

# Which Englishes do the Dutch prefer? Anti-nationalism versus speaker authenticity

Thesis, MA Intercultural Communications, Utrecht University



Adriaan Walpot  
4142799  
a.h.l.walpot@students.uu.nl

Supervisor: Debbie Cole  
Second reader: Alice Henderson

13.390 words (excl. quotes)

23 April 2018

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## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Debbie Cole for inspiring me to undertake this qualitative study, Alice Henderson for all of her free time that she made available for me, and Susi and Isa for being the best study group. All of your support really helped me make the best out of this thesis project.

**Abstract**

English as a foreign language education in the Netherlands follows the norms of native speaker varieties, but limitations of these models led scholars to debate whether non-native models should be adopted instead. This debate, however, is limited to arguments in favor or against non-native speaker models and ignores the possibility that learners might prefer multiple varieties. Moreover, their opinions are mostly ignored. Therefore, I have set out to discover which varieties Dutch learners prefer in various contexts and what their motivations are. Three focus group discussions (N=16) with Dutch students and graduates provided an answer. Afterwards, six English teachers reflected on the preliminary results in individual interviews. During the thematic analysis, attention was paid to learners' awareness of the potential that non-native speaker varieties have in terms of intelligibility. Furthermore, learners' preferences for varieties as motivated by the construction of identities were analyzed with Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) *tactics of intersubjectivity*. This analysis showed that the Dutch prefer native speaker varieties over their own non-native one for two main reasons: they believe native speaker varieties are more intelligible, and they desire an international identity, for which they need to sound like a native. However, Dutch people often produce unnatural native speaker English, in which case the learners prefer Dutch English. Furthermore, there is an equal distribution of preference for British and American English, which suggest that the current educational system, which mainly supports the British model, needs to change. Further research could look into ways to implement this change.

## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 English in Europe**

Within Europe, English is the language most often used as a lingua franca (European Commission, 2012). Even in post-Brexit Europe, English is expected to increasingly become more important (Jenkins, 2017; Modiano, 2017). At the same time however, the prestige of British English (BrEng) is continuously dropping (Modiano, 2017). Consequently, an academic interest has risen in investigating the possible emergence of endonormative English varieties in Europe. One variety that receives considerable attention is Dutch English (DuEng) (Edwards, 2014a; 2014b; Gerritsen, Van Meurs, Planken & Korzilius, 2016). Although there is still much disagreement among academics on the status of non-native English varieties, limitations of the current native speaker (NS) models of English (for an overview see Walpot, 2016, p. 4) urged scholars (e.g. Jenkins, 2007; Modiano, 2007) to consider non-native speaker (NNS) varieties as models in education in European Expanding Circle countries (Kachru, 1992). In reaction, other studies emerged that countered this movement (e.g. Andreasson, 1997; Timmis, 2002) and a debate began in which scholars argue either for or against a NNS target in education.

### **1.2 Debate: which model of English should we use?**

There are several problems I have with this debate, which I will explain after I have given an overview of both sides' main arguments. The arguments in favor of a NNS model are mainly egalitarian. Firstly, it is argued that NS targets are disempowering to NNSs "because they privilege native speakers of English as innately superior" (Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006, p. 7). Furthermore, it is argued that a NS target is unreachable for most NNSs, and therefore demotivates learners and teachers. This argument is carried by Jenkins (2007), who shows the paradox of teachers and learners who "strongly [desire] a native-like English identity as signaled

by a native-like accent” which they cannot attain (p. 231). On the other hand, it is argued that NNS targets limit learners in their ambitions. This is shown in Timmis (2002): “while it is clearly inappropriate to foist native-speaker norms on students who neither want nor need them, it is scarcely more appropriate to offer students a target which manifestly does not meet their aspirations” (p. 249). Furthermore, scholars like Andreasson (1994) explain the many problems originating from the fact that NNS Englishes are uncodified languages:

[...] in those countries where English is neither a native nor an institutionalised language, the ideal goal is to imitate the native speaker of the standard language as closely as possible. Speaking English is simply not related to cultural identity. It is rather an exponent of one’s academic and language learning abilities. It would, therefore, be far from a compliment to tell a Spanish person that his or her variety is Spanish English. It would imply that his or her acquisition of the language left something to be desired. (p. 402)

While this brief overview is unable to show the full scope and nuance of both sides’ arguments, the quotes do illustrate the limitations of the debate. First, the purpose of the debate seems to be to establish which model would work best for NNSs in general. In doing so, however, the complexity of the situation is ignored. As Van den Doel (2007) points out, it will depend on the context whether non-native communities perceive NS Englishes as relevant. I want to add that even within one non-native community the needs of individuals can differ. It is therefore unrealistic to think that a single model in education can satisfy all learners’ needs. Secondly, it seems that most scholars try to settle which model is best amongst themselves. Many of their arguments are based on what they think is best for the users, but the users themselves are seldom asked for their opinion. This issue is shown in Holliday’s work (2005),

who asked a NNS to comment on Jenkins' (2003) argument that NNSs should strive for intelligibility, rather than NS like proficiency:

Although I did feel comfortable to be told that I did not have to be native-speaker like, I would definitely feel upset if I could not reach my own expectation in pronunciation. [...] If we take Jenkins's view and tell them to stay where you are [...]. At some point we would terribly upset the learners because they might want to [...]. It's been clear that I'm a language learner from the periphery and – listen to this – I prefer to speak for myself!  
(p. 9)

Furthermore, those studies that do take a user's approach (e.g., Timmis, 2002) fall short in working toward a solution that enables individuals' choice between English targets.

Regardless of which model is favored in this debate, neither model is ideal. The NS model still has its limitations, as shown previously, and NNS models are far from static. An uncodified variety does not seem to be a viable option to work with for many stakeholders (e.g., publishers, schools, and politicians). It is not surprising that Derwing and Munro (2015) state that we are far from being able to determine pedagogical implications of NNS varieties' features. I argue that this will stay this way so long as academics keep approaching this debate in a binary manner, arguing for one side or the other.

### **1.3 Learners' involvement in the educational curriculum**

It is important for NNS learners' of English to have a say in the educational curriculum for several reasons. Derwing and Munro (2015) argue that, depending on their proficiency level, learners should be allowed to choose which English model they would like to learn, because this gives them additional control over how they want to sound and who they want to identify with. Moreover, learners' motivation increases when they have a positive attitude toward their target



language variety. In turn, this accelerates and improves their command of the language they are learning (Gardner, as cited in Balogh, 2014). Negative attitudes toward a model, on the other hand, are found to negatively affect learners' skills (Scott et al., as cited in Balogh, 2014). Nevertheless, Derwing and Munro (2015) assert that teachers should decide for the learners which areas would most benefit them in terms of increasing intelligibility, an issue that has been found to receive little attention in the educational curriculum and in which teachers have not been sufficiently trained.

#### **1.4 My contribution to the field**

In my research, I will position myself outside of the debate by taking the needs as identified by the users as a starting point, rather than arguing for a specific model. From this position, I hope to bring the theoretical debate closer to its target group: the users of NNS English. Moreover, this approach will eventually allow for a practical application to be created, in which the complexity of NNSs' needs are taken into account. An example of an applicable product could be a guide similar to the last part of Cole and Meadows (2013, p. 131-136), where an example of an educational program and specific practices for teachers are described. However, in order to reach this goal, the needs of NNSs in terms of target models of English have to be established first. This is what my study sets out to discover.

#### **1.5 Research question**

The needs of NNS users can be investigated by looking at two concepts related to language use: intelligibility and social identity construction. It is undeniable that we use language as a means to communicate with each other. Scholars like Jenkins (2003) argue, as noted earlier, that becoming intelligible should be the main goal for NNS learners of English. Therefore, it would be

necessary to find out what NNS users' needs are in terms of intelligibility. Additionally, language is also an important means through which we construct our identities. Bucholtz & Hall (2004) state that language is "closely tied to identity, for beliefs about language are also often beliefs about speakers" (p. 379). It is therefore important to also discuss identity as a motivation for language use.

My study will include two groups of NNS users of English: learners and teachers. It is necessary to include the opinions of both of these groups in order to formulate a definition of users' needs that can be used in education. The emphasis of the research will lie on the learners' needs, on which the teachers will reflect. The inclusion of the aforementioned concepts and variables in this study lead to the main and secondary research questions:

- *In which contexts do Dutch learners of English prefer to use which variety of English, with regards to intelligibility and social identity construction?*
- *How do English teachers in the Netherlands view the preferences of English language learners?*

My use of the word "contexts" here refers to types of interactions: whether users prefer a different English variety when interacting with NSs or NNSs, and whether the conversation is formal or informal.

## **1.6 Hypothesis**

My working hypothesis therefore is that participants' preference for English varieties will tend to differ per context. The methodology is constructed in such a way that the preferences of the participants will be shown in the focus group and interview data by their reference to various situations in which they use different varieties of English, such as at work versus with friends or in a NS country versus a NNS country. Confirming this hypothesis would imply that further

research should investigate ways to aid English users to switch between varieties of English, for example, by creating and piloting educational programs to teach students the salient features of different English varieties.

