

**“In the saus of my country, the Netherlands”**

**How do students evaluate Dutch lecturers' non-native pronunciation in EMI?**

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## Today's topics

- Research on English pronunciation in a changed world
  - Native norm
  - Accentedness research
  - Evaluations of Dutch-accented lecturers
- Countering negative evaluations

## Native pronunciation norm: desirable or obsolete?

- Increasing globalization
  - non-native speakers of English (NNE) outnumber native speakers of English (NE) (Crystal, 2003)
    - 1.5 billion speakers of English → 400 million L1 speakers of English (weforum.org)
  - increasing interactions NNE with NE and other NNE; business, education (English medium instruction - EMI)



## Native pronunciation norm: desirable or obsolete?

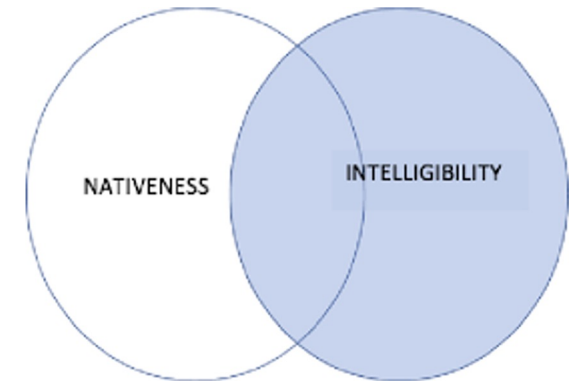
- Second language research (SLA):
  - NNE is different from NE: grammar, vocab, **pronunciation** = salient (Baugh, 2000)
  - Is this a problem?

*Lost*  
~~YOU HAD ME AT~~  
HELLO!

## Native pronunciation norm: desirable or obsolete?



- Traditional view: nativeness principle
  - “... it is both possible and desirable to achieve native-like pronunciation in a foreign language.” (Levis, 2005)
- Modern view: intelligibility principle
  - “... learners simply need to be understandable.” (Levis, 2005)
- Researchers English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and World Englishes (WE):
  - native speaker norm not desirable (Jenkins, 1998)
  - valid model: English spoken by proficient non-native speakers (Cook, 1999)



## Native pronunciation norm: EMI users

- Users: Mixed opinions about lecturers
  - Preference for standard English among students - but also international English (Baker & Hüttner, 2018)
- NE lecturer not strictly necessary, but knowledgeable, proficient and good teachers
  - “I do not care if he is a native speaker as long as his English is good”
  - “If a lecturer who is not a native speaker agrees to teach in English, it means his English is good enough for us” (Inbar-Lourie & Donitsa-Schmidt, 2020)



## Methodologies in accentedness research in EMI

- Different methods
  - Surveys & interviews: opinions about wishes, needs, expectations NNE users (e.g., Baker & Hüttner, 2018; Hellekjaer, 2010)
  - Experiments: evaluations of speakers (e.g., Hendriks et al., 2021; Nejari et al., 2021; Roessel et al., 2019)
    - Audio recordings scripted lecture fragments

## Accentedness research

- Variables measured in experimental research
  - Intelligibility (transcription)
  - Perceived comprehensibility (e.g. 'I think this lecturer is difficult to understand')

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

	Completely disagree (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Completely agree (7)
I have to listen very carefully to be able to understand the lecturer (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The lecturer speaks clearly (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The lecturer is barely intelligible (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Accentedness research

- Attitude towards speaker ('This lecturer sounds ...')
  - Likeability (e.g., 'friendly/sympathetic/helpful/kind')
  - Competence (e.g., 'intelligent/reliable/competent/confident')
  - Dynamism (e.g., 'lively/natural/dynamic')
  - Status (e.g., 'professional/educated/successful')
  - Teaching quality (e.g., 'has excellent didactic abilities/can clearly communicate content of lecture')

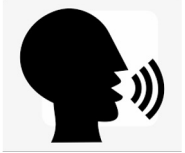
In my opinion, the lecturer sounds...

