.73	< .001	2.65
Error	115.01	180	0.64			
Total	244.89	243				

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on the 61 participants to determine whether there is a significant variation in the niceness trait used to examine social attractiveness across the study's independent variable, which is the four different English-accented speeches. The ANOVA test revealed that the variable accent, with four levels, is a significant predictor of how participants rate the speaker's niceness, $F(3, 180) = 15.12, p < .001$. As seen in Table 4, the niceness ratings for GA ($M = 4.07$) accent are higher than Mexican-accented English ($M = 3.67$), RP ($M = 3.59$) and German-accented English ($M = 3.09$), respectively. The evaluation and the results from the ANOVA test reveal that the used accent does have an influence on the participant's ratings. Similar to the friendliness results, listeners assigned higher ratings for the niceness trait on the solidarity factor to the native-accented GA speaker ($M = 4.07$), while Mexican-accented English, a non-native English accent, was assigned as a more friendly speaker ($M = 3.67$).

Table 4. ANOVA test results on the niceness trait.

Anova: One-way repeated measures ANOVA (within-subjects design)

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Nice – (GA)	61	248	4.07	0.63
Nice – (RP)	61	219	3.59	0.91
Nice – (German)	61	188	3.09	0.92
Nice – (Mexican)	61	224	3.67	0.75

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F-crit
Rows	78.73	60	1.31	2.06	< .001	1.39
Columns	28.88	3	9.63	15.12	< .001	2.65
Error	114.61	180	0.64			
Total	222.23	243				

The data suggests that the non-standard accents received lower ratings compared to GA, which is a standard accent. However, it is interesting to note that RP, a standard and non-stigmatized accent, received lower ratings on both traits compared to Mexican, which is non-standard and received a slightly higher rating than RP. A reason for these evaluation results might be the sample, where 72% of 61 participants were from the U.S., and only 16% of 61 were from the U.K. According to Dragojevic and Goatley-Soan (2020), foreign-accented speakers, such as German and Mexican, usually receive lower ratings on social attractiveness traits than GA. In this case, the results revealed that non-standard accents did indeed receive lower ratings than GA, but Mexican received higher ratings than RP, which is a standard accent. Revisiting Hiraga's (2005) results reveals that the British participants favored GA, and when asked about the usage of a different accent from their current one, GA was preferred over a British accent. One reason RP received a lower rating from my participants might be the participants' perception of a friendly accent and if the participants perceived RP as a formal accent, which resulted in RP receiving a lower rating on the friendliness scale. It would have been interesting to see the results of the participant's formality scale evaluation to see if the results for RP and other studied accents would receive opposite ratings

compared to the current results on the friendliness scale. The results reveal that the independent variable, in this case, the different accents, alters the results for the social attractiveness dependent variable, where the participant evaluations differ depending on the heard accent. Bishop and colleagues (2005) study revealed that German received lower ratings and was downgraded on the solidarity dimension. The results from this study are in line with those of Bishop and colleagues (2005) in that the German accent received lower ratings than both standard accents (GA and RP) as well as the other non-standard accent (Mexican).

5.2 Evaluation of social status

The social status factor was measured by ratings of three traits on the intelligence, education, and competence scales. The mean and standard deviation were calculated for each used trait to measure the social status scale. In this assessment, RP received the highest evaluations from the participants on all three traits (i.e., educational level, intelligence, and competence). The results revealed that RP received the highest ratings on the intelligence scale ($M = 4.16$), followed by German accent ($M = 3.72$), GA ($M = 3.61$), and Mexican accent ($M = 3.21$), respectively. For education, RP was further ranked as the most educated ($M = 4.23$), followed by German ($M = 3.70$). GA ranked as the third most educated accent ($M = 3.67$), and lastly, Mexican received the lowest ratings for the level of education with a mean below 3 ($M = 2.95$). The accents examined on the intelligent and educated traits received the same ranking positions, with RP as the highest, followed by German, GA, and Mexican as the lowest. The competence trait has a different ranking than the other two traits (i.e., intelligence and education). For competence, RP ranked as the most competent accent ($M = 4.21$), followed by GA ($M = 4.16$), German ($M = 3.75$), and Mexican ($M = 3.39$). Standard accents received the highest ratings in terms of competence. Both non-standard accents ranked as less competent, although German still ranked higher than Mexican on this scale as well. Table 5 below illustrates the average and dispersion measure ratings for the three traits associated with social status, namely, intelligence, education, and competence.

