Attitudes towards native and non-native accents of English
A sociolinguistic study in Flemish secondary school education

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by Joke Tavernier

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"Great! O.K., this time I want you to sound taller, and let me hear a little more hair."

...
The English language, and specifically its pronunciation, has always been of particular interest to me. Deciding to study Germanic languages was therefore a relatively easy choice. Similarly, the subject of this dissertation seemed to fit my interests perfectly and I am glad that, by means of writing this piece of work, I was able to finish four interesting years of academic study. However, it would have proved very difficult to do this on my own, and therefore, a number of people deserve to be mentioned here.

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1 INTRODUCTION

“[D]ialect may have an objective reality in the way people talk, but it seems quite clear that it at the same time has a subjective reality in the kinds of consistent attitudes which people hold toward one another’s speech. These kinds of attitudes are probably as important a part of the sociolinguistic picture as the objective data which we find in speech corpora” (Shuy and Williams 1973: 95).

Starting from the idea that language is much more than a series of uttered sounds, a frenzy of sociolinguistic studies cropped up from the 1950s onwards, devoted to finding out the social meanings that were attached to certain speech styles. Howard Giles and Ellen B. Ryan (1982: 208) indicated that these studies have shown that a lot can be discerned from the way a person speaks, viz. his or her “psychological states, category memberships and behavioural capabilities.” Furthermore, since language is said to construct our identity, attitudes towards language are ultimately attitudes towards the users of language (Holmes 2001: 242). Therefore, language attitudes are sometimes perceived to have far-reaching effects. This is often the case, for example, in the context of employment, where certain accents are regarded as unfit for the job because of connotations of criminality or dimwittedness (Thomas 1999: 186).

Traditionally, with regard to the study of the attitudes towards English and its varieties, the research field focussed on the attitudes of native speakers towards their own language as well as other languages and language varieties. More recently, however, attention has been drawn to how non-native respondents evaluate particular English varieties (e.g. Van Bezooijen 1988; Botterman 1995), while other studies aimed at eliciting the attitudes of native speakers towards non-native English varieties (e.g. Palmer 1973). This development can be regarded as a consequence of the contemporary status of English as an international language or lingua franca. English is no longer exclusively ‘owned’ by its native speakers, since it has been found that, nowadays, non-native English speakers outnumber the native ones 3 to 1 (Power 2007). Braj K. Kachru (1988: 3) stated that this spread of English as a world language caused linguistic interactions in English to be of three possible types: native speaker and native speaker, native speaker and non-native speaker, and non-native speaker and non-native speaker. The first two types, as has been mentioned, have already
served as focus of attention in previous language attitude studies. The last type, however, has not nearly received as much interest as the two preceding types when it comes to the study of language attitudes.

The aim of this study, then, was to discover the attitudes of non-native speakers of English towards native as well as non-native varieties of English. More specifically, the focus was on how three native and four non-native Dutch and Flemish English accents were evaluated in Flanders, among Flemish secondary school students. Previous research conducted in Flanders indicated that Flemings held sometimes very strong opinions about several native varieties of English (Botterman 1995; Simon 2005) and, in the light of the ever so international society, it was deemed interesting to find out whether this target group would reveal clear attitudes towards non-native varieties of English as well. The general purpose of the present dissertation will be to investigate the reactions which these native and non-native accents evoke as well as the assumptions underlying these reactions (cf. Botterman 1995: 7).

The experiment involved 119 respondents in the sixth form of a Flemish secondary school and was carried out by means of a questionnaire. After listening to a tape-recording of a particular English accent, the informants were asked to answer questions concerning the personality of the speaker in question on various personality traits. Furthermore, they were required to state their opinions about the accents themselves.

Chapter two serves as a general framework for the present study. In a first part, some attention is drawn to the definition of a language attitude and the measurement techniques that are generally used for the study of language attitudes. A second part gives an overview of attitudinal research ranging from its origin to the more recent studies carried out in this field of study.

Chapter three expands some more on methodology, giving information on the informants, the speech samples and the questionnaire used for the present experiment. Furthermore, some hypotheses are postulated for the expected results of the current study.

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1 A copy of the questionnaire used in the present experiment is included in the appendix to this dissertation.
Chapter four forms the body of the present dissertation, drawing attention to the analysis and discussion of the obtained results for the present experiment carried out in Flanders. The results will be described along two groups, one concerning the attitudes towards the speakers as persons, the other focusing on the evaluations of the accents as such.

The fifth and final chapter describes the general findings for the experiment, checks the validity of the formulated hypotheses and ends with some concluding remarks.
2 THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

2.1. Theoretical framework

Language attitudes are interpreted in various ways in the existing research. Some of the studies focus on attitudes towards language itself – asking informants to evaluate a particular language variety as “beautiful”, “ugly” etc. Others broaden the perspective by eliciting the attitudes towards the speakers of the language as well (Fasold 1984: 148). This is why John R. Edwards (1982: 22) says that “most studies of language attitudes, in fact, would be more accurately termed studies of attitudes towards speakers of language varieties.” Whether these studies either choose to focus on only a particular language or include research on attitudes towards speakers and speech communities, they all have certain terminologies and measurement techniques in common. These two ‘building blocks’ of language attitude study are described in what follows.

2.1.1 A tentative definition of ‘a language attitude’

When studying language attitudes it is essential to take on a larger “foundational perspective” by referring to the importance of the general theory on term ‘attitude’ (Baker 1992: 8). According to Baker there has been a tendency of previous studies on language attitudes to ignore the extensive literature on the definition and measurement of attitudes, which results in research that is “naïve, not well defined [and] prone to replicate previous mistakes” (1992: 8).

Agreement on the definition of attitude, however, has not proved to be simple. Ralph W. Fasold (1984: 147) mentions two opposite theories about the nature of attitudes. On the one hand the behaviourist view defines attitude as single units which can be found in the reactions people have to social situations. Attitudes are thus recognised by investigating observable behaviour (Baker 1992: 11; Vandermeeren 1996: 158). On the other hand, mentalists describe attitudes as mental processes or an internal state, rather than observable behaviour. According to the latter, attitudes act as intermediate variables between the stimuli affecting a person and that person’s response – i.e. overt behaviour (Fasold 1984: 147; Vandermeeren 1996: 158).
Apart from these competing theories, it seems easiest to describe attitude on a more general level as “a psychological orientation toward a particular stimulus, the attitude-object” (K. Williams and Jones 2005: 278). Since this dissertation evolves around a research on language attitudes it is important to embed the more specific term language attitude within these general definitions of attitude. The main difference between the two is that language attitudes have language as their attitude-object. Colin Baker (1992: 8) confirms this idea when he claims that language attitude scholars apply attitude research in certain contexts, which gives them merely a different focus than pure attitude theorists.

Most language attitude research is based on the aforementioned mentalist view which – unlike the behaviourists – considers attitudes to have three sub-components (Ryan, Giles and Sebastian 1982: 7; Edwards 1982: 20; Fasold 1984: 148; Baker 1992: 12-13; Oakes 2001: 29). This method of analysing attitudes is also referred to as the tripartite model (K. Williams and Jones 2005: 278) which basically means that in every attitude a cognitive (thought), an affective (feeling) and a behavioural (action) element are combined. This is shown schematically in figure 1.1.

The cognitive component refers to our thoughts and beliefs about the attitude-object. For example a belief in the value of the Irish language may lead to a favourable attitude towards it (Baker 1992: 12). These thoughts are linked with certain positive or negative feelings about the attitude-object, which form the affective component. Finally, the behavioural component refers to the influence attitudes have on behaviour. Within the same example of Baker (1992: 13), a person who has a favourable attitude towards the Irish language might decide to send his/her children to a bilingual school. However, Baker (1992: 13) also mentions that it is important to note that this action component of attitude is not always an indicator of external behaviour. This means that there often are inconsistencies between how we really behave and the way we say we want to behave – as elicited in questionnaires or interviews (Vandermeeren 1996: 158). This is because people are social beings whose behaviour is influenced by social context and the presence of other people (Vandermeeren 1996: 159).
Edwards (1982: 20) recapitulates the multicomponential attitude model as follows: “[O]ne knows or believes something, has some emotional reaction to it and, therefore, may be assumed to act on this basis”. Directed specifically at language the definition of attitude turns into “any affective, cognitive or behavioural index of evaluative reactions toward different language varieties or their speakers” (Ryan, Giles and Sebastian 1982: 7).

### 2.1.2 The measurement of language attitudes

Measuring language attitudes has proved to be difficult as many techniques devised to elicit them have been criticised openly and frequently (Obiols 2002). A prevailing impediment to the measurement of language attitudes seems to be tied to the social nature of the attitude object – i.e. language – and its evaluation (Baker 1988: 116; 1992: 12; Oakes 2001: 30; Vandermeeren 1996: 158-159). Edwards (1982: 21) explains this social character of language evaluation as follows:

> Evaluations of language varieties – dialects and accents – do not reflect either linguistic or aesthetic quality *per se*, but rather *are expressions of social convention* and preference which, in turn, reflect an awareness of the status and prestige accorded to the speakers of theses varieties. (italics in original, my underlining.)

Leigh Oakes (2001: 30) and Baker (1992: 12) state that the difficulty of measuring language attitudes has to do with the fact that the three components – cognition, affect and behaviour – may not always be in harmony. A person may overtly express a favourable attitude, whereas more covertly s/he may conceal negative feelings or beliefs (Baker 1992: 12). As mentioned above when describing the behavioural component, it is because people are social beings, influenced by what is considered socially desirable, that there often exist
inconsistencies between actual behaviour and reported behaviour. Oakes (2001: 30) explains this further with an example: “a mother may encourage her child to learn French (behaviour), believing that it will be important for his or her future career (cognition), yet all the while possibly loathing the language herself (affect).” Both Baker (1992: 12) and Oakes (2001: 30) are reserved when it comes to attitude measurement. They question whether or not researches are able to delve further than the cognitive component, which may only reflect surface evaluations, and elicit deep-seated feelings and anxieties (the affective component) – especially when these are considered socially unacceptable.

Correspondingly, Fasold (1984: 147) remarks that the mentalist view on language attitudes poses problems for its empirical research, because regarding a language attitude as a mental state instead of observable behaviour makes the researcher entirely dependent on the person’s report of what his/her attitude is. According to Fasold this sort of self-reported data is of questionable validity – presumably for the same reasons as Baker and Oakes – which led many scholars to devise methods of eliciting people’s attitudes without them being conscious of the process.

2.1.2.1 Measurement techniques

There are three assessment techniques relevant to the study of language attitudes, generally referred to as content analysis (of societal treatment), direct measurement and indirect measurement (Ryan, Giles and Sebastian 1982: 7-8; Knops and van Hout 1988: 6-9; Oakes 2001: 30-31).

Content analysis of the societal treatment, although mostly overlooked in theories on language attitudes, is as good a method to give information about views on language varieties than the direct and indirect measurement techniques (Ryan, Giles and Sebastian 1982: 7). Generally, it encompasses all language attitude studies using autobiographical, observational, ethnographic or historiographic methods (Knops and van Hout 1988: 6). This entails that attitudes are not elicited by means of explicit requests to respondents but from the various public ways in which the target language varieties are treated, such as government and educational language policies and the analyses of literature and business documents, newspapers and broadcasting media (Ryan, Giles and Sebastian 1982: 7; Oakes 2001: 30; Knops and van Hout 1988: 7). This method emphasises the group as opposed to the individual and is characterised by its unobtrusive research approach (Oakes
mention that this type of measurement is especially useful in cases where restrictions of
time and space prevent direct access to the subjects of research.

However, methodological debate concerning the study of language attitude has
largely focussed on whether to use a direct or an indirect measurement technique (Obiols
2002: 2). *Direct measurement* distinguishes itself from the content analysis because it lacks
an unobtrusive approach and uses a series of direct questions instead (Knops and van Hout
1988: 7). Subjects are asked to respond to a questionnaire or interview questions regarding
language evaluation (e.g. how favourably a variety is viewed), language preference (e.g.
which of two language varieties is preferred in certain situations), reasons for learning a
particular language, opinions on language planning activities and the evaluation of the
social groups who use a particular variety (Ryan, Giles and Sebastian 1982: 7; Knops and
van Hout 1988: 7; Oakes 2001: 31). As opposed to the content analysis, in which the
investigator infers people’s attitudes from their behaviour, the subjects themselves are
urged to reveal their attitudes (Knops and van Hout 1988: 7). But it is precisely for this
reason that the direct method has been criticised, since it allows the subjects to choose their
answers rationally which gives them opportunity to respond in a way they consider is most
approved of by the researcher and society and disguise their true – possible sexist or racist –
feelings at the same time (Obiols 2002: 3; Preston 2001: 41).

*The indirect method* has been developed to circumvent this possible manipulation
of the attitudes and to include the affective component – which is often irrational and
involves prejudices (Obiols 2002: 3; Preston 2001: 41). The aim is thus to elicit covert
language attitudes instead of public ones by means of techniques designed to keep the
subjects unaware of the purpose of the investigation. Preventing subjects from knowing
that their language attitudes are being measured makes it impossible for them to respond in
a self-flattering or socially acceptable manner (Knops and van Hout 1988: 8-9; Fasold
1984: 149). Therefore, Knops and van Hout (1988: 8) are of the opinion that “the term
disguised measurement would be more appropriate”. Probably the best known and most
used indirect method to measure language attitudes is the matched-guise technique,
developed by Wallace Lambert and his associates in 1960 (Ryan, Giles and Sebastian
1982: 8; Edwards 1982: 22; Fasold 1984: 149; Knops and van Hout 1988: 8; Oakes 2001:
31; Preston 2001: 41; Obiols 2002: 3). Respondents are asked to evaluate the personal
characteristics of apparently different speakers whose voices are recorded on tape, unaware
of the fact that they are hearing the same speaker using different linguistic varieties. Since
every voice sample conceals the same speaker, evaluations can not be influenced by factors such as gender, age and voice quality (Thomas 1999: 183). Judgements are then considered to confirm stereotyped prejudices towards the given linguistic varieties and, what is more, towards the social group that uses that variety (Obiols 2002: 4). Edwards (1982: 22) points out that with the matched-guise technique “it is not the speech per se which is evaluated, but rather the speaker.” This widely used technique thus seems to provide useful information, because its indirect method manages to gather less rational and, hence, more spontaneous and sincere responses (Obiols 2002: 5). Nevertheless, it has been criticised for its experimental features – eliciting attitudes within classrooms and laboratories gives the technique an artificial or unnatural character – which allegedly reduce the value of the judgements (Obiols 2002: 4). Consequently, many alternatives to the original ‘standard method’ in language attitudes have been developed, taking into account natural settings and the dynamic character of people’s speech styles (Knops and van Hout 1988: 8).
2.2. An overview of early and recent research on language attitudes in various contexts

In this section, a number of previous studies on language attitudes conducted in various countries will be discussed. Obviously, this overview is not to be regarded as exhaustive, but rather as a selection of those studies that were deemed relevant to the present investigation. The previous research on language attitudes as described below should complete the second chapter, which in its whole can operate both as a theoretical and functional framework when contemplating the results of the current study.

In a first part the origin and spread of this field of study in Britain and the United States is described. A second part is dedicated to later research that deviates in various ways from the original studies, performed in countries such as the United States, the Netherlands and Finland. The third and last part of this overview focuses on language attitude study in Flanders and Sweden and gives special attention to the most recent development of English as a foreign language.

2.2.1 Early research

When considering the object of study – i.e. language attitudes – in a rather broad sense, one could argue that its research goes back hundreds of years, or even as far as Aristotle – who claimed that the way people spoke had an influence on their perceived credibility. Some descriptive research in the early twentieth century brought under attention the idea that certain language varieties were associated with prestige and others with various kinds of stigma. Further studies conducted in the 1930s and 1940s in Britain and the USA were the first attempts to prove that people are able to accurately evaluate the personality of others on the basis of their speech (Bradac 1990: 388).

However, if language attitude research is more narrowly referred to as “the explicit, scientific study of attitudinal consequences of dissimilar language varieties,” (Bradac 1990: 388) it seems that the first study on language attitudes was conducted some forty years ago. In 1960, Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, and Fillenbaum introduced the abovementioned matched-guise technique as a means of assessing language attitudes.

For this section, information will not be drawn from the primary sources, but from overviews given by Bradac (1990) and Edwards (1982).
Their study aimed to elicit attitudinal responses towards French and English in French-speaking Canada. They played recordings of bilingual speakers reading a prose passage once in the French version and once in the translated English one. English- and French-speaking judges were then asked to rate these passages on scales of opposites that relate to the speaker’s intelligence, likeability etc. The results showed that not only the English-speaking respondents evaluated the English speakers more favourably on traits such as kindness and intelligence, but, quite unexpectedly, the same reactions were found for the French-speaking respondents. These findings led Lambert and his colleagues to conclude mainly two things. On the on hand, their research definitely made clear that the evaluation of a person’s personality can depend strongly on his or her language. On the other hand, from the unexpected result that the lower-status group of French Canadians had positive attitudes towards the speech of the higher-status group of English Canadians the investigators deduced the work of stereotyped evaluative reactions (Edwards 1982: 22; Knops 1988: 105).

This study of Lambert et al. not only set off a frenzy of language attitude research around the globe, its innovative method seems to have set the standard in this field of study for a long time (Preston 2001: 41). James J. Bradac (1990: 388) describes their matched-guise technique as “perhaps the earliest attempt to exert experimental control over potentially confounding speaker idiosyncrasies.” Also the use of semantic-differential scales to rate the evaluations and formal prose passages to reduce the influence of content on respondent reactions has dominated in the measurement of language attitudes (Bradac 1990: 389).

The early language attitude research adhered quite strictly to these techniques and mainly focussed on the evaluations of speakers who represent geographical – and therefore also often ethnic, political and socio-economic – differences (Bradac 1990: 389-390).

In Britain, for example, Strongman and Woosley 1967 (Edwards 1982: 23; Bradac 1990: 390) used the matched-guise technique to investigate the reactions of English undergraduates (half of them were northerners and half southerners) to Yorkshire and London accents. Results showed that both groups of respondents rated speakers of both northern and southern accents in the same way, the former being highly associated with honesty and reliability, the latter with self-confidence. The northern judges, however,
seemed to show extra loyalty to their own Yorkshire accent as they judged its speakers having a high degree of kind-heartedness and a low degree of irritability.

Cheyne 1970 (Edwards 1982: 23; Bradac 1990: 390) did research on the attitudes towards Scottish and English regional accents and found that generally Scottish speakers were regarded by both Scottish and English judges as having a lower status than the English guises. Yet, on personality traits such as ‘friendly’ and ‘likeable’, Scottish speakers were rated more highly and especially so by Scottish raters.

Howard Giles 1970 (Edwards 1982: 23; Bradac 1990: 390) seems to have wanted to conduct a research with a larger scope then the ones mentioned by Strongman & Woosley and Cheyne. He included a total number of thirteen different accents residing in the UK and investigated how they were perceived by British secondary school children. His results indicate a sort of hierarchy of prestige, with RP – i.e. “Received Pronunciation”, the non-regional standard accent also referred to as ‘BBC English’, ‘Oxford English’ or ‘the Queen’s English’ – at the top, followed by foreign (e.g. West Indian) and regional (e.g. South Welsh) English accents and with urban accents (e.g. Cockney, Birmingham) at the bottom.

Attitudes towards language varieties have also been studied outside of Europe. In the United States, for example, early language attitude research seems to support the findings of the British studies (Edwards 1982: 26).

Tucker and Lambert 1967 (Edwards 1982: 26; Bradac 1990: 390) concluded from their research that northern white as well as southern white and southern black college students rated GA guises – i.e. “General American” also referred to as ‘Network English’ – more favourably than all other American English dialect users, such as black speakers, used in the study.

This early research on language attitudes taken together led Lambert 1967 (Edwards 1982: 23; Preston 2001: 41) to make some generalisations about the structure of the attitudes measured so far. He noticed that respondents’ evaluations of the speaker’s personality could be grouped according to three different dimensions or “factor groups”, viz.

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3 GA is generally considered as a collection of accents which are similar in the fact that they do not show any regional – esp. eastern or southern – features. RP, on the other hand, was originally a regional accent but developed because of the prestige of its users to the non-regional standard accent. RP is thus much more a social accent – used largely by middle- and upper-class speakers – than GA (Van Dale dictionary 2004).
competence, personal integrity and social attractiveness. These dimensions are each a combination of a number of personality traits related to the speaker, with competence referring to the speaker’s intelligence and industriousness, personal integrity indicating his or her helpfulness and trustworthiness and social attractiveness reflecting the speaker’s friendliness and sense of humour.

Keeping this in mind, further studies showed that these evaluating dimensions were often at work (Preston 2001: 42). General findings show high ratings for standard accents on the competence dimension and greater integrity and attractiveness evaluations for non-standard (regional) accents. Linda Thomas (1999: 183) points out that previous studies carried out in the UK and the US showed that:

Speakers who score high on the status scale, tend to score low on the solidarity scale; that is, they are not seen as being particularly friendly or sincere. Speakers who score high on the solidarity scale tend to score low on the status scale; that is, they are not seen as being particularly intelligent or confident.

Surprisingly, these evaluations generally tend to be the same for both standard- and regional-accented speakers. This means that a high-status group, for instance speakers with an RP accent, judge their own accent positively on the status/competence dimension and negatively on dimensions underlying solidarity. A low-status group, on the other hand, expresses the same attitude, assigning their own local variety with advantages on personal traits such as friendliness, but disadvantages on traits relating to competence.

Evidence for these general associations can be withdrawn from the fact that a lot of politicians feel it is necessary to work on their accent – for example Margaret Thatcher took elocution lessons – exactly because they are aware of these associations between an RP accent and characteristics such as reliability and intelligence (O’Driscoll 1990: 56). Thomas (1999: 186) also mentions politicians who emphasise their non-prestige accent in order to appeal to a more lower status group.

Edwards (1982: 26) mentions the importance of the social context in which these findings occur, an idea that Janet Holmes (2001) also emphasises in a more general sense when she discusses the study of language attitudes. Change of context includes a change in evaluation patterns, Edwards says. He refers more specifically to the interest in ethnicity and pride among American blacks and to the feelings of nationalism among French

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4 Other researchers (e.g. Ryan, Giles and Sebastian 1982) have often taken personal integrity and social attractiveness as one solidarity dimension (Preston 2001: 42).
Canadians as illustrations of backgrounds that need to be taken into account when studying language attitudes in the United States and Quebec respectively, for they may result in different attitudes than the ones that are generally found – i.e. these ethnic group members and regional speakers may be perceived more favourably.