## **2 Theoretical framework**

In the following section, I will explain several concepts and I will give background information about topics related to the research questions. This will provide a framework on which to structure my data collection and it will, furthermore, act as a focal point for discussion. First, the concepts of intelligibility and identity construction will be discussed. After that, I will elaborate on the notion of language variety, before ending with an overview of the role of English and English norms in the Netherlands.

### **2.1 Intelligibility**

The extent to which a person is intelligible is not solely up to a speaker, as the listener is also responsible for comprehending the speaker's message. While a speaker may be intelligible to one person, he may be less so to another. Since the clear majority of English learners speak a NNS variety of English (Jenkins, 2007), it is important to describe the effects that NNS speech has on different groups of listeners. The extent to which NNS varieties are intelligible in interactions with both NSs and NNSs will be discussed in this section.

Two notions that are often insufficiently defined with regards to NNS varieties are intelligibility and accentedness (Derwing & Munro, 2015). These notions do not correlate, nor is a NS accent necessarily more intelligible than a NNS one, as often is assumed. It is even argued that in international environments, well-educated speakers of a second language are more intelligible than NSs (Moussu & Llurda, 2008). The intelligibility of the NNS accent of speakers

from the Netherlands has received some attention. A study into the effects of a telephone sales speech in Dutch-accented English shows that a slight Dutch accent does not differ from Received Pronunciation in terms of listener ratings of affect and interpretability (Nejjari, Gerritsen, Van der Haagen, & Korzilius, 2012). A moderate Dutch accent, however, is rated lower. This has been confirmed by an even more recent study that had Dutch students evaluate NNS and NS tutors (Hendriks, Van Meurs, & Hogervorst, 2016). This study found that slight NNS accents and NS accents were rated similarly in intelligibility. Moreover, slight NNS accents were found to be more pleasant than NS accents. In practical terms, however, these studies are less helpful, as it is unclear what constitutes a “slight” or “moderate” accent.

One considerable body of research argues that education in the Expanding Circle should mainly focus on communication between NNSs of English. Learners should not have to conform to a NS norm, but work toward international intelligibility (Jenkins, 2003). This proposition is supported by several arguments. First, communication becomes more effective when all participants in a conversation are NNS (Graddol, 2006). This phenomenon can, at least partly, be explained by the difference in how much NNSs and NSs adapt their speech in various interactions. NNSs often accommodate their audience by adapting their use of English to accommodate (Jenkins, 2011). NS are equally capable of adapting their speech, but they rarely do so (Jenkins, 2011). Furthermore, Jenkins (2007) and Kirkpatrick (2006) argue that most learners in Outer and Expanding Circle countries learn English solely to communicate with other NNSs. This would make sense because there are far more NNSs of English around the globe than there are NSs (Crystal, 2003). According to Kirkpatrick (2006) and Zhu (2014), the scope of English as a foreign language teaching should therefore be limited to communication between

NNSs, as this has the benefit that more time can be spent on learning to become intelligible instead of striving for native-like accuracy.

The problem with teaching NNSs to communicate only with other NNSs, is that they may want to be able to interact with NSs, or read books and watch movies that are produced in NS varieties. This might be more difficult when they are not being taught NS English. Moreover, when NNSs speak to NSs, their accent could have a negative effect on their intelligibility. First, certain features of NNS accents cause distraction for NSs, which then results in lower intelligibility (Van den Doel, 2006). It is therefore important for NNSs to be realistic about the stigma of their accents (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Secondly, on a neurological level, foreign-accented speech is found to create extra cognitive load for NS listeners, and therefore requires more cognitive capacity to decipher (Mayer, Sobko & Mautone, 2003). As a result, it may take NSs longer to process the speech of NNSs, in comparison to that of NSs who have familiar accents.

As a last note, studies like Jenkins's (2003; 2007; 2011) raise some valid points about the problems of NNS-NS interaction. However, the solution is not to ignore communication between these groups completely. Instead, I argue that awareness should be raised for the shared responsibility of speakers and listeners to communicate successfully. This literature review shows that for NNS listeners, NNS speech can be more intelligible than NS speech. Furthermore, for NS listeners, NNSs can be just as intelligible as NSs, depending on variables such as the extent of a NNS's accentedness, and the stigma and cognitive load of NNS accents' features. Since the degree of accentedness differs per speaker, and stigma and cognitive load depends on the individual listener, it is difficult to predict NNS accents' intelligibility. It is therefore

important to investigate how the Dutch view their own accent in terms of intelligibility, and to find out whether they base their preference for language varieties on its perceived intelligibility.

## 2.2 Identity construction

The language one speaks has a considerable influence on the identity one constructs (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Identity and other social goals are therefore important factors to consider when explaining individuals' language choice. This topic is extensively studied by Bucholtz and Hall (2004). I will discuss their work in length, as this will not only give insight into the motivations that individuals can have for adopting language varieties, but it will also shed light on the contextual relevance of variety preferences.

Bucholtz and Hall (2004) describe three pairs of *tactics of intersubjectivity*, through which different social goals can be accomplished: *adequation* and *distinction*, *authentication* and *denaturalization*, and *authorization* and *illegitimation*. These tactics, which people situationally adopt in order to construct identities, are negotiated in interaction. The outcome depends, therefore, on all those involved and is not known in advance. Central to Bucholtz and Hall's tactics of intersubjectivity is the idea that individuals have the agency to negotiate an identity. The three pairs will be described below.

The first pair of tactics are adequation and distinction. Adequation is where a person wants to establish socially recognized similarity with an individual or group. In order to accomplish this, differences are erased and similarities that are relevant to the situation are highlighted. This resulting identity performance is a temporary state enacted by the speaker with the purpose of reaching a short or long-term social effect. The following hypothetical situation illustrates a possible motivation for adequation: A group of French co-workers work in a large international organization in Spain. While they are very different people in age and personality, and normally

do not get along, during Bastille Day they set their differences aside and unite around a French identity to celebrate their national day. Distinction is the opposite of adequation, as this tactic involves placing emphasis on salient differences. Like adequation, it is not a permanent state.

Since identity is produced through language, one can adequate oneself with or distinguish oneself from a community by adopting the patterns of a certain language variety. Bucholtz and Hall (2004) explain that speakers of minority languages, for example Corsicans, often increase the linguistic differences between the national language and their minority language in order to maintain the autonomy of the minority language. With regard to adequating with and distinguishing from NNS varieties of English, not much research has been done. A study that touches upon the topic is that of Van den Doel and Quené (2013). They found Polish, Greek, and Spanish raters to be lenient in the judgment of pronunciation errors that are typical of their own NNS accent. Van den Doel and Quené (2013) explain this indicates feelings of solidarity toward their NNS variety, which may prompt these NNS speakers to associate themselves with their fellow countrymen's NNS speech. Contrastingly, Dutch raters were found to be more severe in their judgment. Their inverse solidarity may mean that the Dutch want to distinguish themselves from speakers with Dutch accented English (Van den Doel & Quené, 2013). However, as Bucholtz and Hall (2004) point out, these tactics are situationally and individually adopted. Although it is valuable to be aware of general attitudes of speaking communities toward their NNS accent, elaborate qualitative data is needed in order to understand individuals' motivations for adequating with and distinguishing from their own NNS English in various contexts.

The second pair are authentication and denaturalization. With the tactic of authentication, a believable and authentic identity is created. In the process of authentication, agents make claims that align with or against essentialized notions in order to form an identity that is believable.

Hindu nationalists, for example, have constructed a Hindu identity by talking in the traditional Sanskrit Hindi language in order to diverge from Muslim groups in north India (King, as cited in Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Bucholtz and Hall (2004) argue that in the creation of the nation-state, people who speak the standard language are often positioned as the most authentic representatives of a country. Language is therefore linked to the formation of a national identity. The opposite of authentication is denaturalization, which is the production of a non-believable and inauthentic identity. In this process, essentialist categories and identities are defied, and claims of realness are challenged. This is illustrated by Barret (as cited in Bucholtz & Hall, 2004), who studied black drag queens. He observed that this group, who adhered to linguistic patterns associated with white females to authenticate this identity, frequently disrupted their performance, and used black male speech to purposefully destabilize ideas about gender and race.

The third and last pair of tactics are authorization and illegitimation. These tactics have to do with institutional power or other authorities. In the process of authorization, individuals draw on an institutional power in order to legitimate an identity. An example that the authors give is of a group of Australian Aborigines who normally spoke standard Australian English, but who made use of their community's linguistic repertoire in order to win a legal struggle over land rights. By adopting Aboriginal features in their speech, they came across as authentic Aborigines, which enabled them to reclaim traditional Aboriginal territory (Haviland, as cited in Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Authorization's opposite, illegitimation, is the tactic of removing the structural power of an institution or authority. Bucholtz and Hall (2004) remark that the establishment of a standard language illegitimizes other varieties of that language. The legitimation of a non-standard variety



in its turn denies the standard variety of its power. This illustrates that the removal of power of one authority, in turn supports another authority as a consequence.

