The relationship between accentedness and perceived friendliness, intelligence, and employability: A Montreal-based investigation

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Abstract

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The present study investigates and characterizes potential relationships between accentedness and three language attitude traits: friendliness, intelligence, and employability, in a comparison of L1 English and L1 non-English individuals. Using a direct approach method and situated in the broader English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) context, this research is intended to provide insights for the second language speaker of English regarding the perception of their accented speech. Insights into such perceptions are of high concern to the second language speaker, whose accented speech output is inherently linked with positive or negative judgments by listeners. These judgments are prevalent, subjective, and significantly impact outcomes of opportunity among second language speakers. Twelve-item questionnaires were issued to the sample population, and their responses collated and analyzed for statistical significance. The findings indicate a difference in mean ratings of the measures of friendliness, intelligence, and employability between English and non-English L1 raters, though at a significance level precluding rejection of the null hypothesis. However, significant correlations were observed between ratings of friendliness, intelligence, and employability, and between ratings of accentedness and intelligence. These findings suggest that participants perceived more highly accented speech as less intelligent. Furthermore, ratings of friendliness, intelligence, and employability were closely interrelated across participants. Additional research is suggested to evaluate these relationships, oriented around achieving a wider and more representative

population sample, and further investigation of the friendliness, intelligence, and employability constructs for sub-dimensionality.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As an ESL instructor and teacher now working primarily with accommodated students (i.e., who receive adjustments or support to help them succeed in their education), I have experienced the significant impact that language attitude judgments have on the second language learner or speaker. These prevalent negative or positive judgments have been sources of high interest and concern for many of my students, and frequently impact their choices in terms of employment, community, social interaction, and their access to opportunities. In my experience, students are frequently concerned with the impression that their accented speech elicits, particularly in interactions with native English speakers or "in-groups" (those already firmly established in the local environment). Indeed, in many ESL language teaching environments I have participated in, strategies have been directly targeted towards adaptation to native-like accentedness patterns (e.g., the oral production of English diphthongs, /t, d/ flapping) and the overall quality of learners' communicative competence. These strategies are often explicitly intended for the evasion of potential negative judgments, including the avoidance of language or pronunciation, which may accidentally be perceived as insulting or maladaptive, or specifically coded in terms of local (or broader) norms. The navigation of accentedness (whether one's own, or others') plays a central role in shaping positive or negative judgments about language attitudes, but a relatively limited amount of research is intended to provide the accented speaker with more information about these perceptions as they pertain to speech output. This study is intended to provide additional information to the accented speaker about language attitudes of friendliness, intelligence, and employability, and how they may be impacted by accented L2

speech production. This investigation aims to address the concerns of L2 speakers regarding potentially negative or positive judgments associated with their accented speech.

Accentedness and the ESL Speaker

The second language (L2) accented speaker participating in the modern English language learning environment is motivated by a variety of interests and concerns, akin to the second language learner or user in general. As the evasion of potential negative judgments is of particular concern to the L2 speaker, much available literature is concerned primarily with helping such speakers modify their speech patterns to evade these judgments (Shah, 2010; Shah, 2012; Behrman, 2014). Due to this focus, there is a relatively limited amount of research intended to provide learners with actionable insight into the language attitude-based reception of their accented speech output (Shah, 2019).

Language attitudes comprise a diverse constellation of linguistic and extralinguistic traits. Listeners continuously and dynamically evaluate these traits as they interpret a speaker's output. As we listen, we evaluate negative or positive impressions about the speaker's friendliness, intelligence, communicative competence, confidence, and other traits that are continually formed and developed. These impressions directly or indirectly influence access to opportunities, including employment (e.g., being invited for job interviews) or housing (e.g., securing a lease for a dwelling). The L2 speaker may benefit from additional information provided on these language attitude judgments, particularly in terms of elements (e.g., employability) central to their quality of life. Accentedness, as a core construct involved across many dimensions of speech output, has been consistently reported as being of relevance to such subjective judgments by students across varied gender, age, and language level (Major et al., 2005, Levis, 2005; Bergeron & Trofimovich, 2017).

As such, the present study proposes an investigation into the dynamic interaction of accentedness and primary language attitude traits including friendliness, intelligence, and employability. Inspired by a frequent concern reported by many second language learners I have interacted with, it aims to address the following research question: do first language (L1) and second language (L2) English speakers make significantly different judgments of the accented L2 speaker's intelligence, friendliness and employability? This study seeks to provide additional information to the L2 speaker (regarding the perceptual judgments made of their accented oral production) in view of the available literature and situates itself within the direct approach towards language attitude research in an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) context. A secondary goal is to inform and characterize the employability, friendliness, and intelligence constructs as they relate to accented interaction more fully.

The Direct Approach in an ELF Context

In modern English-speaking contexts, established and novel varieties of English, including diverse pronunciations and accents, dynamically interact (Kortmann et al., 2004). Modern conveniences including the Internet and related social media have resulted in unprecedented levels of interaction between individuals speaking in various "Englishes" (Mauranen, 2018), all of whom exhibit varying degrees of accent. L1 and L2 speakers of English are ever more likely to interact in a world language context where native speakers are outnumbered by non-native speakers to a significant degree (Loewen, 2015). This "English as a Lingua Franca" context informs the current study, oriented around relevant concerns of the L2 English speaker (e.g., access to opportunity as impacted by language attitude judgments). Furthermore, this study situates itself firmly within the direct approach, whereby language attitude judgments are elicited through surveys and/or questionnaires (Garrett, 2010). This

approach has been applied historically to language attitudes of both native speakers (Artamonova, 2020) and L2 speakers (Friedrich, 2000; Timmis, 2002) in regard to their judgments of accented speech. The combination of the direct approach and the ELF context affords a well-founded guide to the investigation of language attitudes in populations like those of concern to this study (English language users and accented speakers).

Friendliness, Intelligence, Employability: Practical Concerns

Across my interactions with language students, it has been clear that significant amounts of effort are applied not only towards general intelligibility, but also towards specific elements of language expression, which express more subtle aspects of speech like insinuation or impression. Frequently, students want to receive additional training on how to sound more friendly, more approachable, more distinguished or intelligent, or even more employable in a professional context. Beyond the focus on "correct" or targeted prescriptive language, students are concerned with providing a positive impression, and in practical terms, impressing a potential employer in a job interview or successfully navigating interaction at a business or institution – including banks, hospitals, or leasing agencies. Students have consistently expressed that these concerns are of primary relevance, due to their direct impact on ability to find a job, dwelling, or indeed access basic resources and opportunities.

Language attitude judgments – that is to say, language-based judgments of traits like friendliness, intelligence, or employability – are subjective, frequently formed, and dynamically mutable as the listener navigates the speaker's accented output. For this study's purposes, three solidarity and status-based traits were selected for analysis: friendliness, intelligence, and employability.

This Thesis

This manuscript-based thesis examines the relationship between L1 identity (whether English or non-English) and language attitude judgments of friendliness, intelligence, and employability, regarding accented speech. Using the direct approach in an English as a Lingua Franca context, it aims to provide insights for the L2 language speaker, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the negative and positive judgments made about their speech. This understanding will be obtained through the statistical comparison of questionnaire responses, whether of L1 English or non-English respondents.

The next chapter constitutes a fully submittable draft of a manuscript which examines the relationship between L1 identity and language attitude judgments (friendliness, intelligence, and employability) on accented speech.

Chapter 2

The Manuscript

Accented foreign or second-language speakers of English, as well as speakers of non-standard varieties of English in general, recognize the implications of being judged based on their pronunciation (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016). Language attitude judgments are prevalent, continuously formed from impressions and dynamic interaction across the spectrum of speaker and listener identity. Indeed, the precise formation and implications of such judgments are a frequently studied phenomenon in sociolinguistics, second language acquisition, and applied linguistics in general. Negative or positive judgments of solidarity or status traits, including an individual's perceived friendliness, intelligence or employability, have concrete implications and consequences in terms of discrimination (Lippi-Green, 1997), authenticity of self-presentation (Zuniga & Simard, 2022), and accessibility to opportunities (Chakraborty, 2017) - particularly in modern English contexts where first and second-language speakers with varied language identities or backgrounds interact (Jenkins, 2002).