More generally, the concept of context is essential in the study of language attitudes, because people always evaluate others within a certain context. Holmes (2001: 343) states that this should be taken into consideration at all times when talking about people’s attitudes towards particular languages or language varieties. People do not judge intrinsic linguistic qualities, but they are led by certain social or political prejudices when they evaluate a language. She formulates this idea as follows:

People generally do not hold opinions about languages in a vacuum. They develop attitudes towards languages which reflect their views about those who speak the languages, and the contexts and functions with which they are associated. When people listen to accents or languages they have never heard before, their assessments are totally random. (2001: 343)

Thomas (1999: 184) explains this further and says that, basically, “we talk about the language as a cover for talking about the people.” The stereotypes influencing our judgement reside within a particular speech community – enhanced by broadcast media such as TV and film – and are thus not a character of the language itself. People who are unfamiliar with a certain language variety will make other judgements than those who do know the variety, exactly because the former are not able to link the language variety to its speakers and the stereotypes usually surrounding them.

Already in the early language attitude studies investigators indicate that by means of the matched-guise technique stereotyped evaluative reactions are elicited. This is, according to Knops, also formulated by Lambert himself. Once a speaker is characterised by the respondents into ethnic categories such as ‘French Canadian’ or ‘English Canadian’ s/he “is assigned the beliefs and feelings associated with that particular category” (Knops 1988: 105).
2.2.2  More recent research and its criticism on the early research

According to Bradac (1990: 391) alternatives to the methodology and subject of the early language attitude research cropped up from the 1970s onwards.

For example, Frederick Williams (1973) used an alternative form of the matched-guise technique – using visual cues on top of the linguistic features to elicit attitudes – to shed light on how language attitudes come about. In a number of studies, Williams aimed to elicit stereotyped attitudes of black and white teachers towards children of various ethnic backgrounds (black, white and Mexican-American) in order to show that these stereotypes about a particular ethnic group play an important role in “how a person perceives another person’s speech characteristics” (p.126). He came to the conclusion that these stereotyped sets of attitudes seem to be even more important than he originally anticipated. One of his studies can serve as what he himself describes as “some evidence of how this [stereotype] bias may effect ratings” (p.125). In this study he presented a number of white teachers with video samples of white, black and Mexican-American children who are all dubbed with the same standard English speech. Williams noticed, however, that the ratings of this speech sample clearly differed depending on the ethnic group of the child in vision. The black child, who was dubbed with exactly the same audio track than the white child, was still evaluated as, what Williams calls in this study, more ‘ethnic-non-standard’. This allowed Williams to assume that “persons tend to employ stereotyped sets of attitudes as anchor points for their evaluation of whatever is presented to them as a sample of a person’s speech” (p.126).

In another study, Leslie A. Palmer (1973) distanced herself from previous language attitude study both in method and subject. She pointed out that not much research had been done so far on attitudes towards English as a foreign language. Based on the hypothesis that foreign speakers may elicit unfavourable reactions because their speech deviates both grammatically and phonologically from the norms residing in the native English-speaking community, Palmer aimed to investigate native speakers’ reactions to various non-native English accents. The difference with previous research is that the subjects used to elicit the language attitudes do not belong to a well-defined stable group within a particular geographical area and, moreover, every speaker has a different degree of competence in English.

The respondents were students from Georgetown University who had a minimum experience with foreign languages. They were asked to evaluate speakers with Arabic,
Lingala, Spanish and Vietnamese language backgrounds. Unlike the method that is usually used in earlier studies, the speech samples that were used in Palmer’s study existed in different formats. On one tape segment the speaker could be heard reading a short text – as was the traditional method – while on another he or she was asked to retell what s/he had read. The third sample, finally, consisted of the speaker narrating an event from his or her own experience. All respondents evaluated each of these samples for every non-native accent on speech scales –i.e. rating the speech on accuracy of pronunciation, hesitation, grammatical errors etc – as well as personality scales – rating the personality of the speaker on various dimensions.

Results showed that most respondents were not able to identify the native language of the speakers, with an exception of the Spanish speakers. This caused that no stereotypical reactions to particular foreigners could be inferred and therefore it was deemed “impossible to determine the extent to which variance might be caused by negative or positive reactions to stereotypes and the extent to which it is caused by differences in L₂ ability” (p.48).

Knops (1988) criticised the pioneering work of Lambert on various points. Firstly, he claimed that it is too simple to assume that it is sufficient to assign speakers to a particular ethnic group on the basis of their speech. More realistically, a person’s accent also indicates his or her social class and thus more categories can be assigned to a single speaker by listening to his or her way of speaking. Secondly, Knops mentioned that language attitudes “vary across contexts and situations” (p.106). Respondents may be asked to evaluate speech in different settings – e.g. the speech style or language variety used at home as opposed to at school. This also includes the nature of the speech sample, going from a formal prose passage to an extract of free conversation. Thirdly, Lambert supposedly reduced the importance of the speech cues themselves, for introducing the matched-guise technique meant a manipulation of variables such as speech tempo, pitch and intonation. Especially this last point was of particular importance to Knops. He wanted to find out in what way the linguistic stimuli themselves influence the evaluations of the speakers. More specifically, his focus was on the potential “effect of phonological versus phonetic deviations from standard pronunciation on language attitudes” (p.109). He presented a number of Dutch university students with speech samples – a combination of isolated words and fragments of running speech – of standard and various regional accents from the Netherlands and Flanders and asked the respondents to rate both the speaker’s
speech and personality on semantic-differential scales. Results showed that there is a clear relation between the evaluations on speech scales and the ones on personality scales:

Speech scales referring to traditional norms for good or correct articulation correlate highly with personality scales referring to speakers’ social and intellectual status. Speech scales displaying raters’ concern with the naturalness and aesthetic qualities of speech correlate highly with personality scales relating to the social attractiveness of speakers. (p.119)

Additionally, phonological deviations from standard pronunciation seemed to be more decisive determinants of language attitudes than phonetic deviations. Overall, Knops was able to conclude that different realizations of consonant and vowel phonemes had a part to play in eliciting attitudes towards varieties of Dutch.

The study of Renée Van Bezooijen (1988) ties up with Knops’ third point of criticism on traditional language attitude studies which availed themselves of the matched-guise technique. This measurement technique looks upon idiosyncratic voice features, such as specific pronunciation, prosody and voice quality as “disturbing factors that have to be controlled for” (p.86). The voice samples that were then used to elicit language attitudes did not vary when it comes to person linked voice features so that evaluations could only be based on the language or dialect used. Van Bezooijen regarded this as a shortcoming of previous language attitude research and aimed to assess the effect of various vocal parameters – prosody, such as pitch, tempo and loudness as well as voice quality and pronunciation5 – on the attribution of personality characteristics.

The speech material consisted of extracts from interviews with male Dutch speakers of different ages who were all born in Nijmegen and from various social backgrounds. Informants, university students from Nijmegen as well as autochthonous Nijmegen inhabitants and four foreign listener groups (English, Kenyan, Mexican and Japanese), were asked to rate these samples on voice scales as well as personality and social status scales. Van Bezooijen was interested in using foreign informants and confronting them with a language that was completely unintelligible to them, because she assumed that they would perhaps base themselves on other cues than language variety to attribute social status, level of education etc. to the speakers.

She was able to conclude that prosody, and pitch variation in particular, appeared to have the biggest influence on the attribution of personality traits. This seemed to be true, not

only for the Dutch-speaking informants but also for the English, Kenyan, Mexican and Japanese respondents, for they all associated various features of pitch, such as varied pitch patterns, a wide pitch range and a large quantity of pitch movements – i.e. a ‘lively’ manner of speaking – with self-confidence, dominance, willpower as well as reliability and sense of humour. So apparently, even if the language is unknown to the hearer, it is possible to perceive variations in pitch. Further, Van Bezooijen noticed that the foreign judges correlated voice quality with the social status of the speaker (e.g. the more harshness, the lower the level of education), whereas in the intracultural setting – i.e. the Dutch-speaking informants – voice quality was only related to attractiveness. Finally, with regard to the importance of pronunciation, Van Bezooijen noticed a different evaluation according to each informant group. The foreign listeners did not react to the pronunciation patterns of the speakers, for they did not possess the linguistic knowledge to make a distinction between the different accents. The Dutch-speaking respondents attributed pronunciation with education, social position and intelligence. The autochthonous group, however, related the Nijmegen accented speakers also with negative traits such as passivity and uncertainty. According to Van Bezooijen, this could be due to the fact that this group did not know the Nijmegen accent and it seems thus that accent has the largest effect on language attitude when the listeners recognise it and connect it with clear connotations. On the whole, Van Bezooijen indicates with this study the influence other factors than language variety on the evaluation of a speaker’s personality.

More recently, Dennis R. Preston (2001) also believes it is necessary to review the traditional method used in language attitude studies. He wants to embed this field of study in a general folk theory by paying attention to the non-linguist’s underlying beliefs about language.

According to Preston, it is important that before the researcher approaches his or her language attitude study in a traditional way, it should be assured that the respondents are able to form a mental map of the particular language variety, i.e. they ought to determine where they think the speaker is from and at least have knowledge of the area with which a sample voice can be identified. The problem with earlier language attitude research is that this kind of “mental mapping” is has not been taken into consideration. Yet, a respondent who is not able to recognise a sample voice as coming from its right origin cannot be said to evaluate that particular regional speech. Instead, one has to conclude that the respondent only assesses that particular sample. Preston makes this clear with an example:
For example, if one submitted a voice from New England to California judges and the judges agreed that the speaker was “intelligent”, “cold”, “fast” and so on, researchers could reasonably conclude that Californians judged that voice sample in that way. They should not conclude, however, that that is what Californians believe about New England voices, for a majority of the judges might not have agreed that the voice was from New England. (Perhaps they would have called it a “New York” voice.) More generally, Californians may not even have a concept of “New England” speech. Perhaps the most detailed mental map of regional US speech available to them is one which simply identifies the “Northeast”. (p.51-52)

Language attitude research which lets respondents literally draw their own map of regional varieties could present a possible solution to this problem. To make this kind of studies completely socially and methodologically correct, Preston even suggests to let the respondents themselves decide which characteristics are needed for judging the speech samples. “The method is to go to the respondents themselves,” he says (p.54) and he further explains that he prefers a more direct approach that does not make use of actual voice samples.

In the case of his own study, he let 147 informants from the state Michigan – varied in gender, status and age – draw up maps of the US regional speech and concluded that the US “South” and “North” appeared most frequently. He asked another large number of Michigan respondents, when showing them a map of the US with all the speech regions that the former group of 147 had drawn, to list characteristics they associated with the speech of the various regions. These are preparations that preceded the actual study, which consisted of asking 85 Michigan university students to rate various regions on scales existing of traits that were abstracted from the previous study. Preston focussed for the results on the two most important regions, “South” and “North”, and noticed that they fit in perfectly with the general findings of the early language attitude research. The majority variety, i.e. the “North”, was rated favourably on social status and the minority variety, i.e. the “South”, had positive reactions on solidarity traits.

Preston concludes that taking into account these social and/or geographical “maps” is just as – or maybe even more – important when studying language attitudes than looking purely at the linguistic facts. If the focus only lies on linguistic theory “one moves up (and away from) the concrete reality of language as a cognitively embedded fact” (p.63) and thus language becomes something abstract, Preston says. It is vital that researches factor in the language ideologies (or, more generally, “folk theory”) which underlie the evaluations of the respondents.
Perhaps in the most drastic sense, Irene Hyrkstedt and Paula Kalaja (1998) also criticised the traditional research on language attitudes. Not only did they reject the widely used matched-guise technique, they thought it necessary to redefine the concept of attitude as well. Language attitudes were then described not in the mentalist way as concepts in the minds of subjects, but as heterogeneous notions constructed in discourse that differ depending on the setting.

Their study started from the perspective of English as a foreign language and aimed to elicit the attitude of a number of young Finns towards the role of English in Finland. Their method consisted of drawing conclusions from the subjects’ written responses to a text that expressed arguments against the use of English in Finland. Results showed that a positive attitude seemed to be a little more prevalent than a negative one, drawn from arguments given by the subjects such as belief in the strength of the Finnish language and the advantages of knowing English (referred to as the nationalist and utilitarian repertoire respectively). Hyrkstedt and Kalaja focussed both on the way in which the subjects argued their attitude and on the content of their arguments and thereby concluded that, when taking a discourse-analytic stance in the study of language attitudes, an attitude proves not to be a stable but rather a variable concept. Subjects argued their agreement or disagreement with the argumentation given in the sample text based on various points of view, going from a nationalist to a utilitarian one.

Unlike the early research into language attitudes with its traditional methodology, these researchers seem to give way to, instead of to suppress, the variability of responses.

So far this overview of language attitude research has focussed on primary results obtained by the early studies into the subject in the 1960s and 1970s, where general findings indicated that low-status groups – using regional varieties – were associated with high ratings on the *solidarity* dimension whereas high-status groups – using standard varieties – scored highly on the *competence* dimension. Moreover, these findings were said to be a sign of underlying stereotypical reactions to certain groups of people.

In section 2.2.2, research that deviated from these early studies was described. This included changes in methodology on the one hand – e.g. F. Williams (1973) decided to use visual cues, Palmer (1973) drew on more naturalist speech samples, Preston (2001) brought mental maps into his research, and Hyrksted and Kalaja (1998) drastically took another methodological turn by employing a qualitative discourse-analysis – and changes
in perspectives on the subject of study on the other hand – e.g. the use of non-native English accents by Palmer (1973), degree of accent as a way of eliciting attitudes in Knops’ (1988) study, the study of the relative importance of speaker idiosyncrasies such as pronunciation, prosody, and voice quality as well as the use of foreign respondents by Van Bezooijen (1988) and Hyrkstad’s and Kalaja’s (1998) study on evaluations of English as a foreign language.

The first part (2.2.1) and the next one (2.2.2) contains the description of studies that show similarities, either in its method or in its subject perspective, with the current study and are therefore considered relevant to be included in this overview. Another number of studies dedicated to language attitudes in Flanders and Sweden are treated separately in a third section below (2.2.3) for, although they were similarly considered to relate to this study, they did not fit within either one of the other sections.

2.2.3 Other relevant research: English as a foreign language in Flanders and Sweden

First, it seems desirable to expand a little more on language attitude studies performed in Flanders, since they share the same language context as the current study. However, this will need an expansion on potentially influential elements for the study of language attitudes in this area, viz. the position of English in Flanders and more generally the Flemish language situation.

Flanders, the northern part of Belgium, is part of the Dutch language area in combination with the state of the Netherlands. Dutch is considered the standard language for both areas, although it is more appropriate to speak of two different standard varieties because of lexical and syntactic differences (Knops and van Hout 1988: 4; De Caluwe 2001). In total, there are about 20 million Dutch speakers in the Netherlands (14 million) and Flanders (6 million) combined (Knops and van Hout 1988: 4).

The Flemish live in a quite complex country when it comes to language. Belgium is a federalised stated divided into three communities based on linguistic-cultural entities, viz. the Flemish-, the French- and the German-speaking community (De Cock 2006: 1). Moreover, the capital, Brussels, officially has a bilingual Dutch-French status. Belgium is nonetheless often wrongly considered as a bilingual country instead of, rightly so, a trilingual one. Michaël Goethals (1997: 105-106) makes this quite clear and says that
it is not the case that all Belgians (...) are bilingual in the sense that they can easily/fluently switch from Dutch to French or vice versa, nor that they can operate in both these languages, nor that they are confronted with these languages daily (...) French is a foreign language for Flemish inhabitants, just as (or for many even more than) English is.

Plurilingualism has always been held in a high regard by both Flemish government and citizens, maybe partly due to the fact that the Dutch language plays a relative little role on a worldly scale (Goethals 1997: 107). This influenced a positive attitude towards the education of foreign languages, with French being taught from the age of 10-11 onwards and English from the age of 13-14. In secondary schools, French seems to dominate the educational area – as it occurs at an earlier stage in the pupils’ education – although English plays a bigger role in the minds of Flemish youngsters. They feel more acquainted with the language seeing that it is omnipresent in the media and cultural life (De Cock 2006: 4). Films, pop songs and advertising are penetrating the Flemish society with English. Its influence is even further increased due to the part it plays in politics and in business contexts.

The combination of the attention given to English in education – secondary schools offer two to four hours of English a week – and the increasing role it plays in the Flemish society results in a high degree of familiarity with and a considerable level of capability among the Flemish-speaking population, especially with regard to the younger generations (Simon 2005: 14).

Jean-Marc Dewaele (2005) starts from this Flemish language situation for his study on language attitudes towards French and English in Flanders. He pointed out that both function as a foreign language and aimed to elicit 18-year-old Flemings’ attitudes towards them. Overall, he concluded that the attitudes towards English were much more positive as measured by the pupils’ individual and social context.

They were asked to fill in a questionnaire and answer a number of statements such as “I read French/English regularly” or “learning French/English is fun”. Additionally, they had to rate their self-perceived competence of either language on a scale (poor, fair, good) and answer a question measuring their politicocultural identity (“I define myself as a Belgian more than a Fleming”).

Dewaele discovered that ratings measuring the degree of contact/use of the foreign languages always ended up higher for English than for French, that self-perceived competence was on the whole rated higher for English than for French and that those who
described themselves as Flemings before Belgians had negative attitudes towards French. At the social level, these results could refer to the different historical backgrounds of both languages. French has long been superior in Flanders which can explain the at times hostile reactions of Flemings to the French-speaking Belgian community. English, however, is not preceded by a turbulent history of occupation in Flanders. Furthermore, in the present globalised society, English has the ‘advantage’ of being associated with popular culture and is therefore considered hip and trendy. The respondents’ positive attitude towards English may thus be influenced by its status as a *lingua franca*, i.e. “a tool allowing communication with people from other countries” (p.133). At the individual level, Dewaele links the measured attitudes to self-perceived competence, the frequency of use and the anxiety to communicate in the foreign language in question. The degree of competence in French being rather low – as stated by the respondents themselves – can be related to the fact that they are not confident speaking the language and thus use it less frequently than English.

Paradoxically, it seems that, although French has been instructed to the Flemish youngsters more intensely and for a longer time, English has acquired the status of a second language, whereas French has become a foreign language (p.133).

Johan De Caluwe (1992) read up on language attitude study in Flanders and more specifically, on attitudes towards Dutch as it is spoken in the Netherlands. He expanded upon the history of the relationship between the Flemish and the northern Dutch variety in another study (2001) and noted that for years, the norm for the whole Dutch language area (comprising the so-called northern Dutch area, i.e. the Netherlands, and southern Dutch area, i.e. Flanders) appeared to be the variety of Dutch spoken in the northern part. The term ‘variety’, however, does not seem really applicable here since Dutch was considered one standard language of which Flemish Dutch was nothing more than an ‘incomplete’ form. From 1980 onwards the latter has been recognised as a valuable national variety of Dutch (2001: 54). De Caluwé points out that this change is partly due to the influence of the Belgian media (television, radio) that started spreading the Flemish variety and thereby juxtaposing it with the northern Dutch variety (1992: 62). The attitudes of Flemings towards the Dutch language changed accordingly and evolved from an association of high prestige with northern Dutch to a more finely tuned view on both varieties.

De Caluwe (1992) summarised a number of studies dedicated to the Flemish attitudes towards the northern variety of Dutch and found that, overall, Flemings prefer their own Flemish variety, although the attitudes differ depending on the type of questioning in the
research and on whether it is the pronunciation, the fluency or the vocabulary they are evaluating. Their inclination to choose the Flemish variety over northern Dutch is much stronger when they are asked directly whether they want to speak with the northern variety themselves. Other research using an indirect method to elicit the Flemings’ attitude – playing speech samples of both varieties – discovered that when it comes to competence and fluency, respondents revealed a positive attitude towards their northern neighbours. On the whole, however, Flemings seem to really detest the northern Dutch pronunciation – associating it with personality traits such as “arrogant” and “blasé” (1992: 57-58).

Particularly relevant to the present study is the dissertation by Ann Botterman (1995) on the attitudes of Flemish students in their first year of higher education on five national accents of English (RP, Irish, Scottish, American and Australian). Her results showed that, even though the respondents were non-natives and thus did not use the language they were evaluating on a daily basis, the accents seemed “to convey so much more than a person’s origin” (p.107).

Botterman conducted a matched-guise experiment and asked Flemish respondents to rate these five native English accents on both personality and speech scales. She discovered that, overall, the RP accent appeared to have the most positive evaluations on personality traits underlying competence and social status. Additionally, the male American speaker was also assigned with nearly the same favourable competence traits, although he was viewed less prestigious than the RP-speakers. The remaining Irish, Scottish and Australian speech samples undermined the superiority of the RP-speakers on the personal integrity dimension as well as on some traits reflecting the social attractiveness of the speaker – e.g. “kindness” and “generosity”. These results of the evaluations on the personality scales indicate a correlation between competence and social status. Those speakers who were assigned to the middle- or upper-class – e.g. the male RP-speaker – were generally viewed as being relatively competent.

Furthermore, Botterman pointed out a correlation between the findings of the ratings on the personality scales and the ones on the speech scales. The RP accent, for example, scored high on pleasantness (the aesthetic dimension) and intelligibility (the status dimension) which clearly links up with its favourable evaluations of the speakers’ competence and social status. It could then be said that the judges based themselves on the degree of attractiveness of the speaker’s accent to evaluate his or her personality (p.106).

Finally, Botterman remarks that as far as the solidarity dimension goes – respondents were asked whether they wanted their teachers or they themselves to speak with the accent heard
on the tape – the American accent seemed to elicit the most favourable reactions. She refers to the possibility of ‘covert prestige’ because all other results indicate high ratings – on both speech as personality scales – for the RP accent, and not the American one (p.106).

In another study, Ellen Simon (2005) equally used Flemish students as a target group, although she also involved a small number of university teachers, to elicit their attitude towards the English pronunciation target for Flemish advanced learners of English in particular. She questioned whether the until now prevailing pronunciation model of RP in both secondary and higher education is still tenable in the contemporary Flemish society. English is now being used internationally by an increasing number of non-native speakers and, moreover, the influence of the American media seems to result in kind of mixed pronunciation. Is it then still feasible or necessary for students to speak ‘native-like’?

The results of the survey she conducted, containing a number of multiple-choice questions, showed that “Flemish students of English appear to be very RP-oriented” (p.19). The majority of the students as well as the lecturers expressed that it is important to speak with a native-like accent. Additionally, nearly all the students claimed that they aim at an RP-like variety of English, which led Simon to conclude that no change in the RP pronunciation model seems to be required. However, she remarked that results could potentially be influenced by the particular target group used in her survey:

[I]t should be kept in mind that the target group discussed in this paper is formed by students majoring in English at university level. Their aspirations as far as the mastering of English is concerned might be very different from those of students taking English as minor subject (p.14-15).