	Completely disagree (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	Completely agree (7)
reliable (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
intelligent (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Findings accentedness research

- Non-native accented speakers < native speakers (Fuertes et al., 2012)
- Accent strength (Dragojevic et al., 2017; van Meurs & Hendriks, 2017)
  - “In general, the stronger a speaker’s foreign accent is, the more negatively he or she tends to be evaluated” (Dragojevic et al., 2017, p. 387)

## Design



Moderate Dutch



Slight Dutch



Native English

**How are Dutch-accented  
EMI lecturers evaluated?**



Dutch  
International  
Native English

## Findings Dutch/international students



Moderate



slight



native

- Perceived comprehensibility
- Attitudes (e.g., likeability, competence, teaching quality)

## Findings for native English students



Moderate



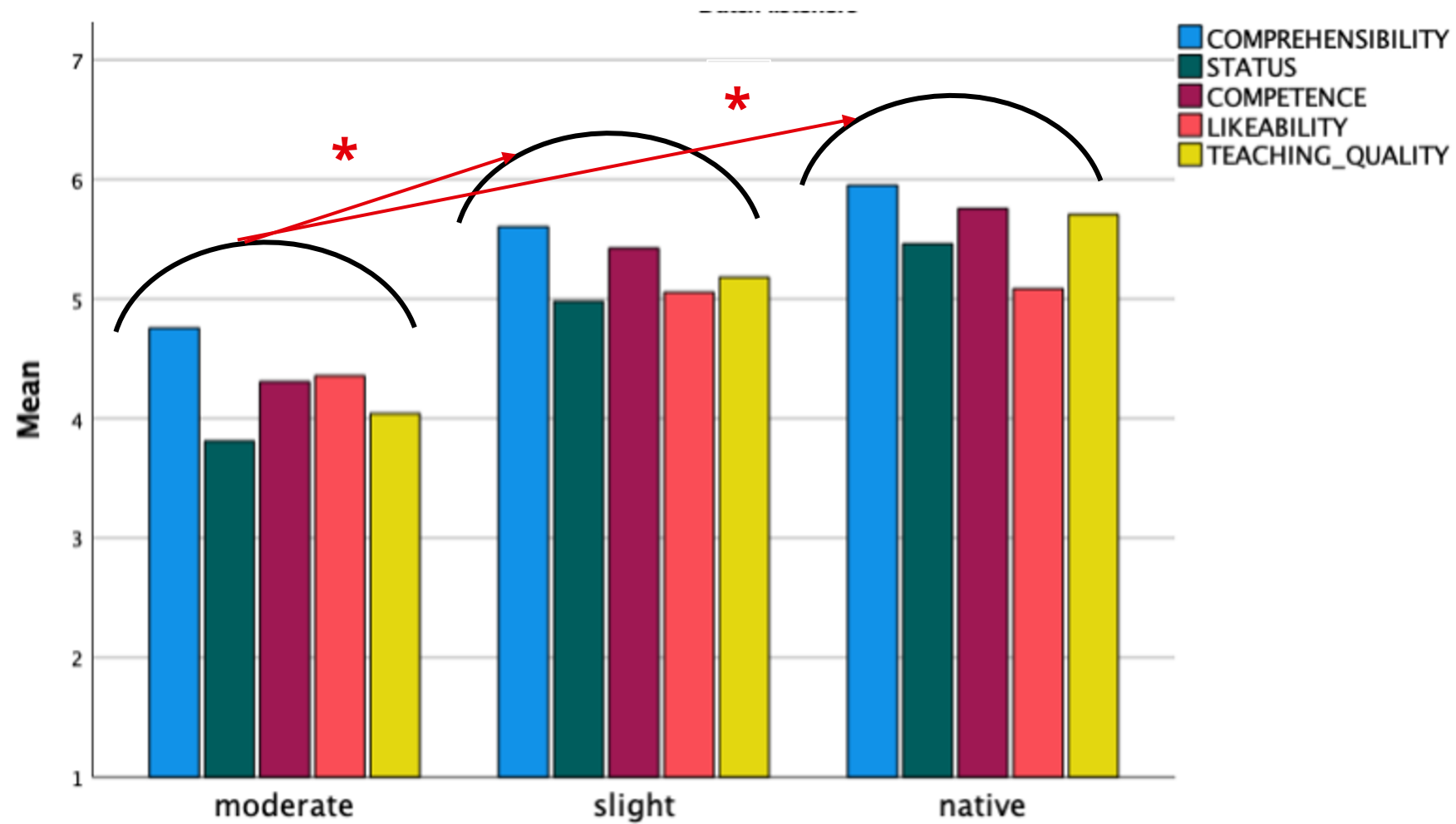
slight



native

(Hendriks et al., 2021)