Another example is BrEng's declining popularity in Europe, where American English (AmEng) is gradually taking over its place as the variety of prestige (Kang, 2014). This shift in popularity is a process of illegitimation of BrEng. It could be that because of this shift, European NNSs will increasingly draw upon AmEng in order to construct a prestigious and authoritative English accent.

In conclusion, the tactics of intersubjectivity enable us to describe and analyze people's motivations for constructing temporary identities by adopting a specific language pattern or variety. The tactics will therefore be a valuable contribution to the present study, as they can be used as a starting point to find out why individuals prefer certain language varieties in specific contexts.

### **2.3 The complex notion of language varieties**

In this section, I will address the complexity of language variety, explain the differences between certain notions of variety, and discuss the status of NNS varieties. This is important, because it will help us understand how individuals perceive and categorize language varieties.

The concept of language variety is complex, as endless variation is possible in and between languages. Some well-known terms of language variation include completely distinct languages, dialects, slang, and idiolects. However, the definitions of these terms are also obscure. Take dialect, for instance, which is defined, "often in a rather vague way, ... [as] any speech variety which is more than an idiolect but less than a language" (Wells, as cited in Coetsem, 1992). Furthermore, it is argued that dialects and languages only differ in prestige and are hard to distinguish from each other on a functional level (Coetsem, 1992). This illustrates the problems

that emerge when trying to discuss the concept of language variety in simple terms. In order to address the complexity of the concept, I will follow Coetsem's (1992) broad definition of language variety as differences in "time", "space", "society", and "style", "as well as language difference[s] between the individual and the community, the spoken and the written language" (Coetsem, 1992, p. 17-18).

In order to explain the phenomenon of NNS varieties, a distinction must be made between interlanguage varieties as opposed to accent varieties. Coetsem (1992) says the following about the two kinds of varieties. Interlanguage, a term originally coined by Selinker (1972), refers to the process of foreign language learning. It is the continuum of forms that exist between the learner's language and the target language. An interlanguage is by default subordinate to the target language. However, when it gains a certain amount of social status it may start to develop independently and become an acknowledged language variety. In contrast to an interlanguage, an accent variety has structural features of which the most salient ones are pronunciation based.

Where two decades ago EU-NNS varieties were often strictly seen as learner languages and not considered an end goal (e.g., Andreasson, 1992, above), nowadays there is a consensus that NNS varieties exist in multiple forms and can in fact acquire their own norms. A NNS variety can become an accent variety (Coetsem, 1992) or even a fully-fledged language. The latter is clearly seen in Jenkins (2001), who argues that a European variety of English is emerging.

Studies that investigate whether a NNS variety is developing its own norms most often discuss this process with regards to Kachru's (1992) Concentric Circles of English Model (e.g., Edwards, 2014a; Gerritsen et al., 2016). In Kachru's model, countries where English is spoken as a native language are called Inner Circle countries. These countries are norm-providing. Outer Circle countries are those in which the language is spoken as a second language (ESL) and where

own norms are being developed. The last circle, Expanding Circle countries, is where English is spoken as a foreign language (EFL). Their English norms are dependent on the Inner Circle.

However, there are some limitations to evaluating the status of English within a country according to the Kachruvian model. First of all, many of the criteria have to do with other things than people's attitudes toward language. For example, whether English is used in a wide spectrum of domains. Moreover, a country-wide evaluation does not take individual differences into account, nor the varying views and attitudes of smaller speaking communities. While a country in general might not see their NNS English as a potential target, it might be possible that individuals and smaller communities have a different opinion. This is defensible, because studies on identity construction through language have shown that speech practices (e.g., slang) do not have to be widely accepted or codified in order for people to identify with them (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Cutler & Røyneland, 2015). It will therefore be interesting to find out how different individuals in the Netherlands view their NNS English, and how they describe their variety.

## **2.4 English in the Netherlands**

In the following section, I will discuss the role of English in the Dutch society, the English proficiency of the Dutch, and the English norms they follow. As the resulting portrayal of the Netherlands will be a generalized one, it will be interesting to compare it to the findings of the present study.

### **2.4.1 English's role in society**

The English language is viewed as the most important foreign language in the Netherlands (Edwards, 2014a). Half a century ago this was different. Van Oostendorp (as cited in Edwards,

2014a) explains that “the Dutch are moving from being a traditionally multilingual population, priding themselves on their knowledge of many foreign languages, to being bilingual, priding themselves on their knowledge of English” (p. 32-3). The extent of English’s role in Dutch society is discussed in studies such as Edwards (2014b), and will be described in the following. In the educational domain, English is a compulsory language and many studies in Dutch universities are entirely in English (Edwards, 2014a; Nejjari, et al., 2012). Furthermore, in Dutch businesses, high English proficiency is assumed (Edwards, 2014b); the language is treated as a basic skill in vacancies (Berns, as cited in Edwards 2014b), employees rarely receive English training (Nickerson, as cited in Edwards, 2014b), and organizations publish their annual reports in English (De Groot, as cited in Gerritsen et al., 2016). In everyday life, English is heard on television and in advertisements and is aimed at people of all ages (Gerritsen et al., 2007, as cited in Gerritsen et al., 2016). Furthermore, for at least two decades, many English passages and texts on television and in advertisement have gone untranslated in order to cut costs (Gijsbers et al.; Stichting Taalverdediging, as cited in Edwards, 2014b). It is not surprising that the majority of Dutch citizens considers the language to be important (European Commission, 2012). Based on the widespread use of English in Dutch society, Edwards (2014b) assumes that people in the Netherlands have a high command of the language. Moreover, a considerable number of studies argue that the status of English in the Netherlands is shifting to that of a second language (for an overview see Gerritsen et al., 2016, p. 458). However, this has recently been disputed (Gerritsen et al., 2016).

#### **2.4.2 English proficiency**

In terms of proficiency, the Netherlands is ranked first in the English Proficiency Index (Education First, 2017). This index is a comparison of the English proficiency of 80 countries in

which English is spoken as a foreign language. Furthermore, 90% of Dutch people claim to be able to hold a conversation in English (European Commission, 2012). Even though both of these statistics are based on self-assessment, and therefore cannot be taken as a fully accurate representation of the English level in the Netherlands, this does illustrate how confident the Dutch are in their English language abilities. This confidence is especially shown in the finding that people from the Netherlands have a strong opinion about the English proficiency of their fellow citizens as, fascinatingly, 90% believes their English level to be higher than the rest of their fellow countrymen (Edwards, 2014a). One of the studies that tested the actual command of English in the Netherlands is Gerritsen et al. (2010). They found that 34% of their highly educated Dutch participants gave an incorrect description of the meanings of English television commercials. This confirms the findings of earlier work (Gerritsen, 1995; 2004; Gerritsen et al., 2000, as cited in Gerritsen et al., 2010). The level of English in the Netherlands might therefore not be as high as the Dutch themselves think.

### **2.4.3 English norms and target models**

In the Netherlands, NS varieties of English are seen as the norm (Edwards, 2014a; Van den Doel, 2010). Errors in pronunciation are viewed as especially problematic by the Dutch (Van den Doel, 2010). Nevertheless, Edwards (2014a; 2014b) noticed that an endonormative attitude toward appropriateness and correctness is emerging. The Dutch do not mind mistakes in grammar, syntax, vocabulary, idiom, and discourse style, as long as they do not hinder communication (Edwards, 2014a). Moreover, research by Jansen (as cited in Gerritsen et al., 2016) shows that 45% of his Dutch respondents found accent-free English unnecessary.

Historically, BrEng was the NS model that was favored in the Netherlands (Edwards, 2014a). Over the past few decades, however, AmEng has become increasingly more popular, a

trend that is seen around the world (Kang, 2014). This was actually already noted in twenty-year old studies, where Dutch high school students were found to prefer AmEng over BrEng because of its dynamic nature (Van der Haagen, as cited in Wang & Van Heuven, 2014). Today, the decline of BrEng features in favor of those associated with AmEng continues (Modiano, 2017). The variety of English that is spoken in the Netherlands, however, is a mixture of BrEng and AmEng with some features of Dutch, depending on a speaker's proficiency level (Modiano, 2017; Trudgill & Hannah, 2017). This is suggested to be the result of the combined exposure of AmEng in students' everyday life, for example on television and internet, and the emphasis on BrEng in Dutch education (Wang & Van Heuven, 2014). Interestingly, even though sources such as Trudgill and Hannah (2017) remark that students in the Netherlands learn BrEng in high school, nowhere is it stated in the educational curriculum of the Netherlands that schools need to teach a specific NS model.

