

Prestige and Prejudice: A Study of Danes' Evaluations of Selected Accents of English

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Introduction

Accent-based stereotyping is a common phenomenon, which entails that the accent with which an individual speaks influences how others will evaluate said individual. Indeed, several studies from the Anglosphere have demonstrated that the accent with which a speaker speaks English affects others' evaluations of the speaker (e.g. Alford and Strother 1990; Bayard et al. 2001; Shah 2019). Though relatively little research has been conducted on Danes' evaluations of different accents of English, Ladegaard (1998) suggests that Danes also let different accents of English influence their evaluations of speakers and that Danes harbour stereotypes about the users of these accents. This study contributes to the academic discussion by assessing Danes' attitudes to different accents of English two decades after Ladegaard's study. The data informing this article were gathered through an experiment involving 21 Danes who were asked to evaluate 3 speakers of the following accents: Received Pronunciation (RP), General American (GA), Southern American (SUS), Australian (AUS) and Danish-accented English (DK). They were also asked to indicate, if possible, where the speakers were from in order to see whether their scores could have been influenced by stereotypes or not. The participants were subsequently asked several questions about their relationship with the English language and English-speaking peoples. To better comprehend their responses, key terms like *stereotypes* and *accent* are initially discussed as well as the media's potential to influence listeners' associations with the accents. Resulting from the analysis, it is argued that Danes have internalised stereotypes about different accents of English, though recognition rates for some of them were surprisingly low, and that the media seem to be a strong influential factor. In extension to this, it is argued that RP is the accent with the most prestige in Denmark, by which is meant overt prestige (e.g. Trousdale 2010, 20), that GA is considered the most 'standard' English accent, having been rated the lowest on perceived accentedness, and that Danes seemingly dislike Danish-accented English.

Theory and hypotheses

The concept of accent

The term *accent* is often misunderstood and given loose and contradictory definitions by laypeople, who ‘very often refer to the entire linguistic system with this word’ (Preston 2016, 180). That is, people often confuse it with dialect, which, besides phonology, also implies variation in ‘morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics’ (Carlson and McHenry 2006, 70). To give a broad and somewhat simple definition, it can be said that *accent* is ‘the phonological individuality of spoken language that is influenced by a person’s geographical origin, native language, or social status’ (Carlson and McHenry 2006, 70). Between the different Englishes of the world, the ‘phonological differences are, with some exceptions, allophonic and not phonemic’ (Millward and Hayes 2018, 232). So, *accent* refers exclusively to phonological variation among speakers, and in English this will often entail allophonic variation and frequently also suprasegmental variation like different intonation patterns.

Another thing often believed by laypeople is the myth of no accent. That is, people tend to believe that some people do not have an accent. But if accent simply refers to a speaker’s phonological speech pattern, this makes no sense. In the words of John Baugh, ‘everybody has an accent. If you speak, you have an accent. If you think you don’t have an accent, it’s because the manner in which you speak doesn’t trigger a negative reaction to you’ (Baugh 2019, 17:27). Of course, the last assertion is a simplification of the interplay between accent and social evaluation, but overall there seems to be much truth to it.

The myth of no accent is strongly connected with the idea of the ‘standard language’, which is defined as ‘a variety of a language that is socially and culturally predominant and is generally accepted as the most proper form of that language’ (Millward and Hayes 2018, 231), and is typically considered the most prestigious variant. Lippi-Green argues that it is ‘the language of the educated ... or those who control the written or broadcast media’ (2012, 59). However, she considers the idea problematic and talks of a ‘standard language ideology’ (Lippi-Green 2012), which is peddled by the powerful to retain prestige. Though the idea is believed in by many people, it is an ‘abstraction’ (Lippi-Green 2012, 44); ‘an idea in the mind rather than a reality – a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser extent’ (Milroy and Milroy 1985, 22-23, in Lippi-Green 2012, 44¹).

¹ In Lippi-Green’s reference list, the source is cited as ‘Milroy, J. and Milroy, L. (2002 [1999])’

Importantly, Lippi-Green states that there are ‘two major kinds of accents: First Language (L1) and Second Language (L2)’ (2012, 45). While the former refers to variation among native speakers of the same language, the latter, also called foreign accent, refers to the ‘breakthrough of native language phonology into the target language’ (Lippi-Green 2012, 46). This is also called cross-linguistic influence (CLI) and can affect ‘individual segments ... sequences including coarticulation ... and all aspects of prosody’ (Colantoni, Steele, and Escudero 2016, 9). An example would be Danes realising the English phoneme /z/ as [s] because of the lack of a phonemic contrast between /s/ and /z/ in Danish.

In sum, the term *accent* is concerned with variation in phonology and is conditioned by an array of factors. Though it is a problematic term, which ‘can only be understood and defined if there is something to compare it with’ (Lippi-Green 2012, 45), it is something everyone ‘has’ and something that has intricate social implications. Keeping Lippi-Green’s arguments in mind, this article will, for practical reasons, refer to some of the accents included as ‘standard’, especially due to the speakers’ high degree of conformity to typical variation patterns encountered in their areas of origin (e.g. Wells 1982a; Wells 1982b), and because the term pervades the discussion of accent-based stereotyping.

Stereotypes and ethnocentrism

The term *stereotype* is also given various definitions depending on the context and whom one asks. To many, a stereotype would be synonymous with an ‘oversimplification’ or a ‘generalization used by one group ... about members of another group’ (Berg 1990, 288). In more technical terms, stereotypes can be described as ‘in-group categorizations of the out-group; as symbolic formulations of the Other;’ (Berg 1990, 294). Though one often thinks of stereotypes as purely negative, they ‘do not have to be overtly negative to be problematic and limiting’ (Lippi-Green 2012, 105). Even if a ‘positive’ attribute is ascribed to an individual due to his/her group affiliations, it still has the potential to distort one’s expectations about said individual. This can be highly problematic, because if that individual then does not possess the ascribed attribute, it might trigger disappointment or a feeling of deception in the observer.

One of the dangers of stereotyping is that ‘out-group members may begin to believe and accept the stereotype’ (Berg 1990, 299). This might mean that a person will start altering their behaviour in order to conform because he/she feels overpowered by imposed expectations, and this can ultimately trap people in the performance of certain roles they do not wish to perform.

An essential concept pertaining to the ingroup/outgroup dichotomy is ethnocentrism. The basic principle of ethnocentrism is that ‘one’s own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled

and rated with reference to it' (Sumner 1906, 13, in Chakraborty 2017, 58). Ethnocentrism can be harmful as it 'leads to ingroup identification, which leads to ingroup-bias and consequently ... outgroup derogation, and discrimination (Chakraborty 2017, 58). If it is true that 'the primary reason behind biases is self-constructed social identity and high ethnocentric attitude' (Chakraborty 2017, 57), a comprehension of the theory appears very useful. In its essence, ethnocentrism describes how the individual navigates the world based on his/her own experiences and interpersonal relations. It taps into ideas and constructs about one's own position and identity in relation to other people, that is, ingroups and outgroups.

Interaction between accent and stereotypes

Everyone has an accent, and everyone harbours stereotypes (Berg 1990, 287). Indeed, the stereotyping is often based on accent, and especially foreign and regional accents are often 'subject to judgments and stereotypes' (Shah 2019, 128). When we hear someone talk, we tend to 'draw demographic inferences' (Baugh 2019, 16:21), and we begin to construct an idea of the speaker's personality and group adherence, that is, we 'socially categorize, stereotype, and form impressions' (Fuertes et al. 2011, 121). This becomes a problem 'if you're in a position to deny someone goods or services and you act on those demographic inferences in a discriminatory way' (Baugh 2019, 16:45), which is an example of what John Baugh defines as 'linguistic profiling'.