Table 5. The average and dispersion measure ratings for intelligence, education, and competence for all four accents.

Measures	GA	RP	German accent	Mexican accent
Intelligent	$M = 3.61$ ($SD = 0.95$)	$M = 4.16$ ($SD = 0.78$)	$M = 3.72$ ($SD = 0.86$)	$M = 3.21$ ($SD = 0.90$)
Educated	$M = 3.67$ ($SD = 0.93$)	$M = 4.23$ ($SD = 0.82$)	$M = 3.70$ ($SD = 0.94$)	$M = 2.95$ ($SD = 1.02$)
Competent	$M = 4.16$ ($SD = 0.92$)	$M = 4.21$ ($SD = 0.82$)	$M = 3.75$ ($SD = 1.01$)	$M = 3.39$ ($SD = 0.86$)

Note. The total number of participants ($N = 61$).

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on the 61 participants to determine whether there is a significant variation in the intelligence trait used to examine social status across the study's independent variable, which is the four different English-accented speeches. The ANOVA test revealed that the variable accent, with four levels, is a significant predictor of how participants rate the speaker's intelligence, $F(3, 180) = 14.52, p < .001$. As seen in Table 6, the intelligence ratings for RP ($M = 4.16$) accent are higher than German-accented English ($M = 3.72$), GA ($M = 3.61$) and Mexican-accented English ($M = 3.21$) respectively. The evaluation and the results from the ANOVA test reveal that the used accent does have an influence on the participant's intelligence trait ratings.

Table 6. ANOVA test results on the intelligence trait.

Anova: One-way repeated measures ANOVA (within-subjects design)

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Intelligent – (GA)	61	220	3.61	0.91
Intelligent – (RP)	61	254	4.16	0.61
Intelligent – (German)	61	227	3.72	0.74
Intelligent – (Mexican)	61	196	3.21	0.80

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F-crit
Rows	67.67	60	1.12	1.75	< .001	1.39
Columns	28.01	3	9.34	14.52	< .001	2.65
Error	115.74	180	0.64			
Total	211.42	243				

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on the 61 participants to determine whether there is a significant variation in the education trait used to examine social status across the study's independent variable, which is the four different English-accented speeches. The ANOVA test revealed that the variable accent, with four levels, is a significant predictor of how participants rate the speaker's education, $F(3, 180) = 25.45, p < .001$. As seen in Table 7, the education ratings for RP ($M = 4.23$) accent are higher than German-accented English ($M = 3.70$), GA ($M = 3.67$) and Mexican-accented English ($M = 2.95$) respectively. The evaluation and the results from the ANOVA test reveal that the used accent does have an influence on the participant's education trait ratings.

Table 7. ANOVA test results on the education trait.

Anova: One-way repeated measures ANOVA (within-subjects design)

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Education – (GA)	61	224	3.67	0.85
Education – (RP)	61	258	4.23	0.68
Education – (German)	61	226	3.70	0.88
Education – (Mexican)	61	180	2.95	1.05

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F-crit
Rows	88.76	60	1.48	2.24	< .001	1.39
Columns	50.49	3	16.83	25.45	< .001	2.65
Error	119.01	180	0.66			
Total	258.26	243				

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted on the 61 participants to determine whether there is a significant variation in the competence trait used to examine social status across the study's independent variable, which is the four different English-accented speeches. The ANOVA test revealed that the variable accent, with four levels, is a significant predictor of how participants rate the speaker's competence, $F(3, 180) = 15.03$, $p < .001$. As seen in Table 8, the competence ratings for RP ($M = 4.21$) accent are higher than GA ($M = 4.16$), German-accented English ($M = 3.75$) and Mexican-accented English ($M = 3.39$), respectively. The evaluation and the results from the ANOVA test reveal that the used accent does have an influence on the participant's competence trait ratings.

Table 8. ANOVA test results on the competence trait.