The fact that many of the Dutch speak a mixed variety of English is not necessarily harmful for them (Modiano, 2017; Trudgill & Hannah, 2017). Furthermore, the educational goal has always been native-like competence of English, rather than consistency in one single NS variety (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017). Modiano (2017) continues to argue that the emphasis of English teaching is moving away from native-like accuracy and toward general competence in communication. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect the acceptance of mixing English varieties to increase in coming decades.

### **3 Method**

The method section will explain how I provided an answer to my research question: *In which contexts do Dutch learners of English prefer to use which variety of English, with regards to intelligibility and social identity construction?* and my secondary question: *How do English*

*teachers in the Netherlands view the preferences of English language learners?* I will describe how I collected the data and explain the means by which I analyzed the findings.

### **3.1 Data collection**

In order to establish the needs of both learners and teachers of English in the Netherlands, I applied two different methods. First, I hosted focus groups with the learners. Afterwards, I held interviews with teachers. This order of data collection allowed me to present the teachers with the preliminary results of the focus groups and to have them reflect on the needs of the learners. By combining these methods, a technique referred to as triangulation, there is an extra validation of results (Rothbauer, 2008).

#### **3.1.1 Focus groups**

For several reasons I chose to use focus groups to gain insight into the needs of Dutch learners of English, instead of surveys or interviews. Firstly, focus groups are able to show participants' preferences, attitudes, and motivations (Brennen, 2017), and in particular those that are conditional (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Secondly, a group is capable of coming up with ideas that individuals alone might not be able to think of (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Thirdly, group discussions show how people reason and behave on an individual level, as well as within a group (Brennen, 2017). These characteristics make focus groups an ideal method for me to gain insight into the motivations of Dutch learners' preference for English varieties and the contextual relevance of their motivations

#### *Participants*

Three similar semi-structured focus groups were conducted ( $n = 16$ ), which is sufficient to reach data saturation (Krueger & Carey, 2015). In the process of selecting the participants, a screener

was used, as suggested by Krueger and Casey (2015). This means that the participants had to meet the following criteria in order to join a focus group: born and raised in the Netherlands; is not a NS of English; uses English in his or her spare time or in work-related activities; is not or has never been an English teacher, and has not had any English teacher training. These requirements resulted in a group of participants who could reflect on their shared experience of learning English as a foreign language in the Netherlands. Furthermore, since it is methodologically important to have a homogeneous group of participants in terms of backgrounds and social experiences (Brennen, 2017), I looked for participants who were in the middle of or had completed an educational program at a university or a university of applied science. At the same time, I made sure none of the groups had participants who followed or had followed the same educational program, to ensure some diversity in opinion. This is also suggested by Brennen (2017).

The call for participation of this research was spread in my network in the form of an information letter (Appendix A) that was modelled after the one from the Ethical Testing Committee Linguistics of Utrecht University (“Information letter”, n.d.) and an accompanying standardized message (Appendix B). However, the fact that I spread the call for participation in my own network resulted in me being familiar with the majority of the people who joined the focus groups. This presented both opportunities and challenges, which will be discussed further on in the method section. The participants were put into the three groups that can be seen in Table 1. Additional characteristics of the participants that became evident in the focus groups can be found in Appendix I.

Table 1  
*Details of the focus groups and their participants*

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Date	21 February 2018	22 February 2018	23 February 2018



Duration	80 minutes	74 minutes	63 minutes
Participants (N)	6	5	5
Age	18 – 27 ( $M = 23.17$ )	21 – 24 ( $M = 22.40$ )	20 – 27 ( $M = 24.20$ )
Gender (N)	3 female 3 male	1 female 4 male	4 female 1 male

The table shows that the groups are nearly the same in terms of age and number of participants. The latter is in accordance with the suggested number of five to ten people per group (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Furthermore, while there is an imbalance in gender composition of the groups, gender is probably not a major factor distinguishing between views as expressed in the focus groups. Lastly, the participants' names have been replaced with pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity.

Other points to note about the group compositions are that each group contained one individual who had studied for a BA either in English Language and Culture or in American Studies. These participants were Merel, Fred, and Isabel. Nonetheless, since every session was joined by one of these people, the groups are still comparable. Furthermore, since it can be helpful for participants to be strangers (Brennen, 2017), I made sure to divide those who knew each other among the three groups as much as possible.

### *Decentering*

As a researcher, I am an expert on the topic of this study. This made it likely that I influenced the discussions in one way or another. To partly counter this, I distanced myself by restricting my presence to the introduction of topics and asking follow-up questions. When participants asked me things like “is this what you meant by your question?”, I would just answer “whatever you think it means”. Nevertheless, by constructing the questions, I already influenced the direction of the conversations. For example, I am a proponent of DuEng and interested in finding out how the variety can be used strategically. This resulted in an emphasis on the usefulness of DuEng.

However, when the participants argued that they do not prefer DuEng, their preference is even stronger because they argued this despite my presence.

Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, I was acquainted with the majority of the participants and some were even close friends of mine. The advantage to this is that they were comfortable around me and they felt free to speak their minds. The challenge was to make sure that the participants would take seriously both the focus group and me as an academic. I addressed this by creating a professional environment, which I did by dressing formally and by speaking in a more formal manner. I refrained, for instance, from using the slang that I normally use around them.

### *Materials & procedure*

The focus groups took place in a quiet room in Utrecht's university library, which is located in the city center. I specifically chose this location because it was easily accessible for participants.

Figure 1 shows the setting of the room.



*Figure 1.* Table seating of the focus groups.

The room was set up as suggested by Krueger and Casey (2015). It included a circular table and there were drinks and snacks provided. Furthermore, pen and paper for note taking and forms of consent were laid out for the participants (Appendix C). The latter helped to create a professional environment and put myself in the role of a professional in the eyes of the participants. I also put down name cards prior to the arrival of the participants to make sure that the people who knew each other were separated. This partly countered the likeliness of them forming a front in discussions. Lastly, I had a camera (Panasonic HC-X920) set up in the corner of the room and an audio recorder (LG G4) as a backup in the middle of the table.

The focus groups were held in Dutch. I chose this language because all the participants were native speakers of Dutch. If I hosted the focus groups in English, this would have created an unfair advantage for those participants who are more comfortable in the language than others. As a likely result, this group's opinion would have dominated the sessions.

After I welcomed the participants and offered them something to drink and eat, I opened the focus groups with an introductory speech (Appendix D), in which I stated the purpose of the research and reminded them of their anonymity. I also asked permission to make audio and video recordings, and explained some rules to encourage positive discussion. Then, the content part of the focus groups began. This part was focused around six questions (Appendix D). In the following paragraphs, I will discuss these questions and explain why these particular questions were pertinent in finding an answer to the main research question: *In which contexts do Dutch learners of English prefer to use which variety of English, with regards to intelligibility and social identity construction?* The questions have been translated into English.

Central to the RQ is the concept of English varieties. It is therefore important to find out how people define varieties of English in order to understand their preferences. This is of

particular importance since DuEng is not an official codified variety and lacks a widely accepted definition. The following questions were presented to the focus groups to avoid misinterpretations of participants' comments about English varieties.

*1a Do you think there are different varieties of English?*

*1b What do you think the differences between these varieties are?*

*2 How would you describe Dutch English?*

After these questions, I was able to understand how they perceive English varieties, and I could start asking the participants about their preferences for English varieties in the next question:

*3a What variety of English do you use or would you like to speak?*

In order to then understand why the participants preferred certain varieties, I would need to know more about their motivations for language use. This led to the question:

*3b What is your target level of proficiency in this variety?*

Next, with the general preferences and motivations of the participants in mind, the contextual aspect of the research question could be broached. The following questions were used to encourage the participants to discuss whether their preferences for English varieties would change depending on the context.

*4 Do you think it could differ per situation which variety of English you would use?*

*5 Can you think of a situation in which you would use Dutch English and one in which you would specifically not use it?*

I made the choice to ask the groups about their preferences for DuEng here, rather than combining this topic with the third question. I did this because, based on studies such as those by Van den Doel and Quené (2013) and Edwards (2014a), I expected that DuEng would not be seen

as a target variety of English in the Netherlands. It therefore seemed to me that I would get more useful answers when by bringing up the topic later on in the session and couched in a question that allowed hypothetical answers.

As a last question I included the following practical one:

6 *What would you need to learn in order to be able to do this?*

The word “this” refers to the variety preference or any other stated need of the participants. I added this question for two reasons. The first one is that I hoped the question would lead the participants to reconsider their preferences for varieties and refine them to more realistic goals and wishes. Secondly, I was curious to find out what suggestions for the educational system the participants could come up with in order to help them get closer to their preferred target variety.

I ended the sessions by summarizing the participants’ main points and I asked them whether they agreed with my summary. Then, I restated the purpose of the focus group and encouraged the participants to add anything they felt was missing. This kind of ending is suggested by Krueger and Casey (2015). Lastly, I thanked the participants and bade them farewell.