There are many examples of discrimination based on accent: It has been demonstrated that certain accents make people sound guiltier (Dixon, Mahoney, and Cocks 2002), non-native speakers can be seen as less credible when speaking or reporting something with a foreign accent (Lev-Ari and Keysar 2010), a strong foreign accent can impact employment options (Carlson and McHenry 2006), and it can affect students' perception of teaching competence (Jensen et al. 2013). Inversely, it has also been shown that students might hear a foreign accent where none exists, when presented with visual cues that trigger certain associations and stereotypes (Rubin 1992).

To laypeople, foreign accents and non-standard native accents are often seen as deviant and improper due to an obsession with 'correctness' (Garrett 2001). Non-native English is frequently described as 'broken' or 'bad' (Lindemann 2005, 210), which is problematic and pernicious as these epithets might end up describing not just the speaker's language but also their character, as we tend to define people, at least partially, by how they speak. Though many justify the use of these terms by claiming that a foreign accent, and sometimes regional ones as well, can hinder communication due to lowered intelligibility, it has been demonstrated that '[a]lthough strength of foreign accent is indeed

correlated with comprehensibility and intelligibility, a strong foreign accent does not necessarily cause L2 speech to be low in comprehensibility or intelligibility' (Munro and Derwing 1995, 92).

Even so, due to social stigma, many people end up signing up for accent reduction courses, which in an Anglo context is 'a concentrated effort to take a person who speaks English with a stigmatized regional, social, or foreign accent, and (supposedly) replace it with one which is favored' (Lippi-Green 2012, 228-229). Unfortunately, 'more emphasis is on accent-reduction ... than on the prevention of accent-based discrimination' (Chakraborty 2017, 60), which exemplifies the pervasive effects of the standard language ideology. This is all the more peculiar as 'linguists know that everyone speaks some regional variety, even those heavily invested in removing such matters from their speech' (Preston 2016, 180). Regardless, it is not surprising that some people wish to attain a more prestigious 'standard' accent as it has been established that 'standard-accented speakers are accorded higher ratings of status, solidarity, and dynamism than non-standard-accented speakers' (Fuentes et al. 2011, 127).

Accent evaluation is subjective. Though the 'inherent value' hypothesis proposes that there is something inherently superior about certain dialects or accents, it is much more likely that our preferences are socially conditioned as proposed by the 'imposed norm' hypothesis (Ladegaard 1998, 267). An ethnocentric explanation might suggest that the more distant one is from a judge's ingroup, the more likely he/she is to evaluate one negatively. The outgroup could be another country, tapping into geopolitical relations: in one American study 'speakers from less familiar countries and from countries that are considered adversaries of the US, were rated negatively' (Chakraborty 2017, 60, referencing Lindemann 2005). It could be an ethnic minority subject to stigmatisation: a Yiddish-accented speaker might be evaluated more negatively due to associations with Jews (Anisfeld, Bogo, and Lambert 1962). It could also be another generation that one feels is threatening one's ingroup or culture; it is certainly not uncommon to hear older generations complain about the young's way of talking. However, it should be kept in mind that being an outgroup member does not automatically mean that a listener will evaluate one's accent or personality negatively. In any case, it seems that 'evaluations of language varieties can be understood as evaluations of the groups who speak them rather than of language *per se*' (Lindemann 2005, 188).

The role of the media

According to Peter Garrett, '[t]he media undoubtedly play an important role in the formation and maintenance of attitudes' (2001, 629). This is also the case when it comes to stereotyping based on accents and dialects. For example, one often encounters 'references to various regional dialectal groups

in the popular press, especially for humorous, condescending, or derogatory purposes' (Alford and Strother 1990, 480). In a globalised world we cannot possibly form first-hand impressions of everything, so we rely on media to inform us about different outgroups. In line with this, several studies have found evidence of media influencing listeners' perceptions of speakers of other accents than their own (e.g. Shah 2019; Lindemann 2005).

It is highly likely that many stereotypes propagated by the media are based on American hegemony as 'American imagery is now employed willy-nilly by the entire world – even by adversaries of America itself' (Bayard et al. 2001, 44). There are plenty of examples of American media which represent 'dominant groups as "naturally" empowered and marginal groups as disenfranchised' (Berg 1990, 292). Hollywood is one of the most well-known stereotype-propagators (e.g. Berg 1990; Dorinson 2010), and, as Lippi-Green has demonstrated, *Disney* seemingly contributes to accent-based stereotyping as '[a]bout 20 percent of U.S. English speakers are bad characters, while about 40 percent of non-native speakers of English are evil' (2012, 117).

Indeed, animated films and shows seem to be powerful when it comes to creating and reinforcing stereotypes as the creators can freely manipulate both sound and visual appearance of any character to make the majority audience laugh. Porsgaard (2019) proposes that on *South Park* (1997-) and *Family Guy* (1999-) 'there is a correlation between being a Jewish stereotype, speaking a distinct and somewhat stereotypical "Jewish English" ... and being a negative character' (43), and something similar could be said about how *The Simpsons* (1989-) portrays certain minorities in the US like Indians, whom, as a consequence of the show's influence, are now often compared to the stereotypical character Apu (Lindemann 2005). Studying this aspect of media is important as, in the words of Lippi-Green, '[a]nimated films offer a unique way to study how a dominant culture reaffirms its control over subordinate cultures and nations by re-establishing, on a day-to-day basis, their preferred view of the world as right and proper and primary' (2012, 111).

According to Ladegaard (1998), stereotypes harboured by Danes are probably also influenced by media-impressions, many of which are imported from the USA. Though there is a strong tendency to watch most other American-produced films and shows in English instead of dubbing them, it should be noted that *Disney* films are often watched in Danish by Danish children, but this does not necessarily entail less stereotyping. Pia Quist argues that goofy Danish *Disney* characters often speak with a 'non-standard' Danish dialect like Jutlandic, which contributes to the stigmatisation of non-standard dialects and accents, which in turn might ultimately lead to the loss of variation (Kristiansen 2011). A similar concern has been voiced regarding the intentional accent shift of some New Yorkers due to negative

media portrayals (Vox 2016). It is also worth noting how Danish media productions and comedians have made fun of Danish-accented English for decades. Notable examples include *The Julekalender* (1991) and comedian Andreas Bo's parodies of former Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs Villy Søvndal, who was frequently mocked for his heavy Danish accent in English. This all seems to indicate that deriding 'non-standard' accents is also an integral element of Danish culture and not just a practice encountered in the Anglosphere.

Hypotheses

The main hypothesis of this study was that Danes, just like people from the Anglosphere, have internalised stereotypes about major accents of English (more specifically RP, GA, Southern American, and Australian). Ladegaard asserts that his Danish results demonstrated 'obvious similarities with social stereotypes found in Anglophone contexts' (1998, 259). It was hypothesised that this would still be the case in 2019. This includes high scores for RP on points like 'status and competence' (Ladegaard 1998, 258), and lower scores regarding 'personal integrity and social attractiveness' (Ladegaard 1998, 259). The Australian and Southern American accents were expected to score highly on solidarity traits like friendliness and humour. The GA accent was hypothesised to receive either neutral or positive evaluations, due to the cultural dominance and media influence of the USA (Bayard et al. 2001), which has possibly rendered it *the* 'standard' accent of English in Denmark. The latter would be tested with the perceived 'accentedness' score. It was also hypothesised that the Danish accent would be scored highly on solidarity traits like friendliness and humour, as well as on other parameters, if the theory of ethnocentrism should serve as a predictor. Lastly, it was hypothesised that the accents would be recognised by most of the participants, perhaps except for the Australian accent, which, unlike the other ones, Danes might not be exposed to often.