Like Simon, Goethals (1997) stated that English pronunciation in Flanders is mainly following the British example but that, at the same time, it seems increasingly “infected by American influences” (p.110). He further indicated the existence of a Flemish variant of ‘educated European English’ – sometimes referred to as ‘Flemenglish’ – which displays its own type of pronunciation together with a number of grammatical or lexical errors and which is “as recognisably different from the Dutch English in the Netherlands as from the German or French Englishes” (p.110).

Apart from this language attitude research conducted in Flanders, it seems noteworthy to mention a last number of studies that aimed to shed more light on the contemporary
Americanisation of society and its influence on the attitudes towards English of Swedish university and secondary school students.

Mats Mobärg (1999, 2002) noticed that in Sweden today, there appears to be a conflict between the British English pronunciation as it is taught at school and the American English pronunciation gaining popularity among students outside of school. Just like Simon (2005), who based herself on these Swedish language attitude studies for her own survey, Mobärg (1999) wondered whether this increasing exposure to the American English variety through popular media created a change in young pupils’ preference for one of the two native English varieties. He discovered a clear correlation between media preferences – elicited by asking the pupils to state their favourite TV programmes, films, actor/actress and singer/group and determining whether these were dominated by American answers – and language attitudes. Those pupils who preferred American media output similarly expressed a preference for American English (2002: 119).

In a further study (2002) he found that the traditional school accent, i.e. RP, seemed to dominate when it comes to the pupils’ own pronunciation, although quite regularly an American accent cropped up. The RP accent increased when they were asked to read a formal text, which led Mobärg to believe that they generally associate RP with formal styles and GA with informal styles.

The study of Marie Söderlund and Marko Modiano (2002) started from the same point of view, viz. the Americanisation process in most European countries and showed that there is a discrepancy between the pronunciation goals in English language learning and the actual linguistic behaviour of the students in Sweden (p.148). Filling in a questionnaire, upper secondary school students admitted that they used a mixed form of English pronunciation – referred to as ‘Mid-Atlantic English’ – but that they were overall more exposed to the American variety and, what is more, that they preferred this variety over the British one. The authors concluded that there should be some important rethinking as far as the educational standard, up till now still dominantly British English, is concerned.

Margareta Westergren-Axelsson (2002) came up with slightly different results, possibly due to the fact that she performed a study among University students of English (cf. Simon 2005). When students were asked to give the variety they preferred, a majority, however small, still indicated British English. Moreover, the author also discovered, when listening to the students’ own pronunciation of English, that although a vast majority used mixed British and American accents, there was still “a clear bias towards British English”
In explaining their answers, students who reported that they use a mixed English accent seemed to deplore the influence the American media has on their pronunciation and described it as something “impossible to resist” (p.141). However, results concerning the students’ self-reported use of an English variety indicated no clear preference for either a British, an American or a mixed English variety.

Westergren-Axelsson concluded, in the same way as Söderlund and Modiano (2002), that it is no longer feasible to aim for a one-accent-only approach in Swedish education, for the students themselves not only mix different varieties in their use of the English language due to the exposure to non-British English-speaking cultures, their positive attitude towards the prestigious British-variety has become less vehement. She pointed out that, even though there is still a small majority that prefers British English, “attitudes towards the two varieties [BrE and AmE] seem somewhat more balanced” (p.143). On the one hand, British English is positively evaluated for the beauty and pleasantness of its sound and because of associations such as politeness, neatness and correctness. On the other hand, positive reactions towards the American English variety are not referring to its beauty, elegance or prestige but they are motivated with answers underlying other types of values, such as “more relaxed” and “comes natural” (p.143).

Generally, these Swedish studies come to the conclusion that the influence of the American English variety is increasing and has an effect on the pupils’ and students’ attitudes towards English as well as their English pronunciation. In Flanders, as investigated by Simon (2005), this Americanisation process does not yet seem as prevalent. Nevertheless, some remarks should be made on the research method. Asking students directly which variety they prefer may only reveal their conscious overt attitudes which correspond to what they think is expected of them. Similarly, measuring their type of pronunciation by letting them read a text aloud is “hardly representative of the English used in a natural communicative situation” (Westergren-Axelsson 2002: 137).

In this third section a selection of language attitude studies conducted in Flanders was discussed in order to complete the framework for the current research.

All authors dedicate considerable attention to the fact that Flanders is a region with a complex language situation. Flemings experienced difficulty defining their own mother tongue, on the one hand distinguishing it from the northern Dutch variety (cf. De Caluwe 1992, 2001) and on the other hand fighting for its rights as opposed to French (the other indigenous Belgian language) (cf. Dewaele 2005). Recently, the situation has become even
more complex with the spread of English as an international language (De Cock 2006; Dewaele 2005; Simon 2005; Goethals 1997).

This complex situation has interested abovementioned authors to start a research on language attitudes in Flanders. De Caluwe (1992) shed light on the predominantly negative attitudes of Flemings towards the speech of their northern neighbours. Dewaele (2005) discovered in his study that Flemish youngsters appeared to treat English as a second language and French as a foreign one, for they indicated a higher degree of exposure to and competence in the former language. He partly attributed this result to the contemporary status of English as a lingua franca. As far as the various varieties of English is concerned, Simon’s study (2005) showed that, although English is increasingly used by non-native speakers which results in problems for the pronunciation model, Flemish university students still clearly preferred to learn an native RP-like accent. Furthermore, Botterman (1995) discovered that Flemish students were able to evaluate native English speakers on various personality scales, which indicates that they, non-natives, have some degree of familiarity with this language. She concluded that, overtly, RP was rated as most prestigious, but as to speaking the language themselves, respondents seemed to prefer the American variety. Goethals (1997) seems to agree both with Simon and Botterman when he states that dominating attention is given to British English in Flemish education, but at the same time there is an increasing influence of an American accent.

The Swedish studies correlated with some of the Flemish studies (Simon 2005; Goethals 1997) – and were therefore regarded relevant to mention – in the prevailing view that English has become a world language which influences non-native speakers. However, the former studies added more positive results with regard to the attitude and influence of the American English variety among Swedish pupils and students.
3 METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESES

In this chapter, detailed explanation will be given on the exact method as well as an elaboration on the speech samples and informants used for the present research. Additionally, based on previous research discussed in the second chapter, some expectations and hypotheses regarding the results will be expressed.

3.1. Method

The present study was performed in order to draw a picture of the contemporary attitudes of Flemish secondary school students in a suburb of Antwerp towards various native and non-native accents of English. More specifically, the accents that were selected to elicit these attitudes were three native ones, viz. RP, American English and Irish English along with four non-native ones, viz. two Flemish English and two Dutch English accents. The non-native accents were chosen to reflect two different degrees of ‘foreignness’: one which indicated a pronunciation rather close to the RP accent and one which showed much more pronounced signs of the speakers own native language – i.e. the southern Dutch variety often referred to as ‘Flemish’ or the northern Dutch variety.

Following previous dissertations dedicated to the study of language attitudes (Botterman 1995; Hiels 1996) this study opted for an indirect method to elicit language attitudes, however without conducting a matched-guise experiment. Finding a person who could read a text passage in all seven accents in a realistic way seemed quite impossible. Instead, seven different male speakers with seven different language backgrounds were recorded to represent the native and non-native accents. The sex of the speakers was the same for all speech samples as a way of controlling for the possible gender-based evaluations. However, the idiosyncratic characteristics of the speakers, going from voice quality to differences in reading style and tempo, could not be fully controlled for and they might potentially prove to have an influence on the students’ attitudes (cf. Knops 1988; Van Bezooijen 1988). But as formerly expressed by Greet Hiels (1996: 14), this disadvantage was deemed a rather minor problem for the present research as compared with the perceived shortcomings of the direct method. The latter technique makes respondents aware of the fact that their language attitudes are being measured, which would give them opportunity to conceal their true covert beliefs and react in a manner which they think is socially acceptable or according to the expectations of the researcher.
Moreover, the advantage of not using a matched-guise technique should also be noted, viz. that every accent used in the experiment was considered authentic (Botterman 1995: 14).

Respondents were asked to fill in a questionnaire after listening to the speech sample in question, which aimed to measure their attitudes towards the recorded speaker on both personality and speech scales. Since the informants used for the present experiment were secondary school pupils and therefore no students of English, the questionnaire was drawn up in Dutch to avoid possible misinterpretations (Botterman 1995: 15).

A first part was dedicated to the evaluation of the speakers’ personality on 21 seven-point rating scales. These scales were selected on the basis of previous research into the field (Botterman 1995; Hiels 1996; Soukop 2001), and the technique, known as semantic-differential scaling, is quite common in the measuring of language attitudes. It requires the evaluation of a stimulus on a scale consisting of adjectival opposites (Hiels 1996: 15). Generally, these personality traits are divided into three, in the case of this study four, dimensions, viz. relating to the speaker’s competence, social attractiveness and personal integrity. Personality characteristics such as intelligence, ambition and leadership were provided to refer to the first dimension (competence). The second dimension (social attractiveness) was measured through personality traits such as friendliness, politeness and likeability. Further, a person’s honesty, tolerance and trustworthiness were considered to be part of the third dimension (personal integrity). A fourth dimension was added here, viz. the speaker’s social status, following the previous experiments conducted by Botterman and Hiels with the prospect of possible comparison of the obtained results. This was elicited by ratings on scales covering a person’s authority and richness together with multiple choice questions asking for the speaker’s social class and profession.

A second part was added consisting of the so-called speech scales which aimed to measure the attitudes towards the accents themselves. Again following Botterman and Hiels, the assessment of the accents was considered on three dimensions: a status dimension (as measured by characteristics such as “intelligible” and “educated”), an aesthetic dimension (e.g. does the accent sound pleasant?) and a solidarity dimension. The latter was not elicited on a seven-point rating scale, but gathered from two direct questions asking whether the informants wanted to speak with the accent themselves and whether they wanted their teacher to use the pronunciation in question.
Finally, in addition to some general information on the respondents, such as age, sex and social background, students also indicated their thoughts on the usefulness to learn English and their interest in English as a course in school on seven-point rating scales.

The present experiment was carried out in a Flemish secondary school in a suburb of Antwerp and measured the language attitudes of a total number of 119 pupils. It took place during normal class hours and a short explanation of the task and its purpose was given before the speech samples were played. Since it was preferred to use an indirect method to elicit the language attitudes it was necessary to make sure the judges were as uninformed as possible about the actual aim of the experiment. Therefore, it was said that they were part of a research into “the ability of listeners to form an opinion of a speaker’s personality using speech cues only” (Hiels 1996: 16).

The pupils were given the questionnaire after they had listened to the tape one time. The speech sample was not played again for it was believed that this would invite respondents to focus on particular speech cues which could possibly make their answers too conscious and therefore less spontaneous.

### 3.2. Speakers and speech material

The earliest research into language attitudes focussed on various native accents as evaluated by native respondents (cf. Lambert et al. 1960). As the field of study further progressed, other researchers felt it was desirable either to elicit the attitudes of non-native respondents towards native accents (cf. Van Bezooijen 1988) or, the other way round, they used speech samples representing non-native accents and asked native speakers to evaluate them on various traits (cf. Palmer 1973)\(^6\).

The present study, however, started from yet another research possibility. Non-native speakers of English were not only asked to evaluate various native English accents (RP, Irish English and American English) – a perspective that is not unknown for the study of language attitudes (cf. Botterman 1995) – this study also aimed to elicit their attitude towards a number of non-native English accents (Flemish English and Dutch English). Elucidating the existing attitudes of Flemish youngsters towards Flemish and Dutch varieties of English could therefore be considered an asset to the study of language.

\(^6\) This is more elaborately explained in section 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 of the previous chapter.
attitudes, for no other studies have been found on the language attitudes of non-native respondents towards non-native speakers of English.

The speakers whose speech formed the basis of the present experiment were contacted with the help of various sources. As far as the native accents is concerned, the Irish English- and American English-speaking males were Erasmus-students living in Leuven and the remaining RP-speaker was a professor of English who previously taught at the English department of the university of Ghent. The latter, living in Utrecht, the Netherlands, put me into contact with the two Dutch English-speaking males. One of them, being brought up by a British English-speaking father, had only a slight Dutch accent filtering through his English pronunciation, whereas the other showed much clearer signs of his mother tongue in his English accent. Finally, the two Flemish English accents were recorded in Flanders. The one speaking with a more pronounced accent had no experience with English but for the language courses he was instructed in secondary school, whereas the more RP-like speaking Flemish male was a professor teaching at the department of language & communication of the university of Ghent and was therefore more familiar with the English language.

These seven speech samples were selected from a total of 19 different native and non-native accents recorded in Flanders and the Netherlands over a period of several weeks. Initially, the idea was to include two American English accents and two British English varieties – the non-regional RP accent and other national English accents such as Irish or Scottish. Several American English-speaking males from various regions were recorded – e.g. California, Mid-West, Louisiana etc. – but many of them had to be excluded because of practical reasons (noise on the background, too many hesitations or mistakes on the part of the speaker etc.) or because the accent was not pronounced enough as the speaker was living abroad for a period of time. Consequently, only one recording of an American accent which was considered pronounced enough – the speaker being an Erasmus-student only living in Flanders for a couple of months – and contained the least hesitations was included in the experiment. Furthermore, other native English accents such as a Canadian

7 The non-native accents will from now on be referred to as: a broad Flemish, a slight Flemish, a broad Dutch and a slight Dutch (English) accent.

8 One of them stated that he had lived in Norway and in the Netherlands each for a period of three years, another had spent a certain amount of his childhood in Japan and Hong Kong and yet another admitted that he had lived abroad for more than 35 years and did not speak English most of the time. These examples are of course a consequence of the fact that is was not possible, for obvious practical reasons, to record the native accents in the nations at hand, i.e. the United States, Ireland and the UK, which would lead to more representative accents.
or an Australian variety were not selected for the same reasons stated above and for the additional reason that these would make the experiment too extensive – resulting in five native accents on top of the four non-native ones.

Overall, the seven selected speech samples were found to be as consistent as possible when it comes to reading rate, voice quality, background noise as well as the social background of the speakers. In order to obtain personal information (age, degree, nationality) each speaker was asked to fill in a form. The highest consistency was found in the speakers’ social background, since they were all either students at university or had already obtained a university or higher education degree – two of them even had a PhD. This led to the conclusion that all recorded speakers had middle- to upper-class social backgrounds. It should be noted, however, that it proved very difficult to reach a high degree of consistency when only 19 recordings were at hand. Therefore, there are still rather large differences when it comes to the age of the speakers – all seven were between the ages of 18 and 67, although four of them were in their twenties – as well as the reading rate for each speech sample – going from one and a half minute to a little over two minutes. Of course, these differences should be taken into account at all times when contemplating the results of the experiment.

Each speaker was asked to read the same short text fragment with a length of about three hundred words. When it comes to studying language attitudes, it is common to use a text that is both neutral in terms of content and simple regarding its grammar and vocabulary. Extracts which are explicitly political or scientific are thus not considered suitable. This traditional approach was preferred for the current research by selecting a text which was thought not to evoke any strong reactions among the respondents. Initially, the same extract from Lewis Carroll’s ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’ used in the experiment by Hiels (1996) was selected. However, it seemed that this kind of prose passage had been frequently used in the early research period and was subsequently criticised for its “little real-world import” (Bradac 1990: 389). Bearing this criticism in mind, it was considered necessary to make use of a more naturalistic message – although asking the speakers to read it aloud still gave the experiment an unnatural setting. The definitive excerpt used for the current experiment was a short text on the profession of nursing and was taken from a handbook on English grammar (Thompson 2004: 80). Some adjustments were made to the text, such as removing explicit geographical references (e.g.
‘London’) and filling in blanks\textsuperscript{9}. Before the actual experiment was carried out, some pilot respondents were confronted with the passage and they were asked whether they were able to understand it and whether they had any strong feelings about its content after they had read it. Since no such problems were assessed, the text was considered applicable for the present study.

\section*{3.3. Informants}

The seven selected test tapes were played to a total of 119 respondents who were all Flemish pupils in the sixth form of a secondary school in a suburb of Antwerp. The experiment was carried out in seven different classes, with the number of pupils ranging from 13 for the smallest class to 22 for the biggest class. Each group listened to and subsequently evaluated only one speech sample. The informants had an average age of 18 of which the majority were females (72 out of 119 or 61\%) and a strong minority were males (47 out of 119 or 39 \%). Four of the groups were only instructed two hours of English a week; this were the pupils majoring in social sciences, maths and economics. The remaining three groups, majoring in languages in combination with either science, economics or maths (along with one group that followed Latin and therefore only majored in languages) were instructed three hours of English a week.

These Flemish participants have been chosen to participate in the present experiment for various reasons.

First of all, however, it should be noted that the initial plan was for the present research to take place among Flemish university students of English, for it is generally believed that they have a greater knowledge of the English language and its varieties. Moreover, using this target group would make comparison with previous studies (cf. Botterman 1995; Simon 2005) possible. The reason why this plan was not followed through was mainly practical. Finding a considerable amount of University students eager enough to participate in this sort of experiment voluntarily was deemed quite difficult and time-consuming. Once this group of volunteers would be put together, there would still be the remaining question of finding the appropriate moment and accommodation for

\textsuperscript{9} A copy of the both the original and the adjusted text fragment is included in the appendix to this dissertation.
conducting the experiment. Performing the research in a secondary school, on the other hand, did not require as much preparatory work and could more easily carried out in different classes during normal teaching hours.

Secondly, it should also be pointed out that using secondary school students, i.e. non-linguists, as informants for this kind of experiment could present the potential problem of unfamiliarity with the various English accents. However, this does not mean that the research would be invaluable. It merely entails that other types of conclusions should be made from the results, e.g. if the informants would not be able to recognise a certain accent it could refer to their limited knowledge of the English language, which in itself is a valuable conclusion. Moreover, language attitude research conducted among Swedish secondary school students showed that these respondents have a rather good knowledge of the English language and were successfully able to recognise its various varieties (cf. Mobärg 1999: 61; Söderlund and Modiano 2002: 155). Therefore, it could be assumed that secondary school students in Flanders, a region paying similar attention to the teaching of English in its schools than Sweden, would be just as competent as their Swedish counterparts.

Furthermore, agreeing with Hiels (1996: 19), it was considered that a secondary school could easily provide the current research with a certain amount of informants representing a rather homogenous group. Variables such as age as well as regional and social background of the respondents proved to be relatively constant in this context. In the case of the present study, all informants were middle-class General Secondary Education pupils in the sixth form of a Flemish secondary school aged between 17 and 20. It was assumed that the General Secondary Education pupils would have the best knowledge of the English language, since this type of education offers the largest amount of English classes to its pupils (cf. Goethals 1997: 108).

This brings us to a last practical consideration for the choice of the secondary school in question. Luckily enough, this school consisted exactly of seven different classes of General Secondary Education pupils in their sixth form and was therefore chosen as the perfect location for the present experiment.

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10 In Dutch this is referred to as ASO or “Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs” and this is distinguished from technical secondary education (TSO), secondary education in the arts (KSO) and vocational secondary education (BSO). The first type generally leads to university or other forms of higher education, the second and third type are generally leading directly to a job or to some non-universitary forms of higher education and the last type is mostly skill-oriented (De Cock 2006: 2).
3.4. Hypotheses and expectations regarding the results of the present experiment

Keeping in mind the previous research on language attitudes performed in Flanders and elsewhere (cf. 2.2.3), certain expectations for the results of the present study can be expressed.

First, a few hypotheses can be formulated for the expected evaluations of the non-native accents. In this context it seems important to refer to the status of English in Flanders (cf. Goethals 1997; Dewaele 2005; Simon 2005) and more generally even, to the spread of English as a world language (Ferguson 1981; Kachru 1988; House 2003; Power 2007). In our contemporary globalised society the English language plays an increasingly important role. It is the language of international politics, business, the internet and other modern technologies. Globalisation has made a village of the world and “English is its language” (Power 2007). Yet, this entails problems when it comes to the norm for the English pronunciation, because in the present-day situation “non-native English speakers outnumber native ones 3 to 1,” Carla Power notes. She sums up a number of so-called New Englishes such as ‘Japlish’, ‘Hinglish’ and ‘Spanglish’ as a way of referring to the fact that these non-native speakers are increasingly shaping the English language. Flemings are not left out when it comes to using English as a lingua franca. Goethals (1997: 110) for example, mentions the existence of a Flemish English variety sometimes called ‘Flemenglish’. As for the pronunciation of these non-native varieties, Power says:

With native speakers a shrinking minority of the world’s Anglophones, there’s a growing sense that students should drop trying to emulate Brighton or Boston English, and embrace their own local varieties. (…) it’s native speakers who have most to lose. Cambridge dons who insist on speaking the Queen’s English could be met with giggles – or blank stares.

In the light of these remarks, it can be assumed that the Flemish pupils in the present research will evaluate the non-native accents rather positively. Dewaele (2005) discovered that Flemish youngsters admitted that they use English quite frequently, but their English utterances will hardly be exchanged with native speakers since English is still a foreign language in Flanders. They will thus rather use English to converse with other non-native speakers and one could question if in such contexts a native-like accent is still required (cf.
Simon 2005). This objection could cause the Flemish respondents of this study to assess the native accents in a negative way.

However, in the context of education it was found that a native English accent, esp. RP, was still set as the norm and preferred by both lecturers and students (cf. Goethals 1997; Simon 2005). Since the present experiment was set within an educational context, negative results can be expected for the non-native accents. This attitude is to be perceived more clearly when a comparison is made between the slight and broad non-native accents. If the former is rated more positively, this could indicate that the respondents find it important not to let the non-native features shine through when speaking English.

Furthermore, following the findings of De Caluwe (1992) which indicated that Flemings generally detest the pronunciation of their northern neighbours, it is assumed that the Dutch English accents will be perceived more unfavourably than the Flemish ones.

Secondly, a few hypotheses can also be formulated for the expected evaluations of the native accents. Power (2007) admits that “despite – or perhaps because of – all the New Englishes cropping up, it’s the American and British versions that still carry prestige”. Previous research conducted in Sweden (cf. Mobärg 1999, 2002; Söderlund and Modiano 2002; Westergren-Axelsson 2002) discovered that as a result of an increasing exposure to popular media, an Americanisation process is taking place in society, which has a positive influence on the attitudes of the Swedish youngsters towards the American English variety. This positive attitude was especially related to informal speech styles. Swedish university students of English, however, still claimed to prefer the British English variety. The results of the survey performed by Simon (2005) among Flemish university students of English confirms the latter, as they showed that these respondents were “very RP-oriented” (p.19).