### **3.1.2 Interviews**

In the limited timespan of this thesis (ten weeks), it turned out to be overambitious to organize an additional three focus groups with English teachers, as I had originally planned. Therefore, in agreement with my supervisor, I conducted individual interviews. This method allowed me to reflect on the preliminary outcomes of the focus groups with the teachers and, moreover, to gain detailed insight into the teachers’ perspectives, which would not have been possible in a group discussion. This is because I could focus my attention on an individual teacher, rather than simply sitting back and listening to a group of teachers speak.

### *Participants*

Six interviews were held with teachers of English as a foreign language in the Netherlands. In order to obtain a wide range of opinions, I looked for high school teachers, teachers in vocational education (*Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs*), and teachers at universities of applied science (*Hoger Beroepsonderwijs*). Furthermore, I wanted to include both novice and experienced teachers.

Since I originally wanted to host focus groups with the teachers, I used the same tactics to recruit participants as I did for the focus groups. This means that I shared the information letter (Appendix A) and the accompanying message (Appendix B) in my personal network.

Additionally, I contacted multiple schools in Utrecht. The participants' details can be seen in Table 2, where they have been given random names.

Table 2

#### *Details of the interviewees*

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Nationality	Educational system	Years of teaching experience
Thomas	22	Male	Dutch/Belgian	High school	4
Ella	19	Female	Dutch	n/a	0
Inge	24	Female	Dutch	High school	5
				Vocational education	
Camila	25	Female	Aruban	High school	7
				Vocational education	
Jeroen	23	Male	Dutch	High school	3
Floor	60	Female	Dutch	High school	18
				University of applied sciences	

It can be seen in Table 2 that the interviewees predominantly have experience in high schools.

Some participants have additionally taught in vocational education or at a university of applied Science. Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees were young teachers, with seven years of experience or less. This is a result of my network consisting of relatively young adults. The results from the interviews will therefore mainly reflect the perspective of the new generation of teachers. Additional characteristics of the teachers and their schools can be found in Appendix I.

### *Materials & procedure*

The interviews were conducted in several different quiet locations. Some took place in the same room as the focus groups, others were held in empty classrooms at the teachers' schools to accommodate the interviewees. All six interviews lasted between 22 and 30 minutes and were recorded with an LG G4.

The interviews were semi-structured, as suggested by Dörnyei (2007), because this allowed me the flexibility to ask the teachers to elaborate on emerging interesting topics. The prepared questions and possible follow-up questions can be seen in the interview scheme, together with the introduction and closing speech in Dutch (Appendix E). The interview scheme consists of two parts. In the first half, I asked the teachers to define two concepts that were also discussed in the focus groups, language varieties and Dutch English, and I asked them which variety of English is taught at their school. By asking them to define these concepts, I enabled a comparison between their answers and that of the focus group participants. In the second part of the interview I presented the preliminary results of the focus groups and asked the teachers to comment on this.

### **3.2 Data analysis**

As my method of analysis I used Clarke and Braun's (2006) Thematic Analysis. As a first step, I immersed myself in the data by listening to the recordings of the focus groups and the interviews many times over the course of two days. In agreement with my supervisors, I decided not to transcribe the recordings because I only had ten weeks for this thesis and, moreover, my second reader does not know Dutch. After I was familiar with the data, I started writing down keywords, or codes, which are defined as recurring and striking words and phrases. Once I had my codes, I formed them into several themes. These codes and their themes can be seen in Table 3, in which

the codes are translated in English, unless they were relevant in their original form. The original Dutch codes can be found in Appendix F.

Table 3

*Codes and their corresponding theme*

Codes	Theme
American; British; English English; Australian English; mother tongue speakers; India; dialects; Steenkolen Engels; borders; language; country spelling; pronunciation; vocabulary	Defining language varieties
monotone; clear; simple; small vocabulary; slower speech; chaotic; ungrammatical; word order; intelligible; literal translation (of sayings); Dutch pronunciation; Steenkolen Engels; accent; Louis van Gaal; wrong; fake	Defining Dutch English
interest; intelligibility; informal; not serious; cultural associations; accommodate; WC South Africa; identity; not nationalistic	Dutch English; Would they use it?
anonymous; belonging; distance; accommodate; goodwill; prestige; intelligibility; academic; television; presentations; international	The value of native speaker English
unnatural; irritation; exaggerated; know-it-all; posh	The acceptability of native speaker English
American: vacation; informal; media British: university; academic; formal; posh consistency; intelligibility; mixture	Native speaker Englishes; Attitudes and preferences

The themes in Table 3 each form a section in the results section where I describe the themes by summarizing recurring opinions within and between focus groups, and by singling out interesting individual opinions. Central to each theme are excerpts of conversations that illustrate how the participants talked about the theme. These excerpts and other quotes that I used are translated into English. I tried to convey the idiomatic speech style of the original utterances in the English translations. This means that I adjusted the word order several times and translated catchphrases (e.g., the Dutch phrase ‘*zeg maar*’ was translated into the English word ‘like’). I did



not omit any words or phrases other than ‘ehm’ and words repeated in a stammering manner, which were already deleted in the original transcriptions. The original Dutch utterances can be found in Appendix H. The transcription conventions can be read in Appendix G. Furthermore, every theme is introduced by a restatement of the questions that instigated the discussions and a description of how these then developed. Striking reactions of the participants are sometimes added as well. Additionally, the teachers’ perspective is given at the end of most themes. A couple of themes, however, are not discussed by the teachers. Afterwards, in the discussion section, I connect the themes to the literature that is described in the theoretical framework section. Lastly, in the conclusion, I provide an answer to the research question, based on this discussion.

## **4 Results**

### **4.1 Defining language varieties**

The first question I asked the focus groups to discuss was whether there are different varieties of English. This seemed to perplex them. They all deliberated on it, as if it was a trick question, before answering with a sometimes hesitant, but always unanimous “yes”. All the groups then started listing varieties of English. The first ones mentioned were those spoken by NSs, such as AmEng, BrEng or “English English”, and Australian English. After that, varieties of countries where English is an official language were named. The one that recurred in all sessions was India. The groups continued to talk about dialects and NNS varieties like their own *Steenkolen-Engels*. *Steenkolen-Engels*, or Stone Coal English, is the name that the Dutch use to refer to English speech that is heavily Dutch-influenced. After dialects and NNS Englishes were included in the list of language varieties, all groups ended up debating what else should count as

a variety. An example of such a discussion is the excerpt below, in which participants of the first focus group talk about the borders of varieties.

**Excerpt 1: English varieties; Where to draw the line?**

- Jaap: *yeah that is a bit your own interpretation. of what a different kind is.*
- Adriaan: *what do you mean by that?*
- Jaap: *in the sense of, where do you draw the line? is that when there is a real difference on a grammatical level. or a such a difference in pronunciation that you think like here I draw the line, these are two different kinds. but there are so many crossings or something like that and there are so many similarities that it is at the same time difficult to really make a clear distinction.*
- Merel: *maybe there are just as many kinds of English as there are people who speak English.*
- Jaap: *yeah. yeah, right! I like that idea-*
- Daan: *yeah.*
- Jaap: *that you have your own individual English.*

In all the focus groups, similar conversations about the endlessness of varieties of English occurred. Interestingly, in the remainder of the sessions, the participants continued to talk about national varieties and regional dialects of English only. BrEng and AmEng were almost exclusively the topics of conversations, with occasional mentioning of Australian and Indian English, and some regional British or American dialects such as Yorkshire and Texan English. As an answer to Jaap's question in Excerpt 1, "where do you draw the line", the groups seemed to provide the answer: varieties that have a geographical placement. This idea of languages being bounded to places is later on reinforced by Pieter (Excerpt 2), who argued that "when a language is spoken in a certain region, you can call it a language". In sum, the participants were willing to have a discussion about how there are an endlessness amount of varieties, but in their normal conversation they referred to language varieties as those language forms that are spoken in specific regions. In most occasions they meant BrEng and AmEng.

I furthermore asked the participants what they thought the differences between varieties would be. Their answers to this question mainly focused on pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary, though not in a specific order. “BrEng spells ‘colour’ with a ‘u’ and AmEng without”, was the remark that was said in all focus groups.

Similarly, I asked the teachers what they thought language varieties of English were. In their answers there was an emphasis on what most of them called “NS accents”. American and British were given as the main examples. Additionally, dialects and NNS accents were often mentioned. The majority of the teachers discussed differences in pronunciation, lexicon, idioms, grammar, and spelling. These discussions suggest that the teachers believe that English varieties differ on more levels than just pronunciation, even though they referred to varieties as accents.

#### **4.2 Defining Dutch English**

“*Steenkolen-Engels*” and “the English that Louis van Gaal speaks” were the comments that were instantly made in every session when I asked what DuEng is. Strikingly, where the discussions were mild at first and the participants were somewhat hesitant to contribute, directly after this question, the speed with which participants responded increased and everybody joined the conversation. Furthermore, the comments were overwhelmingly negative. It became apparent in the discussion that the NNS variety of English is seen as a bundling of recurring mistakes that Dutch learners of English make, rather than a “real” language. Moreover, it is thought to be unprofessional.