Anova: One-way repeated measures ANOVA (within-subjects design)

SUMMARY				
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Competent – (GA)	61	254	4.16	0.84
Competent – (RP)	61	257	4.21	0.67
Competent – (German)	61	229	3.75	1.02
Competent – (Mexican)	61	207	3.39	0.74

ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F-crit
Rows	88.30	60	1.47	2.45	< .001	1.39
Columns	27.09	3	9.03	15.03	< .001	2.65
Error	108.15	180	0.60			
Total	223.55	243				

The results reveal that standard accents (RP and GA) received higher ratings on the status dimension and are more favorable than non-standard accents (German and Mexican), which received lower ratings. However, there is a difference in how non-standard foreign accents are rated. German as a foreign accent from a Western European country received favorable ratings compared to Mexican, which is also a foreign accent. As Hiraga (2005) writes, a standard accent, such as RP, is considered the more satisfying and appealing alternative compared to other non-standard accents. The *inherent value hypothesis* (Hiraga, 2005) also refers to the pleasing form of a standard accent, which in this case is RP that received the highest ratings. The results from this study reveal that foreign accents receive less favorable ratings on the status dimension compared to native accents. As Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan (2020) have stated, this difference in accent evaluations occurs between foreign and standard accents. As Hiraga (2005) writes, less prestigious varieties, such as German and Mexican accents, are considered low-grade accents with language irregularities. Therefore, they receive less prestige than standard accents. Standard accents receive higher prestige than other varieties and have a higher status in terms of correctness. Higher status accents are evaluated as better accents. When a speech is more difficult to understand, it makes

the listener evaluate and characterize the speaker as lacking competence (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020), as shown by the competence average results for non-standard accents being lower than the average results for standard accents. As supported by the claim from Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan (2020), the foreign accents in my study, most of the time, received lower ratings on status traits. The reason for these ratings can be frequently linked to the portrayal and promotion of the accent in media, which sets an image of what these accents are connected with, for example, the education level of the speaker or their competence. As stated in the background section, there is an evaluation hierarchy for foreign accents (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020), where German received favorable ratings compared to other foreign accents, and this is illustrated in the status evaluations from this study. The survey results illustrate that native English speakers have favorable evaluations toward standard accents compared to foreign accents, where both foreign accents received lower ratings in terms of competence. Depending on the accent that the native speaker hears, there will be different evaluations of the examined accents and their traits. Giles's (1970) study results mentioned by Bishop and colleagues (2005) revealed that ethnic accents, in this study, Mexican, received lower prestige on the scale, and other accents, same in my study, received higher ratings and prestige and were ranked next to RP. Revisiting the statement by Dragojevic and Goatley-Soan (2020), an English accent from a Western European country, such as German English, and other English accents from Anglosphere countries, such as Canada and the U.S., have "the world's strongest economies and tend to be associated with a high developmental index and standard of living, all of which promote relatively positive status stereotypes" (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2020, p. 170). Therefore, from this claim, the survey results reveal that native English speakers have favorable evaluations toward standard accents (GA and RP) and foreign accents that are non-stigmatized (German).

5.3 Evaluation of social class

The social class factor was measured by a separate question that contained three different options. The three options were higher-class, middle-class, and lower-class. The results regarding the social class evaluation question in the survey are presented below in Table 9. When looking at upper-class evaluations, RP was evaluated as the accent that most belong to the upper class: 30 out of 61 participants (49.2%), followed by German (16.4%), GA (9.8%), and lastly, Mexican (4.9%). When

looking at middle-class evaluations, GA was evaluated as the accent that most belong to the middle class: 50 out of 61 participants (82%), followed by German (54.1%), RP (47.5%), and Mexican (24.6%). Mexican-accented English ranked as the last accent on both upper-and middle-class scales, but the accent ranked highest on the working-class scale. The results revealed that RP received the lowest ratings on the working-class scale of 2 (3.3%), followed by GA 5 (8.2%), German accent 18 (29.5%), and Mexican accent 43 (70.5%), respectively. The standard accents, RP and GA, were both ranked as the accents that least belonged to the working class, and the evaluations for the foreign accents had a higher rating for the working class. Although there is a difference between the foreign accent rating on the working-class and the middle-class, where German had fewer participants evaluating the accent as spoken by the working-class.

Looking at the results for each accent separately reveals that RP (49.2%) had a higher rating in the upper class, GA had higher ratings in the middle class (82%), and German-accented English had higher ratings in the middle class with 54.1%, and Mexican-accented English was highly rated on the working-class scale (70.5%) of the participants chose this option when evaluating the accent. Both GA and German received higher ratings in the middle class, where the participants evaluated these accents as belonging to the middle class.