Methodology

Tasks and procedure

The experiment consisted of two parts. The first one was a quantitative rating task during which respondents were asked to rate 15 male speakers reading the 'please call Stella' paragraph on various traits on a 9-point scale. The audio files containing the speakers' voices were all obtained from Steven Weinberger's *Speech Accent Archive* (Weinberger 2019). For each audio file, the respondents were asked to indicate to what extent the speaker sounded rich, formal, funny (personality-wise), intelligent, masculine, friendly, snobbish and educated, and were asked to indicate how 'strong' the speaker's

accent seemed to them (perceived accentedness). The respondents were also asked to guess the speaker's age, sexuality and origins, though the first 2 were primarily included as distractors, and were also given an opportunity to add additional comments. All questions were in both Danish and English, and they were free to respond in either language. They were asked to answer all questions as specifically as they could.

The sessions took place at locations chosen by the participants for their convenience and comfort, and most sessions included 2-4 respondents, who were asked not to verbalise their answers before the experiment had concluded, and took between 30-60 minutes. It is possible that the results might have been influenced somewhat by the intimate nature of the data-collection as the author and the participants were in the same room throughout the sessions and the answers were sent to the author as digital files including the respondents' initials. However, participants were assured that their names and initials would not be published anywhere before the sessions began, as they were asked to sign a consent formula guaranteeing their privacy.

After the rating task, respondents were asked for information about themselves including age and gender identity. They were also asked about their relationship with the English language where the options were a) 'I often/sometimes feel insecure when I communicate in English, or never use it'; b) 'Though I sometimes make mistakes, I feel like I am good at speaking English and I feel rather comfortable doing it'; c) 'I study/have studied English, including the advanced technicalities of the language (e.g. syntax and phonetics) at a university or a similar institution of higher learning, i.e. above High School-level'. If the last option was chosen, they were asked whether they primarily take electives in linguistics. This, of course, is a simplistic and somewhat insufficient way to categorise, and it was primarily done for practical reasons and to see whether this somehow influenced responses.

They were also asked to indicate at which level they had studied English formally, whether they regularly speak English with anyone, whether they had ever lived in an English-speaking country, which accent they believe they speak English with and what they consider proper/correct English.

The second, more qualitative, part of the experiment consisted of a series of questions sent to the respondents, which they could answer more freely. These questions were designed to assess why they had rated the speakers as they did. They were asked with what they associate Australians, Americans not from the South, Americans from the South, English people (as all RP speakers were from England) and Danes. They were then asked what they believed these associations were based on. They were also asked to provide examples of what English-speaking media they view/interact with,

how many hours a day they spend on English-language media on average and with which accent their English teacher(s) spoke at school.

Stimuli

The 15 male speakers were divided into 5 groups consisting of 3 speakers each representing their prototypical accent. 4 L1 accents (Australian, GA, Southern American and RP) were represented as well as ‘the Danish accent’. Authentic speakers were used instead of the otherwise popular matched-guise technique (Lambert et al. 1960) for increased ecological validity. This seemed advantageous as the reading task for the speakers potentially already impacts the ecological validity negatively. However, it is acknowledged that by using natural speakers, the respondents might let speaker-specific traits like a high-pitched voice affect their evaluations. This is why 3 speakers of each accent were included.

Two of the GA speakers are from Connecticut, which, according to John Wells, ‘falls under the GenAm category’ (1982b, 518), and one is from New York, though no typical New York features were used (e.g. Sęn 1979). Notable features of the speakers include post-vocalic /r/, realising the GOAT vowel as [oʊ], realising the BATH vowel as [æ], the LOT vowel as [ɑ], and frequent use of [ɫ].

The Southern American speakers (SUS) are all from ‘the linguistic South of the United States’ (Wells 1982b, 527), namely Georgia, Tennessee and Arkansas. Salient features include the archetypical monophthongisation of the PRICE vowel [a:], fronting of the GOOSE vowel, realising post-vocalic /r/, which in a Southern context is often ‘associated with lower-class whites’ (Wells 1982b, 542), a tendency to diphthongise where other accents would have monophthongs, and, perhaps most importantly, the Southern ‘drawl’ (e.g. Wells 1982b, 529).

The RP speakers are all from England. Though RP is often considered more of a social variant than a regional one, typically associated with upper-class individuals and British media, it is, it was hypothesised, the accent most Danes associate British speakers with more generally, and therefore the most suitable British accent to include for this particular study (for a more detailed description, see Wells 1982a). Notable features include the absence of post-vocalic /r/, realising the GOAT vowel as [əʊ], raising [ɔ] relative to GA and realising the BATH vowel as [ɑ].

The Australian speakers are from Sydney, Launceston and Albury. Several features are shared with RP like the absence of post-vocalic /r/, realising the BATH vowel as [ɑ], the GOAT vowel as [əʊ] and raising [ɔ], but there were also distinct features like raising [æ] and, importantly, a tendency to diphthongise some vowels where RP would have monophthongs, as well as realising the FACE

diphthong as [aɪ]. It is also possible that the intonation was perceived to be a bit ‘flatter’ than for the RP speakers (Millward and Hayes 2018, 273).

The Danish speakers are from Copenhagen, Aarhus and Aalborg. To varying extents, they all showed signs of CLI. At least one of the speakers did the following things: devoiced obstruents (e.g. *kids* realised as [kɪts]); realised /ʃ/ as [ç] or [s]; realised /l/ as ‘clear’ [l̥] in places many native speakers would have realised it as velarised [ɫ]; backed and fully monophthongised [u]; affricated /t/, which is common in Danish; realised syllable-final /r/ as a vowel, which is a generalised feature of Danish; realised /ð/ as an approximant. Furthermore, the speakers mixed features from GA and RP and were not always consistent regarding the inclusion/exclusion of post-vocalic /r/. At the suprasegmental level, Danish intonation patterns also seemed to be employed, arguably making it sound ‘flat’.