The present study aims to investigate language attitude judgments of accented L2 speech in terms of the listener's rating of the speaker's intelligence, friendliness, and potential employability. Insight into the precise operation of this phenomena in an English Lingua Franca (ELF) context (Jenkins, 2002) may serve to contextualize traditionally neglected efforts to provide second or additional language (L2 henceforth) speakers with information on how their accents are interpreted by others in these qualitative judgments of personality, socioeconomic status, approachability, and prestige. In ELF contexts, first-language speakers and second-language speakers of English frequently interact, and thus frequently form language attitudes;

however, the question of whether these two groups of language users differ in their ratings of language attitudes (and, if so, to what degree) forms the impetus for the current study.

Interaction in English as a Lingua Franca Contexts

First-language (L1) speakers of English are ever more likely to interact with L2 English speakers in a variety of situations, from daily life to business, in a world language context where native speakers are outnumbered by non-native speakers to a significant degree (Loewen, 2015). In this ELF context, the related issues of accent, pronunciation, and judgment by native and non-native speakers of English are directly relevant to the experiences of second or additional language English (L2) learners, for whom mutual intelligibility, sociocultural competence, and practical communication within the local context constitute primary goals (Dewaele, 2004, Jenkins, 2002; Pickering, 2006). Indeed, attitudes about the accented oral production of second or additional language speakers are continually reflected in personal judgments of the speaker, with standard varieties typically valued and non-standard varieties typically undervalued (Renoud, 2008; Trofimovich & Turuseva, 2020).

Appropriately, SLA researchers are steadily becoming more familiar with the concept of multiple "Englishes" (Mauranen, 2018) and their interaction, primarily due to high potential for variation, crossing of cultural/national boundaries, and the high incidence of native speakers of other languages inhabiting the so-called "Inner Circle" ELF countries (Mauranen, 2018; Sridhar & Sridhar, 1986; Sridhar, 1994). In such contexts, native English speakers interact consistently with non-native speakers of English who exhibit varied oral production; as such, it is of crucial importance to further characterize such interactions to provide insight into the progressive and dynamic language change and interaction which occurs in such diverse L1 environments (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Mauranen, 2018; Shah, 2019).

Both native and non-native English speakers' attitudes towards non-standard and non-native English varieties have been extensively studied by SLA researchers in terms of linguistic measures such as accentedness, as well as extralinguistic measures including status and solidarity traits (Saito, Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2017; Shah, 2019). Status traits typically include employment, socioeconomic status, prestige, or other elements which hold a significant degree of utilitarian value in economic or hierarchical terms (Lindberg & Trofimovich, 2020). Solidarity traits, by contrast, usually encompass empathic personality characteristics such as friendliness, openness, or honesty which elicit feelings of attachment (Cavallaro & Ng, 2009) (Lindberg & Trofimovich, 2020). Often, these ratings reflect a variety of negative attitudes towards accented speech. For instance, L2 users often hold negative attitudes towards their own and other L2 accents (McKenzie, 2008). Furthermore, less-recognizable accents relative to the local environment have been observed to correlate with lower listener ratings of the speaker's social competence or level of education (Mirshahidi, 2017).

In a context where the L2 speaker already commonly experiences negative feelings of inauthenticity in their presentation (Cohen & Norst, 1989), these attitudes can contribute to feelings of inadequacy (Cohen & Norst, 1989), foreign language anxiety (MacIntyre, 1999) (Zuniga & Simard, 2022), frustration or lack of mutual understanding (MacIntyre & Serroul, 2015), and loss of prestige or competence for other speakers (Dewaele, 2004). As such, the precise operation of L1 and L2 speaker judgments of L2 accented speech is of direct relevance to the SLA and, more specific, to ELF contexts: these judgments serve both to characterize L2 speakers in terms of qualitative assessment of their identity, as well as present potential barriers to communicative competence between non-native and native English speakers in the ELF

context. A primary distinguishing characteristic between these speakers is the presence of accentedness, which will form a central concern of the present study.

Accentedness and Language Attitudes

Accent is typically defined as the sum total of differences in pronunciation and phonology between two given varieties of a language (Derwing et al., 2014; Fromkin & Rodman, 1998; Maclagan, 2005; Trudgill, 2000). Substantive differences in accent type or quality have been conceptualized in terms of specific measures of accentedness (Major, 2001; & Blanchet, 2017), typically in terms of vowel quality and the articulation of consonants (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2015), syllable timing (Wiltshire & Moon, 2003), intonation and speech rate (Bergeron & Trofimovich, 2017), and word stress (Saito, Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2016). As such, measures of accentedness are strongly tied to segmental pronunciation, intonation, and syllable timing rather than lexis or grammar of an L2 speaker (Saito, Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2017) and can be understood to function as reflective of a primarily phonological phenomenon.

Importantly, level of accentedness is not necessarily directly correlated with comprehensibility: a given individual may exhibit highly comprehensible, understandable, even intelligible speech while producing highly accented output (Derwing & Munro, 1997; Crowther, Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2016). However, existing literature suggests that the accentedness construct is relevant to the accomplishment of the broader goals of communicative competence, particularly comprehensibility; and intelligibility during language development (Levis, 2005; Bergeron & Trofimovich, 2017), a concept that is referred to as the "Intelligibility Principle" (Loewen, 2015). Indeed, accentedness is directly relevant to crucial elements of language attitudes. Previous research into such attitudes suggests that pronunciation features produced by L2 users may affect both judgments of their degree of accentedness, as well as influence

judgments of the speaker's perceived personality traits and identity (Beinhoff, 2013). Overall, this research suggests a strong preference among learners for native-like production (Friedrich, 2000; Friedrich, 2003; Derwing, 2003), but reveals that in at least some contexts, there is a disconnect between such preference and individual ability to even identify accentedness, or accurately determine variety of accent (Wong, 2018).

Meanwhile, research into the effect of language attitudes on the status-related trait of employability suggests that speakers of a "standard form" of English often receive higher-quality employment offers and are, overall, seen as more employable in job interview situations, with American and British English viewed as particularly desirable in job candidates (Hopper, 1977; Hopper & Williams, 1973; Timming, 2017). This paradigm, where perceived employability and perceived intelligence are related to level of accentedness or spoken variety of English, is similarly applicable to individuals from foreign countries and individual accents originating from distinct regions within countries (Chakraborty, 2017).

The complex interplay of accent and language attitudes (whether positive or negative) is immediately relevant and recognizable to many second or additional language speakers, who share common goals of communicative and sociocultural competence (Dewaele, 2004) and often seek equitable integration into academic and work communities. In such communities of practice within the broader ELF context, the formation of language attitudes is prevalent and dynamic due to the high degree of mixed interaction of native and non-native speakers. Such formation of language attitudes is furthermore directly relevant to the accomplishment of an L2 speaker's goals and the desired authenticity of their self-presentation (Chakraborty, 2017). Ultimately, it has been well-established that listeners judge accents dissimilar to their own, and that such judgments have significant consequences to accented speakers (Shah, 2019).

Approaches to Study of Language Attitudes

Two central approaches to the measurement of language attitudes have been used in the bulk of research on language attitudes regarding accented speech: the direct approach, where participant attitudes are typically elicited through surveys or questionnaires (Garrett, 2010), and an indirect approach using techniques including the matched guise technique (Connor, 2008; Magne, 2016). The direct approach has, historically, been primarily concerned with L2 attitudes towards native varieties of English (Friedrich, 2000; Timmis, 2002). However, the direct approach has also been applied to language attitudes of native speakers towards accented speech, as well as non-standard varieties present in "World Englishes" (Artamonova, 2020).

The study of attitudes of such native speakers towards accented speech and non-standard varieties of English is of prime importance: non-native and accented speakers of English face potential discrimination in housing, education and in workplace contexts (Chakraborty, 2017; Lippi-Green, 1997). Importantly, this discrimination can even occur without accented speech, as listeners will sometimes assume a speaker is accented based on extralinguistic elements such as appearance (Rubin, 1992). Furthermore, attitudes towards specific cultural groups, as well as importance of language and accent in each society or culture (particularly in terms of education and politics) can influence listener attitudes concerning L2 speakers (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Reid, Trofimovich & O'Brien, 2019). The direct approach, then, offers a well-founded guide to investigation of language attitudes in populations like those of interest in this study (English language users in ELF contexts and the accented speakers who interact with them), and will dictate the approach towards preparation of questionnaire materials.