## Evaluations by Dutch and international students



## Conclusion

- Our research in line with
  - ELF research: moderate/strong non-native accents → negative evaluations
  - EMI research: moderate/strong (Dutch-)accented lecturers less positive than slight / native
    - less competent
    - less status
    - lower teaching quality

## Possible strategies

- Speaker-based
  - Pronunciation training speaker?
  - Feasible/possible?
  - Desirable?
  - Necessary?



## Possible strategies

- Listener-based (Subtirelu & Lindemann, 2016)
  - Teaching materials with different varieties of English, incl. foreign-accented; inner- outer - expanding circle speakers (BrE/AE, Kenyan/Nigerian, French-/Dutch-accented)
  - Changing listeners' reactions (e.g., Roessel et al., 2019)

## Our own prejudice control research - What?

- Can prejudice control interventions reduce negative evaluations of Dutch-accented lecturers?
- For Dutch listeners (197 Dutch listeners)

## Research setting

- Context:
  - Selection committee Dutch university
  - EMI lecturer in marketing
  - Candidates have sent in audio fragment of lectures
  - Instructions HR department

# Our own prejudice control research - How?

instructions



## HIRING POLICY

At our university, we strongly believe in equal opportunities, and we do not tolerate discrimination in any form. We expect the members of our hiring committees to keep this in mind during the selection procedures for new lecturers. All candidates should be treated equally and be given the same opportunities to prove themselves during the job interview procedure.

Research has found that accent-based discrimination is especially prevalent in education and employment settings. Thus, lecturers and job candidates with a non-native English accent are consistently downgraded by students and interviewers on aspects such as competence and status. This can often mean that they are also less likely to get hired for certain positions. A negative hiring recommendation is then solely based on their accent and not on their actual skills and competences.

Please be aware that most candidates were not speaking their native language in the fragment which they were asked to submit for the job interview. This means that the candidate may not sound like an English native speaker.

We therefore kindly ask you not to base your evaluations on feelings or stereotypes that might be evoked by the non-native accent of the candidate.



moderate



slight



Dutch listeners



## HIRING POLICY

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# Design

			
MODERATE DUTCH			
SLIGHT DUTCH			

# Design

 	ANTI-ACCENT DISCRIMINATION	GENERAL ANTI- DISCRIMINATION	NO INSTRUCTIONS
MODERATE DUTCH			
SLIGHT DUTCH			

## Design

 	ANTI-ACCENT DISCRIMINATION	GENERAL ANTI- DISCRIMINATION	NO INSTRUCTIONS
MODERATE DUTCH	Moderate / anti-accent discrimination	Moderate / general anti- discrimination	Moderate / no instructions
SLIGHT DUTCH	Slight / anti-accent discrimination	Slight / general anti- discrimination	Slight / no instructions



## METHOD - variables

- Each participant evaluated one fragment in online questionnaire
- Perceived comprehensibility (e.g. 'I think this speaker is difficult to understand')
- Attitudes towards speaker (e.g. competence, likeability, teaching quality, hiring recommendation, etc.)