After the initial emotionally-charged comments had been made, detailed descriptions of DuEng were given. Within all sessions, it was concluded that multiple gradations of the variety exist. According to the participants, DuEng is characterized as a simplistic, clear variety, that is easy to understand on the high end of the continuum, and sloppy, with a lack of grammatical

rules on the low end. The participants paradoxically argued that DuEng is ungrammatical because it strictly follows the SVO (subject-verb-object) sentence structure, even in contexts where English NSs would use a different word order. The variety also includes the use of literal translations of Dutch words (e.g. ‘ICT’ instead of ‘IT’) and Dutch sayings (e.g. ‘a cookie from your own dough’). Moreover, it has a smaller vocabulary than BrEng and AmEng. Furthermore, the Dutch phoneme inventory is often used to pronounce English words. For example, “love” is pronounced as [lyf], rather than [lav]. The participants described the DuEng as having a monotone pronunciation, with clear and harsh sounds, spoken at a slower pace than NS Englishes.

The above mentioned descriptions of DuEng’s distinct sentence structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation might suggest that the participants see DuEng as a full-fledged variety. However, remarks such as in the following excerpt show that the participants still view DuEng solely as an English accent.

**Excerpt 2: Dutch English’s legitimacy**

Pieter: *when a language is spoken in a certain region, you can call it [sic] a language. because in that case it belongs to that region. but that is strange, because we already speak Dutch here. [...] when you have a dialect, you have learnt this at home. and in order to somewhat organize it, everybody who speaks with a dialect- also speaks standard Dutch, also learns standard Dutch. but the thing is that everybody already knows Dutch. and everybody in the Netherlands communicates in Dutch. and then you try to learn another language. and that is not a dialect because you try to learn such a language and then you get an accent. and it is also not really an English dialect, because it is learnt at a later age instead of at home.*

This line of thought suggests that Pieter is inclined to treat DuEng as something more than an accent, but that he lacks a definition for it. The variety does not fit his concepts of a language or

dialect because he reserves these terms for varieties learned as a first language. Therefore, he limited himself to defining what DuEng is not, rather than what it is.

The teachers also found DuEng to be solely a learner's variety, or interlanguage. Most of them mentioned this in relation to a continuum, in which they themselves are at the high end. Louis van Gaal's accent was sometimes given as an example to showcase the opposite end of the DuEng continuum. The positioning of Louis van Gaal's pronunciation of English at the low end is an example of how most teachers find accent to be vital for the acceptability of a Dutch person's English. This is illustrated in the following quote from Floor:

*in terms of pronunciation it [DuEng] is terrible. I believe, most of the times, even people of whom you know, or you find out, like well they actually speak very good English. they have a very good understanding of the language. but they can't pronounce it. that really is cringeworthy.*

This quote shows that even if a person has an excellent proficiency in English, if their pronunciation is too Dutch, their speech will be found unpleasant by this teacher.

As for the features of DuEng, the teachers mentioned the same things as the focus group participants: literal translations of words and phrases, a pronunciation that uses the Dutch phoneme inventory, and a strong adherence to the SVO word order.

### **4.3 Dutch English; Would they use it?**

After the participants had defined DuEng, I asked them in which situations they would use the variety. The participants had to think about this for a few moments. Then, they came up with several examples, of which most were hypothetical. "At the soccer World Championships in South Africa", Jaap said, "because then other Dutchmen would recognize me as being Dutch". Some argued that DuEng could be used to come across as apologetic, because it sounds

sympathetic and cute to non-Dutch listeners. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the variety could be used to get out of a fine in a foreign country, as the accent makes one look like an ignorant foreigner who does not know the rules. However, the conversations quickly developed into discussions about whether the participants would want to make it known to others that they are Dutch. This resulted in the following discussion about how internationally-minded the Netherlands is (see Excerpt 5).

**Excerpt 3: Nationalism in the Netherlands**

- Fleur: *we are not that nationalistic I think.*
- Anne: *I also don't think the Dutch accent is something that many people are proud of I think.*
- Fleur: *no exactly. yes.*
- Tim: *that is actually what you [Adriaan] also just said. we are not proud of it [DuEng].*
- Adriaan: *yes, but what you [Fleur] say is something different again. that we actually aren't nationalistic at all and that we therefore also don't want to show that we're Dutch.*
- Jaap: *I think that indeed the thing is that we also want to express ourselves very internationally*
- All: *yes.*

Excerpt 3 shows that the participants not only think that the Dutch want to dissociate themselves from their DuEng accent, but that they furthermore attach little value to a Dutch national identity.

To the teachers I said that there were some instances in which the focus group participants wanted to use DuEng, because I wanted to elicit a response. I explained that the participants would use the variety in order to come across as sympathetic or to express a Dutch identity. The interviewees reacted negatively and were full of disbelief. Some just laughed. “Why would you want to express a Dutch identity? I can't think of any possible situation”, said one teacher for example. Only the Aruban teacher did not find it surprising that Dutch people would want to

broadcast their national identity by speaking DuEng. However, she found it more logical that students would want to hide their Dutch accent. In general, the teachers appeared to be even more internationally-minded than the focus group participants and they furthermore believed broader Dutch society to have the same mindset as them. This is evident in utterances like “there is prestige in sounding international, not in sounding Dutch”.

#### **4.4 The value of native speaker English**

A theme that received particular attention during the sessions was the value of speaking English like a NS. In this section, I will present some conversations that highlight the value of NS Englishes for the participants in my study.

The first conversation is centered around a speech that the former Dutch minister of foreign affairs, Frans Timmermans, gave about the airplane MH17 that was shot down above Ukraine (The Daily Conversation, 2014). The group explained that the entire country was proud of the way minister Timmermans spoke English. This proudness stems from the previously mentioned notion that the Dutch want to be taken seriously as an internationally-oriented country. A second example was given by Fred. He said that when his father has to give a presentation in English, he practices his accent in front of the mirror. Speaking like a NS is something Fred’s father and his co-workers deem important. There is a certain prestige attached to a high command of English among the Dutch, the participants argued. This is especially true in domains where it is important to show your expertise, such as in the academic world, the business world, and on television. For the participants, being mistaken for a NS is the biggest compliment you can get about your English proficiency.

Another argument the participants gave for their desire to sound like a NS, is that they believe this creates goodwill among local speakers of English. This is illustrated in the following excerpt in which the participants discuss the effects that DuEng has on listeners.

**Excerpt 4: Dutch English; Not taken seriously**

Anne: *apparently other people [NSs] don't mind [a DuEng accent]. but because you have the idea that others mind, you will especially do, like, for those others very much your best to hide it [DuEng accent]. but that is actually more a kind of insecurity than that it is something that really makes sense.*

Jaap: *yea it is indeed really a thing. to begin with we have a term for it. Steenkolen Engels. It really is kind of a disgrace or something like that. those group of English speakers you don't want to belong to.*

Tim: *it is also like. we can understand it [DuEng]. we can laugh about it. [...] it is funny, we don't even take it seriously.*

Anne: *yea that is maybe also the case. that Dutch English, if it sounds really Dutch. that we don't take it seriously anymore.*

Tim: *it sounds as if you haven't had enough English.*

Anne: *yea that is maybe also the case. as if you don't put enough energy into it to actually speak English and you're more somewhat half doing something.*

Even though most participants were aware of the fact that NSs are lenient toward NNSs' English, like Anne points out in the first line, their own negative perception of DuEng made the participants believe that the variety is not accepted among NSs.

Lastly, the participants explained they would like to speak NS English because this increases their intelligibility.

#### **4.5 The acceptability of native speaker English**

Whereas the previous section showed how much the participants value sounding like a NS, the present one will discuss contexts in which it is less acceptable to speak NS English.



Whether a Dutch speaker's production of NS-like English is accepted seems to depend upon the "naturalness" of one's speech, a word that recurrently appeared in all the focus group sessions. What follows are two fragments that illustrate different situations in which NS English sounds unnatural, and therefore is rejected. In Excerpt 5a, the participants talk about Dutch people who speak with a NS-like English accent in general. Excerpt 5b has the more specific topic of English words and phrases within a Dutch sentence. Both excerpts will be shown, before they are discussed together.