The ELF "Inner Circle" Context: Montreal, Quebec

Much of current SLA and sociolinguistic literature is concerned with progressive change in language patterns (Leech et al., 2009; Mair, 2017), and the dynamic interaction of both established and novel varieties of English (Kortmann et al., 2004). Furthermore, ELF has been posited as a major driver of this change in the global context of English as an internationally spoken language (Mauranen, 2018). This dynamic interaction of language identities is evident in the target population of the study: French-based accents in L2 English in Montreal, Quebec.

English-French bilingualism is relatively common in Quebec, exhibiting increasing rates among the school-age youth (5-17) from 28% in 2006 to 33% in 2016 (Turcotte, 2019). Retention rates of both languages are likewise relatively high in Quebec (Houle & Corbeil, 2016; Houle & Corbeil, 2017), implying relative likelihood of familiarity with both languages (and therefore their accents) among the target population. Although the charter of the City of Montreal identifies the city as French, it seems clear that the people living within the area are exposed to both English and French L1 identities experientially. As such, investigation contextualized by an ELF approach may serve to provide further insight into the operation of the phenomenon of language attitudes in this environment. Furthermore, the intense political, societal, cultural, and educative focus in the Quebec and Montreal contexts on interaction between English and French speakers stresses the immediate relevancy of learner attitude investigation, particularly in situations of possible opportunity and/or inequality (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Additionally, the Montreal context offers an opportunity to study specifically non-monolingual English language users who may have experience distinguishing between accents, more directly reflective of typical interaction in the contemporary ELF environment.

Simply put, in an ELF context such as the target population, it is of crucial importance to investigate judgments and assessments of an individual's personality traits that occur as a result of interaction between English language users and accented L2 speakers of English. Such investigation may provide insight into phenomena of discrimination, inequality, or difficulty with self-presentation that L2 accented speakers experience, with real and effective "stakes" for their opportunity and employment.

Studies of language attitudes experienced by accented English speakers in ELF "Inner Circle" contexts like Montreal reflect a complex environmental context involving judgments of prestige, authenticity, and employability that both L1 and L2 speakers of English must navigate (Lindberg & Trofimovich, 2020; Timming, 2017; Timmis, 2002; Wernicke, 2016). As discussed above, linguistically varied and complex contexts, such as those involving the perception of French accents in Montreal, represent critical areas for further investigation through ELF language attitude perspectives (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). For instance, some research into language attitude differences between judgments of Canadian French and European French accentedness has reflected a perception among teachers that European French is more authentic, and that there is some belief that the identity of a French language expert is more congruous with European French accent (Wernicke, 2016). Likewise, language attitude studies performed in Montreal have revealed similar positive beliefs regarding prestige and preference of European French accents (Lindberg & Trofimovich, 2020). Considering L2 individuals' desire for self-presented authenticity (Cohen & Norst, 1989) and competing concerns of sociocultural competence including prestige, intelligence, and friendliness (Dewaele, 2004), it seems an opportune time to investigate this issue in terms of English language operations in the context of Montreal. Such investigation could provide local English language users with additional

information and context regarding their interactions with second or additional-language English speakers.

Measures: Friendliness, Intelligence and Employability

The target measures of friendliness, intelligence, and employability were selected for several reasons. Primarily, these measures have a long pedigree of study in Applied Linguistics in general, as well as within the subject of language attitudes specifically (Giles & Coupland, 1991). What literature is available tends to be concerned primarily with helping speakers modify their speech patterns to evade possible negative judgments (Shah, 2010; Shah, 2012; Behrman, 2014). Because of this focus, there is only a limited amount of research intended to provide learners with actionable insight into the attitude-based reception of their accented output (Shah, 2019). Fundamentally, language attitudes regarding accent bias are inherently subjective, rendering the phenomenon difficult to reliably study – despite the prevalence of accent bias in any context of interaction between standard variety speakers and non-standard variety speakers.

Friendliness, intelligence, and employability constitute well-studied measures in applied linguistics literature generally, as well as the study of language attitudes in particular. Friendliness, as a measure, has typically been studied in terms of its operation within a broader cluster of solidarity traits, which include similar perceptual judgments like honesty, warmth, or trustworthiness (Trofimovich & Turuseva, 2020). Friendliness, in such studies, is typically established as the quality of being pleasant, affable, or kind towards another – simply put, being of a friendly disposition (Ryzhkova, 2018).

The second measure, intelligence, is often studied in linguistics in terms of specifically social intelligence – which involves cognitive, behavioural, and affective goals which contribute towards intercultural communicative competence (Wawra, 2009). Such social intelligence was

first defined by Thorndike (1920) as the ability to understand and manage others, and to act wisely in human relationships (Walker & Foley, 1973). Recent developments in sociopsychological literature outline this social intelligence as concerned with motivational and social factors, as well as information-processing mechanisms which instantiate cognitive processes (Oschner & Lieberman, 2001). Social intelligence forms a fundamental component of any intercultural (and thus, inter-accent) communication (Wawra, 2009). So far, as will be the case in the current study, much of the research into listener judgments of accented speech in terms of friendliness and intelligence has focused on Likert-type ordinal ratings by listeners representative of a given population (Wernicke, 2016; Shah, 2019).

Finally, employability of L2 language users is an increasingly relevant topic in sociolinguistic research (Hyde, 2015). Individuals seeking employment in a foreign country (Canning, 2009) or with employers who do not select for a particular variety of accent (Atkins, 1993) may experience linguistic or extralinguistic obstacles during the hiring process as a result of their accentedness (Major et al., 2005). Employability can be understood as including elements pertaining to a candidate's potential for hiring, their expected performance once in the role, and typically as a research measure simulates the first phase of a given hiring process (Hyde, 2015). Friendliness and employability can be contrasted in terms of their operation as solidarity or status-related traits, respectively.

Overall, investigation of the measures of friendliness, intelligence and employability provides a three-pronged approach to the study of language attitudes. It comprises, respectively, a central solidarity-related trait (friendliness), a trait foundationally necessary for competent intercultural communication (social intelligence), and a primary status-related trait (employability). Previous studies have investigated both solidarity and status sets of traits,

including development of measures of friendliness, intelligence, and employability for the purposes of participant raters (Shah, 2019). The application of these measures to the populations of interest (English language users rating European French and Quebecois French accented L2 speakers), then, presents an approach to study that is well-founded in the literature while presenting possible actionable implications.

The Current Study

In summary, in an ELF context such as the multicultural setting that characterizes Montreal, L1 and L2 speakers of English are highly likely to interact with each other in a variety of situations in daily life. Both sets of speakers (L1 and L2) are continually in the process of making judgments of speech, particularly in the case of accented speech, and typically these judgments are negative when such speech differs significantly from experienced or standard varieties (e.g., McKenzie, 2008). Particularly, L2 speakers of English experience negative affect, anxiety, frustration, and feelings of inadequacy or inauthenticity in the presentation of their second (or additional) language. In the ELF context, this may translate to possible difficulties in interaction, or negative impactful judgments, particularly in high stake-holding situations (e.g., in academics or employment). So far, the priorities of teaching and language education in ELF contexts regarding sociolinguistic perspectives on accent have been oriented around mitigation of accented features, with native-like speech constituting a primary (if unrealistic) goal for many L2 English learners historically (Shah, 2019).

Relatively little research exists to contextualize these L2 English speakers' understanding of judgments regarding their accent. In ELF "Inner Circle" contexts, and in contexts where language debate and interaction are particularly culturally or politically salient, insight into these judgments may provide learners with additional informational resources concerning interaction

with native speakers, particularly in high-stakes relationships or situations. As such, the following research question is proposed to take steps towards providing such actionable insight to the accented speaker, as well as to further contextualize the dynamic of judgment of accented speech language attitudes:

- Do first language (L1) and second language (L2) English speakers make significantly different judgments of the French-based accented L2 speaker's intelligence, friendliness and employability?