Table 9. The survey results from the social class question for all four accents.

Accent	Upper class	Middle class	Working-class
General American	6 (9.8%)	50 (82%)	5 (8.2%)
Received Pronunciation	30 (49.2%)	29 (47.5%)	2 (3.3%)
German-accented English	10 (16.4%)	33 (54.1%)	18 (29.5)
Mexican-accented English	3 (4.9%)	15 (24.6%)	43 (70.5%)

Note. The number of participants is presented in both numbers and percentages. The number outside the parenthesis is how many of the total participants chose the option. The total number of participants ($N = 61$).

The study by Ryan and Sebastian (1980) that Garrett (2010) writes about examines the attitudes of participants toward the social class evaluation of accents, and it revealed that, similar to my findings, standard accents received more favorable evaluations than Mexican-accented English. The Mexican-accented speaker was evaluated and categorized as belonging to the lower class. Standard-accented speakers are categorized as belonging to a higher social status and therefore receive higher ratings. As Holmes (2013) writes, depending on where the accent is spoken, one place might evaluate an accent with less pronunciation of the post-vocalic [r] to be of a higher class, whereas another place may consider an accent with more pronunciation of the [r] to be of a higher class. Therefore, it is interesting to see that RP, the standard accent spoken in the U.K., which is also the accent that has fewer [r] pronunciations, received higher ratings on the upper-class scale. However, since the British accent used in this study is the standard accent, it received higher ratings compared to if the study had examined a different accent spoken in Britain, such as the accent spoken in Norfolk. According to Kerswill (2009), most working-class speakers, for example, speakers from Norfolk, do not pronounce the initial /h/. However, the initial /h/ is pronounced by almost all English-speaking countries and social classes.

5.4 Assigning character roles from the accent audio

A character that would speak GA was evaluated by 59% of the participants as mostly being a minor character and by 21.3% of the participants as being the main character. A character that would speak RP was evaluated by 45.9% of the participants as being the main character and by 19.6% of the participants as being the antagonist. German-accented English was rated by 39.3% of the participants as a minor character and by 22.9% of the participants as being an antagonist. Mexican-accented English was also rated by 44.3% of the participants as a minor character and by 37.7% of the participants as the background character. All accents except for RP received higher ratings as the minor character, whereas RP received a higher rating as the main character. The protagonist and antagonist roles were equally rated as being less assigned to GA speakers. RP received lower ratings as an accent to be assigned to a background character. German was less likely to be spoken by a protagonist character, and Mexican was also equally evaluated as less likely to be a protagonist or antagonist.

Table 10. The survey results from the character role question.

Accent	Protagonist	Antagonist (Villain)	Main character	Minor character	Background character
General American	1 (1.6%)	1 (1.6%)	13 (21.3%)	36 (59%)	10 (16.4%)
Received Pronunciation	7 (11.5%)	12 (19.6%)	28 (45.9%)	9 (14.8%)	5 (8.2%)
German-accented English	3 (4.9%)	14 (22.9%)	7 (11.5%)	24 (39.3%)	13 (21.3%)
Mexican-accented English	1 (1.6%)	1 (1.6%)	9 (14.8%)	27 (44.3%)	23 (37.7%)

Note. The number of participants is presented in both numbers and percentages. The number outside the parenthesis is how many of the total participants chose the option. The total number of participants ($N = 61$).

The results regarding the evaluations of each accent that could be spoken by a character in an American movie, as Hiraga (2005) and Ladegaard & Sachdev (2006) write, movies like American movies are a form of media that influences the evaluation of accents. This standard or foreign accent could be linked with the accent evaluation on the dimensions of status and solidarity, which can illustrate how a standard or foreign accent is portrayed in the media. A background character refers to a character that is a non-central character having around two dialogues, and this can be linked to the previous status and solidarity evaluations from the previous results that a foreign accent or non-standard accent is less favorable, leading to less appearance. Dragojevic and colleagues (2016) write that the media can affect the portrayal of language attitudes where it shapes the listener's thinking that some features of the speaker are linked with a specific group, role, and traits. Stereotypes toward various speakers using different accents can be linked to exposure to media. In this case, the results show that there is variation in the ratings and evaluations of native English speakers regarding the selected accents and how they would be portrayed in media, such as a movie. However, some factors can be linked to the participant's evaluation, such as if the participant has not had an interaction with a target accent in real life and therefore evaluates the accent based on knowledge obtained from the media. This factor is mentioned by Dragojevic and

colleagues (2016), and they further claim that a standard accent usually has more influence on society compared to non-standard speakers.