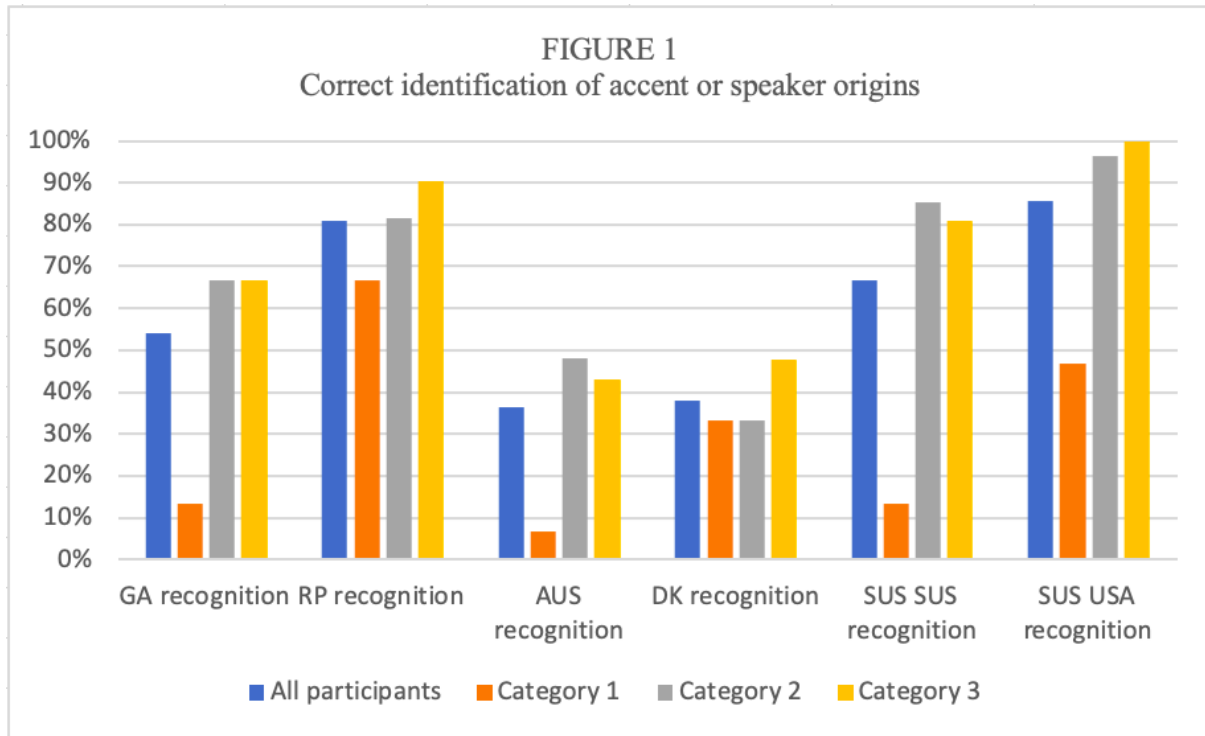
Participants

21 Danes participated in the experiment, all of whom were over the age of 18 and native speakers of Danish living in Denmark. The vast majority were from Jutland. 9 identified as male and 12 as female, and they were between 19-74 years old with an average age of 31.48 years. 5 of the participants reported that they ‘often/sometimes feel insecure when [they] communicate in English, or never use it’, 9 participants expressed that they feel confident when interacting with English, and 7 were university students of English. The first 5 are henceforth referred to as category 1, the 9 referred to as category 2, and the last 7 are referred to as category 3. Though the sample size is small, which of course entails the necessity of exercising great caution when generalising based on their responses, it was somewhat representative and balanced as it included responses from different segments of the Danish population.

Results

Recognition rates

Figure 1 demonstrates how frequently the 5 accents were recognised by the participants where each score is an average based on 3 speakers. ‘SUS SUS recognition’ refers to identifying the Southern speakers as Southern American, while ‘SUS USA recognition’ refers to identifying them as simply American. A guess of a specific area was accepted as correct if that area is part of the country the speaker is from, and any state/city that is part of the linguistic South of the USA was considered a SUS guess.



It is clear that there is an immense disparity between the category 1 participants' rates of correct identification and the other categories' rates in most instances. This, unsurprisingly, seems to indicate that being more intimate with the English language makes it easier for Danes to recognise different accents. The easiest accents to recognise for everyone were the RP and SUS ones, and Southern American speakers were recognised as Americans much more easily than the GA speakers. The Australian and Danish accents were hard to recognise, even for the university students, and the GA recognition rate was surprisingly low for all categories (54%), reaching only 67% for categories 2 and 3. It should be noted that there was a remarkable difference between recognition rates for the Danish-accented speakers as speakers 3 and 7 were both recognised by only 19% of all the respondents, but speaker 11 was recognised by 76%.

Quantitative scores

Figure 2 shows the average scores of the five accents rated by all participants whether they guessed where the speakers are from or not. RP clearly received the highest scores in social status, that is, the RP speakers were perceived to be wealthier, more educated, more intelligent and more formal than the other speakers. They were also perceived to be more snobbish, and, interestingly, just a little friendlier than the others, though not by a significant amount. They were also considered the least masculine

speakers, as funny as the others, and had only a slightly ‘thicker accent’ according to the participants than the GA and Danish speakers.

The GA and Australian accents followed each other peculiarly closely receiving relatively unnoteworthy scores, never deviating more than around 1 point from the middle score of 5 excepting the ‘snobbish’ score, which was only high for the RP speakers. However, the Australian accent was perceived to be ‘thicker’ than the GA one.

It was a general trend that the Danish and SUS speakers received rather low scores on most points. The SUS speakers, however, scored very highly on ‘masculinity’ as well as perceived ‘accentedness’. They were also considered somewhat funnier and less formal than the Danish speakers besides being scored a little lower on ‘educated’.

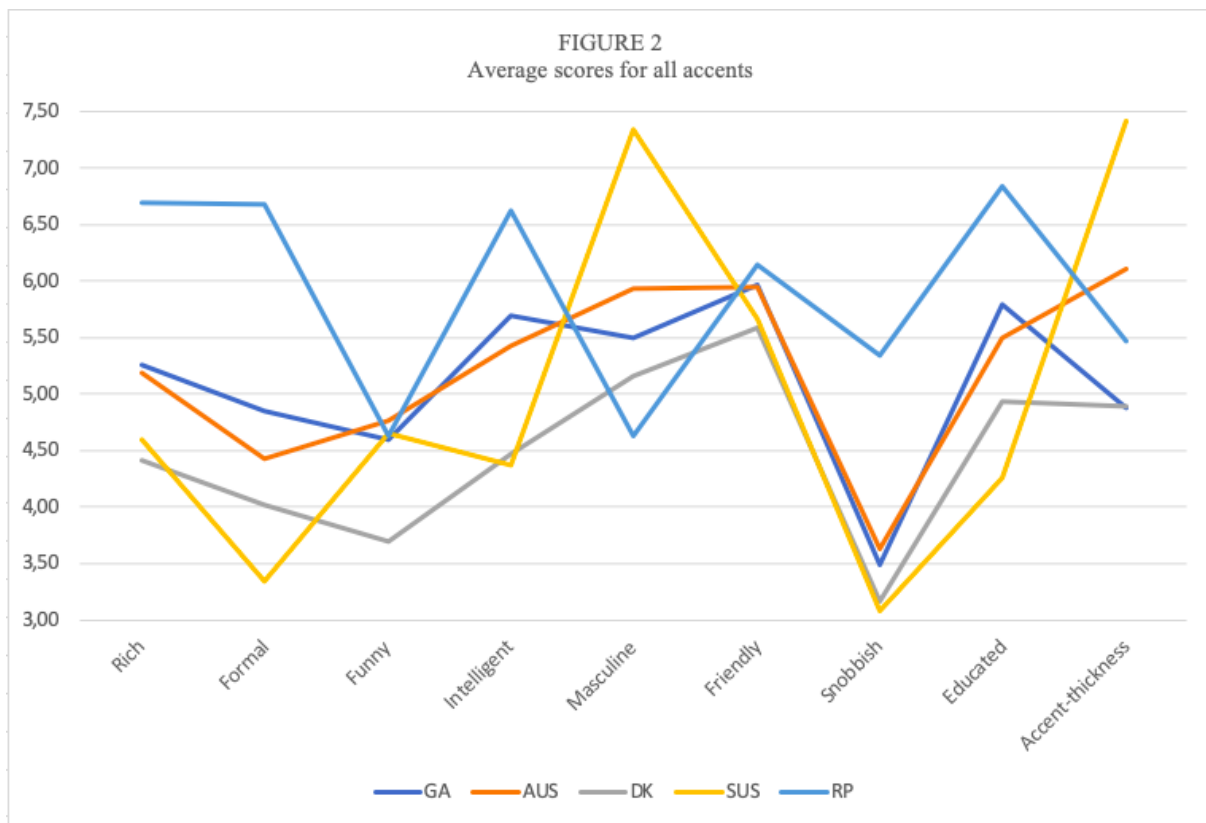


Figure 3 shows the scores given while the participants knew (or guessed) where the speakers were from, and figure 4 shows the scores given when the speakers’ origins were unknown. Thus, figure 3 is based on scores where stereotypes could play a role while figure 4 is supposedly freer of bias and

based more on the individual speakers. Comparing the two, it is certainly clear that there is much greater interaccent variation regarding scores in figure 3 than in figure 4.