**Excerpt 5a: The naturalness of native speaker accents**

- Lotte: *it does trigger a lot of annoyance in me if someone deliberately starts speaking super English, exaggerated English. while I hear that someone is Dutch. and then puts on a like super exaggerated English accents that really annoys me. and then I think, just speak normal Dutch English then, because I know you are Dutch. and then, like, in that case I'd rather have that he speaks with his own accent instead of very exaggerated.*
- David: *but maybe that has become his own accent? after a lot of practice and that kind of stuff.*
- Lotte: *yeahh...*
- David: *like he doesn't have to put on something, but that it has become normal for him or something like that.*
- Lotte: *yeah and it still feels like that in a certain way. a little exaggerated, exaggerated or something like that.*
- David: *yes that [a natural command of a NS English accent] is exceptional maybe.*

**Excerpt 5b: The naturalness of native speaker accents in codeswitching**

- Fred: *if you for example are just talking with friends and you indeed want to do an utterance, a sentence in English or something like that. if you refer to something. I don't know, to a tv show you just watched or something like that. if you then try to switch in that one sentence to an authentic English accent and then back again, that also sounds very forced. people often find that annoying. so then it is*

*better to say it in the easy, in the Dutch manner. then it fits the conversation more or something like that.*

Pieter: *it then also looks like you're not really yourself anymore. that if you start speaking with a heavy English accent that you discard your identity. I can also see how it sounds a little know-it-all-like. if someone simply tries to speak English and that you in a better accent, a more appropriate accent.*

Rosa: *that you sort of try to make it a competition.*

Fred: *you just kind of sound like a dick a little.*

All: *hahaha.*

The first fragment (Excerpt 5a) suggests that it is not always acceptable for Dutch people to speak with an English NS accent. The reason for this seems to be that it is not *their* accent. The participants claimed that they would rather hear a natural accent, even if this includes Dutch features, than a NS accent that does not belong to a Dutch speaker. Furthermore, as David mentions in the last line of Excerpt 5a, it is exceptional for a Dutch speaker to attain a natural NS accent. It therefore seems to be possible for someone from the Netherlands to get away with a English NS accent. However, it is unclear what specifically makes one's NS accent sound natural. The participants in Excerpt 5b elaborate on the attitudes towards unnatural NS speech. Unnatural NS English is, in this excerpt, the use of a NS accent to pronounce words while codeswitching between English and Dutch. They explained that doing this makes a speaker come across as annoying, a know-it-all, or, as Fred puts it, "like a dick". According to them, this kind of accent use does not align with a Dutch identity.

#### **4.6 Native speaker Englishes: Attitudes and preferences**

Regardless of the contextual appropriateness of speaking NS English, the participants do have NS Englishes as target models. In this section, I will therefore discuss what learners and teachers said about their attitudes toward and preferences for specific NS varieties.

The two English varieties that have been discussed at great length are BrEng and AmEng. BrEng is seen by the participants as the most formal variety. It is what they are taught in high school and what they use at university and in the academic world. Moreover, they believe it is dignified English. Contrastingly, AmEng is seen as the informal variety that is used in the media. Among the participants, there seems to be an equal distribution of those who prefer BrEng, those who prefer AmEng, and those who do not have a preference. Interestingly, almost all the participants argued that because they are exposed to both Englishes, their own English has become a mixture of BrEng, AmEng, and Dutch features. With regards to this mixing, they explained that they would prefer to be consistent in a single variety. There were no recurrent arguments in favor of one variety or the other, as the individual participants all have different motivations. Paul, for instance, favors BrEng, because he “think[s] it is more beautiful, esthetically”. Tim, on the other hand, justified his preference for AmEng by saying: “when I have an American text, it’s way easier for me to understand [compared to British]. because it [AmEng] is actually everything you come in contact with on social media, and on the internet in general”. It should be noted that it does not seem that Tim inferred he will be more intelligible when he speaks AmEng, rather it seems that AmEng is more intelligible to him, as this is the variety he is most used to. Although some of the participants’, like Tim, favor a variety because they believe it is the easiest for them to learn, none argued that BrEng or AmEng is more intelligible in general.

The majority of the teachers, five out of the six, prefers BrEng. When I told them that a considerable group of the participants in the focus groups preferred AmEng over BrEng, they were not surprised. This was something they recognized among their own students as well. In the

following excerpt, Camila, a teacher originally from Aruba, talks about the effect that her AmEng accent has on her students.

**Excerpt 6: American English's effect in a classroom**

Camila: *I did notice that if I spoke American that it seems like they immediately take me very seriously. because it is the English that they know from their shows. whereas British is immediately super fancy, they can't relate to British.*

Adriaan: *so they take you more seriously if you speak American?*

Camila: *yes certainly! at least, in comparison to other teachers who use British.*

[...]

Camila: *they don't say like I like American better, but in their behavior you do notice like, they really go: woowow that lady speaks really good English. while another English teacher who walks around is also good in English, but then British.*

This excerpt indicates that Camila's students relate better to AmEng than to BrEng because this is the variety of English that they hear in their free time in the media. It might therefore be that this is the English that they can see themselves using. The other interviewed teachers also attributed AmEng's increasing popularity to its dominance on television, internet, and social media. In reaction to the growing dominance of AmEng, the teachers said that they want to provide students with a choice, and that they will support them in acquiring their target, whatever it may be. However, they argued that this is not the main priority in vocational education nor in the first years of high school.

## 5 Discussion

In the discussion section, I will analyze the results in relation to the literature in the following way. First, I will discuss preferences for DuEng in comparison to NS Englishes. After that, I will focus specifically on the NS varieties of AmEng and BrEng.

### 5.1 Dutch English versus NS Englishes

In order to explain learners' and teachers' preferences, I will talk about three things: views on the official status of Dutch English, views on the intelligibility of Dutch English and NS Englishes, and views on identity construction through these varieties. The latter part will be discussed in relation to Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) tactics of intersubjectivity.

### 5.1.1 Status of Dutch English

The learners' view of Dutch English does not seem to fit any of the concepts of language variety provided in the theoretical framework. First, the learners see DuEng as an interlanguage and notice at the same time that it has salient features in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, which they are able to describe in great detail. Moreover, in all focus groups the same features are described. This would suggest that DuEng is indeed acquiring its own norms, as Edwards (2014a) argues, and yet the variety has not gained social status; the learners are aware of its features, but still see DuEng as a learner variety. This finding adds extra complexity to the distinction between interlanguages and full-fledged varieties, as people do not necessarily have to view a variety as one or the other. Secondly, I argue that the learners see the variety solely as an accent, regardless of their awareness of the other features, in that they view the pronunciation errors as most disruptive. Where Coetsem (1992) describes accent varieties as those varieties of which the most salient features are pronunciation based, I argue that DuEng is an accent variety despite the fact that many salient features are *not* pronunciation based. However, although pronunciation is only one of the widely recognized features, it is probably the most "disruptive" one. This, in relation to the notion that the learners think of DuEng as a "bundling of mistakes", goes a long way in explaining why they view DuEng as an accent variety. In sum, DuEng is seen by the learners as an interlanguage accent variety that has salient features in vocabulary,

grammar, and pronunciation, of which the latter is most frequently mentioned as being “disruptive”.

The teachers describe the same features as the learners, which is further proof for the pertinence of the features. Like the learners, the teachers lay the most emphasis on the pronunciation. It is clear that Dutch pronunciation features are less prestigious and even cause irritation among the teachers. This finding concurs with my argument that pronunciation is the most important of DuEng’s features for the Dutch.

### **5.1.2 Intelligibility**

In the continuum of DuEng, the learners find the high end variety intelligible, while they regard the low end as unintelligible for people other than native speakers of Dutch. The rest of the results focus on the high end variety, and therefore I will simply refer to this variety as DuEng.

The learners do not mention they want to use DuEng because of its intelligibility in English. Instead, they argue that speaking with a NS accent makes them more intelligible. Therefore, in terms of intelligibility, NS accents are favored over the DuEng one. This shows that the theoretical work of scholars such as Derwing and Munro (2015) and Jenkins (2011), who found NNS accents to be equally or, in some occasions, even more intelligible than NS ones, is not in line with the preferences of the Dutch, as expressed by the participants in my study.

### **5.1.3 Identity construction**

Extrapolating from my findings, it seems reasonable to say that Dutch learners have the following preferences in terms of identity construction: the learners want to distinguish themselves from DuEng, as Van den Doel and Quené (2013) hypothesized, and they prefer NS Englishes. Their motivation for doing so is that they favor an international identity over a

national one. A DuEng accent restricts learners from constructing an authentic international identity, as “it sounds as if you haven’t had enough English” (Tim, Excerpt 4). Similarly, Jaap mentions that he “think[s] that indeed the thing is that we also want to express ourselves very internationally” (Excerpt 3), with which he implies that DuEng is insufficient to reach this goal. NS English, on the other hand, is perceived as prestigious and as capable of authorizing an international identity. The entire country was proud of minister Timmerman’s speech because he has a perfect NS accent. I argue that they are proud because they see his accent as an authentic representation of the Dutch international identity, with which they want to align. The preference for NS English is furthermore illustrated in the example of Fred’s father, who authorizes NS English by drawing on its institutional power to create an expertise role. Aside from authentication and authorization purposes, the learners’ preference for NS English can also be motivated by a need for adequation. This is seen in the learners’ argument that speaking NS English creates goodwill among the NSs.