It seems thus that Flemish secondary school students will be especially confronted with American English as well as RP in their daily lives. The former reaches them through popular culture, i.e. pop songs, films, soaps, while the latter is exposed to them in school. Other native English accents (e.g. Irish English), however, are varieties with which this group of people rarely comes into contact. This is also the perspective from which Botterman (1995: 19) started her research on language attitudes of Flemish students in higher education. She discovered positive evaluations for the RP-speaker on the competence and social status dimension, together with high ratings of the Irish English accent in terms of social attractiveness and especially concerning personal integrity. The American English variety received the highest ratings on what Botterman named the solidarity dimension.
Bearing all these findings in mind as well as the fact that the informants are secondary school students, it is assumed that the RP-speaker will be judged favourably on more formal traits such as competence and social status (due to the importance of this accent in education), whereas the American speaker is expected to be evaluated favourably on more informal traits such as social attractiveness and personal integrity (due to the dominating attention this variety receives in popular media). In addition, the Irish accent is presumed to either have no clear evaluation pattern, since the target group may not be familiar with this accent, or to have the same ratings as in Botterman’s study, viz. a positive evaluation on the social attractiveness and personal integrity dimensions.

To sum up, a total of seven hypotheses have been postulated. The first three are concerned with the results for the evaluations of the non-native accents, whereas the last four refer to the expected ratings of the native accents:

- **H1**: (a) the non-native accents will be rated positively, considering the contemporary status of English as a lingua franca. (b) the native accents will then be perceived in a more negative way, taking the same context into account.
- **H2**: (a) the non-native accents will be rated negatively, as a reflection of the importance of a native-like pronunciation in an educational context. (b) this attitude will be further enhanced by a more negative evaluation of the broad non-native accents.
- **H3**: the Dutch English accents will be rated unfavourably in comparison with the Flemish English accents, following previous attitude studies conducted in Flanders (De Caluwe 1992).
- **H4**: the RP-accented speaker will be judged favourably on the competence and social status dimensions, indicating the importance of this accent in formal and educational contexts.
- **H5**: The American-accented speaker will be evaluated favourably on the social attractiveness and personal integrity dimensions, indicating the influence of the generally Americanised popular media on the informants.
- **H6**: The Irish accent will have no clear evaluation pattern, indicating the informants’ unfamiliarity with the accent.
- **H7**: The Irish-accented speaker will be rated positively on the social attractiveness and personal integrity dimensions, referring to the previous results obtained by Botterman (1995).

When it comes to the first and the second hypotheses, which clearly contradict one another, it is expected that at least one of the two will find support in the eventual results of the present experiment, depending on which underlying context (either the status of English as a lingua franca or the importance of the educational context) has the most influence on the Flemish secondary school students who are used as informants in this study. The same remark counts for the contradiction between the sixth and the seventh hypotheses, i.e. the assumption that at least one of these two will be confirmed.

In order to find out whether these hypotheses will prove to be valid or not, the results for the present experiment will be first extensively analysed in the following chapter. In the concluding chapter, these hypothesis will then be given a closer look.
4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

4.0. Preliminary remarks

Before analysing the actual results of the present research it is noteworthy to make some introductory comments.

First of all, some remarks ought to be made on the respondents’ familiarity with the various accents used in the present experiment. Following previous research conducted among secondary school students (cf. 2.2) it was believed that this was a valuable target group for a language attitude study. The aforementioned experiments conducted in Sweden had shown that secondary school students were on the whole quite successful when asked to indicate the origin of a native speaker of English after listening to his or her voice on tape. Moreover, taking an example closer to home into account, Dewaele (2005) discovered that the majority of his respondents – Flemish secondary school students – not only admitted that they preferred English over French, they also said they were generally more exposed to English and used this language relatively often. This last finding was assumed to imply that Flemish youngsters would also be able to recognise various English accents.

When performing the present experiment, however, it soon became quite clear that these earlier findings were not applicable in the Flemish secondary school in question. Correctness rates for the seven speech samples are shown in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The correct country of origin</th>
<th>% guessed correctly</th>
<th>Other countries guessed (significant % between brackets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England (RP)</td>
<td>76,5</td>
<td>United States, the Netherlands, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>7,7</td>
<td>England (53,8), Ireland, Flanders, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>14,3</td>
<td>United States (47,6), England (23,8), Flanders, Australia, Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders (slight Flemish accent)</td>
<td>18,2</td>
<td>England (63,6), Australia, United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders (broad Flemish accent)</td>
<td>85,7</td>
<td>The Netherlands, Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands (slight Dutch accent)</td>
<td>6,3</td>
<td>England (37,5), Ireland (31,3), Flanders, United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands (broad Dutch accent)</td>
<td>93,8</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Correctness rates for the seven speech samples.
Apparently, the only recorded speakers the informants were relatively successfully able to relate to its rightful country of origin were the RP-accented speaker along with the two broad non-native accents. These three speech samples clearly stood out as far as correct guesses is concerned, since fairly poor results were found for the other native and non-native tapes.

Not surprisingly, low correctness rates were found for the Irish English speech sample. Since the target group of the present study is not often exposed to this type of English variety in the media, this result was to some extent already expected (cf. 3.4). The same counts for the two non-native speakers who only slightly let their mother tongue shine through when reading the English text fragment. Their pronunciation showed some similarities with an RP-accent which accounts for the considerable amount of pupils who guessed these speakers came from England. Particularly for the slight Flemish English accent this was the case, since its speaker was a professor teaching at the Language & Communication department of a Flemish University – an environment that still emphasises the standard British pronunciation (i.e. RP) when it comes to speaking English.

Especially the results for the American English speaker came as a surprise, for it was expected that the high exposure to American popular culture in the informants’ daily lives would result in the majority of the pupils recognising the accent (cf. 3.4). Nevertheless, among the 13 Flemish pupils that this speech sample was played to, only one of them ticked the United States-box, whereas more than half of them thought they had listened to someone from England. This result could have been caused by various circumstances. It should be taken into account, for example, that only a small group rated this speech sample and thus, these pupils can not be considered representative for all Flemish secondary school students. Perhaps these thirteen students did not watch a lot of American soaps or listened to American pop songs – things that have been proven to have a positive influence on young people’s familiarity with an American English accent (cf. 2.2.3). This could have been elicited if an additional question on media preferences was added to the questionnaire, but this was unfortunately not done. Further, the previous language attitude studies among secondary school students in Sweden as well as Dewaele’s research opted for a more direct approach, asking clear questions such as “What type of English do you prefer” and “what type of English are you most exposed to?” (Söderlund and Modiano 2002: 52-53). Perhaps, this is a more suitable technique for measuring the language attitudes of this specific type of informants and, if it were applied in the present experiment clearer evaluations for certain speech samples could have been found.
The three accents that the majority of the informants did manage to associate with its rightful origin were perhaps the ones they were most exposed to. The RP-accent is the one they hear most in school, since it is still largely this accent that is considered the pronunciation goal for pupils learning English (cf. Goethals 1997; Simon 2005). This, together with the fact that the present experiment was set during class hours (i.e. in an educational context), could account for the high correctness ratings of the RP speech sample.

The most strikingly correctness rates were found for the strongly pronounced non-native accents. During the experiment, pupils were sometimes jumping up in excitement and laughing loudly when hearing this, according to them, “preposterous/absurd/ridiculous” accent (as they shouted these remarks for everyone to hear). Clearly, as Table 1 shows, they had no difficulty at all in recognising the right nationality of these speakers. A possible explanation for these high ratings is that it was easy for them to recognise a Flemish influence in the English accent because they speak with such a variety themselves – and perhaps even their teachers do so. When it comes to the Dutch accent, correctness ratings were even higher, which can partly be accounted for against the background of a long tradition of Flemings making jokes about the accent of their northern neighbours (and vice versa) which perhaps makes these Dutch features immediately recognisable in a foreign accent as well.

After trying to explain the results shown in Table 1, it should also be noted that, obviously, this low degree of familiarity with four out seven speech samples used in the present study involves consequences for the interpretation of the informants’ measured attitudes. When it comes to evaluating languages or accents unknown to the respondents, previous research has shown that no pattern can be distinguished from the results. This has been explained by Holmes (2001):

The listeners’ reactions to languages and dialects that are familiar to them are (...) compared with their reactions to languages which are unfamiliar. Using this method, it has been found that responses to a familiar language form a pattern. The pattern reflects the prestige of the speakers of the language in the community whose views are being sought. Responses to unfamiliar dialects and languages, however, form no pattern and are randomly distributed. The same is true for accents. (...).

(p.361-362)

As for the results of the present research, these remarks on familiarity and unfamiliarity with the presented speech samples ought to be kept in mind at all times.
Secondly, it has to be noted that several questions that were included in the questionnaire will not be dealt with for the analyses of the results, because this would make the analyses too extensive or because the results that were obtained for these questions did not show any clear patterns. This was especially the case for question asking the informants to guess the age of the speakers and the question requiring the informants to express their interest in English as a course in school, both showing randomly distributed answers. Furthermore, the sex of the informants was not evenly distributed so that it was not valid to divide the analysis of the results along this line.

As for the question included to elicit the informants’ attitude towards the usefulness of learning English, the results were quite interesting and will be mentioned here, so that they can be kept in mind when contemplating the results in chapter four. All informants expressed quite unanimously that it was very useful to learn English, explaining their answers by mentioning that it is a world language and therefore makes it possible to communicate with people from other countries. Apparently, the informants were aware of the status of English as an international language and regarded this as a highly positive or useful phenomenon.

In the following chapter, the results that were derived from the personality scales and from the speech scales will be described, each in a separate part. Moreover, for each personality or speech dimension, the results for the native accents and non-native accents will be dealt with separately, before analysing the entire group of accents as a whole. It was believed that this approach would make the analysis more surveyable and comprehensive than when all accents were only discussed as a whole.
4.1. The personality scales

In this section, the evaluations of the various speech samples on the four discerned dimensions, i.e. competence, social attractiveness, personal integrity and social status, will be discussed. These ratings are said to reflect the attitude of the informants towards the various English-accented speakers as persons.

4.1.1 The competence dimension

In the present experiment, seven characteristics were thought to reflect the speaker’s competence, viz. “intelligent”, “not nervous”, “ambition”, “possessing leadership qualities”, “industrious”, “self-confident” and “competent”. For each of these characteristics the speaker was rated on a seven-point rating scale with the low numbers representing the favourable end of the scale. The perceived competence of the various native and non-native speakers of English was measured by obtaining the mean scores of the seven personality traits related to competence. These mean scores were determined by calculating the average of all scores acquired from the informants. As already mentioned in the third chapter, each test tape containing one English-accented speaker was played to a group ranging from 13 to 22 secondary school students.

It is important to always bear in mind, when contemplating the mean scores, that the lower numbers stand for favourable evaluations and that the higher numbers represent unfavourable evaluations of the various characteristics. More simply put, a mean score of 1.82 for a personality trait such as “intelligent” indicates that this speaker is perceived to be highly intelligent, especially when compared with a speaker who only received a mean score of 4.13 on the same characteristic (Botterman 1995: 34; Hiels 1996: 32).

11 It should be noted here that the “nervous”-trait was presented wrongly in the questionnaire, with the favourable end represented by the highest numbers. However, this mistake was noticed when handling the data and the scale was turned around so that also for this trait the favourable end, i.e. “not nervous”, would be represented by the lower numbers.
4.1.1.1 The native English speakers

The mean scores for the seven included personality traits that were considered to reflect the speakers’ competence are shown below in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;intelligent&quot;</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;not nervous&quot;</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;ambitious&quot;</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;possessing leadership qualities&quot;</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;industrious&quot;</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;self-confident&quot;</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;competent&quot;</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ‘competence’</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The native speakers’ competence as perceived by the informants.

These figures clearly show that the RP-speaker is perceived as being relatively more intelligent, ambitious, self-confident, competent and more suitable for leadership than the two other native English-speakers. Moreover, he is thought to be the least influenced by his nerves (as measured on the “not nervous” trait). The only characteristic for which he did not get the most positive rating is “industrious”, since the Irish English speech sample received a slightly higher score on this trait.

When contemplating the figures shown in Table 2 a little further, it can be seen that there is some kind of hierarchy for the ratings on the characteristics “ambitious”, “possessing leadership qualities”, “industrious” and “competent”, with the RP-speaker rated most favourably followed by the American speaker and with the Irish speaker at the bottom. This hierarchy does not hold true, however, when considering the personality traits intelligence, nervousness and self-confidence. In these cases the Irish speaker received more positive ratings than the American one, although the RP-speaker still keeps his place on top of the hierarchy. Results for the American and Irish speech samples on the competence dimension seem quite evenly distributed, with four characteristics rated more positive for the former and three characteristics judged more favourably for the latter accent. On the whole, the second hierarchy (with the American accent at the bottom) seems to outweigh the first one, for the total score (obtained by adding up the mean scores for all seven competence-reflecting traits and dividing this sum by seven (cf. Hiels 1996: 35)) of the ratings on the competence dimension shows that the American speaker is averagely evaluated most unfavourably.
One consistency that seems to stand out is the overall positive evaluation of the RP-speaker. The differences between the evaluations of the other two native English accents are relatively negligible, with total ratings of 3.62 for the American accent and 3.35 for the Irish speech sample. There thus seems to be a gap between the positive ratings for the RP-speaker on the one hand and more negative evaluations for the American and Irish speakers on the other hand. This is to some extent in accordance with the results for the perceived competence of the same three native English speakers found in Botterman’s study (1995: 35).

4.1.1.2 The non-native English speakers

The informants’ evaluations of the non-native speech samples on the seven personality traits underlying the competence dimension are shown below in Table 3. These figures are discussed separately from the ones obtained for the native speakers, because it was deemed interesting to first examine the interrelations in each group of accents before actually looking at the evaluations of all seven accents at the same time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“intelligent”</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“not nervous”</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ambitious”</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;possessing leadership qualities&quot;</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“industrious”</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;self-confident”</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;competent”</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ‘competence’</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The non-native speakers’ competence as perceived by the informants.

Looking at the total scores for all seven traits reflecting the competence dimension, it seems that the informants regarded the slight Dutch English speaker as the most competent, although it can be seen that the scores between the two Dutch speakers and the slight Flemish English speaker are not far apart. When regarding the figures for the traits separately it becomes even more clear that there are few differences in the ratings for these three speakers. The slight Dutch English speaker was perceived most intelligent, most competent and most suitable for leadership, the broad Dutch English speaker received most

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12 For clarification, the (s) and (b) in this Table stand for ‘slight’ accent and ‘broad’ accent respectively.
positive ratings for the characteristics ambition and industriousness and the slight Flemish English speech sample was judged most favourably on two personality traits, viz. “self-confident” and “not nervous”. The most positive ratings on the seven traits thus seem quite evenly divided among these three speech samples, which indicates that is not really a clear pattern or hierarchy to be discerned from these figures.

What does stand out when contemplating Table 3 is not the most positive rated speech sample but the one that was perceived most unfavourably, viz. the Flemish speaker with a broad accent. On four of the seven competence-reflecting traits this speech sample shows the most negative ratings. These characteristics are: “possessing leadership qualities”, “industrious”, “self-confident” and “competent”. The total score of 4.54 is also distinguishably higher – reflecting a more negative attitude – than the other three total figures.

Finally it also seems worth mentioning that the more pronounced non-native accents are on the whole perceived less favourably than the less marked non-native accents, particularly on traits such as intelligence, having leadership qualities, self-confidence and competence.

### 4.1.1.3 Comparison and interpretation

The separately discussed results for the native and non-native speakers’ perceived competence will now be related to each other in this additional section. Moreover, some suggestions will be made as for the interpretation of the evaluations. Table 4 shows the mean scores for all seven speech samples on the seven competence-reflecting traits:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“intelligent”</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“not nervous”</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ambitious”</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“possessing leadership qualities”</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>4.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“industrious”</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“self-confident”</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“competent”</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ‘competence’</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: The native and non-native speakers’ competence as perceived by the informants.**
It seems that, when looking at the overview of the figures relating to the competence dimension presented in Table 4, the RP-speaker maintains his top position in the hierarchy. He received highest ratings for intelligence, leadership qualities, self-confidence, competence and was perceived the least nervous of all seven speech samples. With the exception of the “not nervous” trait, the two broadly accented non-native speakers were assessed least favourably on exactly the same four characteristics that were rated the most positive for the RP-speaker. Furthermore, the non-native accents are on the whole perceived more negatively in terms of competence than the native speakers, with the broadly accented Flemish speaker receiving the lowest ratings. It can thus be said that what was true when consulting the results for each group separately remains accurate when comparing the evaluations for all seven speech samples. In other words, the RP accent is associated with the highest ratings whereas the two broad Flemish and Dutch accents are downgraded the most of all seven accents.

Although the American and Irish English accents received more positive ratings than the two slightly accented non-native speakers, the differences between ratings for these four speech samples are only minimal. Therefore, it seems most important to remember that ratings seem to be divided into two camps: a highly positive one (RP) and a highly negative one (broad Flemish English and broad Dutch English) with the four remaining speech samples as an intermediary level between the two.

As for the interpretation of these results, the preliminary remarks concerning the familiarity with the various accents should be taken into account. The results for the three speech samples that are most marked appear to be the ones with high correctness rates among the informants (cf. Table 1).

Firstly, most of the Flemish pupils rating the RP speech sample were aware of which nationality they were evaluating, which could explain the high ratings on traits such as intelligence, self-confidence, competence and leadership qualities. These positive evaluations can be related to the dominating position of the RP pronunciation in the Flemish educational system. Associating a certain accent with the standard pronunciation model in school would account for the association of the RP-speaker with a high degree of competence. Moreover, the Flemish pupils were possibly also aware of the social connotations of this variety as an accent mostly used by the upper classes. Consequently, they related this type of speaking to prestigious and highly educated people and therefore indicated the RP-accented speaker in this study as highly intelligent and likely to have a
leadership position. It should be mentioned here that Botterman (1995: 38) concluded that the same underlying assumptions were responsible for the high rating of the RP speech sample in her research. Moreover, some evidence for the fact that the informants in the present experiment associated RP with either high status jobs or education can be found when looking at the section in the questionnaire in which the informants were asked to attribute an occupation to the speaker. They could choose from eight possibilities, ranging from very high status jobs to being unemployed. The results showed that 53% of the informants placed the RP speaker in the highest rank offered, viz. having a profession such as a doctor or a lawyer. Another strong minority of 35.3% believed this speaker to have a function in education, such as a teacher or professor. Comparing this to the other speech samples, it appears that the association with a high prestigious job only occurred in such a majority in the case of the RP speaker.

Secondly, the speech sample containing the broad Flemish English speaker was also correctly related to its country of origin by most respondents. As the abovementioned results have shown, this type of speaking was looked down on the most in terms of competence. Additionally, a similar negative evaluation was found for the broad Dutch English speaker, which at the same time is the speech sample that received the highest correctness rates. Apparently, it thus seems that the informants regarded a speaker with a high degree of ‘foreignness’ in his accent as absolutely not intelligent, competent, self-confident and having the least possibility of a leadership position. These results can be explained by means of some remarks made by Simon (2005: 15,17) and Palmer (1973: 42). They both stated that speakers with foreign English accents are generally associated with an overall low degree of competence, since deviations – grammatically and/or phonologically – from the norms of the native English-speaking communities indicate a limited knowledge of the language. In the case of this study, these remarks seem to hold true, since it appeared that the informants judged the Flemish and Dutch speech samples more negatively than all three native test tapes when it comes to the speakers’ competence. Moreover, the more pronounced non-native speakers received even lower ratings than the non-native speakers with only a slight foreign accent. The context in which the experiment was set, i.e. during class hours, could have influenced these results even further, since the importance of a ‘correct’ standard English pronunciation is generally stressed and all accents that deviate from the norm are as good as rejected.

Finally, when it comes to the American, Irish and two slightly accented non-native speech samples, the informants appeared not really to know which nationality it was they
were evaluating, which makes interpretations of the results more difficult. This is because no underlying conceptions of the speakers and speaker communities can be said to have an influence on the informants’ attitudes. It has been shown that these four speech samples did not elicit such clear attitudes in terms of competence than the ones which were familiar to the informants. For the two native accents, figures seemed quite evenly distributed and the same can be said for the two slightly accented non-native speakers. Following Holmes (2001), the attitudes towards these unfamiliar accents will perhaps rather be based on intrinsic linguistic features, such as voice quality and reading rate, than on preconceived opinions about the nationalities of the speakers. Although it should be taken into account that speaker idiosyncrasies can just as well have an effect on the evaluation of speech cues with which the informants are familiar, it is thought that these have a stronger effect on the ratings of unfamiliar accents or languages. Van Bezooijen (1988), for example, found that foreign judges based their evaluation of various Dutch speech samples on voice quality and prosody rather than on pronunciation, as it was impossible for them to perceive different accents of a language they had never heard.
4.1.2 The social attractiveness dimension

After having presented the results for the various speakers’ perceived competence, a second category of personality traits included in the questionnaire which were believed to reflect the speakers’ social attractiveness will now be discussed. This dimension was measured by six characteristics, viz. “friendly”, “polite”, “likeable”, “sense of humour”, “sociable” and “introvert”.

4.1.2.1 The native English speakers

Once more, it was decided to first treat the results for the native English speakers and non-native English speakers separately before looking at the obtained results for all seven speech samples together. The mean scores attributed to the three native speakers of English in terms of their social attractiveness are shown in Table 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“friendly”</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“polite”</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“likeable”</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“sense of humour”</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>5.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“sociable”</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“introvert”</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ‘social attractiveness’</td>
<td><strong>3.60</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.97</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.29</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: the native speakers’ social attractiveness as perceived by the informants.

It can be deduced from these figures that, again, the RP-speaker was on the whole evaluated most positively compared to the other two native English speakers. For four out of the six included personality traits reflecting social attractiveness, the RP-speaker received the highest ratings, viz. friendliness, politeness, likeability and ‘introvertiveness’. The second place is generally occupied by the American speaker and the last place is reserved for the Irish speech sample. This hierarchy (1: the RP speaker, 2: the American speaker, 3: the Irish speaker) can be perceived for the mean scores of the first three characteristics: friendliness, politeness and likeability as well as in the total scores for all six characteristics taken together.

However, it also seems worth mentioning that the American speaker has the most favourable ratings when it comes to sense of humour and sociability, although it appears that the figures for these characteristics are rather similarly negative for all three native
accents (ranging from a mean score of 4.15 for the American speaker’s perceived sociability to a mean score of 5.94 for the RP-speaker’s alleged sense of humour). Especially when it comes to sense of humour all native speakers were perceived fairly negatively, with mean scores of 5.46 and more. Thus, as far as these two characteristics is concerned, i.e. “sociable” and “sense of humour”, the RP-speaker loses his superior position in the hierarchy.