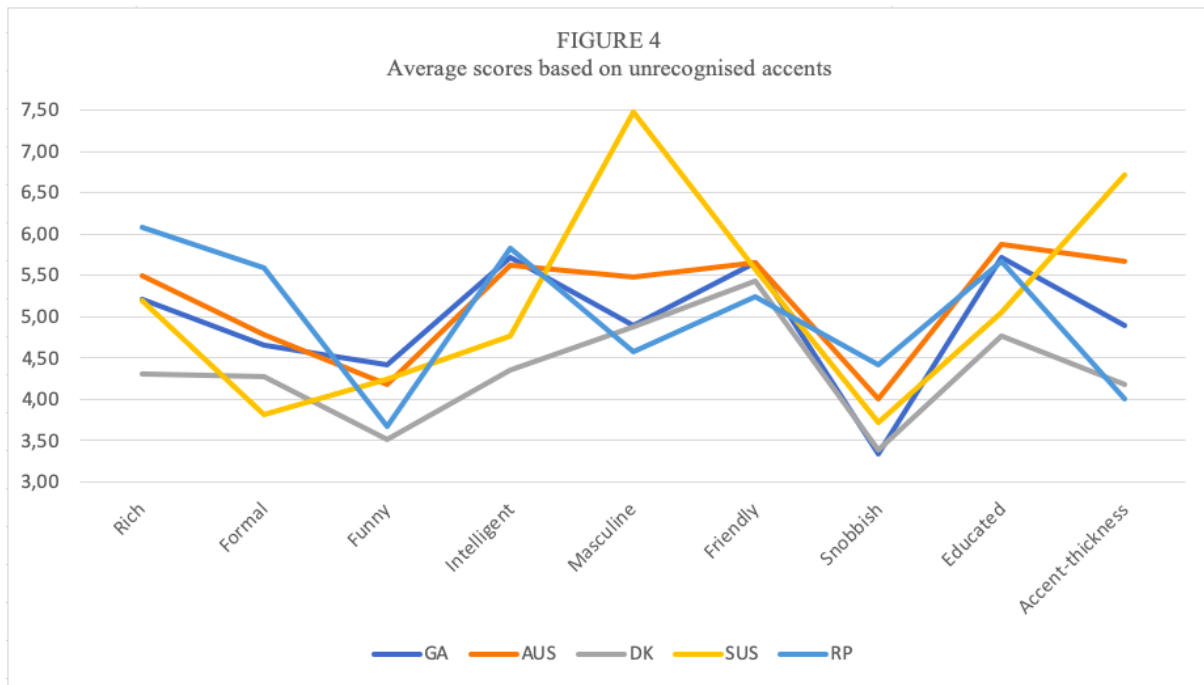
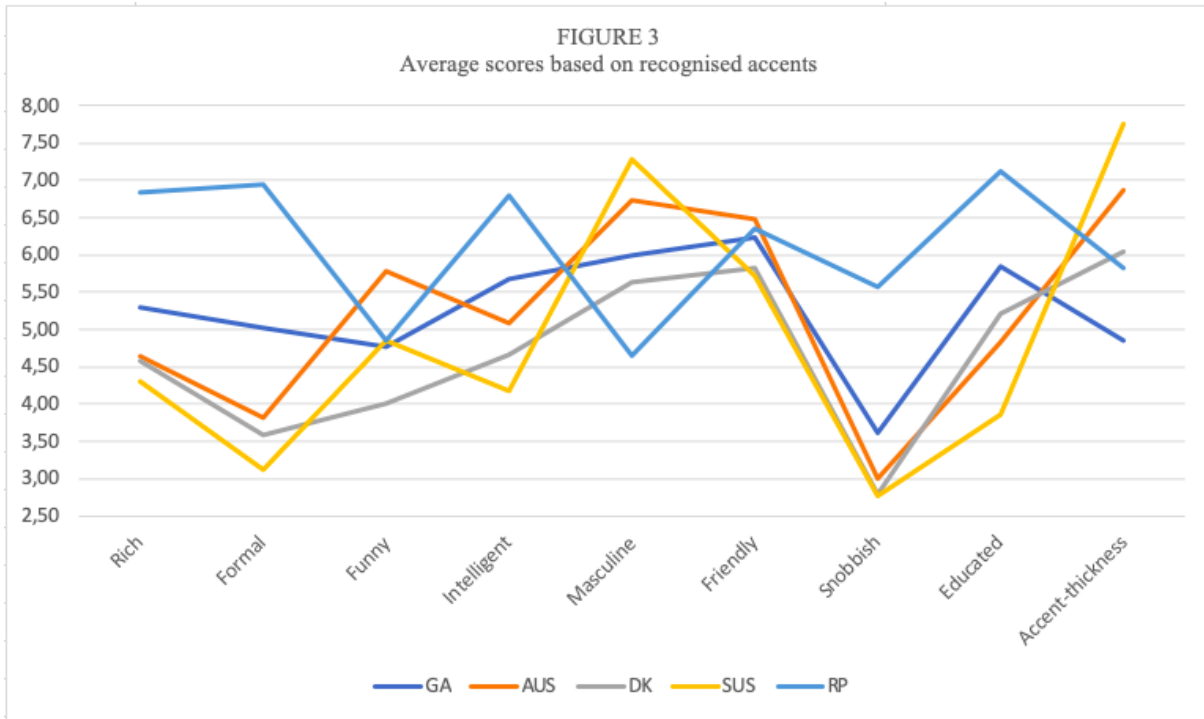
When the participants knew they were listening to an RP speaker, they rated him higher on every single trait except for masculinity (no change). This is equally true for ‘positive’ traits like intelligence as well as ‘negative’ traits like snobbishness.

SUS speakers were scored lower on most traits with the exception of ‘funny’ (higher score), masculinity (no change) and friendliness (no change). It is remarkable that they were scored 3.26 points lower than the RP speakers on ‘educated’ when all speakers were recognised while only 0.62 points lower when the speakers were not recognised. This heavily suggests that stereotypes influenced the evaluations of the individual, unknown speakers.

When recognised, the Australian speakers were also scored lower on wealth, formality, intelligence and ‘educated’, but also on snobbishness, and they were scored higher on ‘funny’, masculinity and friendliness. It is interesting that, when unrecognised, Australians received the highest scores for ‘educated’ of all the speakers while receiving the second lowest scores when recognised. Arguably, this also suggests stereotyping.

The Danish and GA speakers’ scores did not change much. However, the GA speakers were rated as being more masculine and a little friendlier when recognised. The Danish speakers were considered less formal, a little funnier, a little more masculine and somewhat less snobbish when recognised.

It is noteworthy that every single accent except for GA (-0.04) was rated between 1.05 (SUS) and 1.86 (DK) points higher on perceived accentedness when recognised. This seems to indicate that whenever an accent that is not GA is recognised, it is considered to be ‘stronger’. It should be emphasised that the Danish speaker who was recognised by most participants is primarily the source of the scores in figure 3, and it makes perfect sense that his rate of recognition is correlated with a ‘thicker accent’, as this was probably the very reason that he was recognised by so many compared to the other Danish speakers.



Comments and questions

During the rating task, some respondents compared the speakers to real people or TV characters like Harvey Keitel and Forrest Gump. About the first Danish speaker and two of the Australian speakers,

some respondents said they sounded monotonous and boring, and it is possible that the idea of the ‘flat’ Australian intonation pattern plays a role here. The RP speakers were sometimes called gentlemen and upper-class. The Southern speakers reminded some of Republicans, the Southern drawl was mentioned, one wrote about one of the SUS speakers that ‘he got his money from physical work’, and another wrote that everyone with a funny American accent sounds like they are from the South.