It is hypothesized that, based on the current literature involving language attitude judgments related to accented speakers, listeners will make more negative judgments of highly French-based accented individuals across the three target profiles (intelligence, friendliness, and employability), particularly when those accents diverge significantly from local linguistic norms. If so, then further research may be motivated into further investigating the causality of this link, or the precise motivations listeners have for making such judgments. As such, the current study is concerned primarily with investigating a possible negative correlation between language attitude judgment and accentedness, specifically in the ELF context of Montreal, Quebec.

This investigation is centred around application of the direct approach towards language attitude research (where attitudes are elicited via surveys or questionnaires; Garrett, 2010) and situated firmly within existing research contexts concerning measures of perceived friendliness, intelligence, and employability among L2 accented speakers.

Method

Participants

Our participants formed two broad groups: (1) *accent speakers*, providing audio recordings of their accented output, and (2) *accent raters*, providing ratings of perceived

accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability of said audio recordings. The first group of participants, *accent speakers* (N=5), was recruited from a representative sample of L2 English speakers in Montreal, Quebec. Inclusion criteria for speakers consisted of the following: aged 18-35, having spoken English frequently for at least the past five years, and for whom French was a first language.

The second group, attitude raters (N=20), was recruited from a representative sample of English language users in Montreal, Quebec. Inclusion criteria for accent raters consisted of the following: aged 18-35, having lived in Montreal for at least five years, and frequently using English in work contexts. The attitude rater group varied in L1 between English and non-English first languages, including French, Hebrew, Hokkien, Turkish, and Hungarian. Both groups of adult participants varied in age and gender. All participants were compensated CAD $15 for their participation in the study.

Materials

Three main categories of instruments/materials were used in data collection and analysis for the purposes of the study:

Demographic questionnaires (Appendix 1B): The use of demographic questionnaires was motivated by the necessity of providing an accurate description of the participants and research sample (Hughes, Camden & Yangchen, 2016). Fundamentally, demographic elements often influence outcomes, as addressed in varied studies in the language attitudes literature (Chakraborty, 2017; Lippi-Green, 1997). The items involved in the demographic questionnaire issued to all participants included: their age, self-described gender identity, first language, age of first English use, number of years of continual English use, frequency of English use at work, frequency of English use outside of work, self-described level of English competency, self-

described level of familiarity with non-native English accents, and self-described level of familiarity with L2 English speakers. To anonymize participants, all responses on the demographic questionnaire were coded according to an assigned identity (e.g., “P01”, “P02”) in all further analysis.

Audio recording and playback instruments: Audio recordings were captured from the oral output of the accent speakers' group, in response to a shared prompt. Participants recruited into the *accent speaker* group provided a short audio recording (approximately 1.5 minutes) of their speech, in response to a prompted question regarding a potential job interview for a waitstaff/server position requiring the use of English (for details, see Appendix C). A recorded Zoom audio-only interview with the researcher was scheduled individually for each participant, during which they provided their answer to the prompt. Participants were asked to be as detailed as possible and to address several discrete topics within the prompt (e.g., self-introduction, previous experience, job expectations). These recordings were then organized for presentation to the accent rater participants, who rated the recordings according to their language attitude perception of the speaker’s accentedness, intelligence, friendliness, and employability. All audio recordings were presented to the accent rater participants using Zoom and LimeSurvey, which participants also used for recording their ratings.

Accent rater questionnaires (Appendix 2B): Accent rater participants were asked to rate their attitude evaluations of the audio recordings provided by the accent speaker participants. All attitude evaluation questionnaire items were rated on 100-point scales, arranged from “minimum” to “maximum” values, respectively. Participants were asked to position a slider on these scales which corresponded to their response to questionnaire items assigned to the target measures of perceived accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability. For each

section, one questionnaire items directly addressed the rater's perception of the measure (e.g., "*How accented do you think the speaker is?"*) while others presented statements which the respondent may agree or disagree with (e.g., "*I think this person would make a friendly colleague*). This approach has been identified as particularly valuable for analysis of subjective, perception-based attitudes regarding the measures of employability (Cargile, 2000), accentedness (Lindberg & Trofimovich, 2023), and some dimensions of friendliness, including interpersonal liking (Trofimovich et al., 2023).

Procedure

As described above, participants formed two groups: *accent speakers* and *accent raters.* Both groups were recruited in an open call to participation distributed through social media (Appendix 1A) and throughout the Department of Education (Appendix 2A). Upon recruitment and provision of written informed consent (Appendix D) in an initial meeting, participants were issued a short demographic questionnaire (Appendix 1B) to accurately describe the research sample and to provide information for future statistical analysis. To preserve anonymity, all results of the demographic questionnaire were coded, replacing any identifying information (e.g., names) with relevant codes (e.g., "P01", "P02"). Participants were given opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback after the initial questionnaire.

Participants recruited into the *accent speaker* group provided a short audio recording (approximately 1.5 minutes) of their speech, in response to a prompt question regarding a potential job interview for a waitstaff/server position *(*see Appendix C*).* A recorded Zoom audio-only interview with the researcher was scheduled individually for each participant, during which they provided their audio output, which was saved onto the researcher's computer, locked in a drawer in his private residence. Audio-only recordings were taken, to avoid potential interference

from facial expression, appearance, or other subjective extralinguistic elements. After the recording had been completed, the researcher debriefed the participant and answered any questions or concerns relevant to their participation. Participants were invited to contribute any qualitative information or observations they had about their participation in the survey (e.g., regarding reactions to the prompt). This approach was adopted to ensure maximum participant care and involvement.

Participants recruited into the *attitude rater* group then rated the audio recordings in terms of their perceived levels of accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability across a variety of question items. The recordings were played during a Zoom interview with the researcher, scheduled individually for each participant. After listening to the recordings, participants completed a survey questionnaire composed of thirteen items (three items per construct, with an additional item targeted towards intelligibility) intended to assess the above measures *(*Appendix 2B*).* Under each item, participants were asked to position a sliding indicator along an unlabeled 100-point scale corresponding to their rating response, with a rating of zero corresponding to a minimum assessment, and a rating of 100 corresponding to a maximum assessment of the measure. Participants were permitted to repeat listening to each recording and to modify their answers if needed. After rating all items, the participant was debriefed by the researcher, and the recorded Zoom interview logged for data analysis. Participants were given an opportunity to discuss their reactions to the research and to submit possible qualitative data on their rating motivations and potential biases. All questionnaires and recordings were hosted and delivered using LimeSurvey, an online questionnaire administration tool. Results of the surveys were exported to SPSS Statistical Package for further analysis.

Results

Multiple statistical analyses were applied to the population and rating results to address the core concern of the study: whether L1 or L2 English language users rated French-based accented speech significantly differently in terms of the L2 speaker's intelligence, friendliness, and employability. Further, an investigation of potential correlations between-measures was undertaken, as well as an investigation of their potential relationships to demographic or experiential data elicited from accent rater participants.

A primary concern of the research method was to establish an accurate characterization of the population sample. Two groups of participants were recruited: (1) the *accent speaker* sample (n=5) shared the targeted first language: L1 French, varied in age and gender; (2) the *accent rater* population (n=20) had a mean age of 29.20 (SD = 3.55) and varied in both gender and L1 identity (whether English, or non-English). See Appendix 1E for additional demographic items. Rated on 100-point scales, accent rater participants reported a high mean frequency of English use both at work (M = 74.00, SD = 28.94) and outside of work (M = 86.00, SD = 14.36), and reported a very high mean self-rated English-speaking skill (M = 94.85, SD = 5.09). Accent rater participants self-rated as being very familiar with L2 accents (M = 78.5, SD = 13.85) and L2 speakers (M = 89.45, SD = 15.46), although they rated their level of interaction with L2 speakers slightly lower (M = 70.65, SD = 19.79). Following a Shapiro-Wilk test (see Appendix 2E), the accent rater sample showed no significant departure from normality in the distribution of age (W = .92, df = 20, p = .113) and years of English use (W = .94, df = 20, p = .20*).* The accent rater sample showed no significant departure from normality in the distribution of self-ratings of L2 accent familiarity (W = .93, df = 20, p = .13) and rates of English use with L2 speakers (W = .95, df = 20, p = .35).