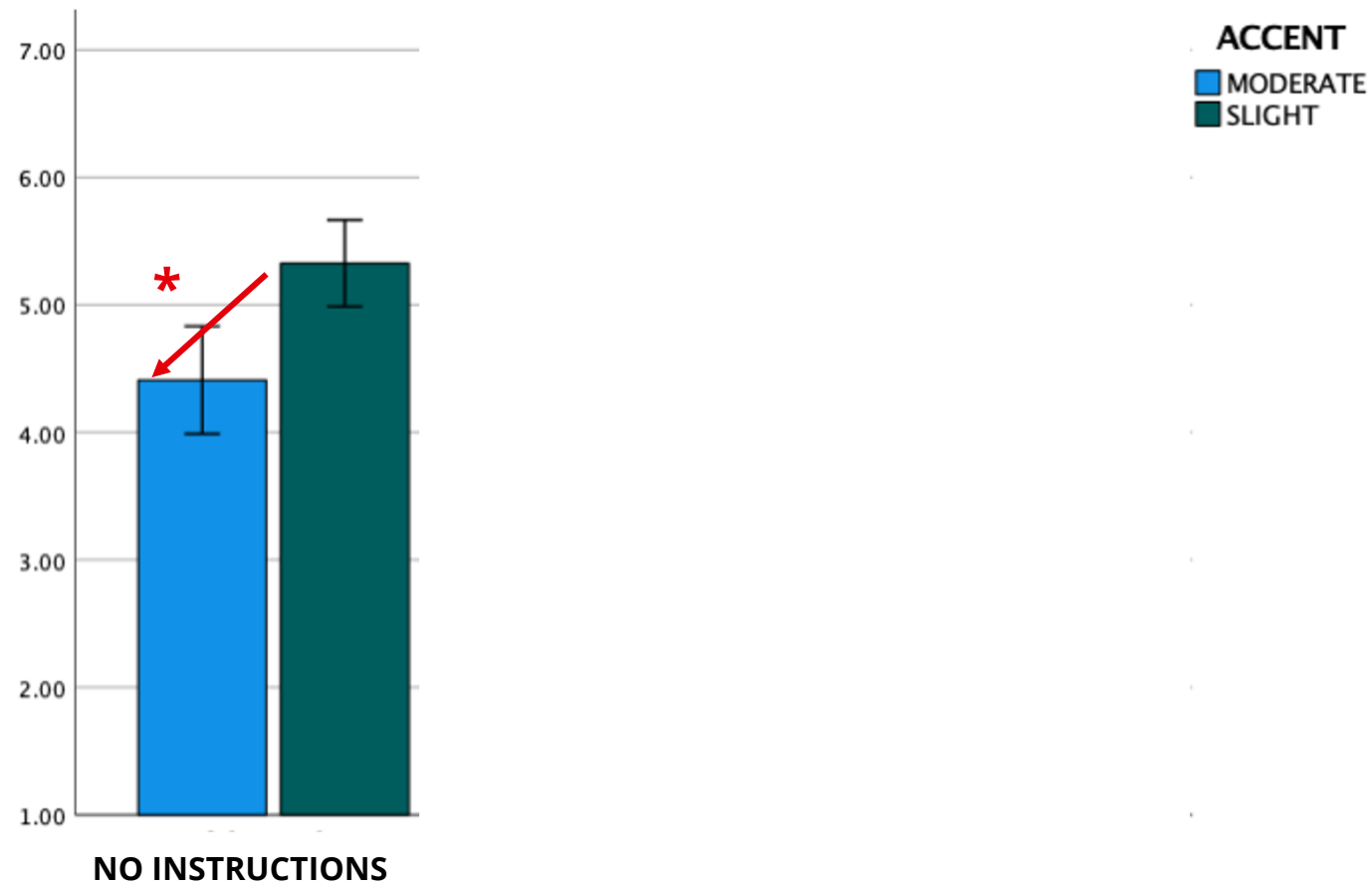
## Results: Prejudice Control

- Did the instructions reduce accent discrimination?
- Only for
  - likeability
  - status