A little more than half of the respondents reported that they speak English regularly with someone privately (57%), and a third had lived in an English-speaking country for at least some months. 8 reported that they speak English with a Danish accent, 3 said ‘British’/RP, 2 said ‘American’ and 8 said it was mixed. Participants estimated that they spend 2-3 hours a day on English-language media on average, and the most common accents of their former English-teachers were ‘British’ (17), Danish (15) and ‘American’ (9).

When asked to define ‘proper/correct’ English, many, especially of the category 1 and 2 respondents, expressed that it is ‘British English’ (48%), by which they probably refer to RP. One defended this answer by saying that ‘it is what one learns in primary school’. Only 1 person wrote ‘American English’, while a few said either British or American English. Some said the only criterion for correctness is being grammatically correct, and another said that ‘local dialects ... are not proper English ... but it’s still fun’. Others expressed that it should not contain slang or ‘local accents’.

Yet, some also said that it is all relative and essentially impossible to define what correct/proper English is. These sentiments were especially expressed by the university students, most of whom had studied sociolinguistics. This could indicate that studying language variation and change affects one’s attitudes about correctness/properness in language, which is otherwise something average Danes (apparently) have very black-and-white ideas about, possibly due to the pervasiveness of the standard language ideology described by Lippi-Green.

Respondents were also asked about their associations with the implicated speakers’ compatriots. Australians were deemed kind, friendly, rowdy, drunk, laid-back, well-mannered, welcoming, country, humorous, independent and active. They associated them with kangaroos, Crocodile Dundee, Steve Irwin, sports, aborigines, nature, the agrarian lifestyle and also British people and New Zealand. Overall, the associations were primarily positive.

Americans not from the South were considered ambitious, loud, polite, kind, arrogant, religious, modern, liberal, conservative, intelligent, stupid, professional, heterogenous, ‘normal’/plain/basic. The respondents also mentioned gangs, economic inequality, political division and obesity. It would seem that Danes have more nuanced and contradictory associations with Americans than Australians.

Southern Americans were called loco, loud, generous, uneducated, stupid, traditional, rednecks, hillbillies, racist, patriotic, hospitable, conservative, liberal, funny, aggressive, loyal and Trump supporters. Respondents also mentioned cowboys, incest and unemployment. Generally, the associations were more negative than for Americans not from the South.

The English were called sophisticated, snobbish, drunk, rowdy, violent, cultured, polite, articulate, not funny, well-dressed, upper-class, proper, calm, well-mannered, intelligent, traditional, proud, posh, superficial, entitled and superior. They also mentioned pub-culture, the Queen, football hooligans and weird humour. Both upper-class and working-class stereotypes were expressed.

Danes were called polite, drunk, content, reserved, spontaneous, happy, prejudiced, closed, social, proud, traditional, friendly, nationalist, introverted, helpful, unapproachable, busy, and honest. Equality, the law of Jante, Vikings and hygge were also mentioned. Generally, the associations were rather mixed compared to the ones attributed to some of the other groups.

When asked what they believe these associations are based on, participants mentioned movies, TV, music, personal encounters, travels, social media, literature, jokes, interviews and news. Though many reported that personal encounters had impacted their opinions of some of the non-Danish peoples, their answers reflected that their associations were primarily a product of media input, especially movies, TV and online content. This mirrors findings from the Anglosphere like Lippi-Green's analysis of how movies affect people's opinions of outgroup members (2012) and it merits a closer look.

Discussion

Accent recognition

The findings of this study suggest several things, none of which should be overgeneralised, considering the relatively small sample size. The first point of interest is the recognition rates, especially the surprisingly low GA recognition rate (54%), not just for the category 1 participants (13%), but also for the other two groups (67%). Ladegaard concludes that his American speaker was the easiest to identify, which he argues is 'not surprising since American movies, documentaries and soap operas have a dominating position in the Danish media, so we may assume that the informants are used to hearing this accent' (1998, 260). Though there is little reason to believe that the American media domination has significantly decreased on Danish television, it is possible that Danes today are used to hearing GA spoken by people from many different countries and therefore do not take it for granted that a GA speaker is from the USA.

That Danes more easily recognise RP (81%) might be because they associate the accent with their English teacher(s) or RP-speaking media characters that are portrayed as explicitly 'British' and thereby a distinct 'other' by the dominant American media. However, it is not surprising that the Australians were not easily recognised (37%), as this accent is seldom heard by Danes since little Australian-produced media is imported (Ladegaard 1998, 254).

The SUS accent might be easier to recognise than GA due to stigmatisation (e.g. Alford and Strother 1990, 480). It is certainly not unreasonable to ask oneself why someone who is not from the Southern USA would voluntarily adopt an accent whose speakers are called 'racist', 'stupid' and 'aggressive'? It could also be that Southerners are often portrayed in American movies Danes watch, so they are familiar with the accent. If it is stigmatised it is probably also more noticeable as an 'other'. These, of course, are just possible explanations.

Finally, the Danish accent (38%) was only recognised by the majority when it was more heavily influenced by Danish phonology (76%). It is possible that many Danes are simply good enough at emulating English native accents to 'fool' other Danes, or it could be that Danes do not consider it a 'Danish' accent unless it is heavily influenced by Danish features.

Internalised stereotypes

It appears that Danes have internalised certain stereotypes about different accents of English, or rather the speakers of these accents.

The SUS speakers were rated poorly on almost everything and received the lowest scores for intelligence and 'educated', indicating that the accent is also stigmatised in Denmark, in accordance with the typical stereotypes. Though the scores were also low when people did not recognise the accent as Southern, the accentedness score was still high, which implies that the participants could still hear it was not 'standard'. Indeed, even when the accent was not recognised, multiple trends, like scoring the SUS speakers low on intelligence, were still evident, possibly due to subconscious processes drawing on 'latent' stereotypes (Ladegaard 1998, 269).

The Australian speakers were rated lower on social status when recognised, but higher on solidarity traits as predicted, in line with the stereotypes of them being 'laid-back' and 'welcoming'.

RP speakers were rated very highly on almost all traits when recognised, apparently indicating that in Denmark RP is still 'the unsurpassed prestige variety' (Ladegaard 1998, 265) at least in the sense of 'overt' prestige (e.g. Trudgill 2000, 20). As the RP speakers did not receive the lowest scores on perceived accentedness, this also indicates that an accent does not have to go unnoticed for it to score

highly. They were, however, given low scores on masculinity, possibly due to a ‘wider pitch range’ (Millward and Hayes 2018, 255), and possibly also because one of them was guessed to be homosexual by most participants. It is also probable that RP was scored so highly on intelligence and ‘educated’ partially due to associations with school (a hierarchical formal environment based around learning) as most of their English teachers had spoken with ‘British’ accents. Generally, the scores fit the stereotypes of the educated upper-class Englishman.

The GA speakers received rather uninteresting, though mostly positive, scores, never being the highest or lowest scored for anything except for accentedness, where it received the lowest score when recognised. This makes sense as the GA accent is probably the one Danes hear the most due to the American media dominance in Denmark (Bayard et al. 2001; Ladegaard 1998). If Danes are exposed to many facets of America through media, it makes sense that stereotypes are conflicting and ‘heterogenous’ as one respondent wrote, which means that scores will be rather mediocre, balancing around the middle point. So, the results of this study seem to indicate that, although RP is the prestige accent considered most correct and proper by Danes, GA is considered the most ‘standard’ accent of English with the fewest marked features, as it was scored the lowest on perceived accentedness.