After characterizing the sample of accent rater participants, several statistical analyses were applied to their rating responses. First, responses were collated: same-target measure question items were subjected to paired-samples t-tests to determine validity of the item pairs. Across the five audio samples, both question items targeted towards accentedness exhibited strong and significant correlations with each other, r (20) = .723 to .977, p <.001. Paired question items among other measures were similarly significantly correlated, including pairs targeted towards friendliness, r (20) = .931 to .977, p <.001, intelligence, r (20) = .870 to .948, p <.001, and employability, r (20) = .594 to .970, p <.001.

Upon establishing inter-item validity among the paired target question items, averaged variables were computed to generate mean sample ratings of all recordings on the target measures (accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability) for each rater participant. Following a series of Shapiro-Wilk tests (see Appendix 3E), averaged ratings of accentedness displayed no significant departure from normality ($W = .96$, $df = 20$, $p = .450$). Averaged ratings of intelligence displayed no significant departure from normality ($W = .95$, $df = 20$, $p = .34$). Averaged ratings of employability displayed no significant departure from normality ($W = .92$, $df = 20$, $p = .09$). By contrast, averaged ratings of friendliness displayed a statistically significant departure from normality, though relatively slight ($W = .899$, $df = 20$, $p = .04$).

To establish whether there was a significant difference in the ratings of accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability by L1 English or L1 non-English language users, an independent-samples t-test was performed to compare the means from each group. The results of these tests are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Means (Standard Deviations) for Attitude Ratings by Group

Variable	Group	N	Mean (SD)
Averaged Accent Ratings	English	11	29.85 (16.00)
	Non-English	9	41.06 (23.38)
Averaged Friendliness Ratings	English	11	83.89 (15.11)
	Non-English	9	79.95 (16.34)
Averaged Intelligence Ratings	English	11	75.32 (17.33)
	Non-English	9	78.03 (18.46)
Averaged Employability Ratings	English	11	83.53 (16.67)
	Non-English	9	82.15 (12.81)

*Note***.** Higher values represent more pronounced ratings (e.g., high accentedness, high intelligence, high friendliness, or high employability.)

On 100-point scales, accent rater participants with L1 English rated the recorded speakers as being less accented (M = 29.85, SD = 16.0) than did participants with a non-English L1 (M = 41.06, SD = 7.79), although this difference was not found to be statistically significant, t(18) = -1.27, p = .220. Accent rater participants with L1 English rated the recorded speakers as being more friendly (M = 82.89, SD = 15.11) than did accent rater participants with a non-English L1 (M = 79.95, SD = 16.34), although this difference was not found to be statistically significant, t(18) = .56, p = .58. Accent rater participants with L1 English rated the recorded speakers as being less intelligent (M = 75.31, SD = 17.33) than did accent rater participants with a non-English L1 (M = 78.03, SD = 18.46), although this difference was not found to be statistically significant, t(18) = -.338, p = .74. Finally, accent rater participants with L1 English

rated the recorded speakers as being more employable (M = 83.53, SD = 16.67) than did accent rater participants with a non-English L1 (M = 82.15, SD = 12.81), although this difference was not found to be statistically significant, t(18) = .20, p = .842. A series of one-way ANOVA tests revealed no statistically significant main effects of L1 identity (English or non-English) on ratings of accentedness, F(1, 18) = 1.614, p = .220. Comparable results were found for main effects on ratings of friendliness, F(1, 18) = .314, p = .582, ratings of intelligence, F(1, 18) = .114, p = .739, and on ratings of employability, F(1, 18) = .041, p = .842. For additional reference regarding significance in t-testing, refer to Appendix 4E.

Further to these results, additional statistical analysis was applied to ratings of accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability on a between-measures basis. The relationships observed are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Between-Measures Correlations of Accentedness, Friendliness, Intelligence, and Employability

Variable	Accentedness	Friendliness	Intelligence	Employability
Accentedness		-.288 (.218)	-.448* (.047)	-.258 (.272)
Friendliness	-.288 (.218)		.832** (<.001)	.856** (<.001)
Intelligence	-.448* (.047)	.832** (<.001)		.686** (<.001)
Employability	-.258 (.272)	.856** (<.001)	.686** (<.001)	

*Note***.** Values in parentheses represent p-values. * $p < .05$, ** **p** < .01 (2-tailed).

Various significant correlations were found between the target measures. A moderate negative correlation of statistical significance was found between ratings of accentedness and ratings of intelligence, r (20) = -.45, p = .047. Moderate negative correlations were found between ratings of accentedness and friendliness, r (20) = -.29, p = .22, as well as between

ratings of accentedness and employability, r (20) = -.26, p = .27, although these were not found to be statistically significant. Strong positive correlations of statistical significance were found between ratings of friendliness and intelligence, r (20) = .83, p < .001, as well as between friendliness and employability, r (20) = .86, p < .001. A strong positive correlation of statistical significance was found between ratings of intelligence and employability, r (20) = .69, p < .001.

Finally, correlations were investigated between averaged ratings of accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, employability, and items from the demographic questionnaire to evaluate potential relationships. These correlations are represented in Table 3.

Table 3

Demographic Correlations with Target Measures

Variable	Accentedness	Friendliness	Intelligence	Employability
Frequency (English at work)	.285	−.455*	−.546*	−.599**
Frequency (English outside)	−.037	.121	.109	−.043
English speaking skill	−.021	.535*	.311	.451*
L2 accent familiarity	−.110	.408	.437	.469*
L2 speaker familiarity	−.227	.440	.516*	.307
Frequency of L2 interaction	−.042	−.452*	−.398	−.519*

*Note***.** * p < .05, ** p < .01.

A moderate negative correlation was found between ratings of friendliness and the rater's frequency of English use at work, r (20) = -.46, p = .044. A moderate positive correlation was found between ratings of friendliness and the rater's self-rated English-speaking skill, r (20) = .54, p = .02. A positive correlation was found between ratings of friendliness and the rater's familiarity with L2 speakers, r (20) = .44, p = .05. A moderate negative correlation was found

between ratings of friendliness and the rater's frequency of English use with L2 speakers, r (20) = -.45, p = .046. A strong negative correlation was found between ratings of intelligence and the rater's frequency of English use at work, r (20) = -.55, p = .013. A strong positive correlation was found between ratings of intelligence and the rater's familiarity with L2 speakers of English, r (20) = .52, p = .02. A moderate negative correlation was found between ratings of intelligence and the speaker's frequency of English use with L2 speakers, r (20) = 0.398, p = .08. A strong negative correlation was found between ratings of employability and the frequency of the rater's use of English at work, r (20) = -.599, p = .01. A moderate positive correlation was found between ratings of employability and the rater's self-rated English-speaking skill, r (20) = .451, p = .046, as well as their familiarity with L2 accents, r (20) = .47, p = .037. Finally, a strong negative correlation was found between ratings of employability and the rater's frequency of English use with L2 speakers, r (20) = -.52, p = .02.

Discussion

RQ: Did L1 and L2 English language users rate French-based accented speech significantly differently in terms of intelligence, friendliness and employability?

The core concern of the present study was to answer whether L1 or L2 English language users rated accented speech significantly differently in terms of the speaker's intelligence, friendliness, and employability. Situated in the broader direct method's approach to the study of language attitudes, this investigation sought to describe the dynamic interaction of the accentedness construct with these three measures. Additionally, this study sought to characterize and investigate potential correlations between the friendliness, intelligence, and employability measures, particularly due to their significant impact on accented speaker outcomes as described in existing research. Although differences in ratings of the measures were observed between L1

or L2 English language users, it cannot conclusively be determined that these differences were specifically related to L1 identity.