Finally, concerning the results for the evaluations of the Irish speaker’s social attractiveness, it can be seen that in addition to having the last place on the hierarchy when it comes to the first three personality traits (friendliness, politeness and likeability), he has also been perceived the least sociable of the three native English speakers.

4.1.2.2 The non-native English speakers

An overview of the perceived social attractiveness of the four non-native speakers of English as measured on the six personality traits can be seen in Table 6 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;friendly&quot;</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;polite&quot;</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;likeable&quot;</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;sense of humour&quot;</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;sociable&quot;</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;introvert&quot;</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ‘social attractiveness’</td>
<td><strong>4.31</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.15</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.86</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.77</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: The non-native speakers’ social attractiveness as perceived by the informants.

It can be discerned from these ratings of the non-native speakers’ social attractiveness that the broad Dutch-accented speaker is perceived most favourably concerning friendliness, likeability, sense of humour and sociability. However, the professed advantage for the Dutch speaker with a broad accent on these traits is not really convincing, since the differences with the slight Dutch accent are often only minimal. On sociability, for example, these two non-native speakers received exactly the same mean score of 3.94. The second most favourable ratings are generally reserved for the slightly accented Dutch speaker. This counts for the characteristics friendliness, politeness, likeability and sense of humour. With only a small difference in the total scores for the Flemish-accented speakers, these two speech samples were on the whole perceived the least favourably.
These observations make it possible to postulate a hierarchy in the results for the non-native speakers’ social attractiveness relating to four included personality traits, viz. friendliness, likeability, sense of humour and sociability. The first position is for these characteristics always for the speaker with a broad Dutch English accent, followed directly by the slightly accented Dutch speaker and with the two Flemish speakers at the bottom position. Apart from the results for the friendliness characteristic (which shows precisely the same mean score of 4.14 for both Flemish accents), the speaker with the least pronounced Flemish English accent is rated even more negatively than his Flemish counterpart when it comes to sociability, sense of humour and likeability.

However, it appears that this hierarchy completely falls apart as far as the speakers’ politeness and ‘introvertiveness’ is concerned. On these characteristics, it is the speaker at the hierarchy’s bottom position that now climbs up to the top and receives the most positive ratings of all four non-native speech samples, i.e. the speaker with a slight Flemish English accent. Moreover, the speaker that previously enjoyed a superior position, i.e. the broadly accented Dutch speaker, is perceived relatively unfavourably, with a last position for the “introvert” characteristic and an all but last place related to politeness.

Finally, when contemplating the total scores for all six social attractiveness-reflecting traits, it seems that on the whole the Dutch speakers are perceived more favourably than the Flemish speakers. Results could then be seen to reflect two groups of evaluation: a rather negatively viewed Flemish one and an overall more positive Dutch one. This is also noticeable in the small mutual differences between the total scores of each group, 3.77 and 3.86 for the Dutch speech samples along with 4.15 and 4.31 for the Flemish speakers.

4.1.2.3 Comparison and interpretation

After discussing the results for the native and non-native speakers’ social attractiveness separately, this section will be devoted to an analysis of these results for the total number of seven speech samples as a whole. The figures concerning social attractiveness of all seven speakers are reflected in Table 7:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“friendly”</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“polite”</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“likeable”</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“sense of humour”</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“sociable”</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“introvert”</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ‘social attractiveness’</td>
<td><strong>3.60</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.97</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.29</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.31</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.15</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.86</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.77</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: The native and non-native speakers’ social attractiveness as perceived by the informants.

It seems, when looking at the figures for all seven accents together, that some adjustments have to be made to the patterns that were found when splitting up the results in a native and a non-native group. In what follows, some general findings are expressed.

First, it can be seen in Table 7 that the RP-speaker is not only perceived the friendliest, the most polite and the most likeable compared with the other native speakers, he maintains these positive ratings when the non-native speech samples are taken in as well. Especially when it comes to politeness, the RP-speaker clearly stands out from all the other speakers (with a mean score of 1.82). This could possibly be related to the idea that an RP accent will be more associated with situations where it is important to be polite, since this is the pronunciation used by British royalty and upper classes as well as the model aimed at in school. Such associations with formal contexts will not be made for the other accents.

Second, this means that the broadly accented Dutch speaker loses his top position that he had within the non-native group on the characteristics friendliness and likeability to the RP-speaker, but he remains the favourite when it comes to sense of humour and sociability and this counts for the whole group of seven speakers. These are the same two characteristics for which the American speaker was rated the highest compared with the other two native accents, but it thus seems that when the whole group of accents is considered the American speaker is perceived less humorous and less sociable than the Dutch speakers. It is clearly noticeable that these two traits stand out from the other four social attractiveness-reflecting characteristics, because they received on the whole, for all speakers, rather negative ratings of the informants, with figures never below a mean score of 3.94. Although it can be seen that the two Dutch speakers are thought to be the most humorous and sociable of all seven speakers, even they were rated rather negatively.
However, there is a clear gap between the mean scores for the Dutch speakers and those for all other speakers on these traits, the latter being much more negative. The reason why the Dutch speakers are considered more humorous and sociable can be linked to the stereotypes surrounding these people, especially among Flemings. In Flanders, the northern neighbours are typically described as more spontaneous and extraverted, which could explain why they are in the present experiment rated most positively on traits that underlie these stereotypes. Moreover, especially for the Dutch speaker with a broad accent, some links can be seen with the results for the politeness and “introvert” traits, on which this speaker was evaluated rather negatively. Being associated with a high degree of sociability and sense of humour seems to go together, according to the informants, with a low degree of politeness and ‘introvertiveness’, which actually does make sense. A very sociable person is not likely to have an introverted character. As for the low degree of politeness, this also could refer to the stereotypical idea of the Dutchman as a ‘blabbermouth’, always saying what s/he thinks with perhaps too little concern for the consequences. This association between sociability and sense of humour versus politeness and ‘introvertiveness’ is not so clear for the other Dutch speaker, probably because of the poor results this speech sample received with regard to correctness rates (cf. Table 1) which makes it difficult for the informants to base their evaluations on knowledge of the stereotypical views on the speaker residing in the speech community.

Further, some of the ratings for the slightly accented Flemish speaker deserve to be mentioned here. He received the highest ratings on ‘introvertiveness’ of all seven speakers whereas on the characteristics likeability, sense of humour and sociability he was perceived the least favourable. In order to suggest an interpretation of these figures, it has to be mentioned that that this speaker read the text passage exceptionally slowly and perhaps a little too articulated compared to the other speakers. Some of the informants indicated during the experiment that they found this irritating which could explain the negative ratings for likeability and sense of humour. When it comes to the favourable ratings for the “introvert” trait, two possible reasons can be given. On the one hand, taking into account that the other Flemish speaker was perceived as the second most introverted person, this positive rating could refer to the stereotypical idea of Flemings as reserved and modest people, particularly compared to the stereotypical loud and extraverted Dutchman. This assumption is enhanced when considering the results only for the non-native accents: the Flemish speakers score the highest and the Dutch speakers the lowest on this trait. On the other hand, another possible
reason for the slightly accented Dutch speaker to be perceived the most introverted person can be related to his RP-like pronunciation. After the high ratings for the Flemish speakers on this trait, it is the RP-speaker who is next with a mean score of 3.06. Moreover, within his own native group, the RP-speaker even received the most positive ratings for this “introvert” characteristic. This association between an RP-accent and ‘introvertiveness’ can perhaps be linked to the results for the politeness trait, referring both to the cliché of ‘the stiff upper lip’ and the stereotypical Brit who is perceived to be polite and reserved in every situation. The RP-like pronunciation of the Flemish speaker with a slight accent can thus be associated to some extent with the same stereotypes, since this speaker also has high ratings on politeness and ‘introvertiveness’. In this context, it should also be noted that both the RP and the slight Flemish English speech samples – and thus not only the latter – lasted about half a minute longer than the other five test tapes. This idiosyncratic feature has to be kept in mind when similarities are found in the results for these two speakers.

Not much can be said for the perceived social attractiveness of the American and Irish speakers when their mean scores on the six personality traits are compared to the mean scores of the five remaining speech samples. From the total scores it can be deduced that they are on the whole perceived rather negatively on the social attractiveness dimension, but is difficult to try to give an explanation for these results since, as has already been mentioned, almost none of the respondents who rated their speech samples were able to recognise the nationality of the speakers as American and Irish. Therefore, informants could only base themselves on intrinsic linguistic factors to evaluate the personality of the speakers. A possible reason, then, for the more negative total score for the Irish speaker than the American one could be that the informants’ judgement was influenced by the exceptionally fast reading rate of the Irish speaker compared to the other speakers.

Overall, the ratings for these six social attractiveness-reflecting traits seem to be divided in three groups or patterns: one containing the first three characteristics friendliness, politeness and likeability on which the RP-speaker is rated most favourably, a second one for the sociability and sense of humour traits which showed the highest ratings for the two Dutch speakers, especially so for the one with the more pronounced accent, and finally, a third pattern can be discerned for the last characteristic, “introvert”, for which the Flemish speaker with a slight accent was given the most positive evaluation.
According to the final scores it is the RP-speaker who is on the whole perceived the most socially attractive whereas the slightly accented Flemish speaker is believed to have the least socially attractive qualities.
4.1.3 The personal integrity dimension

A third group of personality traits on which the informants were asked to evaluate the tape-recorded speaker in question were the ones related to the speakers’ personal integrity. The questionnaire contained five characteristics that were thought to underlie this dimension in the speakers’ personality, viz. “honest”, “tolerant”, “trustworthy”, “modest” and “open-minded”. The technique that was used to measure the evaluations remained unchanged, meaning that informants were asked to rate these personality traits on a seven-point rating scale with the more favourable ratings represented by the lower figures.

In what follows, the results for perceived personal integrity of the native speakers will be dealt with in a first part, followed by a second part on the degree of personal integrity attributed to the non-native speakers and, finally, in a third part this dimension will be looked at for all seven speech samples combined.

4.1.3.1 The native English speakers

Table 8 indicates the evaluations of the respondents on the five characteristics pertaining to the native English speakers’ personal integrity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“honest”</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“tolerant”</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“trustworthy”</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“modest”</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>4.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“open-minded”</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ‘personal integrity’</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.18</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.32</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.72</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: The native speakers’ personal integrity as rated by the informants.

It seems that the most favourable ratings on the personal integrity dimension are divided relatively equally among the RP-speaker and the American speaker. The former was perceived the most tolerant, trustworthy and open-minded, whereas the latter received the most positive ratings for honesty and modesty.

However, it seems important to mention that often only slight differences were found between the mean scores for these two speakers. This is especially the case for the speakers’ honesty, tolerance and open-mindedness. Thus, when contemplating the more positive ratings for either the American or RP accent on one of these characteristics, it
should be taken into account that this superior position is only obtained by a means of a small difference.

The Irish speaker was related to the most negative ratings on almost all personality traits. He was evaluated as the least honest, tolerant, modest and open-minded of all three native English speakers. Only with regard to perceived trustworthiness the American speaker was viewed most unfavourably – although the difference with the mean score for the Irish speaker on this trait is minimal. Moreover, it is also on the trustworthiness characteristic that the RP-speaker clearly distinguishes himself from the other two native English speakers with a very positive mean score of 2.71.

Furthermore, some attention must be drawn to the “honesty” characteristic included in Table 8. Although the American speaker was evaluated most favourably for this trait, it seems worth mentioning that the mean scores for the perceived honesty of all three native speakers are relatively positive, especially when compared with the mean scores for the other personal integrity-reflecting traits.

On the whole, the total scores indicate that the RP-speaker is related to the highest degree of personal integrity, closely followed by the American speaker and with the Irish speaker in last position. This same hierarchy was found when it comes to the results for the native English speakers on the social attractiveness dimension.

### 4.1.3.2 The non-native English speakers

After the analysis of the results for the degree of personal integrity attributed to the native English speakers, some general findings concerning the evaluations of the non-native English speakers on the personal integrity dimension will be described. Table 9 gives an overview of these ratings for the non-native English speakers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“honest”</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“tolerant”</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“trustworthy”</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“modest”</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“open-minded”</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ‘personal integrity’</td>
<td><strong>3.62</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.78</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.91</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.09</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 9: The non-native speakers’ personal integrity as perceived by the informants.*
The results as shown in Table 9 seem quite consistent along two of the characteristics, viz. tolerance and trustworthiness. For each of these two traits the first position is always occupied by the Dutch speaker with a slight accent, followed by the slightly accented Flemish speaker and with the two non-native speakers speaking with a more pronounced foreign accent at the bottom positions. However, for the three remaining characteristics this pattern can not be discerned. Therefore, it seems necessary to treat these three personality traits separately for the analysis of the results.

The mean scores for the first included trait, i.e. honesty, show that the most positive ratings were assigned to the two Flemish speakers as opposed to more negative ratings for both Dutch speakers. Looking at the mean scores for each speaker individually, however, it appears that the slightly accented Flemish speaker was clearly evaluated as having the highest degree of honesty, whereas the broadly accented Dutch speaker was perceived as the least honest person.

When it comes to modesty, the most favourable rating was attributed the broad Flemish speech sample. This speaker seemed to be perceived as a particular modest person, since the mean score of 2.85 forms a big gap with the other mean scores for this trait. As was seen for the speakers’ honesty, it is also with regard to their modesty that the two Flemish speakers received more favourable evaluations than the two Dutch speech samples.

Finally, on the characteristic open-mindedness it is the broadly accented Dutch speaker who obtained the most favourable ratings, followed by a more negative mean score for the other Dutch speaker. The two Flemish speech samples show only a minimal difference in mean scores for this trait and are both generally viewed the least open-minded. Thus, for the last included personality trait underlying the speakers’ personal integrity, it is the two Dutch speakers who have a superior position.

Overall, three patterns of evaluation have been discussed for the results shown in Table 9: one which includes the most positive ratings for the slightly accented non-native speakers (concerning the tolerance and trustworthiness characteristics), a second one which indicated more favourable mean scores for the Flemish speakers as opposed to the Dutch speech samples (regarding the honesty and modesty traits) and, finally, a third pattern was found showing a superior position for the Dutch speakers and a minor position for the Flemish speakers (concerning the speakers’ open-mindedness).

It seems that the second pattern outweighs the other two perceived patterns when consulting the total scores for the personal integrity dimension.
4.1.3.3 Comparison and interpretation

Several suggestions will now be made for the interpretation of some of the previous stated results for the personal integrity dimension. In addition, some attention will be drawn to the analysis of the data for all speech samples on this dimension as shown in Table 10:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;honest&quot;</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>3.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;tolerant&quot;</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;trustworthy&quot;</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;modest&quot;</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;open-minded&quot;</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL 'personal integrity'</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: The native and non-native speakers’ personal integrity as perceived by the informants.

It proves quite difficult to find a clear and consistent pattern in the figures presented in Table 10 if the mean scores for the five characteristics are regarded individually – as opposed to just analysing the total scores. It seems that, when looking at the native and non-native group of accents separately, it is easier to make some remarks on the mutual relations between the various mean scores. However, some ratings do seem to stand out in Table 10.

This is especially the case, for example, for the modesty trait. The two broad non-native accents account for the highest as well as the lowest score on this characteristic and, moreover, the gap between these two mean scores is quite large. To be more specific, it is the broadly accented Flemish speaker that is generally perceived to be very modest (with a mean score of 2.85) whereas the broadly accented Dutch speaker is viewed as absolutely not modest (having a mean score of 4.75). In order to interpret these ratings, they can perhaps be related to the findings for the same speakers’ ‘introvertiveness’ and politeness (personality traits that reflect social attractiveness) as discussed in 4.1.2. After all, being polite, modest and introverted are all characteristics that seem to share the same qualities. Therefore, it can be said that the same stereotypical range of thoughts that was assumed to underlie the ratings for the two mentioned social attractiveness-relating traits, could also be applied to explain the ratings for the speakers’ modesty. In other words, the informants probably perceived the Flemish speaker (especially the one with the broad accent, since this is the one with the highest correctness rates of both Flemish speakers) as being a modest person because of the preconceived idea of Flemings as generally reserved and
quiet people. As for the Dutch speaker (again, the one with the broad accent shows the
clearest evaluations because of the fact that the majority of the informants who rated this
speaker recognised him as being a Dutchman. The same cannot be said for the other Dutch
speaker), the associations with the stereotypical extraverted Dutchman can be said to
account for the highly negative rating he received for the modesty characteristic.

Another personality trait included in Table 10 that needs to be discussed is honesty.
Taking all seven speech samples into account, it is the American speaker who is perceived
the most honest, closely followed by the other native speakers. The non-native speakers, all
having more negative mean scores for this trait than the native speakers, are then perceived
as less honest, with the slightly accented Dutch speaker having the lowest score. Within the
group of non-native accents, the Flemish speakers received higher ratings than the Dutch
speakers when it comes to the speakers’ honesty. The reason why the latter were attributed
the lowest ratings for this trait is perhaps the underlying negative perception of Dutchmen
as being ‘brutally honest’, saying what is on their mind without considering that people
might get hurt in the process. Therefore, it seems that this negative rating can be linked
with the negative rating for the Dutch speakers’ modesty, since both ratings could possibly
be explained by the same stereotypes. However, it is very important to keep in mind that
these offered interpretations are highly tentative and should not be considered as
irrefutable.

A last mean score that catches the eye whilst contemplating the ratings for all seven
speech samples, is the highly positive mean score of 2.71 for the RP-speaker’s evaluated
trustworthiness. He is thus perceived to be the most trustworthy person, not only compared
with the other native speakers but also when the whole group of speech samples is taken
into account. Additionally, it seems worth mentioning here that this same speaker is also
regarded the most tolerant and open-minded of all native and non-native speakers. Thus,
with regard to the most favourable ratings for these three characteristics, viz. trustworthiness, tolerance and open-mindedness, the results that were found for only the
native accents remain accurate if the results of the non-native accents are considered as
well.

The fact that the RP-speaker was perceived most favourably on three of the five included
personal integrity-reflecting traits, which gives him the most positive rating on the personal
integrity dimension as a whole, does not correspond to previous findings for the
evaluations of an RP accent. Holmes (2001: 350), for example, stated that it is most
common for an RP accent to be highly evaluated on the status dimension because of
associations with a high level of education and high status jobs, but, when it comes to the solidarity dimension, it is usually the non-standard native English accents that score the highest. Moreover, the Flemish study by Botterman (1995) – that, among other accents, also elicited attitudes towards RP, American and Irish accents – found positive evaluations for the Irish accent on the personal integrity dimension. This would mean for the present study that the Irish speech sample should have more favourable ratings than the RP speech sample when it comes to social attractiveness and personal integrity. However, a hierarchy that deviates from this pattern was found for the three native English accents for the results of both these dimensions, viz. with the RP-speaker in a superior position, followed by the American speaker and in each case with the Irish speaker downgraded the most on almost all individual traits.

One could wonder here why the Irish speech sample used in this study was associated with such negative attitudes towards the speaker’s personal integrity, when earlier research – British studies as well a Flemish one – have indicated the opposite result. It seems that, once more, the only valuable explanation should be linked with the low correctness rates for this accent. Since very few informants knew which accent it was they were rating, they could hardly be familiar with the positive associations regarding social attractiveness and personal integrity that are usually surrounding it, which makes it not surprising that the evaluations of this speech sample do not fit within a logical pattern. As mentioned before, they probably based themselves on the fast reading rate of the speaker to attribute him with negative ratings.

Furthermore, it seems that, until now, the RP-speaker is rated most favourably by the informants on all three personality dimensions so far discussed. He is thus not only perceived the most intelligent and competent person but also the friendliest, the most likeable (social attractiveness), tolerant and trustworthy (personal integrity). A possible explanation for the positive ratings on the solidarity dimensions is difficult, as these results deviate from previous found evaluation patterns of an RP accent. Possibly, the speaker idiosyncrasies account for some of these positive evaluations, as the voice of the RP-speaker was overall rated the most beautiful and pleasant. Moreover, these results can also be looked at in a juxtaposing way, i.e. by saying that this speaker is rated more positive than the other accents. In this sense, it is not necessary to give explanations for the positive ratings as such, but it is sufficient to conclude that the informants clearly think that using a standard native English accents reflects most positively on your personality in almost every sense – as opposed to using, for example, a foreign accent.
4.1.4 The social status dimension

The last three personality traits that were included in the questionnaire which have not been discussed so far are seen to reflect the speakers’ social status. These are: “authoritative”, “rich” and “educated”. Apart from evaluating three characteristics on a seven-point rating scale, the informants were also asked to evaluate the speakers’ social status by means of choosing between three possibilities – i.e. lower, middle or higher class – offered in a direct multiple choice question. Thus, the results for this dimension will be analysed by looking at the mean scores for three personality traits on the one hand and by referring to the views on the speakers’ social class as elicited from the multiple choice question on the other hand.

Results for the native and non-native speech samples will first be analysed separately before going into the elicited evaluations of all seven speech samples as a whole.

4.1.4.1 The native English speakers

In order to analyse the results for the elicited social status of the native speakers, an overview of the mean scores for the three personality traits that were believed to reflect a person’s social status is shown in Table 11:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“authoritative”</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“rich”</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“educated”</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ‘social status’</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: The native speakers’ social status as perceived by the informants.

A high degree of consistency can be found in these figures, because for all three characteristics the same continuum of accents seems to be apparent. The RP-speaker was perceived as the most authoritative, educated and the richest, the Irish speaker occupies the second place on the continuum and the American speaker is related to the lowest degree of social status as measured by the mean scores for the three characteristics presented in Table 11. It seems worth mentioning here that the same hierarchy of native accents was found for the competence dimension.

The most positive ratings can be seen for the speakers’ perceived ‘educatedness’. All three native speakers were evaluated as being highly educated, but there is a clear gap between
the mean score of 1.53 for the RP-speaker and the ratings of 2.33 and 2.46 for the Irish and American speaker respectively. As for the richness trait, the RP-speaker was also perceived most favourably, although this time, only small difference exist between the three measured mean scores. The most negative figure that can be seen in Table 11 is the mean score of 4.15 for the American speaker’s alleged authority. The RP-speaker as well as the Irish speech sample were attributed with more positive mean scores for “authoritative”, although, again, the former received a slightly more favourable rating than the latter.

In order to find out whether the American speaker was also downgraded the most when it comes to the social class he was assumed to belong to, the results that were obtained concerning the native speakers’ social class will now be discussed. As already mentioned earlier, the questionnaire contained a multiple choice question which required the informants to indicate the alleged social class of the speaker, i.e. lower, middle or higher class. Table 12 shows the results for the perceived social class of the native speakers, with every figure presenting the number of informants (expressed in percentage) assigning each of the native speakers to a specific social class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher class</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower class</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: The native speakers’ social class as perceived by the informants.