To an extent, the findings of this study mirror those of other studies conducted within the Anglosphere regarding the scores given and the stereotypes mentioned, like scoring RP-accented speakers higher on intelligence than Australians and SUS-speakers (e.g. Shah 2019; Bayard et al. 2001). However, the fact that RP received such favourable scores on almost all traits is not always mirrored in findings from the Anglosphere, and this underlines the prestige that RP (still) has in Denmark.

Dislike of ‘the Danish accent’

As all of the above-mentioned stereotypes are attributed to outgroup-members relative to the participants, it is also interesting to look at how the participants responded to ‘their own accent’. Generally, the results were very negative. Though the theory of ethnocentrism asserts that ‘an ethnocentric person harbors resilient affinity and favoritism in their attitudes and behaviors toward in groups, often at the expense of the outgroup’ (Chakraborty 2017, 58), it is possible that the participants simply were not very ethnocentric, considering they did not even score the Danish speakers highly on solidarity traits.

Another explanation for the low scores could be that they simply sound perceptibly non-native in general and are therefore rated lower than the ‘standard’ native accents (e.g. Fuertes et al. 2011; Chakraborty 2017). It could, of course, also be speaker-related. However, more Australian speakers

were personally criticised through added comments than the Danish speakers, and they scored higher than the Danish speakers on all traits.

Yet another explanation is that it is precisely *because* it is Danish-accented. Some evidence is provided by Jensen et al. (2013), who suggest that Danish students scored their English-speaking Danish lecturers lower than other English-speaking lecturers. This, matched with the old tradition of laughing at Danish-influenced English, as can be seen in the highly popular Christmas series *The Julekalender* (1991), might indicate that Danes simply do not like Danish-accented English, at least in a serious context. The results of this article certainly seem to support this idea. This is somewhat comparable to New Zealanders scoring their own native accent lower than other 'standard' accents, which has been referred to as the 'cultural cringe' (Bayard et al. 2001). Certainly, it seems more likely that the participants reacted more to the accent of the Danish speakers than their identities as Danes as the associations with Danes were equally positive as negative, and the participants probably do not consider most Danes dislikeable people as these constitute their primary ingroups. This seems especially evident if the results are compared to the results of the SUS speakers, whose compatriots were described in significantly more negative terms.

Though the Danish speakers were still scored poorly when they were not recognised, it is probable that subconscious dislike played a role while respondents were evaluating the Danish speakers they did not identify. Indeed, Ladegaard asserts that his participants were still able to stereotype even when they said they did not recognise the speakers' origins (1998, 268). It seems highly probable that the participants did the same thing with Danish-accented English, as they have all listened to it for years in classrooms and through media and are therefore, even if unwittingly, very familiar with it.

Finally, it is interesting to note that, overall, perceived accentedness for the Danish speakers, though apparently treated as non-native, was essentially as low as for the GA-speakers, which makes sense as this is probably the accent Danes hear the most along with GA in English.

Media influence in Denmark

It seems clear that the media play a crucial role regarding the participants' evaluations of the speakers as is also argued by Ladegaard (1998). Though the respondents also said that personal encounters played a role in the formation of their associations with Australians, Americans and English people, considering that the average respondent spends 2-3 hours on English-language media a day and that films and series were cited more frequently as sources of their associations, it seems evident that the media are the primary cause of the reported stereotypes. Hollywood films were the most frequently

cited example of a media product they interact with regularly, and these are notorious for their propagation of stereotypes (e.g. Berg 1990; Dorinson 2010).

American series also have the potential to create and reinforce stereotypes, and these were also frequently cited as an example. This certainly seems to be true for animated series like *South Park* (1997-) and *Family Guy* (1999-) that rely heavily on stereotypical looks, behavioural patterns and ways of speaking to make the audience laugh (Porsgaard 2019). This is equally true for animated movies like *Disney's* films as laid out by Lippi-Green (2012).

However, many also mentioned internet sites like Facebook and YouTube, and it is possible that these sites offer a more nuanced portrayal of different people as much (if not most) content is produced independently and does not necessarily entail big dominant forces attempting to reinforce their worldview (Lippi-Green 2012, 111) like Hollywood. This, however, requires further research.

Finally, though this is probably not the only reason, it is also likely that media play a prominent role in the respondents' apparent dislike of the Danish accent. Examples mentioned include the very popular Christmas series *The Julekalender* (1991), which heavily mixes Danish and English for comedic effect, as well as comedian Andreas Bo's parodies of Villy Søvndal speaking English, which were also performed on the popular weekly sketch show *Live fra Bremen* (2009-2013). Naturally, more research is required in order to draw any definite conclusions.

Conclusion

Based on the responses of 21 Danish participants, this article has argued that Danes have internalised several stereotypes about different accents of English, or rather the speakers of these, specifically Australians, Americans from the Southern states and RP-speakers, for instance scoring RP-speakers highly on many parameters related to social status while Australians and SUS-speakers were primarily scored highly on solidarity traits like friendliness and humour. This is in accordance with common stereotypes like the rich and educated upper-class Englishman, the stupid but hospitable Southerner and the laid-back Australian. A rather neutral, but mainly positive, attitude was demonstrated towards GA-speaking Americans, and apparent dislike of Danish-accented English was also expressed. Respondents easily identified RP and the Southern American accent, but struggled with the speakers from Australia and Denmark, and, surprisingly, only identified half of the GA-speakers correctly. The data also indicate that RP is still, in line with the findings of Ladegaard (1998), the prestige variant of English in Denmark. Yet, by having participants assign a perceived accentedness score to all speakers, it was found that GA, along with Danish-accented English, was scored as the least 'strong' accent.

Thus, GA seems to be *the* 'standard' native accent of English in the minds of Danes. This makes sense as American media is what Danes interact with the most and seemingly the main creator and propagator of the mentioned stereotypes. Finally, it was also suggested that Danish media has legitimised the ridiculing of Danish-accented English by presenting it as something one is supposed to laugh at, which continuously reinforces the dislike of it by Danes.

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Audio file IDs from Weinberger (2019) in the order they were presented:

Speaker 1: English182 (GA)

Speaker 2: English230 (AUS)

Speaker 3: Danish7 (DK)

Speaker 4: English45 (SUS)

Speaker 5: English346 (GA)

Speaker 6: English583 (RP)

Speaker 7: Danish9 (DK)

Speaker 8: English500 (AUS)

Speaker 9: English451 (SUS)

Speaker 10: English38 (RP)

Speaker 11: Danish6 (DK)

Speaker 12: English84 (AUS)

Speaker 13: English365 (RP)

Speaker 14: English375 (GA)

Speaker 15: English619 (SUS)

Appendices

1A: Quantitative rating sheet

TALER X (SPEAKER X)

OBS: Spørgsmålene besvares efter i hvor høj grad, du mener, taleren lyder til at have den egenskab, som ordet beskriver. 1 = i meget lille grad, 9 = i meget høj grad. (The questions are answered by assigning each trait a value which characterises the speaker depending on how they sound. 1 = not at all, 9 = very much so)

Sæt kun 1 kryds i hver række! (Only check one box per row!)

I hvor høj grad lyder taleren (to what extent does the speaker sound):

Rig (Rich):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Formel (Formal):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Sjov personlighed (Funny personality):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Intelligent (Intelligent):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Maskulin (Masculine):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Venlig (Friendly):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Snobbet (Snobbish):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Veluddannet (Educated):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Hvor stærk accent har taleren? (How strong is the speaker's accent?):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

OBS: For at skrive et svar, trykkes først på de grå bokse (Click on the grey boxes to write an answer).