The approach to addressing the above research question followed a defined procedure. After demographic statistics were compiled to characterize the research sample, it was essential to demonstrate validity of the question pairs targeted towards the measures studied (e.g., multiple questions, differently phrased, to assess each measure). The dynamic and multi-faceted models of accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability necessitated multiple framings of questionnaire items to capture the construct more fully. Inter-item validity testing demonstrated strong and significant positive correlations between every set of question pairs, including all items targeted towards accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability. The results indicated that accent rater participants interpreted the question item pairs as targeted towards the same measure, providing a more complete, multi-dimensional rating of the construct, and enabling further computation of mean averages for analysis. These mean averages revealed no significant departures from normality in the ratings of accentedness, intelligence, and employability. However, averaged ratings of friendliness displayed a statistically significant departure from normality, though relatively slight. Friendliness has been described as a particularly complex construct, involving diverse sub-elements including interpersonal liking and identification with in-groups (Trofimovich et al., 2023). As such, the departure from normality in friendliness ratings was not surprising considering the high degree of potential variety in language attitude judgments, whether based on speech output, accent, or even extralinguistic variables like confidence.

To establish whether there was a significant difference in ratings between accent rater participants with L1 English or L1 non-English, further statistical analyses were applied to the

obtained mean ratings of accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability. The results of these tests indicated differences in mean ratings between the L1 English and L1 non-English identities on all measures: participants with non-English L1 rated the French-accented L2 English speech as generally more highly accented, as sounding less friendly, as sounding more intelligent, and as sounding less employable. However, these differences were found to be below the threshold for statistical significance at an alpha level of <.05, with two-sided *p*-values ranging from .220 to .842. As such, despite found differences in mean ratings of the language attitude measures, this study cannot reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the ratings of the target measures and the rater's L1 English or L1 non-English identity. Thus, these findings suggest an inconclusive answer to the research question: While differences in ratings were observed between English and non-English L1 participants, they did not reach the required significance level to attribute the differences to L1 identity. Additional research and a more representative sample may help clarify these inconclusive results. Recommendations for further investigation and potential limitations of the study are described in the section "*Limitations and Future Studies."* A more detailed discussion of the research question and its implications can be found in the following Chapter 3.

Accentedness and Friendliness

Friendliness was approached holistically in terms of its operation as a broad cluster of solidarity traits, including perceptual judgments of honesty, warmth, or trustworthiness (Trofimovich & Turuseva, 2020). Defined as the quality of pleasantness, affability, or kindness (Ryzhkova, 2018), friendliness operates as a dynamic construct with a high degree of granularity, including diverse judgments of interpersonal liking and speech quality or confidence

(Trofimovich et al., 2023). Friendliness is described as a core self-presentation goal by accented speakers in a variety of situations, including job interviews (Chakraborty, 2017).

Upon analysis, ratings of friendliness were found to be moderately negatively correlated with ratings of accentedness, suggesting that raters who perceived the speaker as being more highly accented also perceived them as being less friendly, although this finding was not statistically significant. Strong and significant positive correlations were found, however, between ratings of friendliness and intelligence, and between ratings of friendliness and employability. These results suggest that raters perceived friendliness, intelligence, and employability as being consistently closely related. Existing literature has suggested that these three measures are interactive in their operation as dynamic constructs (Lippi-Green, 1997; Zuniga & Simard, 2022) and their potential correlation in this study was to be expected. Still, the high degree of statistical significance observed, and the strength of the positive correlation found, was of particular interest for further study recommendations, and constituted additional evidence for the relationship of intelligence, friendliness, and employability.

Comparison of the responses from the participants' demographic questionnaire and their mean ratings of friendliness revealed further potential relationships. Moderate positive correlations were found between friendliness ratings and the rater's self-reported English speaking-skill and between friendliness ratings and the rater's familiarity with L2 speakers in general. These findings indicate that higher English-speaking skill and a greater familiarity with L2 accented speech was significantly associated with higher ratings of friendliness. This dynamic is supported by existing literature which demonstrates that experiential interaction with L2 speakers significantly impacts outcomes (Chakraborty, 2017; Cargile, 2000). Likewise, individuals who interact with L2 accented speakers more often may have higher adaptability to

L2 speech patterns, permitting additional focus on linguistic or extralinguistic components related to friendliness (e.g., confidence, vocal tone).

Accentedness and Intelligence

Intelligence measures were specifically targeted towards social intelligence, involving cognitive, behavioral and affective goals contributory towards overall communicative competence (Wawra, 2009). Relevant dimensions of social intelligence include motivational factors, social factors, and information-processing mechanisms (Oschner & Lieberman, 2001). Language attitudes relating to perception of intelligence are typically studied in a comparable manner to those of friendliness (e.g., ordinal rating scales) and indeed are associated with many of the same sociolinguistic traits, with a high degree of granularity (Wernicke, 2016; Shah, 2019).

A moderate negative correlation was found between participants' ratings of accentedness and of intelligence. This correlation was statistically significant, indicating that high ratings of accentedness were associated with low ratings of intelligence. This finding is well-situated within the broader context of language attitude judgments, where evidence has frequently been proposed to support the prevalence of negative intelligence-based judgments of accented speech (McKenzie, 2008). Such negative judgments are particularly impactful the more they deviate from "standard" varieties of accented English (Hopper, 1977; Timming, 2017). Like friendliness, intelligence as a construct is subject to a high degree of granularity, involving both diverse phonetic (e.g., pauses, stutters), and semantic (e.g., content-based) elements. The question of which elements most significantly contribute to this high-accent low-intelligence dynamic is certainly worthy of further investigation yet remains beyond the scope of the current study.

Regarding demographic items, some atypical relationships were observed. Significant negative correlations were found between the intelligence ratings and the rater's frequency of English use at work as well as their frequency of English use with L2 speakers. This would suggest that participants who frequently used English at work and who interacted more L2 speakers also rated intelligence more harshly. By contrast, a significant positive correlation was observed between intelligence ratings and the rater's familiarity with L2 accents in English. These findings, initially contrastive or contradictory, illustrate the complexity of the intelligence construct, and its dynamic relationship to L1/L2 accented interaction. Additional investigation into why more experienced English users who interact more frequently with L2 speakers produced significantly more negative intelligence ratings may serve to provide more specific insight into social intelligence as a rating category.

Accentedness and Employability

Employability can be understood as comprising the elements pertinent to a candidate's hiring potential, their expected performance, and typically is studied in the context of the first phase of a hiring process (e.g., initial job interviews; Hyde, 2015.). As a status-related trait, measures of employment involve both linguistic and extralinguistic aspects, with negative judgments based on accentedness represented as a significant concern for individuals seeking employment in varied contexts (Canning, 2009; Major et al., 2005). Typically contrasted with more solidarity-based traits like friendliness, employability has been increasingly studied as a particularly relevant language attitude judgment for the accented speaker (Shah, 2019).

Among the accent rater sample, a strong and significant positive correlation was observed between ratings of friendliness and employability, suggesting that participants associated ratings of high employability with high ratings of friendliness. This finding was expected and is

supported by existing literature which suggests that fundamental elements of employability (e.g., intercultural communicative competency) are inherently related to elements present in the friendliness construct (e.g., interpersonal liking; Hyde, 2015; Wernicke, 2016). Furthermore, a strong and significant positive correlation was found between high ratings of intelligence and high ratings of employability. This suggests that participants in the study associated the speaker's employability with both their perceived friendliness and intelligence as contributory measures, providing additional evidence that these three language attitude judgment categories are related or associated in their functioning.

Strong and significant negative correlations were found between high employability ratings and frequency of English use at work, and between employability and frequency of English use with L2 speakers. These findings suggest that raters who used English more frequently while working, and who interacted more frequently with L2 speakers, likewise provided lower ratings of employability. As with the findings presented above regarding intelligence, this seemingly contradictory finding suggests additional complexity to the interaction of employability and accentedness. Positive correlations were found between employability ratings and the rater's English-speaking skill, suggesting that participants who rated their English-speaking skill highly also provided higher ratings of prospective employability. Further investigation of the employability construct, as well as its relation both overall and in sub-dimensions (e.g., interpersonal liking) to the friendliness and intelligence constructs, may prove fruitful to additional characterization of language attitude judgments.