The continuum of accents that was perceived for the results of the natives speakers’ social status seems to be confirmed when consulting the results for the native speakers’ social class. The RP-speaker obtained a strikingly high degree of social class, with no less than 76.5% of the informants assigning him to the higher social class. Furthermore, a minority of 23.5% agreed that this speaker was a member of the middle social class.

As for the perceived social class of the American and Irish speaker, an opposite arrangement appears to be noticeable, since each of these speakers were assumed to have a higher class position by the minority of respondents whereas a convincing majority ticked the ‘middle class’-box for the social class of these speakers. Although the difference between these two speakers’ social class is relatively negligible, the American speaker was somewhat more related to the middle social class than the Irish speaker. Therefore, a similar hierarchy can be found for the native speakers social status and social class, viz.
with the RP-speaker having a strong first position, followed by the more negatively evaluated Irish and American speakers. Remarkably, not one of the informants who were asked to rate the native accents placed these speakers in the lower social class. This indicates that the informants had a tendency to attribute a relatively high social class to all native speakers, although the RP-speaker was obviously perceived to have the highest social position.

### 4.1.4.2 The non-native English speakers

In this section, a closer look will be taken at the social status and social class assigned to the various non-native speech samples. First, the results for the three personality traits reflecting the non speakers’ social status will be described. An overview of these results can be seen in Table 13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“authoritative”</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“rich”</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“educated”</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL ‘social status’</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: The non-native speakers’ social status as perceived by the informants.

The results for the assessed social status of the non-native speakers does not seem to form a consistent pattern – as was found for the social status of the native speakers. However, some general remarks can be made when considering the mean scores presented in Table 13.

Similarities can be found, for example, between the results for the “authoritative” trait and the “educated” characteristic. To be more specific, it appears that the slightly accented speakers received more positive mean scores for each of these characteristics than the broadly accented speakers. With regard to the perceived authority, it can be seen that all non-native speakers are rated rather negatively, but that there is considerable difference between the most favourable rating for the slightly accented Dutch speaker (with a mean score of 4.00) and the least favourable one for the broadly accented Flemish speaker (with a mean score of 5.36). As for the attributed ‘educatedness’ there is again a noticeable discrepancy between the assessments for the non-native speakers with only a slight Flemish or Dutch English accent and the ratings for the non-native speakers with a more
pronounced foreign accent. Once more, the former were perceived more favourably (with highly positive mean scores of 2.27 and 2.63) than the latter (with more negative mean scores of 3.13 and 3.57).

However, as far as the perceived ‘richness’ is concerned, the results do not fit the pattern that was described for the other two social status-reflecting personality traits. The informants evaluated the slightly accented Flemish speaker as the most wealthy person, followed by the two Dutch speakers and with the broadly accented Flemish speaker as the allegedly least wealthy person.

What does seem consistent for all the ratings for the social status dimension combined, is that the Flemish speaker with a pronounced foreign accent was perceived least favourably concerning all three traits. This is also reflected in the negative total score of 4.36 for this speaker.

As was done earlier for the analysis of the native speakers’ evaluated social status, a comparison will be made between the analysis of the results for the three included characteristics and the obtained answers on the multiple choice question asking the informants to identify the speakers’ social class. An overview of the perceived social class of the non-native speakers is shown in Table 14 (again, with each figure representing the percentage of informants attributing a particular social class to each of the speakers).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social class</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher class</td>
<td>45,5</td>
<td>7,1</td>
<td>26,7</td>
<td>37,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>85,8</td>
<td>66,7</td>
<td>56,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower class</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>7,1</td>
<td>6,6</td>
<td>6,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: The non-native speakers’ social class as perceived by the informants.

Concerning the broadly accented Flemish speaker, there seems to be a consistency between the perceived social status and the attributed social class. He was perceived least favourably in terms of social status and, apparently, the informants also believed he was least likely to be a member of the higher social class. Only a meagre 7,1 % of the respondents assigned this speaker to the higher social class. Additionally, 85,8 % of the informants placed this Flemish speaker in the middle social class, which is the most convincing majority of all the percentages presented for the perceived middle social class of the four non-native speakers.
Furthermore, the speaker who was perceived to have the highest social class of all non-native speech samples was the slightly accented Flemish speaker. A strong minority of 45.5% placed him in the high social class, although a faintly larger percentage of informants indicated him as belonging to the middle social class (50%). This correlates with the same speaker’s highly perceived ‘educatedness’ and richness.

The two Dutch speakers’ assessed social class seems to have an intermediary position between the results for the social class of the two Flemish speakers. In other words, they were both assigned to the higher social class by a minority of the informants, but this minority is somewhat larger than the one for the broadly accented Flemish speaker on the one hand and smaller than the one for the slightly accented Flemish speaker on the other hand. Moreover, the Dutch speakers are perceived by more than half of the informants as being a member of the middle social class. When comparing these evaluations of the Dutch speakers’ social class with the results for their perceived social status, some inconsistencies seem to exist. The previous stated pattern for the non-native speakers’ social status – indicating that the slightly accented speakers were perceived the most favourable in terms of social status – appears only to hold true for the slightly accented Flemish speaker, who was also assigned with the highest social position, as shown in Table 14. However, the slightly accented Dutch speaker, who received a similar positive rating concerning ‘educatedness’ and richness than the speaker with a slight Flemish accent, seems to be more associated with the middle social class. Moreover, a higher percentage of informants related the broadly accented Dutch speaker to the higher social class, although the difference with the other Dutch speaker is only minimal (37.5% for the broadly accented Dutch speaker and 26.7% for the slightly accented Dutch speaker).

Only small percentages can be seen for the speakers’ alleged lower social class. However, they seem to confirm the continuum that has been discussed so far, viz. the slightly accented Flemish speaker the least associated with the lower class, the Dutch speakers take an intermediary position and the broadly accented Flemish speaker seems to be assigned to the lower social class the most.

### 4.1.4.3 Comparison and interpretation

The results for the native and non-native speakers that have been discussed separately above, will now be juxtaposed and some tentative interpretations will be suggested for the
perceived social status and social class of the seven speech samples. Table 15 and 16 are presented to give an overview of all the ratings for the social status dimension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality traits</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;authoritative&quot;</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;rich&quot;</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;educated&quot;</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL 'social status'</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.80</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.51</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.30</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.26</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.36</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.44</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.77</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: The native and non-native speakers' social status as perceived by the informants.

One consistency that appears to be true for all seven speech samples on all three social status-reflecting personality traits, are the highly negative ratings for the broadly accented Flemish speaker. He is perceived as the least authoritative, rich and educated person of the native and non-native speakers combined. Particularly the exceptionally negative mean score of 5.36 for his assessed authority can hardly be overlooked. For two of the characteristics, i.e. authority and ‘educatedness’, the broadly accented Dutch speaker seems to share this last position with the Flemish speaker having a broad accent. This can also be seen in the total scores for these two speakers, which are the most negative for all seven speakers. Nevertheless, it is still convincingly the Flemish speaker who is downgraded the most.

The most favourable positions, then, appear to be taken by the RP-speaker and the slightly accented Flemish speaker (who has already been said to have an RP-like accent). The former was rated the most authoritative and educated person, whereas the latter was perceived to be the most wealthy of all seven speakers. However, on the whole, it is the RP-speaker who is rated most favourably in terms of social status, with a total score of 2.80.

Considering all the mean scores for the authority trait as opposed to all the mean scores for the educated characteristic, it appears that the speakers were generally perceived as having a low degree of authority (the most positive mean score being a meagre 3.65) and, oppositely, a high degree of ‘educatedness’ was ascribed to almost all speakers (perhaps with exception of the broadly accented speakers).
The most persistent findings for the speakers’ social status stated above are also reflected in the speakers’ assessed social class (cf. Table 16).

First, the broadly accented Flemish speaker is the least associated with a higher social class as well as the most assigned to the middle social class of all seven speech samples. Moreover, a very small minority of 7.1% believed he was a member of the lower class, which appears to be the largest percentage for this class for all speakers. This correlates with his least favourable position concerning the three personality traits reflecting social status.

Second, both the RP-speaker and the slightly accented Flemish speaker seem to be the most attributed to the higher social class. This corresponds to their top positions concerning their assessed authority, richness and ‘educatedness’. However, a clear advantage can be detected for the RP-speaker, who is the only one that was placed in the higher social class by the majority of the informants. The same superior position was found for this speaker regarding the social status ratings.

Additionally, a remark can be made for the results of the speakers’ attributed social class that does not seem to fit with the results for the social status-reflecting characteristics. That is to say, it appears that the non-native speakers were as a whole more associated with the lower social class than the native speakers. Although this only concerns very small minorities, it seems striking that none of the informants who were asked to rate the native speakers felt that the lower class was applicable to these speakers.

Apparently, to some extent, a link can be made between the results for the competence dimension and the findings for the social status dimension. This connection will be kept in mind when offering some general explanations for the results that were found for the speakers’ social status.

First of all, it became clear that the RP-speaker was evaluated most favourably in terms of social status, not only within the group of native speakers, but also when all speech samples were considered. Exactly the same result was found for the competence dimension. It appears, thus, that the informants regarded someone with an RP accent as...
being most intelligent, competent, self-confident, suitable for leadership (the competence-reflecting traits) as well as having the most authority and being the most educated (the social status-reflecting traits) of all speakers. Presumably, the same underlying assumptions about an RP accent underlie these findings, viz. the importance of this way of speaking in education. This is also what Botterman (1995: 57,59) refers to when she tries to explain the high rating on prestige and social class that was found for the RP speech sample in her study. She assumes that it is the teachers who make the pupils aware of the high status position of an RP accent while at the same time they discourage the use of other varieties of English. This could give a reasonable explanation for the favourable evaluations of the RP-speaker and the less favourable evaluations of all other speakers in terms of social status. Furthermore, some associations with British films which often portray the lives of upper class people could account for the majority of informants assigning the RP-speaker to the higher social class (Botterman 1995: 60).

The Irish and American speakers were both in terms of competence and social status perceived more negatively than the RP-speaker. Moreover, although there often were only slight differences between their obtained mean scores, it was the Irish speaker who was generally rated more favourably than the American speaker. As has been mentioned for their perceived competence, it is difficult to link these ratings to certain assumptions about American and Irish speakers, since low correctness rates were found for both speech samples (cf. Table 1). However, it can be said that informants did seem to recognise these accents as deviations from the RP-norm, which is indicated by the more negative evaluations of these speakers on traits reflecting social status and competence.

As for the non-native speakers, particularly the ratings for the slight Flemish English speech sample and the broad Flemish English speech sample caught the eye. The former was perceived most favourably within the group of non-native speakers both on competence and on social status characteristics, whereas the opposite was true for the latter, i.e. the broadly accented Flemish speaker was perceived the least favourable on the same traits. Furthermore, the results for both personality dimensions showed that the slightly accented speakers generally elicited more positive attitudes than the broadly accented speakers. Therefore, it seems that informants considered that speaking with a foreign accent is reserved for people who are not competent and have a low social status. Specifically the speech sample that contained the broadly accented Flemish speaker appeared to arouse these unfavourable reactions among the informants. This can be explained by the fact that the informants are probably more exposed to a Flemish English
accent than a Dutch English one (since they were Flemings themselves). Because the ratings for the competence dimension and the social status dimension are so similar, the same underlying thoughts or assumptions can be applied for the interpretation of these results. Again, it is thought that stressing an RP-like pronunciation in education could result in overall negative attitudes towards any accent that deviates from this presumed ‘correct’ way of speaking. This is especially clear when contemplating the overall more negative reactions to the more pronounced non-native accents as well as the more favourable ratings for the non-native speakers with only a slight foreign accent.

Furthermore, it appeared that the native speakers as a whole were perceived as having a higher degree of competence (looking at the total scores for the competence dimension) and, moreover, none of them were assigned to the lower social class. This could possibly point to the underlying idea that any native accent is preferred over a non-native accent, although it should be said that this is a highly tentative assumption based on only a small amount of data.

Additionally, some remarks ought to be made for the results of the evaluation of the slightly accented Flemish speaker. He was seen to be assigned to the higher social class by a relatively large minority of the informants, and, moreover, he received very positive ratings for his perceived richness – for which he even received the highest rating of all speakers – and ‘educatedness’, giving him a second position concerning the social status dimension (after the RP-speaker). These findings could indicate that informants based themselves for this positive evaluation of social status on the RP-like features in his pronunciation. However, the similarities that have been found so far between the results for the social status dimension and the ones for the competence dimension do not seem to be entirely applicable for this speaker. Apparently, the informants were not so much guided by his RP-like pronunciation when evaluating him for the competence-reflecting characteristics, since the total score of 3.82 for this dimension sets him far apart from the most favourable total score of 2.76 for the RP-speaker. This inconsistency can be explained, once more, by the low correctness rates for the slightly accented Flemish speaker. Table 1 shows that 63.6% of the respondents who were asked to rate this speech sample thought that they were listening to a person from England, which could account for the high ratings on the social status dimension. However, a large minority did not think he was English and therefore did not make any assumption with English speakers when evaluating his speech. This group could possibly have based itself more on the slow
reading rate of this speaker, which could then account for the negative results on the competence dimension.

Finally, what seems most important to keep in mind is that, again, the three speech samples showing the most consistent and clear attitudes, i.e. the RP accent and the two broad non-native ones, are the ones with the highest degree of familiarity among the informants. The same was found for the competence dimension.
4.2. The speech scales

As it is generally believed that the evaluation of a speaker’s personality is closely related to the evaluation of the accent of that speaker, it was deemed interesting to add a second type of seven-point rating scales in this study, in order to find out whether there existed a correlation between the speakers’ assessed personality and their accents (Hiels 1996: 61). These so-called speech scales aimed at eliciting the attitudes of the informants towards the various native and non-native accents as such, as opposed to the previously analysed personality scales that measured the attitudes towards the speakers as persons. More specifically, the questionnaire that was used for the present experiment contained four seven-point rating speech scales, again with the low numbers representing the favourable end of the scale. These were divided in a status dimension and an aesthetic dimension. Furthermore, two direct questions were added to elicit the respondents’ solidarity with the accents. This method to elicit the attitudes towards the accents was the same for the previous experiments conducted by Botterman (1995) and Hiels (1996). It should be noted here that the analysis for the native and non-native accents will be dealt with separately for each dimension, as was done for the personality scales, before turning to the results for all the accents as one group.

4.2.1 The status dimension

The questionnaire contained two characteristics that were believed to reflect the status dimension of the speakers’ accent, viz. “educated” and “intelligible”. These characteristics were two possible answers, presented as a seven-point rating scale, to a question asking the informants how they perceived the accent of the speaker. The results for the other two provided answers to this question will be discussed in a following section on the aesthetic dimension.

In other words, concerning this dimension, the informants were asked whether they thought the accent they had listened to sounded educated and whether it was intelligible to them. Once more, the more favourable answers were represented by the lower numbers.
### 4.2.1.1 The native English accents

The elicited attitudes of the informants towards the native speakers’ accents in terms of status will be described by means of analysing the mean scores that were attributed to these speech samples on both included characteristics, ‘educatedness’ and intelligibility, as can be seen in Table 17:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>status characteristics</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“educated”</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“intelligible”</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: The status dimension of the native speakers’ accents as perceived by the informants.

There seems to be an exceptionally clear preference for RP in terms of ‘educatedness’, with an impressive mean score of 1.71. The American and Irish accents were perceived noticeably less favourably, with mean scores of 3.69 and 3.90 respectively. This result is to a great extent in accordance with the findings for the attitudes towards the same speech samples with regard to competence and social status.

As for the second included speech characteristic, the American accent appeared to be more clearly understood by the informants than the RP speech sample. However, it can be seen that RP received a highly positive rating on the intelligibility characteristic as well. The more negative rating for the Irish accent forms a visible gap with these other two favourable mean scores. It should be mentioned here that Botterman (1995: 68-71) discovered almost exactly the same results for the status dimension of the RP, American and Irish accents she investigated in her study.

Some suggestions for the interpretation of the results found for the native accents’ perceived status will be given in a separate section that takes into account all speech samples used for the present experiment.

### 4.2.1.2 The non-native English accents

Before turning to some general conclusions, however, the results for the assessed status of the non-native speech samples will by analysed first. The mean scores for the ‘educatedness’ and intelligibility of the non-native accents are shown in Table 18:
Table 18: The status dimension of the non-native speakers’ accents as perceived by the informants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>status characteristics</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“educated”</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>4.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“intelligible”</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results for the perceived status of the various non-native accents can be analysed along a perfectly consistent continuum. The slightly accented Flemish speaker was perceived to have the most educated and intelligible accent, with highly positive mean scores of 2.38 for ‘educatedness’ and 2.59 for intelligibility. The other slight non-native accent occupies the second position on the continuum with fairly positive ratings for the two speech characteristics. Finally, the two more marked non-native accents were assessed as having the lowest status, with the Dutch accent completely at the bottom. This latter accent received highly negative ratings for both ‘educatedness’ and intelligibility (as can be seen from the mean scores of 4.81 and 5.31).

It thus seems that the slight non-native accents were both associated with a much more higher status than the broad non-native accents. This result corresponds to some extent with the findings for the non-native speakers’ competence and social status. That is to say, it was discovered that the informants evaluated the broadly accented speakers much more unfavourably than the other non-native speakers in terms of their competence and social status and especially the Flemish speaker with a pronounced foreign accent appeared to be downgraded the most. The evaluations of the accents’ status, however, seem to show that this bottom position is reserved for the broad Dutch accent.

4.2.1.3 Comparison and interpretation

After contemplating the status dimension of the native and non-native accents individually, some attention will now be drawn to the way in which these results relate to each other. Furthermore, some tentative explanations will be offered to clarify the obtained mean scores. Table 19 represents an overview of the ratings for the status of all seven speech samples:
A slightly different pattern can be found for each of the two status-reflecting characteristics.

As for the assessed ‘educatedness’ of the various accents, RP does not only appear to be regarded the most favourable of the native accents, it was moreover overwhelmingly perceived as the most educated speech sample when the non-native accents were taken into account as well. Next in line is the slight Flemish accent, which was also attributed with a highly positive mean score for its ‘educatedness’. The other slight non-native accent then follows with a fairly favourable rating in terms of status. So far, it appears that the three accents occupying the top of the hierarchy for ‘educatedness’ are the ones with a standard or standard-like British pronunciation. The American and Irish accents take the fourth and fifth position and, once more, the two broad non-native accents were associated with the least favourable ratings, in this case with the broad Dutch accent in last position.

These findings for the assessment of the accents as such seem to correlate with the attitudes towards some of the speaker’s personality traits. The RP-speaker was seen to have a superior position concerning personality traits reflecting his competence and social status and the broadly accented non-native speakers were evaluated least favourably on the same traits. The high level of ‘educatedness’ in the slight Flemish accent, according to the informants that is, can also be said to relate to his perceived high social status.

In a research by Giles conducted in 1970 (cf. 2.2.1), it was discovered that a group of British secondary school children associated RP with the highest degree of prestige compared to other foreign, regional and urban English accents. Just as Botterman (1995: 69) concludes for the perceived status of RP in her study, it can be derived from the above discussed results that apparently an RP accent “elicits similar attitudes in Britain [than] in Flanders”. Of course, it should be kept in mind that the present study only measured the attitudes of 119 Flemish respondents and results can not be considered representative for all Flemings.

As far as the high ‘educatedness’ of the slight Flemish accent is concerned, it seems plausible, again, that this result was obtained due to the RP-like features of this accent. The

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>status characteristics</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“educated”</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>4.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“intelligible”</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19: The status dimension of the native and non-native speakers’ accents as perceived by the informants.
elicited lower prestige for the American and Irish accents can than be explained by their deviate pronunciation from the highly prestigious RP-norm. This is especially the case for the American accent, for, although it is a frequently occurring accent in the popular media, the emphasis in education is still on RP. Finally, the same underlying assumptions that were thought to clarify the low scores for the pronounced non-native speakers’ competence and social status, can be applied for these accents’ low ‘educatedness’. In other words, a high degree of foreignness in the pronunciation of English is generally downgraded in an educational context, because it is associated with an insufficient knowledge of the phonology and grammar of the language. That is probably why the broad non-native speech samples were perceived as non-educated accents.

A somewhat different picture has to be drawn with regard to the second speech characteristic reflecting the status of the accents. It can no longer be said that the three standard or standard-like British accents, i.e. RP and the two slight non-native accents, received the most favourable ratings. Apparently, the American speech sample was perceived the most intelligible of all the accents used in the present study, and thus not only compared to the other native speech samples. Again, a plausible explanation for this phenomenon can be given by referring to Botterman (1995: 69). She assumed that the high level of intelligibility for the American speaker “was probably due to the frequent opportunities they [the informants] have to see American films and soap operas”. The credibility of this interpretation is increased when the previously mentioned studies by Mobärg (1999, 2002), Söderlund and Modiano (2002) and Westergren-Axelsson (2002) are taken into account, since all these authors started their research by referring to the contemporary Americanisation process dominating most European countries, which implies the high degree of exposure to American media products for the informants of this study as well. The fact that only a very low percentage of the informants rating the American speech sample were aware of the American nationality of the recorded speaker, should again be taken into account when considering this interpretation. However, it does not necessarily make this interpretation less valuable, because indicating whether the accent is intelligible or not does not require any assumptions about American people, and, moreover, it is very unlikely that none of these informants have never heard an American accent before – and thus ‘escape’ the so-called Americanisation process.

Next, RP and the slight Flemish accent were similarly perceived as being relatively easy to understand. Apart from the obvious explanation that the dominant position of an RP or RP-like pronunciation in education accounts for these high ratings, two other remarks should
be made. One, the reason why the RP accent was perceived slightly less intelligible than the unpronounced Flemish speech sample is probably due to the circumstances of the experiment. More specifically, the tape recorder used for the experiment that aimed to measure the attitudes towards the RP speech sample did not manage to reach the same relatively high volume than the audio equipment used for the other six experiments. Consequently, the respondents in the back of the class expressed during the playing of the tape that they had difficulty hearing what the RP-speaker was saying. However, this disadvantage seems to have only a small effect on the perceived intelligibility, because the mean score of 2.65 is still rather high. Two, the slight Flemish accent’s high perceived intelligibility should not only be related to its RP-like features, but also to the very slow reading rate that this speaker used. This second remark is actually also applicable to the RP speech sample, having a very similar recording time of approximately 2 minutes.