Hvor gammel tror du taleren er? (How old is the speaker?):

Hvilken seksualitet tror du taleren har? (Which sexuality do you think the speaker identifies with?):

Heteroseksuel (heterosexual)

Homoseksuel (homosexual)

Andet (other)

Hvor er taleren fra? Kom med dit bedste gæt (land, område osv.) eller marker ved 'ved ikke' (Where is the speaker from? Guess (country, area etc.) or answer 'I don't know'):

Ved ikke (I don't know)

Yderligere kommentarer til taleren? (Additional comments about the speaker?):

1B: Questions about the listener/participant

Afsluttende spørgsmål omkring lytteren/deltageren (final questions about the listener/participant)

Obs: Sæt kun ét kryds pr. spørgsmål i spørgsmål 3-6 (Only check one box per question in questions 3-6)

Skriv gerne dine svar på engelsk, men hvis du foretrækker dansk, er dette også godtaget. (Please write your answers in English, but if you prefer Danish, this is accepted as well)

1. Dine initialer? (Your initials?):

2. Din alder? (Your age?):

3. Hvilket køn identificerer du dig som? (Your gender identity?):

Mand (Male)

Kvinde (Female)

Andet (Other)

4. Hvilken seksualitet identificerer du dig med? (Your sexuality?)

Heteroseksuel (Heterosexual)

Homoseksuel (Homosexual)

Biseksuel (Bisexual)

Andet (Other)

Ønsker ikke at svare (I do not wish to answer this question)

5. Hvilken af disse muligheder beskriver *bedst* dit forhold til engelsk? (Which of these options describes your relationship with the English language best?)

Jeg føler mig ofte/nogle gange usikker, når jeg kommunikerer på engelsk, eller bruger det aldrig (I often/sometimes feel insecure when I communicate in English, or never use it)

Selvom jeg nogle gange laver fejl, føler jeg mig god til engelsk og temmelig selvsikker, når jeg bruger det (Though I sometimes make mistakes, I feel like I am good at speaking English and I feel rather comfortable doing it)

Jeg studerer/har studeret engelsk, inklusivt de avancerede tekniske aspekter af sproget (f.eks. syntaks og fonetik), på universitetet eller en lignende uddannelsesinstitution, dvs. OVER gymnasieniveau. (I study/have studied English, including the advanced technicalities of the language (e.g. syntax and phonetics) at a university or a similar institution of higher learning, i.e. above High School-level)

5a. Hvis du satte kryds ved sidste mulighed i spørgsmål 5, (If you checked the last box in question 5):

Vælger du *hovedsageligt* valgfag der hører under lingvistik? (Do you primarily take electives based on linguistics?)

Ja (Yes)

Nej (No)

50/50 mellem lingvistik og andre dele af Engelsk (50/50 between linguistics and other parts of English)

Min uddannelse giver ikke mulighed for lignende valgfag (My education does not allow such electives)

6. Hvilken af disse muligheder er det højeste niveau du har læst engelsk på? (Which of these options is the highest level you have studied English at?)

Folkeskolen (Folkeskolen)

Ungdomsuddannelse (STX, HHX, HTX, HF etc.)

Universitetet (University)

Ingen af disse (None of the above)

Andet (Other)

Hvis du svarede "andet", uddyb gerne (If you said "other", please elaborate):

7. Har du familie/venner, du taler engelsk med jævnligt, og, hvis ja, hvor er de fra (uddyb)? (Do you have friends/family with whom you speak English regularly, and, if yes, where are they from (please elaborate)?)

8. Har du nogensinde boet i et engelsktalende land i en længere periode (uddyb)? (Have you ever stayed in an English-speaking country for an extended period (please elaborate)?)

9. Hvilken accent mener du selv du taler engelsk med, f.eks. dansk, britisk, amerikansk etc.? (With which accent do you think you speak English, e.g. Danish, British, American etc.?)

10. Hvad er "ordentligt/korrekt engelsk" for dig, og tales det et bestemt sted eller af nogle bestemte mennesker (uddyb)? (What is 'proper/correct' English to you, and is it spoken in a specific place or by a certain group of people (please elaborate)?)

2: Additional questions for the accent experiment

Ekstra spørgsmål til accenteksperiment (additional questions for the accent experiment)

Venligst svar så uddybende og detaljeret som muligt på de følgende spørgsmål (please answer the following questions as thoroughly as possible)

IF POSSIBLE, PLEASE WRITE YOUR ANSWERS IN ENGLISH.

0. Initialer (initials):

1. Hvad associerer du de følgende personer med/hvad synes du om dem? (With what do you associate the following people/what do you think about them?)

Australiere (Australians)

Amerikanere som ikke er fra Sydstaterne (Americans who are not from the Southern states)

Amerikanere fra sydstaterne, f.eks. Texas, Georgia, Arkansas, Tennessee osv. (Americans from the Southern states, e.g. Texas, Georgia, Arkansas, Tennessee etc.)

Englændere (English people)

Danskere (Danes)

2. Hvad tror du dine meninger omkring disse folk er baseret på? Fjernsyn, film, personlige møder/relationer eller andre ting? (What do you think your opinions about these people are based on? TV, movies, personal encounters/relationships or other things?)

3. Giv gerne eksempler på, hvad du ser/interagerer med mest af engelsksprogede medier, f.eks. Hollywoodfilm, HBO-serier, adventure-videospil, facebooksider osv. (Please provide examples of what English-speaking media you view/interact with, e.g. Hollywood films, HBO series, adventure videogames, Facebook pages etc.)

4. Hvor mange timer bruger du I gennemsnit om dagen på engelsksprogede medier såsom internetsider (inklusive sociale medier), film/serier, videospil osv.? (On average, how many hours a day do you spend on English-speaking media like webpages (including social media), movies/series, videogames etc.?)

Mindre end en time (Less than an hour)

1-2 timer (hours)

2-3 timer (hours)

3-4 timer (hours)

4-5 timer (hours)

5-6 timer (hours)

6 timer eller mere (6 hours or more)

5. Hvilken accent, mener du, din(e) engelsklærer(e) talte med? Sæt et eller flere krydser (With which accent did your English teacher(s) speak according to you? Choose one or more options)

Dansk (Danish)

Britisk (British)

Amerikansk (American)

Sydstatsaccent (Southern accent)

Australsk (Australian)

Andet (other)

6. Yderligere kommentarer (additional comments):

3: Letter of consent

Researcher name: Matias Porsgaard

Student at Aarhus University, BA English

LETTER OF CONSENT: SURVEY FORM

As part of this project, I have obtained data provided by you while you participated in the research. I will only use the data in ways that you agree to. In any use of these data, names will not be identified.

Please write your initials under the statements if you agree.

1. The data can be used for scientific publications and I can change my mind regarding this within the next two months.

2. The data can be shown at meetings of scientists interested in linguistics and I can change my mind regarding this within the next two months:

3. The data can be used in classrooms and I can change my mind regarding this at any point in future.

4. The data can be shown in public presentations to non-scientific groups and I can change my mind regarding this at any point in future.

This means that I could e.g. illustrate the results of my research when presenting them to you, my respondents, as a thank you or to other non-linguistic groups of people who may be interested in learning more about language variation.

5. The data can be used by other researchers and I can change my mind regarding this at any point in future.

6. The data can be made available in a public database and I can change my mind regarding this at any point in future. This public database would only be available to other scientists.

7. I would not mind answering further questions.

[Please use initials and provide your e-mail address if you agree.]

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of the data as indicated above. I am aware of the fact that personal data will be protected.

Date _____

Signature _____