## Results: + Prejudice Control

Effect instructions

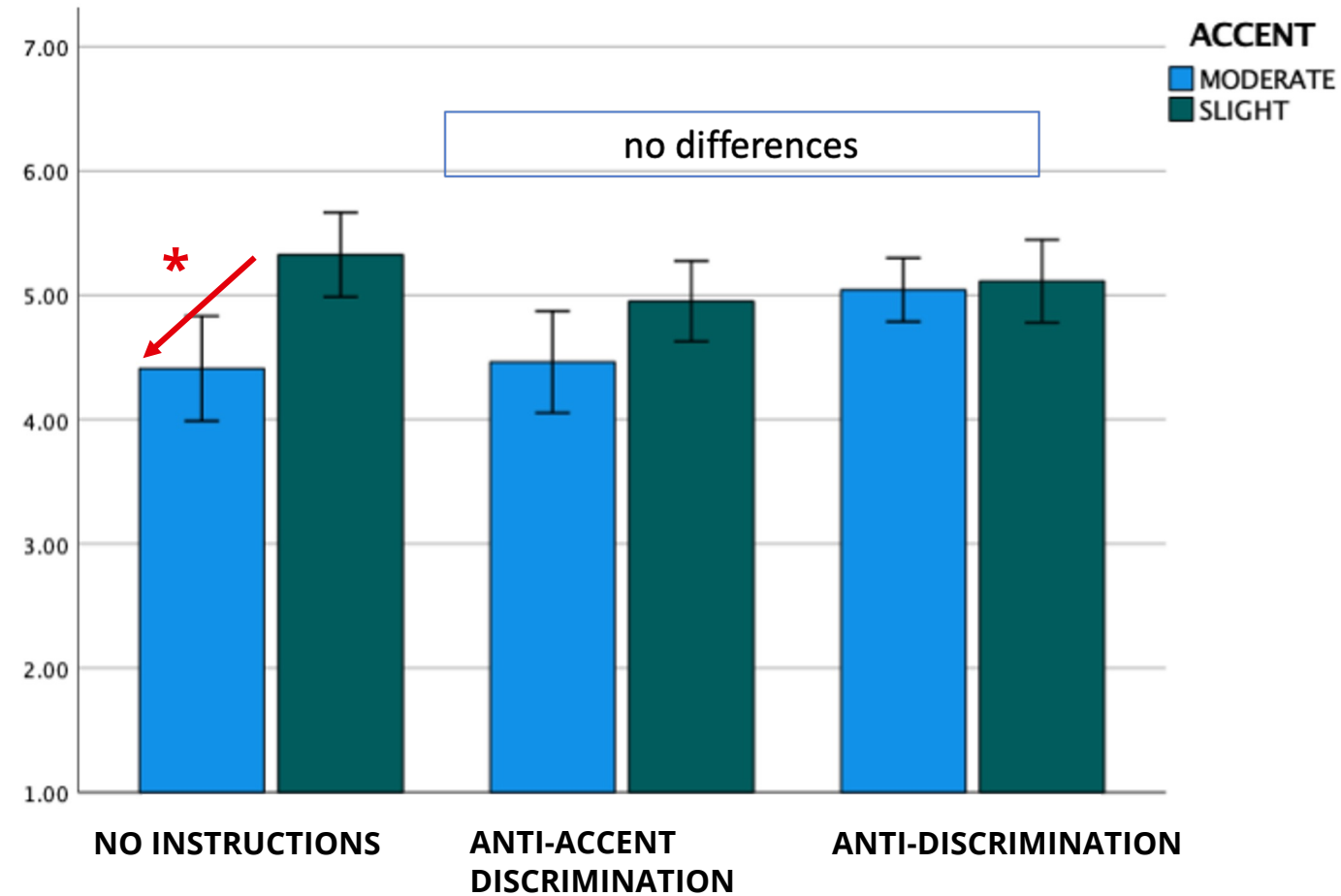
- likeability
- status



## Results: + Prejudice Control

Effect prejudice control interventions

- likeability
- status



## Results: - Prejudice control



Moderate

Slight

- Teaching quality
- Hiring recommendation

## Road ahead

- Listener-based strategy partly successful with Dutch students
  - International students & native English students?
- Other interventions?
  - speaker-based
    - self-disclosure
    - apologies for speaking with accent

## Summing up: Non-native English pronunciation in a changed world

- English L1 → English as lingua franca
- Native norm → intelligibility principle
- Appreciation (non-native) varieties of English
- But negative evaluation non-native accent in practice
- Prejudice control interventions → can work but more research needed

Any suggestions, questions, comments, etc.?

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