Dragojevic and colleagues (2016) further mentioned the cultivation theory, which refers to constant exposure to TV with specific messages that will affect the listener's "social perceptions towards a television version of reality" (Dragojevic and colleagues, 2016, p. 63), which could explain why each accent in this study received different evaluations, with an accent being rated as spoken by a protagonist, main character, or background character. The foreign accents that received a less favorable rating on the status and solidarity scales are less likely to be heard in media, where Dragojevic and colleagues' (2016) study has revealed these findings. Lippi-Green (2012) writes that the portrayal of language attitudes toward English accents can also be found in animated movies, where the author illustrates this with an example from the Disney movie *Beauty and the Beast*. This accent portrayal described by Lippi-Green (2012) can be linked to how the participants in this study evaluated the accents, such as whether their evaluation was influenced by previous experience with the accent used in media.

6. Limitations

It is important to mention that one important limitation in this study is that we do not know where the significant difference between the groups lies. There might be a difference between all groups, or maybe between only two. However, the output of the ANOVA tests tells us that there is a significant difference between at least two groups. There is a follow-up post-hoc test that I could have conducted to compare the different groups, although this might be outside the scope of my study.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study examined native English speakers' language attitudes toward two native and two non-native English accents. The evaluations of the study's dependent variable varied depending on the accent. The dependent variables were social attractiveness, social status,

and social class. Standard English accents received favorable ratings, and non-standard accents received less favorable ratings. For the social attractiveness evaluation, GA was the accent that received the highest ratings on the friendliness and niceness scales. On the friendliness and niceness scales, the German accent received the lowest ratings. There was a difference in the ratings of the four accents for the social status evaluation. RP had the highest average rating measured on the traits of intelligence, education, and competence. The Mexican accent ranked as the lowest accent when measured on the same social status traits. The evaluations of the accents on the social class factor and character role also received different ratings when examining each accent on each factor. These findings support the claim that language attitudes toward native and non-native accents are evaluated differently depending on which accent is heard by the native English speaker.

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Appendix A

Below are the questions used in the survey. Questions 1–5 had the ratings on a 5-point Likert scale. On the 5-point Likert scale, endpoint 5 is the agreeable option, and endpoint 1 is the disagreeable option. Questions 6 and 7 are questions with multiple options where the participant can only choose one option.

Question 1: Do you find the speaker using the accent you listened to as a “friendly” or a “not friendly” person?

Question 2: Do you find the speaker using the accent you listened to as a “nice” or a “not nice” person?

Question 3: Do you find the speaker using the accent you listened to as an “intelligent” or a “not intelligent” person?

Question 4: What is the educational level of the speaker you listened to?

Question 5: Do you find the speaker using the accent you listened to as a “competent” or a “not competent” person?

Question 6: What is the social class of the speaker from the audio that you listened to?

- Upper class
- Middle class
- Working class

Question 7: If this accent that you listened to from the speech audio were to be used in an American movie, what kind of character would that be?

- Protagonist
- Antagonist
- Main character (as a regular character)
- Minor character (as an infrequent or a one-time character)
- Background character (as a noncentral character that has around two dialogues)

Appendix B

The Read passage from *The Speech Accent Archive* (Weinberger, S. H., 2017).

“Please call Stella. Ask her to bring these things with her from the store: Six spoons of fresh snow peas, five thick slabs of blue cheese, and maybe a snack for her brother Bob. We also need a small plastic snake and a big toy frog for the kids. She can scoop these things into three red bags, and we will go meet her Wednesday at the train station” (Weinberger, S. H., 2017).

Appendix C

The collected audio files from *The Speech Accent Archive* (Weinberger, S. H., 2017) for each used accent in this study.

Speech audio 1: General American (GA)

https://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=detail&speakerid=662

Speech audio 2: Received Pronunciation (RP)

https://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=detail&speakerid=1292

Speech audio 3: German-accented English

https://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=detail&speakerid=189

Speech audio 4: Mexican-accented English

https://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=detail&speakerid=2588