Limitations and Future Studies

In addition to the limitations highlighted above, there remain constraints that could help shape recommendations for future research. Firstly, some elements of the research sample were

particular to the recruitment method and target population: As public calls to participants were disseminated through the Concordia University Education department and those associated with it (e.g., the Applied Linguistics program), the research sample is more generalizable to the population of students enrolled. Although normally distributed in age, the recruited population sample was notably weighted towards individuals who self-identified their gender as female (14F, 6M). In the study of language attitudes, gender has been identified as impactful on outcomes, which motivated the inclusion of such demographic items. Further, although the population sample was roughly equal in terms of number of individuals reporting L1 English or L1 non-English identities, participants with L1 non-English reported a wide variety of first languages (e.g., French, Hungarian, Hebrew, Turkish, Hokkien). Although first language was treated as a binary category in this study, individual interference effects from differing L1 identities may operate as a moderating variable; however, no such effects were observed across various coding approaches. Additionally, as participants were mostly involved in the Department of Education as students or in other capacities, the research sample was more likely to have familiarity with diversity in accent or first language, as such is typically covered by course material and vocation. Overall, the main recommendation for addressing these limitations is expanding the population sample size in future studies and calling for participation from the public beyond university students or staff. Obtaining a more wide-reaching and representative population sample may provide additional opportunities to achieve more comprehensive and reliable results.

This study grounds itself in the direct method of investigating language attitude judgments. As such, future recommendations for research are founded in providing additional context to the L2 accented speaker about how their speech is perceived, across both solidarity

and status-related traits including friendliness, intelligence, and employability. It seems clear from the correlation results reported that these traits are simultaneously closely related, yet highly granular in their operation. Participants making assessments of these language attitude judgments did so from a variety of subjective viewpoints, involving both linguistic and extralinguistic measures. Additional investigation of the intelligence, friendliness, and employability constructs in terms of their sub-dimensionality (e.g., interpersonal liking, speech quality or semantic content) may provide additional information to the accented L2 speaker, for whom language attitude judgments have significant and recognized impacts on outcomes.

Conclusion

To summarize, L1 English speakers and non-English speakers differed significantly in their ratings of L2-accented speech on measures of friendliness, intelligence, and employability. Overall, participants with non-English L1 rated the French-accented L2 English speech as sounding more highly accented, less friendly, more intelligent, and less employable. However, these findings did not meet the expected level of statistical significance, implying that these differences are inconclusive regarding the specific influence of L1 identity as a factor.

Relationships between the measures of friendliness, intelligence, and employability, and the construct of accentedness, were investigated for potentially significant findings. Significant correlations were observed between accentedness and intelligence, suggesting that higher ratings of accentedness were associated with lower ratings of intelligence. Furthermore, significant correlations between friendliness, intelligence, and employability indicated that rating of these constructs was highly inter-related among the sample population of raters. The relationships observed between some demographic or experiential elements and the language attitude measures were occasionally contrastive, suggesting additional dimensionality and granularity.

The results demonstrate a negative relationship between perceptions of accentedness and intelligence, as well as a consistent alignment in judgments of intelligence, friendliness, and employability. They also suggest that L2 learners' highly accented output may be judged negatively in terms of their perceived intelligence. As ratings of intelligence were found to be closely correlated with ratings of friendliness and employability, the learner may indeed be further impacted in terms of negative perception of these other two measures in dimensions not captured by the current study. Although inconclusive about the specific influence of L1 English or non-English identity, this research demonstrates relationships between accentedness and language attitude judgments, in this case negative judgments of intelligence. Further research is recommended to achieve a more significant result, with a wider and more representative population sample. Likewise, further analysis of the friendliness, intelligence, and employability constructs on a sub-dimensional or granular level may establish additional characterization of their interaction, useful for second language learners and speakers.

Chapter 3

Overview

This chapter overviews the study's goals, findings, and discusses potential impacts on the ESL speaker. Furthermore, potential areas of future investigation are proposed to mitigate limitations and address a more complete characterization of the research question.

Grounded in a direct method to the study of language attitudes in an ELF context, this study investigated potential relationships between L1 English or non-English identity and ratings of perceived accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability.

Summary of Main Findings

The primary objective of this research was to determine whether there was a significant difference in ratings of language attitudes relevant to speech output between English and non-English L1 listeners. Furthermore, it aimed to investigate potential relationships between ratings of accentedness and ratings of perceived friendliness, intelligence, and employability among the sample population.

Differences in mean ratings were observed in each measure between language attitude raters who spoke English as a first language, and raters who did not. Non-English L1 raters evaluated the oral expression captured in the audio recordings as more highly accented, less friendly, more intelligent, and less employable than did English L1 raters. These findings, however, did not meet the requisite level of statistical significance which would enable a rejection of the null hypothesis of no relationship. As such, although non-English and English L1 raters made different evaluations of the measures in each case, statistical analysis determined that these differences could not conclusively be proven to be due to L1 identity. Achieving a wider and more representative research sample may address this issue and provide a finding with

higher statistical significance, suggesting that these perceptual differences observed are indeed related to the L1 identity of the rater, and not to other extraneous or modifying variables.

A significant negative correlation was observed between ratings of accentedness and intelligence, suggesting that more highly accented speech was associated with a lower rating of the speaker's intelligence. This finding is unsurprising given the established link between accent and negative perceptual judgments in existing literature (Beinhoff, 2013; Chakraborty, 2017; Shah, 2019) Significant and strong positive correlations were found between ratings of the target measures of friendliness, intelligence, and employability. This finding further characterizes the operation of these measures as closely related, a relationship supported by existing research into status and solidarity traits (Giles & Coupland, 1991; Trofimovich & Turuseva, 2020). In demographic terms, significant correlations were found between some experiential elements (e.g., frequency of English use with L2 speakers) and ratings of language attitude traits: these correlations were occasionally contrastive, particularly in measures of intelligence. This may indicate that the status or solidarity traits selected for analysis operate with a level of sub-dimensionality or granularity which bears further investigation.

The above findings suggest valuable additional insights to the L2 learner, for whom perception of accented speech is a relevant concern. Although inconclusive in terms of statistical significance, L1 English and non-English participants did rate accented speech differently on the measures of intelligence, friendliness, and employability. Furthermore, highly accented speech was perceived as less intelligent: valuable information to the L2 speaker for whom accent is an integral aspect of oral communication. Finally, as expected, the triad of friendliness, intelligence, and employability were found to be highly associated and inter-related. This would suggest to the L2 speaker that the three measures are closely intertwined. As such, if perceived

accentedness impacts perceived intelligence as observed in this study, it may be the case that accentedness has further or subtler impacts on friendliness and employability than were captured by this analysis. Further investigation is suggested to provide more comprehensive insights for L2 speakers and learners.

Implications for Education and Research

The goal of this study was to provide the L2 user with additional insights about the impact of their accentedness on negative or positive language attitude judgments. In that regard, this study has succeeded in further characterizing the relationship between friendliness, intelligence, and employability, as well as the significant correlation found between high ratings of accentedness and low ratings of intelligence. This study situated itself in the direct approach towards investigation of the ELF context and has provided evidence of the dynamic and varied interaction of the accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability constructs in a context where multiple world "Englishes" interact.

Implications for education may include placing a greater emphasis on how accentedness interacts with solidarity or status-based traits such as employability. Accentedness, already a present concern among L2 learners, has become an area of growing academic inquiry, sparking debates about appropriate pronunciation targets (e.g., native-like pronunciation versus intelligibility; Levis, 2005). The significant negative correlation observed between accentedness and intelligence serves to demonstrate the relevance of such investigation of accent dynamics.

Further implications of this study are largely oriented around the relationships observed between the measures studied. It seems clear from the results that, in this population sample, ratings of friendliness, intelligence and employability were highly related to a significant degree. Further investigation of these traits, particularly in their granularity and sub-dimensions, may

provide more information and context to the L2 learner, or the accented L2 user in general. In a practical sense, additional information about the potentially negative or positive judgments made about an individual due to their accentedness is crucial; for instance, these judgments can have significant impacts on an individual's ability to secure gainful employment.