The Irish speech sample has a similar medium position for intelligibility than for ‘educatedness’. Moreover, it has already been mentioned that this accent was perceived the least favourable of the native English accents. Botterman (1995: 70) related this negative rating to an association with dialect speech, but, unlike Botterman’s study, the low correctness rates for the Irish speech sample in the present research resulted in illogical patterns in the elicited attitudes, which makes it unclear what the underlying assumptions were on which the informants based themselves.

The slight Dutch accent received a rather similar mean score for intelligibility than for ‘educatedness’. However, comparing the assessed degree of intelligibility for this speech sample with the other accents, this seems to be a rather negative rating. The only plausible explanation that can be offered here is that this rating is based on certain idiosyncratic features of the speaker.

Finally, what does seem to be consistent for the ratings on both speech characteristics is the unfavourable position of the broad non-native accents. The negative attitude towards a pronounced foreign accent seems to dominate even when all accents are considered. Particularly the broad Dutch accent was associated with negative attitudes, which seems to confirm the findings of De Caluwe (1992), who indicated that Flemings generally look down on the northern Dutch pronunciation.
4.2.2 The aesthetic dimension

The accents’ aesthetic dimension was reflected by the rating of the following two characteristics: “beautiful” and “pleasant”. Informants were asked to evaluate these characteristics on a seven-point rating scale.

It seems worth mentioning here that the speech scales were limited to a minimum in the questionnaire for the simple reason to keep the respondents as unaware as possible about the aim of the research, i.e. eliciting their attitudes towards native and non-native accents of English. For this reason, more attention was drawn to the evaluation of the various speakers as persons on a larger number of personality scales (Botterman 1995: 76; Hiels 1996: 69). However, the small number of speech scales were still deemed necessary to include in the research, because this would make it possible to discover potential correlations between the evaluations of the speakers’ personality on the one hand and the attitudes towards their speech on the other hand.

4.2.2.1 The native English accents

An overview of the mean scores for the native English accents’ perceived beauty and pleasantness, together forming the aesthetic dimension, is shown in Table 20:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aesthetic characteristics</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“beautiful”</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“pleasant”</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20: The aesthetic dimension of the native speakers’ accents as perceived by the informants.

It seems that the RP speech sample hardly received any negative ratings until now and, once again, this trend appears to persist also for the evaluation of this accent’s aesthetic value. The informants rated RP as the most beautiful and pleasant speech sample of all the native accents, and, moreover, it is also the only accent that was perceived positively in terms of the aesthetic dimension (with a clearly favourable mean score of 2.71 for beauty and a fairly positive mean score of 3.24 for pleasantness).

Compared to the favourable evaluation of RP, the American accent was much less considered as beautiful or pleasant in sound. The difference between these two speech samples is particularly visible when it comes to the perceived beauty of the accents, for which the American accent received a rather unfavourable mean score of 4.00. As for
pleasantness, the divide between RP and the American accent is much smaller, but the former still convincingly has the first position.

The Irish speech sample, then, was even more downgraded than the American accent and was generally regarded as sounding rather ugly and unpleasant.

These results show that a consistent pattern exists in the native accents’ aesthetic dimension, which could not be said for the status dimension of the same accents. Referring to the results for the accents’ aesthetic dimension in Botterman’s (1995: 76-81) study, the same hierarchy of accents was discovered (1: the RP accent, 2: the American accent, 3: the Irish accent), although it has to be noted that the RP speech sample in the present study received much more positive ratings than the RP speech sample in Botterman’s experiment. Furthermore, the results for the aesthetic dimension in the current study seem to show a pattern that has been found for all the other personality and speech scales that have been discussed so far, viz. on the whole (i.e. by looking at the total scores) the RP speech sample always received the most favourable ratings, followed by the more unfavourable positions for the American and Irish speech samples. The ratings for these last two accents have been seen to alternate, once with the American speaker least favoured, once with the Irish speaker at the bottom. When it comes to the analysis of the speech scales, it appears that until now, the Irish accent is evaluated most negatively of all the native accents.

4.2.2.2 The non-native accents

The results for the aesthetic dimension of the four non-native speech samples will be analysed by means of the mean scores attributed to the two included speech characteristics reflecting this dimension, beauty and pleasantness, as presented in Table 21:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aesthetic characteristics</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“beautiful”</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“pleasant”</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 21: The aesthetic dimension of the non-native speakers’ accents as perceived by the informants.*

These figures are in a large extent similar to the findings for the non-native accents’ status dimension, although on a first glance it can be seen that these mean scores are all relatively more negative than the ones obtained for the accents’ perceived status.
There is again a consistent hierarchy apparent in the figures for the non-native accents, with the most favourable ratings for both beauty and pleasantness assigned to the slight Dutch English accent. The slight Flemish English accent was evaluated very similarly, especially for the “beautiful” characteristic (the mean scores for these accents being 3.94 and 4.00). The least favourable evaluations, then, were once more reserved for the broad non-native accents. Moreover, similar to the results for the status dimension, the broad Dutch speech sample was downgraded most of all with very negative mean scores of 5.75 for beauty and 5.38 for pleasantness.

Thus, the same pattern was found for the non-native accents’ ‘educatedness’, intelligibility, beauty and pleasantness, viz. the slight non-native accents were related to much more favourable mean scores than the pronounced non-native accents. Furthermore, for all these speech characteristics, the respondents evaluated the broad Dutch accent least favourably.

However, what does seem different for the aesthetic dimension, is that the order for the slight non-native accents was turned around. More specifically, the slight Flemish accent was favoured over the slight Dutch accent in terms of status, but the latter elicited more positive attitudes concerning the aesthetic characteristics than the former.

### 4.2.2.3 Comparison and interpretation

The mean scores for the aesthetic dimension of the native and non-native accents are juxtaposed in Table 22. This overview will serve as the starting point to go deeper into the relations between the results for these two groups of accents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aesthetic characteristics</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;beautiful&quot;</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;pleasant&quot;</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 22: The aesthetic dimension of the native and non-native speakers’ accents as perceived by the informants.*

When the mean scores for the seven speech samples are considered, it seems that the evaluations of three accents are consistent along the two speech characteristics reflecting the aesthetic dimension. First, RP elicited the most favourable attitudes in terms of beauty and pleasantness, strengthening the superior position it already has when the previously obtained results are taken into account. Apparently, the informants thought that this speech
sample sounded highly educated as well as beautiful and pleasant. It must be said here that the mean scores for the aesthetic dimension of all the other accents were generally unfavourable, forming a gap with the rather positive ratings for the RP speech sample. The two other accents that induced consistent reactions on the two speech characteristics included in Table 22 were the broad non-native speech samples. Similar to the results for the status dimension, these pronounced foreign accents were perceived the least favourable of all seven speech samples, again with the lowest ratings attributed to the broad Dutch accent. Therefore, the same underlying assumptions can be applied to explain for these negative evaluations, viz. the overall downgrading of any degree of foreignness in the English pronunciation as well as the general disliking of a Dutch pronunciation among Flemings.

Rather high on the continuum of accents regarding the aesthetic dimension was the American accent. It was perceived the second most pleasant of all the speech samples, after RP. This result could again, as was said for the assessed high degree of intelligibility of the American accent, be related to the probably frequent exposure of Flemish youngsters to American media products, such as films, soap operas and pop songs. Moreover, the somewhat more positive evaluation of RP is most likely the result of the tradition to emphasise this pronunciation in Flemish education while at the same time an American accent is generally disapproved in this context (Botterman 1995: 77). As for the perceived beauty, the ratings for the American accent and the RP speech sample show a much larger difference (4.00 for the former, 2.71 for the latter), which indicates that the informants were still very clearly preferring RP over an American pronunciation. This corresponds to some extent with the findings of Simon (2005), who indicated that Flemish students showed an overwhelming preference for RP as a pronunciation model.

The slight Dutch and Flemish accents showed similar mean scores to the American accent, although in terms of pleasantness the latter received a noticeably more favourable rating. The slight Flemish accent was even regarded rather negatively on this characteristic (showing a mean score of 4.55), even though it was attributed to a high degree of ‘educatedness’ and intelligibility (cf. 4.2.1). This perceived unpleasantness for the slight Flemish accent can again be related to the slow reading rate of its speaker, which, as has already been mentioned, evoked unfavourable reactions of the informants during the experiment.

As for the Irish accent, results appear to be quite similar to the ratings that were found for this accent on the status dimension. Within the group of native accents it was perceived to
have the lowest status as well as the least pleasant and beautiful in sound. When the non-native accents are considered as well, this speech sample was still evaluated rather unfavourable for both dimensions, placed just before the two ‘losing’ broad non-native accents. This result could be due to the fast reading rate or voice quality of the speaker but any certainty for this assumption can not be assured, since no techniques were included in the questionnaire to measure the influence of these speaker idiosyncrasies on the evaluations of the informants.

Recapitulating, it appears that the informants did not really differentiate between the status of an accent and its aesthetic value when evaluating the seven speech samples included in the present experiment. A correlation between the ratings for ‘educatedness’ on the one hand and beauty and pleasantness on the other seemed, for example, was found for the RP speech sample and the broad non-native accents. The former was perceived as highly educated and thus very beautiful and pleasant as well. The opposite was the case for the pronounced non-native speech samples. The attitudes towards the American accent showed similarities between its assessed intelligibility and pleasantness, both being rather positive. The Irish speech sample was rated negatively on all four speech characteristics that were discussed along the status and aesthetic dimension. Only the slight Flemish accent seems to form the greatest exception to these correlations, because it was seen to be perceived much more favourable on the status dimension than on the aesthetic one. This could be explained by the fact that half of the informants probably based themselves on the RP-like features of this accent for their evaluations (63,6 % thought is was an English speaker), resulting in the positive mean scores in terms of status, whereas the remaining respondents (the ones who did not think that this speaker was English) presumably focussed on the slow reading rate and therefore evaluated the accent as rather unpleasant.
4.2.3 The solidarity dimension

The last dimension that was included in the present experiment in order to analyse the evaluation of the accents was named – in imitation of the study on language attitudes performed by Botterman (1995: 82) – the solidarity dimension. As opposed to the previously discussed status and aesthetic dimensions, the informants’ solidarity with the various accents was not measured by means of seven-point rating scales. Instead, two direct questions were included in the questionnaire, asking the respondents whether they wanted to speak with the accent they had heard on the tape themselves and, secondly, whether they preferred their English teachers to speak with the accent in question. The informants were required to answer either ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and, moreover, they were asked to explain their negative answers.

This dimension was, similar to the analysis of the previous dimensions, described in three parts: one focussing on the native accents, a second one on the non-native accents and a third which brought the previously discussed results together and suggested some interpretations.

4.2.3.1 The native English accents

The obtained answers to the questions “Would you like to speak with a similar accent yourself (when studying English as a second or third language)?” and “Would you like your English teacher to speak with a similar accent?” for the group of native English accents will be discussed in this section. An overview of the percentage of respondents who answered ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to the former question is shown in Table 23:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>speak with the accent yourself?</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>52,9</td>
<td>46,2</td>
<td>33,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>47,1</td>
<td>53,8</td>
<td>66,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23: The solidarity dimension of the native speakers’ accents as perceived by the informants.

The hierarchy that emerges from these percentages seems to conform with the previously obtained results for the evaluations of the native accents.

The only accent that elicited a positive answer by the majority of the informants was the RP speech sample. No less than 52,9 % of the respondents indicated that they wanted to speak with this accent themselves. Nonetheless, this entails that a very large minority of
47.1% gave a negative answer to this question. Thus, although the RP speech sample was seen to be associated with very high levels of ‘educatedness’, intelligibility and beauty, quite a large number of the informants did not prefer this type of pronunciation for themselves. However, compared to the other two native accents, this accent still evoked the most positive reactions.

Almost the exact opposite results can be found for the American accent. In this case, a large minority expressed they wanted to speak with this kind of accent and a small majority said they did not. Once more, this seems to correspond to the fairly favourable attitudes towards the same accent’s intelligibility and pleasantness on the one hand and with the less favourable attitudes towards its ‘educatedness’ on the other hand.

Surprisingly, one third of the informants who listened to the Irish speech sample wished to speak with this kind of English accent. This does not add up with the general unfavourable reactions to this accent’s status and its very negatively perceived aesthetic value. However, when comparing this with the answers for the other native accents, it seems that, yet again, this speech sample was placed at the bottom of the hierarchy.

After having discussed the results for the informants’ preference to use any of the three native accents for their own English pronunciation, the results for the second included question will now be analysed, viz. the informants’ desire to have an English teacher with the native accent in question. The figures that were acquired for this second question concerning the native accents are shown in Table 24:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>the accent for English teacher?</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 24: The informants’ desire to have a teacher with a certain native accent.*

These figures indicate an unexpected difference with the answers for the other ‘solidarity question’. The RP speech sample no longer elicited the most favourable responses, since only a meagre 35.5% of the informants wished to have an English teacher speaking with an RP accent. A considerably larger minority wanted their teachers to speak with an American accent. Moreover, it seems striking that the percentages presented in Table 24 for this accent are exactly the same as the ones obtained for the former question. Apparently, the respondents who rated the American speech sample did not make a distinction between their desire to speak this accent themselves and their wish to have an
American-accented English teacher, giving the same answer to each question (i.e. 46,2 % answered ‘yes’ and 53,8 % answered ‘no’). The same minimal difference between the percentages for both solidarity-eliciting questions can be found for the Irish speech sample. Only one third of the informants wished to use an Irish English pronunciation and a slightly smaller percentage expressed that they preferred their English teacher to use an Irish accent.

It appears, then, that only the informants who rated the RP speech sample evaluated each question significantly differently. Strangely enough, the majority of them did not want their English teacher to use RP, although more than half of the same respondents preferred to use this pronunciation themselves. Some explanations for this phenomenon will be offered after the discussion of the results for the non-native accents.

### 4.2.3.2 The non-native accents

The obtained answers to the first solidarity-eliciting question, i.e. “Would you like to speak with a similar accent yourself (when studying English as a second or third language)?”, regarding the non-native accents is shown in Table 25:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>speak with accent yourself?</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27,3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37,5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>72,7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>62,5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25: The solidarity dimension of the non-native speakers’ accents as perceived by the informants.

The figures that immediately stand out on a first glance of Table 25, are the unanimously negative answers for both the broad non-native accents. Not one of the informants who evaluated these speech samples expressed the desire to speak with a pronounced Flemish or Dutch English accent. This result is perfectly in accordance with the exceptionally unfavourable attitudes towards the broad non-native accents’ aesthetic and status dimensions.

The percentages for the slight non-native accents are clearly more divided. First, it can be seen that they, on the whole, elicited more favourable answers than the pronounced non-native speech samples – which also corresponds to the more positive evaluations for these accents on the other speech scales. Second, however, only a minority of the respondents (27,3 % for the Flemish accent and 37,5 % for the Dutch one) gave a positive answer to the
question whether to use the accent that they heard themselves when speaking English. Furthermore, the slight Flemish accent appeared to evoke more negative reactions than the slight Dutch speech sample.

It seems interesting to, once again, compare the results for the first question included in the solidarity dimension to the obtained answers to the question that asked the informants to express whether they wished to have their English teachers use the particular accent they had listened to. An overview of the results for this second question concerning the non-native accents is presented in Table 26:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>31,8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>56,3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>68,2</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>43,7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26: The informants’ desire to have a teacher with a certain non-native accent.

Although some of the percentages have increased or decreased, the hierarchy of the non-native accents has remained unchanged.

The slight Dutch accent elicited the most favourable answers among the informants – compared to the other non-native accents – when it came to speaking the accent themselves and the same result can be found for these informants’ desire to have a teacher speaking with this accent. However, it must be noted that with regard to the pronunciation of their teachers, a clear majority of 56,3 % gave positive answers, whereas the same can not be said for the results concerning their own pronunciation (which indicated that only a minority of 37,5 % answered ‘yes’ to using this accent).

The second most favoured accent was, again, the slight Flemish English accent. Around one third of the informants expressed the desire to have such an accent and a slightly larger minority wanted their teachers speaking with this accent.

Finally, the least favoured positions were once more reserved for the broad non-native accents. However, the unanimity that was found for the negative answers to the question asking the informants if they wanted to speak with the accent in question themselves, seems to have disappeared for the slight Flemish accent (whereas it remained unchanged for the broad Dutch speech sample). An almost negligible minority – actually equivalent to only one informant – indicated the wish to have a teacher speaking with a pronounced Flemish accent.
4.2.3.3 Comparison and interpretation

Some attention will now be drawn to the analysis of the results for the native and non-native accents as an entire group. Furthermore, some tentative interpretations for the discussed results for the accent’s solidarity dimension will be presented in this last section. Table 27 represents the obtained figures for the entire group of accents concerning the first solidarity-reflecting question – asking whether they wanted to speak with the particular English accent they had assessed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>speak with accent yourself?</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>52,9</td>
<td>46,2</td>
<td>33,3</td>
<td>27,3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37,5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>47,1</td>
<td>53,8</td>
<td>66,7</td>
<td>72,7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>62,5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27: The solidarity dimension of the native and non-native speakers’ accent as perceived by the informants.

Taking all seven speech samples into account, it appears that the results for this first part of the accents’ solidarity dimension are to a relatively great extent similar to the results that were discovered for the status and aesthetic dimensions. With regard to the two latter dimensions, the RP speech sample was evaluated most favourably (with the exception of its perceived intelligibility, for which the American speech sample received the highest ratings) and the broad non-native accents were regarded as sounding the least educated, intelligible, beautiful and pleasant of all seven accents. Since the same pattern can be discerned from the figures presented in Table 27, it seems that these ratings have influenced the informants in their desire to speak with the accent in question themselves. In other words, the speech sample that sounded the most educated, beautiful and pleasant to the informants, i.e. RP, elicited the largest majority of positive answers of all speech samples. On the other hand, the broad non-native accents were related to very negative ratings concerning status and aesthetic value and thus no one preferred to speak English in this way.

Some clarification ought to be offered, however, for the relatively large minority of respondents who indicated that they disliked RP for their own English pronunciation (47,1 %). For this, references can be made to what the informants wrote to motivate their negative answers, and, what seemed to recur the most were explanations such as “it sounds boring and stiff” as well as “the speaker uses no intonation”. The former clarification in particular can be said to relate to the stereotypical connotations of RP with the ‘stiff upper
lip’ mentality and therefore elicited the negative evaluation for the solidarity dimension. Moreover, Mobärg (2002) assumed that youngsters – in his case, Swedish youngsters – generally associated RP with formal styles and that, when they were asked which type of English accent they preferred, a considerable number of these young people did not choose RP. This was caused, according to Mobärg, by their generally great exposure to the American popular media, which resulted in their preference for the American accent instead.

As for the perceived solidarity with the American accent in the present experiment, the tendency to prefer this accent over RP does not seem applicable here – as opposed to the result that was found by Botterman (1995: 82-91) – since the majority of the informants, however small (53.8 %), still indicated that they did not wish to speak with an American accent themselves. Some of them even motivated this choice by adding “I prefer a British English pronunciation” or “speaking without an accent has more credibility”. The latter remark could refer to the standard non-regional RP accent and it is especially striking that this informant associates this type of speaking with a positive rating of your personality.

On the other hand, it must be said that the percentage of 46.2 % indicating a favourable stance towards the own use of an American accent can be seen to be the second largest of all the seven speech sample. This result is in accordance with the fairly favourable position the American accent occupied on the accent hierarchy concerning its pleasantness. Therefore, the informants did appear to be influenced to a certain extent by the contemporary Americanisation process.

The remaining accents, i.e. Irish English and the two slight non-native English speech samples, can also be seen to have the same position on the continuum of accents for this part of the solidarity dimension than the one they occupied for the pleasantness characteristic. Therefore, it could be assumed that the informants based themselves on what they thought sounded pleasant in order to decide whether to speak with the accent in question themselves.

After RP and the American accent, it is the slight Dutch accent that appears to be next in line on the hierarchy, with 37.5 % of the informants expressing favourable answers. Since the informants were not asked in the questionnaire to explain their positive responses, it can only be guessed why this minority preferred to speak with a slight Dutch accent. It should be mentioned, however, that almost all respondents did not realise that they were rating a Dutch English accent and that the only informant who did, indicated that she did not want to speak with this accent herself. Clarifications for the negative answers (62.5 %)
with regard to speaking with this accent were for example: “I do not think it is a beautiful accent” or “this accent is not appealing”. Both statements seem to assess the accent for its aesthetic value, which confirms the previously mentioned assumption that informants expressed the desire to speak or not to speak with the particular accent, based on whether or not they believed it to be pleasant in sound.

The reason why 33.3% of the respondents wished to speak with an Irish accent is also quite difficult to provide, since it contradicts the overall negative ratings that were obtained for this speech sample. Again, attention needs to be drawn to the low correctness rates for this accent (cf. Table 1), which implies that the informants could not have based their answers on assumptions about an Irish accent as such. In any case, it seems most important to point at the fact that the majority of the respondents did not want to use this English accent, an answer that most of them made clear by noting that they perceived the accent as being ugly and unpleasant. Therefore, the correlation between the aesthetic dimension and the first part of the solidarity dimension seem to hold true for this speech sample as well.

The results for the slight Flemish accent can be explained, once more, by means of its RP-like features on the one hand and its slow reading rate on the other hand. The minority of informants who expressed a favourable attitude were the ones who believed this speaker to come from England and one of them even clarified his positive evaluation by writing: “it sounds rather British and that is good”. A convincing majority, however, did not wish to speak English in this way for reasons they described as “it sounds mincing and unnatural” or “the speaker exaggerates too much which makes it irritating”. They clearly based themselves on the manner in which the speaker read the text passage.

After this exposition on the first question included to measure the accents’ solidarity dimension, a comparison will now be made with the results for the second question, viz. “Would you like your English teacher to speak with a similar accent?” The obtained answers to this question for the seven speech samples as an entire group are shown in Table 28:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>the accent for your teacher?</th>
<th>RP</th>
<th>AmE</th>
<th>IrE</th>
<th>FlemE (s)</th>
<th>FlemE (b)</th>
<th>DutchE (s)</th>
<th>DutchE (b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28: The informants’ desire to have a teacher with a certain native or non-native accent.
These figures present some very striking results, especially when compared to the results for the first solidarity-eliciting question. RP seems to have been wiped off its pedestal, as it only comes in third, after the slight Dutch accent and the American accent. Therefore, it could be assumed that the informants rating the RP speech sample used other criteria to assess the particular English accent in terms of their own solidarity than the ones they used to answer the second question concerning the English accent for their teachers. Apparently, these informants were much stricter when it came to deciding whether they wanted their English teacher to use the accent in question. When referring to the written clarifications of 64.7% of the informants who gave negative answers, it can be seen that they rejected an RP pronunciation for their teachers because they felt that their lessons would then become boring and they would have difficulties paying attention. The negative associations of RP with dullness and formality seemed to dominate over the prestigious value of the accent when the informants answered this second solidarity-eliciting question. The opposite is true for the previous solidarity question. Furthermore, some of them related their negative answer to the fairly low degree of intelligibility, writing things like: “I would not be able to understand everything the teacher is saying”.

Finding an explanation for the 56.3% of the informants who wanted a teacher speaking with a slight Dutch accent is guesswork, since the informants were not required to make their positive answers clear and, moreover, the preference for this accent over RP has never been found in the previously described results. It seemed that some of them did not want to speak with this accent themselves but they did want their teachers to use it. These informants, as opposed to the ones rating the RP speech sample, can be said to be less strict for the answer on this second question. Perhaps they felt it was enough for their English teacher to speak with a native-like accent (taking into account that more than half of the informants considered this speaker to speak with a native accent: 37.5% thought he was English and 31.3% indicated that he was Irish, cf. Table 1). However, it could be assumed that the informants based themselves on certain idiosyncratic features – unfortunately undetectable which ones – to give their answer, since this speaker was not related to a specific nationality by a convincing majority of the informants (which implies that they were not really aware of, or taking into account the nationality of the speaker they were rating).

The results for the remaining speech samples remained relatively unchanged. The American accent elicited a large minority of favourable answers also with regard to the choice of accent for the English teacher. However, because of the serious downgrading of
the RP speech sample for this question, the American accent appeared to be more favoured when it comes to the pronunciation of teachers than the RP accent. This seems striking at first sight, but it can probably explained by the fact that these accents were rated by two different groups. In other words, the informants who rated the RP speech sample did not give any evaluations whatsoever of an American accent and vice versa. Therefore, the fact that the American accent seems to have elicited more positive answers on this second question than the RP speech sample can be ascribed to the more strict character of the informants who rated the latter accent. Obviously, this is only a suggestion for the interpretation of this striking result and other possible explanations should not be excluded.

The Irish and slight Flemish speech samples were evaluated in almost exactly the same way for the first and the second solidarity-eliciting questions. However, the slight Flemish accent shows a little more favourable answers to the question concerning the accent of the teachers, whereas the Irish speech sample shows a little less positive answers.

Finally, the most unanimous answers can be found for the broad non-native accents, which counts for both questions. The informants did not want to speak with these accents themselves nor did they want their teachers to do so. This, as has been said, ties in perfectly with the overwhelmingly negative evaluations of these accents on the speech scales (not taking into account the very small minority of 7 % that apparently preferred to have a teacher with a broad Dutch accent). Some examples of the reasons they wrote down to explain their negative answers to the first question are: “this accent deviates too much from the real English”, “I want to learn the beautiful accent of the Brits”, “the aim for our English pronunciation should not be a non-English accent” or “this accent does not sound fluently and demonstrates a poor knowledge of the language”. These writings indicate that the informants disapproved of any degree of foreignness in their own English accent and, moreover, that they aimed at speaking with a British accent. This correlates with the findings of Simon (2005) who discovered a preference of RP by Flemish university students. As for the negative answers to the second question, the informants seemed to have based themselves on the same range of thoughts, viz. indicating that a teacher needs to speak with a British accent because s/he is expected to set the example and, therefore, s/he can not speak with an accent reflecting an imperfect knowledge of the language.
5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1. General findings

In order to provide a general view of the attitudes of the Flemish secondary school students used as informants in this study towards the three native and four non-native English accents, the results that were obtained for the present experiment will be summarised. The focus will be mostly on clear patterns which were discovered, so that this summary presents an overview of the general attitudes of the informants towards the various speakers and their speech.

The first part of the questionnaire that was used for the present experiment aimed at eliciting the attitudes of the informants towards the personality of the seven native and non-native speakers of English. In order to discover these attitudes, the informants rated the speakers on a number of 21 personality traits which were divided into four dimensions, reflecting the speaker’s competence, social attractiveness, personal integrity and social status.

The RP-speaker was perceived most favourably in terms of competence within the group of native accents as well as for the whole group of seven speech samples. The Irish accent was evaluated somewhat more positive than the American accent and they were both rated more favourably than the slight non-native accents. At the bottom of the hierarchy of accents in terms of competence were the two broad non-native accents, with the most unfavourable ratings for the broadly accented Flemish speaker.

As for the assessment of the various speakers on the social attractiveness dimension, the RP-speaker generally elicited the most positive attitudes, whereas the slightly accented Flemish speaker was rated least favourably. The two Dutch speakers and the American speakers were rated fairly positively and, finally, the Irish speech sample and the broad Flemish accent elicited almost similarly negative attitudes than the slightly accented Flemish speaker. These results were not consistent for all personality traits that were believed to reflect the speakers’ social attractiveness. For example with regard to sociability and sense of humour, the RP-speaker occupied a lower position on the hierarchy than the American speaker and the two Dutch speakers. The broad Dutch speaker was evaluated the most favourable of all seven speech samples on these traits. Furthermore, in
terms of ‘introvertiveness’ the two Flemish speakers, especially the slightly accented one, were favoured over all other speakers.

Relatively similar results to the ones on the social attractiveness dimension were found for the native speakers on the personal integrity dimension. The RP-speaker evoked once more the most favourable reactions, closely followed by the American speaker (who on one characteristic, i.e. honesty, received the most positive ratings) and the Irish speaker was downgraded the most of the three native speakers. Considering the non-native speakers as well, either the Flemish speakers were evaluated more positively than the Dutch speakers (in terms of honesty and modesty) or the slightly accented speakers received more favourable ratings than the broadly accented speakers (in terms of tolerance and trustworthiness). Looking at the seven speech samples as one group, the RP-speaker maintained his superior position.

Finally, the last series of personality traits were thought to reflect the speaker’s social status. The RP-speaker occupied a very convincingly first position, followed by a fairly positive evaluation for the slightly accented Flemish speaker. Both the Irish and the American speakers received more negative ratings, with the former eliciting slightly more favourable attitudes than the former. The slight Dutch English speaker had a similar middling position on the hierarchy than the Irish and American speakers and the two broadly accented non-native speech samples were favoured the least concerning social status, with the broad Flemish speaker at the bottom.

These last findings point to a correlation between the speakers perceived competence and the assessment of their social status. Apart from the slightly accented Flemish speaker – who was evaluated far more favourably on social status than on competence – the hierarchy of accents is the same for both these personality dimensions. For example, the RP-speaker was related to the highest degree of competence, which corresponds to the highly positive ratings for this speaker regarding social status. Moreover, the most convincing majority of all speakers believed the RP-speaker to be a member of the higher social class. At the other end of the hierarchy, the broadly accented Flemish speaker was attributed to the lowest degree of competence and social status of all speakers. Furthermore, only a very small minority thought this speaker was a member of the higher social class, whereas the most convincing majority placed him in middle class position. Therefore, it can be said that, apparently, “a person’s competence is inextricably linked to his or her social status” (Botterman 1995: 105).
The second part of the questionnaire was devoted to the evaluation of the various accents on speech scales. The assessment of the speech samples was divided in three dimensions, viz. the status dimension, the aesthetic dimension and the solidarity dimension.

The results for the accents’ status dimension were to some extent in accordance with the findings for the speakers’ social status. With regard to ‘educatedness’ the RP accent was overwhelmingly favoured in comparison with all other speech samples. The slight Flemish English accent came in second with a highly positive score as well, followed by middling positions for the slightly accented Dutch accent and the American and Irish speech samples. The broad non-native accents once more occupied the bottom position, although as opposed to the results for the speakers’ social status, it was the broad Dutch English accent that was associated with the most negative ratings. As for intelligibility, the first position was no longer occupied by the RP accent. Surprisingly, the American accent was perceived to have the highest degree of intelligibility, followed by positive ratings for the slight Flemish accent and RP. Apart from these changes, the hierarchy remained relatively similar to the one described for ‘educatedness’, again with the broad Dutch English accent at the bottom.

The RP speech sample was also the most favoured of all seven accents on the aesthetic dimension. Moreover, this was the only accent that elicited positive evaluations on this dimension as opposed to much more negative ratings for all the other speech samples. Similar to the results for the accent’s status dimension, the slight non-native accents were perceived more favourably than the broad non-native ones. The latter, once again, occupied the bottom position on the hierarchy, with the broad Dutch English accent related to the least favourable evaluations. The American speech sample received fairly positive ratings, especially compared to the more unfavourable evaluation of the Irish accent.

The results for the solidarity dimension of the accents showed a different picture concerning the desire of the informants to have a teacher with a certain English accent, in that the RP speech sample was no longer the most favoured accent (receiving a lower percentage than the American accent, for instance). However, when it comes to the question asking the informants whether they wanted to speak with the accent themselves, the results showed a hierarchy of accents that was very similar to the one described for the aesthetic dimension. This implies that the informants based themselves on the aesthetic value of the accent for their answer to this question. Thus, the RP accent was favoured the most, followed by a fairly positive result for the American accent and a more negative
result for the Irish accent. Further, more favourable responses were found for the slight non-native accents than the broad non-native accents, the latter being preferred by no one for their own English accent.

The reason why only a minority of the informants wished to have teacher speaking RP was ascribed to the relatively strict character of the informants rating this speech sample and was therefore not considered to overwhelmingly contradict the overall positive results for this speech sample.

Considering these general findings it can be seen that some correlations exist between the evaluations on the personality scales and the assessment on the speech scales (cf. Botterman 1995: 106; Hiels 1996: 88). This is especially the case for the RP-speaker, who was not only rated the most favourably on the various personality traits but also elicited the most positive attitudes on the speech scales. For example, he was assigned to the higher social class by a large majority of the informants and, moreover, his accent was related to a very high degree of ‘educatedness’. The same correlation between the personality and speech scales can also be found for the accents that were generally at the bottom of the hierarchy, i.e. the broad non-native speech samples. Their accents were generally associated with a low aesthetic value and status which then relates to the unfavourable evaluations of these speakers’ in terms of competence and social status.

5.2. Discussion of the hypotheses

Before turning to some concluding remarks concerning the results of the present experiment, it seems interesting and necessary to shed some more light on the earlier postulated hypotheses (cf. 3.4). Based on the information that was derived from previous research on the study of language attitudes, seven hypotheses for the results of the present study were expressed. The main focus of this section will be to check whether these hypotheses proved to be valid or not, referring to the abovementioned general findings and to some of the results described in the fourth chapter.

- **H1**: (a) the non-native accents will be rated positively, considering the contemporary status of English as a lingua franca. (b) the native accents will then be perceived in a more negative way, taking the same context into account.
H2: (a) the non-native accents will be rated negatively, as a reflection of the importance of a native-like pronunciation in an educational context. (b) this attitude will be further enhanced by a more negative evaluation of the broad non-native accents.

With regard to the first two hypotheses, the results that were discovered for the present research rather convincingly validated the second hypothesis (the (b)-part in particular), which at the same time entailed that the first one did not find support in the results. Specifically the assumption that the broad non-native accents would receive more unfavourable scores than the slight non-native accents was confirmed in the present experiment. This was particularly the case for the competence and social status dimensions, on which the broad Flemish and Dutch speakers were rated the least favourably. As for the status, aesthetic and solidarity dimensions of the accents as such, these speech samples were also related to the most negative evaluations. Summarizing, the informants looked down on a high degree of foreignness in the English pronunciation, and, therefore, the dominance of a native-like pronunciation in the Flemish educational context seemed to overrule the status of English as a lingua franca.

H3: the Dutch English accents will be rated unfavourably in comparison with the Flemish English accents, following previous attitude studies conducted in Flanders (De Caluwe 1992).

The third hypothesis was too some extent confirmed by the results of the present study. Comparing only the broadly accented non-native speakers, it was discovered that the speaker with a broad Dutch accent was rated more unfavourably concerning the evaluation of this accent on the status and aesthetic dimensions. Furthermore, it was found that the Dutch speakers were evaluated more negatively on individual traits underlying the social attractiveness (e.g. ‘introvertiveness’) and personal integrity (e.g. modesty, honesty) dimensions. This confirms what De Caluwe (1992) said about Flemings generally downgrading the accent of their northern neighbours, and associating them with personality characteristics such as “arrogant” and “blasé” (cf. 2.2.3). However, the elicited attitudes towards the non-native speech samples were more frequently seen to be...
distributed along the slight-broad divide, as discussed for the second hypothesis, rather than on the Flemish-Dutch one.

- **H4**: the RP-accented speaker will be judged favourably on the competence and social status dimensions, indicating the importance of this accent in formal and educational contexts.

This hypothesis was validated in a large extent, since the RP speaker was seen to have the a strong superior position in terms of competence and social status. What is more, this speech sample was generally evaluated the most favourably on all other described personality and speech dimensions as well. This indicates that the prestige of this accent was overwhelmingly confirmed in the present research, and that the general downgrading of this accent on social attractiveness- and personal integrity-reflecting traits was undermined.

- **H5**: The American accented speaker will be evaluated favourably on the social attractiveness and personal integrity dimensions, indicating the influence of the generally Americanised popular media on the informants.

Taking the abovementioned generally favourable ratings for the RP speaker into account, it appeared that this hypothesis did not find support in the results for the present experiment. Therefore, the influence of the American popular media on the Flemish pupils used as informants did not prove to be as strong as expected. However, on certain individual personality traits underlying the two dimensions mentioned in the hypothesis, the American speech sample received more positive ratings than the RP speaker. This was the case for the speaker’s perceived honesty (personal integrity) and sense of humour and sociability (social attractiveness). Moreover, the American speaker was regarded as the most intelligible and a relatively high percentage of the informants expressed a wish to have a teacher with this accent. Thus, although the RP-speaker was on the whole the most favourite accent, this hypothesis seems to be validated too some extent. A possible reason for this unexpected result, i.e. the fact that this hypothesis was not confirmed, was offered by referring to the low correctness rates for the American accent (cf. Table 1).
- **H6**: The Irish accent will have no clear evaluation pattern, indicating the informants’ unfamiliarity with the accent.
- **H7**: The Irish-accented speaker will be rated positively on the social attractiveness and personal integrity dimensions, referring to the previous results obtained by Botterman (1995).

The last expectations that were formulated for the outcome of the present study, were with regard to the Irish speech sample. It was discovered that the informants had a lot of difficulty in recognising the nationality of this speaker, which confirms the sixth and not the seventh hypothesis. On the whole, the Irish speaker was rated rather negatively on all discerned dimensions, which clearly contradicts the expectation that this speech sample would be rated favourably on personal integrity and social attractiveness. Because of the low correctness rates for this accent, it proved quite difficult to explain these negative ratings. Plausible clarifications were that informants either based themselves on particular idiosyncratic features of the speaker or on the fact that this accent deviated from the RP-norm.

### 5.3. Concluding remarks

The present study showed that the Flemish secondary school students seem to favour an RP pronunciation over all other native and non-native accents. Moreover, they held a similar strong opinion about the broad non-native English accents, although in this case it was an overwhelmingly negative one. Apparently, even when the contemporary status of English as a lingua franca is taken into consideration, the informants were absolutely not keen on using or listening to non-native English accents. It should be noted, however, that these results might be influenced by the fact that the experiment was set in an educational context, in which the ‘correct’ pronunciation is strongly emphasised and all deviations from the norm, thus also non-native accents, are discouraged. Previous research has shown that non-native speakers of English elicit less unfavourable attitudes “when the setting for their speech is the home rather than school” (Knops 1988: 106). Further research is needed in order to find out whether the same attitudes would be discovered towards the accents used in this study if the experiment was not set in school but in a more informal context.
Furthermore, it was mentioned that four out of the seven speech samples did not sound familiar to the informants. Consequently, illogical patterns were sometimes found in the results because no underlying assumptions about the nationality of the speaker in question could account for the obtained attitude. The respondents that were used for the present experiment clearly did not have an extensive knowledge of the various varieties of English. Possibly, however, their knowledge of these varieties would have proved to be better if more explicit and pronounced accents were used. It should be kept in mind, then, that further research using accents that are familiar to all informants could indicate completely different results.
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APPENDIX

1a. Text fragment (original)

1b. Text fragment (adjusted version)

2. Questionnaire
1a. Text fragment (original)

(1) Do the financial rewards match the emotional ones?
(2) Emotionally, nursing is one of the most satisfying of professions.
(3) Imagine how rewarding it is to nurse a stroke victim towards independence. (4) Or to watch a critically ill patient go into intensive care and come out of it in a stable condition. (5) Or being recognised and thanked by former patients.
(6) Of course these sorts of experiences are worth a great deal. (7) But you can’t live off experiences any more than you can live off fresh air.
(8) So what sort of money can you expect as a nurse?
(9) A nurse’s salary is far from being the pittance of popular imagination. (10) The very least a newly qualified nurse can earn is £____ or £____ in Inner London. (11) These figures and the ones that follow exclude unsocial hours payment.
(12) But the above salary is just the first rung on the pay ladder.
(13) The pay structure in nursing is designed to reward the clinical skills and responsibilities of individual posts. (14) In other words, it’s no longer necessary for a nurse to leave the patient’s bedside in order to earn a higher salary. (15) Even better, each step-up or grade gets an automatic increment every year for the first four years.
(16) But what does it all mean in real terms (or rather real money)?
(17) Well, more than three out of four staff nurses are currently in one of the higher grades. (18) They earn up to £____ or £____ in Inner London.
(19) And what’s the money like if you go on to become a Ward Sister or (the male equivalent) a Charge Nurse?
(20) They can earn as much as £____ or £____ in Inner London.
(21) Not as bad as you thought, is it? (22) Of course, you’re unlikely to be attracted to nursing because of the money. (23) But there’s no reason in the world why you shouldn’t be.
(24) What did you do at work today?
Do the financial rewards match the emotional ones?

Emotionally, nursing is one of the most satisfying of professions. Imagine how rewarding it is to nurse a stroke victim towards independence. Or to watch a critically ill patient go into intensive care and come out of it in a stable condition. Or being recognised and thanked by former patients.

Of course these sorts of experiences are worth a great deal. But you can’t live off experiences any more than you can live off fresh air. So what sort of money can you expect as a nurse?

A nurse’s salary is far from being the pittance of popular imagination. The very least a newly qualified nurse can earn is €1400.

But the above salary is just the first rung on the pay ladder. The pay structure in nursing is designed to reward the clinical skills and responsibilities of individual posts. In other words, it’s no longer necessary for a nurse to leave the patient’s bedside in order to earn a higher salary. Even better, each step-up or grade gets an automatic increment every year for the first four years.

But what does it all mean in real terms (or rather real money?). Well, more than three out of four staff nurses are currently in one of the higher grades. They earn up to €1700. And what’s the money like if you go on to become a Ward Sister or (the male equivalent) a Charge Nurse? They can earn as much as €1900. Not as bad as you thought, is it? Of course, you’re unlikely to be attracted to nursing because of the money. But there’s no reason in the world why you shouldn’t be.
2. Questionnaire

Beste leerling,

Als laatstejaarsstudente Germaanse Talen doe ik voor mijn thesis een onderzoek naar uw evaluatie van iemands persoonlijkheid met enkel diens stem als basis. Gelieve na het beluisteren van het geluidsfragment dan ook volgende vragenlijst zo eerlijk mogelijk in te vullen. Uw antwoorden zullen anoniem verwerkt worden en zijn dus strikt vertrouwelijk. Alvast heel erg bedankt voor de medewerking!

Joke Tavernier

I.
Hoe komt deze persoon bij jou over? Hoe zou je de persoonlijkheid van deze persoon beschrijven?

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II. Wat is de beroepstoestand van deze persoon volgens jou? Kies één van de volgende:

☐ een vrij beroep (dokter, advocaat etc.)
☐ een leidinggevende functie (directeur, manager etc.)
☐ een functie in het onderwijs (leerkracht, professor etc.)
☐ bediende of winkelier
☐ arbeider
☐ student aan een hogeschool of universiteit
☐ gepensioneerd
☐ werkloos

III. Hoe oud is deze persoon volgens jou? Kies één van volgende mogelijkheden:

☐ < 20 jaar
☐ 20-30 jaar
☐ 30-40 jaar
☐ 40-50 jaar
☐ 50-60 jaar
☐ > 60 jaar

IV. 1. Wat vind je van de stem van deze persoon?

mooi | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 lelijk

2. Hoe klinkt het accent van deze persoon?

beschafd | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 onbeschafd
mooi | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 lelijk
gemakkelijk verstaanbaar | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 moeilijk verstaanbaar
aangenaam | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 onaangenaam

3. Zou je zelf met dergelijk accent willen spreken (bij het leren van Engels als tweede/derde taal)?

☐ Ja
☐ Neen

Indien neen, waarom niet?
..........................................................................................................................

4. Zou je een leraar/lerares Engels met dergelijk accent willen?

☐ Ja
☐ Neen

Indien neen, waarom niet?
..........................................................................................................................
5. Vind je het nuttig om Engels te leren?

| Ja, ik vind het nuttig | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Neen, ik vind het niet nuttig |

Waarom wel/niet?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

V.

1. Waar komt deze persoon volgens jou vandaan?

□ Amerika
□ Engeland
□ Ierland
□ Vlaanderen
□ Nederland
□ Australië
□ Schotland
□ Andere: ………………………………………………….

2. Tot welke sociale klasse hoort deze spreker volgens jou?

□ Hogere klasse
□ Middenklasse
□ Lagere klasse

VI.

1. In welk jaar ben je geboren?

19……...

2. Wat is je geslacht?

□ Man
□ Vrouw

3. Welke richting volg je op school?

□ Humane wetenschappen
□ Economie – moderne talen
□ Economie – wiskunde
□ Latijn – moderne talen
□ Wetenschappen – moderne talen
□ Wiskunde – moderne talen
□ Wetenschappen – wiskunde
□ Andere: …………………………………………..

4. Hoeveel uur Engels krijg je per week op school?

□ 2 uur/week
□ 3 uur/week
□ Andere: …………………………………………..
5. Wat is het hoogste diploma dat je moeder/vader behaald heeft?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vader</th>
<th>Moeder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lager onderwijs</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secundair beroeps (BSO)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secundair technisch (TSO)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secundair kunstonderwijs (KSO)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secundair algemeen vormend (ASO)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niet universitair hoger onderwijs</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universitair onderwijs</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Ben je al naar een Engels sprekend land geweest? Zo ja,

Welk land?
........................................................................................................................................................................

Welke stad?
........................................................................................................................................................................

Hoe lang?
........................................................................................................................................................................

7. Heb je vrienden of familieleden die Engelstalig zijn?

☐ Ja  ☐ Neen

Zo ja, uit welk land?
........................................................................................................................................................................

8. Wat vind je van Engels als vak op school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>boeiend</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>saai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Bedankt voor de medewerking!