Future Development

If replicated, this study would attempt to address core limitations for a more significant answer to the research question. Simply put, an increase in scope and recruitment for a more representative population sample would be a central recommendation. A study less limited by the scope of a Master's thesis, disseminated through the public rather than through only Concordia University, may also serve to achieve the mean differences in ratings observed while also securing a more acceptable level of statistical significance to reject the null hypothesis.

Furthermore, additional investigation of the measures of friendliness, intelligence, employability, and accentedness is required. Notably, these measures appear to operate with a high degree of sub-dimensionality as reflected in their contradictory significant relationships with some demographic items (e.g., intelligence and level of interaction with L2 speakers), as discussed in Chapter 2. Although multiple question item pairs were targeted towards each measure to reflect this, a more explicit focus on these sub-dimensions may yield deeper insights into their operation and interaction.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Materials

1A: Sample Recruitment E-mail

Hello!

I am currently recruiting participants for a study on perceived accentedness and ratings of language attitudes. We are currently seeking participants who speak English as a first or second language, between the ages of 18 and 35, from a variety of linguistic and social backgrounds.

Please see the attached Call for Participants (*Appendix 2A*) for all relevant information.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any additional questions.

Kind regards,

Jayson Yuskovitz

2A: Sample Call for Participation

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS – PAID

We are currently recruiting participants with a selection of first language backgrounds for a study. Information on how to participate can be found in this document.

Criteria for participation

First group – *Speakers*

- You are between the ages of 18 and 35.
- You have spoken English frequently for at least the past five years.
- French is your first language.

Second group – *Raters*

- You are between the ages of 18 and 35.
- You have spoken English frequently for at least the past five years.

- You frequently use English in work contexts.

Research Tasks

- Provide short audio recordings of your response to a prompt.
- Fill out a brief questionnaire about your linguistic and social background.
- Use several scales to share your impressions about accented voices.

All tasks are done remotely using LimeSurvey. **You will need the following:**

- A laptop or computer with an internet connection.
- A Google Chrome or Internet Explorer browser.
- Headphones to hear audio better.
- A microphone in order to record audio samples.
- A space where you will not be disturbed for the duration of the survey.
- A Canadian bank account that accepts Interac transfer (for compensation)

How long will this take? How am I compensated?

- All tasks will take about thirty minutes. You will be compensated **$15** for your contribution (payable by Interac e-transfer).

How can I participate?

If you are interested in participating or know someone who might be, please email accentresearch100@gmail.com with the subject heading "**Accent Research"**

This study is conducted by Jayson Yuskovitz (jayson.yuskovitz@concordia.ca)

Appendix B: Questionnaires

1B: Demographic Questionnaire

- **Age.**
    - What is your age?
- **Gender.**
    - What is your gender?
- **First language.**
    - What is your first language?
- **Age of first English use.**
    - At what age did you first learn how to speak English?
- **Years of continual English use.**
    - How many years have you been speaking English?

The following responses are rated on a 100-point scale as example:

- **Frequency of English use at work.**
    - How frequently do you use English at work?
- **Frequency of English use outside of work.**
    - How frequently do you use English outside of work?
- **English Competency.**
    - How skilled are you at speaking English?
- **Familiarity with non-native English accents**

- How familiar are you with second-language accents in English?

- **Familiarity with L2 English speakers**
  - How familiar are you with speakers of English as a second language?
  - How often do you use English with a second-language English speaker?

2B: Accent Rater Questionnaire

All responses are rated on a 100-point scale as example:

- **Accentedness**
  - How accented do you think the speaker is?
  - "I think this person's accent is difficult to understand".
  - "This person has a strong accent"
- **Friendliness**
  - How friendly do you think the speaker is?
  - "I think this person would make a friendly colleague".
  - "I think this person sounds friendly".
- **Intelligence**
  - How intelligent do you think the speaker is?
  - "I think this person would make an intelligent colleague".
  - "I think this person sounds intelligent".
- **Employability**

- How employable would you consider this person?
- “I would hire this person”.
- “I would hire this person because they sound very intelligent”.
- “I would hire this person because they sound very friendly”.

Appendix C: Accent Speech Prompt

Prompt: You are applying for a waitstaff/server position in a restaurant. The job will require speaking in English, and you are applying for a part-time schedule. Please speak for around one and a half minutes, and address the following points:

- Introduce yourself and express your interest in the job.
- Speak about any previous experience you may have.
- Speak about what you would like to learn on the job.
- Speak about what you want from this job in the future.

Appendix D: Written Consent Form

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: The relationship between accentedness and perceived friendliness, intelligence, and employability: A Montreal-based investigation
Researcher: Jayson Yuskovitz
Researcher's Contact Information: jayson.yuskovitz@concordia.ca
Faculty Supervisor: Walcir Cardoso
Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: walcir.cardoso@concordia.ca
Source of funding for the study: N/A

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to investigate possible relationships between perceived accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability. Second-language speakers of English are frequently concerned with the impression made by their accented speech. This study aims to provide additional context as to which degree a speaker's accented speech is related to their perceived friendliness, intelligence, and employability in a job-interview context.

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to provide audio recordings of a scripted event (e.g., a job interview for a waitress position). You will also be asked to respond to a questionnaire focused on rating other participants' audio recordings based on their perceived accentedness, friendliness, intelligence, and employability.

In total, participating in this study will take approximately one hour.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

You will not be exposed to any foreseeable risk during the course of this study.

This research is not intended to benefit you personally.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

We will gather the following information as part of this research: your age, gender, your first language, at what age you began speaking English, how long you have spoken English, and your self-described level of frequency of English use.

We will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research. We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

The information gathered will be coded. That means that the information will be identified by a code. The researcher will have a list that links the code to your name.

We will protect the information by coding your identity (e.g., P01, P02) in a spreadsheet document. All data will be kept on a password-protected computer in a locked drawer.

We intend to publish the results of the research. However, it will not be possible to identify you in the published results.

We will destroy the information three years after the end of the study.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher before September 31st, 2024.

If participants are being offered compensation:

As a compensatory indemnity for participating in this research, you will receive $20. If you withdraw before the end of the research, you will receive $5.
To make sure that research money is being spent properly, auditors from Concordia or outside will have access to a coded list of participants. It will not be possible to identify you from this list.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix E: Statistical Analysis Output

Appendix 1E

Descriptive Statistics for Sample Population

Variable	N	Mean	SD	95% CI-	95% CI+
Age	20	29.20	3.54	27.75	30.80
Gender					
Male	6				
Female	14				
Years of English Use	20	26.40	5.18	24.00	28.65
Frequency of English Use at Work	20	74.00	28.94	61.60	86.20
Frequency of English Use Outside Work	20	86.60	14.36	80.00	92.00
English Speaking Skill	20	94.85	5.09	92.40	97.15
L2 Accent Familiarity	20	78.50	13.84	72.50	84.35
L2 Speaker Familiarity	20	89.45	15.46	82.60	95.45
Frequency of L1-L2 Interaction	20	70.65	19.79	62.00	78.90

Appendix 2E

Tests of Demographic Normality

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Age	0.923	20	0.113
Years of English Use	0.936	20	0.200*
Frequency of English Use (Work)	0.824	20	0.002

Frequency of English Use (Non-Work)	0.835	20	0.003
English Speaking Skill	0.859	20	0.008
L2 Accent Familiarity	0.925	20	0.125
L2 Speaker Familiarity	0.709	20	<.001
Frequency of L1-L2 Interaction	0.949	20	0.351

Appendix 3E

Tests of Response Normality

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Averaged Accent Ratings	0.955	20	0.450
Averaged Friendliness Ratings	0.899	20	0.040
Averaged Intelligence Ratings	0.948	20	0.341
Averaged Employability Ratings	0.917	20	0.087

Appendix 4E

Independent Samples t-Test

Variable	t	df	p	Mean Difference	SE Difference
Accent Ratings	-1.22	13.70	.242	-11.21	9.17
Friendliness Ratings	0.56	16.61	.586	3.94	7.10
Intelligence Ratings	-0.34	16.73	.741	-2.71	8.07
Employability Ratings	0.21	17.95	.837	1.37	6.60