NS English does not always successfully lead to the creation of an authentic international identity, nor is it always appropriate. Firstly, Dutch speakers’ NS English can sound unnatural, according to the learners. This is a phenomenon that the learners call “exaggerated English” (Excerpt 5a), where a Dutch speaker puts on a NS accent, but sounds superficial when using it. The learners argue that this is an inauthentic way of speaking for Dutch people. This shows that they are aware that an identity is negotiated and that success is not guaranteed. Secondly, pronouncing English words and phrases within a Dutch utterance with a NS English accent is unacceptable (Excerpt 5b).

In sum, although Dutch learners would like to use NS English in order to create a prestigious international identity, they prefer a DuEng accent when this creates a more appropriate or

authentic identity for a Dutch person. It seems, therefore, that the Dutch only want to authorize a NS identity when they are capable of successfully producing an authentic NS accent.

There are some specific situations in which the learners argue DuEng is useful. These situations, however, are hypothetical and were only considered for a short period. The gravity of these preferences is therefore minimal. The first example is that the learners would like to speak DuEng in order to be seen as innocent when they are about to receive a fine in a foreign country. The DuEng accent would make them believable as an ignorant foreigner who is not aware of the rules. However, this would work with any foreign accent and is not specifically used to create a Dutch identity. Another motivation for using DuEng would be at the soccer world championships, which is the only context mentioned in which the Dutch learners would want to adequate with their countrymen in order to establish a shared national identity.

The teachers also prefer NS Englishes. They illegitimate the DuEng accent in a similar fashion as the learners by arguing that international accents are more prestigious. Moreover, the teachers are more critical of the DuEng accent than the learners. This may be because they spent a considerable part of their life studying the English language and eradicating their Dutch accent.

## **5.2 American English versus British English**

To conclude this section, I will address the preferences for AmEng and BrEng. I will mainly do so in terms of identity construction, because there are few arguments given related to the variety's intelligibility. Furthermore, as the individual learners have different preferences and motivations with regards to AmEng and BrEng, I will use this section to illustrate what can motivate individuals' preferences, rather than comparing the general opinion of the group with the literature like I did in section 5.1.



As I already mentioned, the learners base few arguments about intelligibility in terms of a preference for BrEng or AmEng, as they believe both NS Englishes are equally intelligible. However, some of the learners do argue that they find the variety with which they are most familiar the most intelligible. This suggests that a listener's exposure to a variety increases his or her perceived ability to understand a speaker, which adds to the argument that intelligibility is dependent on both speaker and listener.

In terms of identity construction, BrEng and AmEng may be drawn upon to fulfil various social goals. This was clearly shown in section 4.6, about the fact that learners believe that the varieties are used in specific domains. BrEng may be used to authenticate a formal and serious identity that is necessary to come across as an expert in the academic world. Similarly, because AmEng is used in the media and seen as the informal variety, people might want to authenticate a popular and casual identity by adopting AmEng. Furthermore, Excerpt 6 shows that one variety can be found to be more authentic than the other. In this excerpt, Camila explains that her students think her English is better than that of her colleagues, because she uses AmEng instead of BrEng. When such beliefs about a variety are established, they can be used to authorize someone's English proficiency. Another motivation for adopting a variety may be similar to that of Paul, who prefers BrEng because "it is more beautiful, esthetically". He uses BrEng because of the values he attaches to the linguistic features of the variety. It cannot be deducted from the results whether he also views the British language community in a positive light and wants to adequate with them, as Bucholtz and Hall (2004) suggest, or if he simply likes the variety.

Although there is some consistency in BrEng's and AmEng's perceived usefulness in certain specific domains, the differences in attitudes toward the varieties may make it difficult to predict whether a social identity will be successfully negotiated. For example, if Paul tries to authorize

his English expertise in front of Camila's students by adopting BrEng, his identity as an expert in English will probably not be recognized. While he may believe BrEng is more esthetic, the students may think his English is too "fancy" and not take him seriously because of it.

Among the teachers, there is a considerable preference for BrEng. This reflects the image about target models of English in Dutch education that is given in the literature. However, the teachers state that they are willing to set aside their personal preferences in order to help students reach their target model of English, provided that the students' educational level allows it.

## **6 Conclusion**

I will begin this section by restating the importance of my study, before summarizing an answer to the research questions. After that, I will address the study's limitations, discuss the implications of the findings, and provide suggestions for further research.

### **6.1 Importance of the study**

There is an academic debate that argues whether NNS varieties of English should or should not be used in English as a foreign language education. This debate, however, ignores the possibility that learners might prefer one or the other variety depending on the context. Moreover, the academics in the debate mainly try to decide amongst themselves which model of English would be most suitable for NNSs, rather than directly consulting non-native users. Therefore, I positioned myself outside of the debate by starting with the needs of the users.

### **6.2 Answer to the main research question**

The main purpose of this study was to find out *in which contexts Dutch learners of English prefer to use which variety of English, with regards to intelligibility and social identity construction*. The answer to this question is the following.

In general, Dutch learners prefer NS Englishes as target models. This is, first, due to the act that they would in no occasion use DuEng instead of NS Englishes to become more intelligible. The learners believe that DuEng is easily intelligible at the high end of its continuum, but they are not aware that NNS accents such as their own can be equally intelligible as NS accents, or even more intelligible in interaction with other NNSs. Furthermore, they do not want to project a Dutch national identity, but rather an international one, which they believe gives them more authority in domains such as business, television, and the academic world. This is the second reason for them to prefer NS Englishes, as they believe these varieties authenticate an international identity. Additionally, the learners want to adequate with NSs of English by speaking their variety in order to create goodwill.

The Dutch do not prefer NS English when they have to listen to a fellow Dutch speaker who produces an inauthentic NS accent. In this case they prefer high end DuEng. Interestingly, since the learners believe it is highly unlikely for a Dutch person to produce a believable NS accent, the learners would most often prefer DuEng. Furthermore, learners also find it unacceptable to use NS English for the pronunciation of English words or phrases in the middle of a Dutch conversation, as this creates a dual identity that is unnatural within a Dutch context.

DuEng would hypothetically be used by the learners to authenticate as innocent in a foreign country and to create a Dutch national identity at a big international sports event when the Netherlands is competing.

The two varieties that are mainly preferred by Dutch learners as target models are BrEng and AmEng. The preference for either of these varieties differs per individual, as do their motivations. Moreover, some of the learners do not have a specific preference for a NS variety at all. However, most learners agree that BrEng is the most appropriate variety to use in formal domains like the academic world, and that AmEng is suitable for more informal contexts such as in the media. What can be problematical is that learners have different perceptions of which variety is the “most real” English. This could lead to difficulties in the negotiation of identities that are constructed by using BrEng and AmEng.

### **6.3 Answer to the secondary question**

Subsequently, this study aimed to answer *how English teachers in the Netherlands view the preferences of English language learners*. The answer to this question is the following.

The teachers agree with the learners’ preference for NS Englishes and, moreover, they take a more critical standpoint than them: the teachers are stricter about DuEng pronunciation and they argue that DuEng could never be desired in any contexts, rather than seeing its usefulness in some situations.

Furthermore, the majority of the teachers prefers BrEng, but they acknowledge the increasing popularity of AmEng and are open to accommodating students who want to pursue AmEng as a target model.

### **6.4 Limitations**

There are some limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the implications of this study.

The first limitation to consider is the representativeness of this study's participants. The focus group participants were all between 18 and 27 years old. It may be that they have different opinions than current high school students. For example, as Excerpt 6 suggests, Dutch teenagers might have had a stronger preference for AmEng. Similarly, as the interviewees were mostly novice teachers, this study is not representative of more experienced teachers. Although the participants do represent the future group of experienced English teachers, the difference in representation should be taken into account.

Another limitation is the fact that the focus groups were meta-discursive evaluations; during the sessions, the participants explained what they thought their preferences would be. Furthermore, some of the conversations were hypothetical and not all of the arguments were based on participants' realistic abilities in the English language. In real-life situations, therefore, the participants' preferences may be different.

## **6.5 Implications**

The findings of this study have several implications for the academic world and the Dutch educational system.

Firstly, this study shows that the preference of variety can differ per individual and per context, and individuals can also have different motivations for their preference. Therefore, academics should be careful with generalized remarks about (national) communities' preference for English models. Secondly, based on the findings I suggest that high schools in the Netherlands consider teaching AmEng as an additional target next to BrEng, as a large part of the Dutch learners prefers AmEng, and teachers seem to be open to support learners in attaining either target. Thirdly, it is unlikely that the Dutch will prefer DuEng, given the attitude that they

have toward it. Since this study indicates that a considerable part of Dutch society is probably not aware of the intelligibility of NNS varieties, I argue that it will be beneficial for scholars in favor of NNS models to think about ways to raise awareness in the general society about the effect that these varieties have. However, the indication in this research that the Dutch do not want to express a national identity will remain a major factor in their preference for disassociating from DuEng.

## **6.6 Further research**

The next step after the present study could be to research whether the identified preferences should be included in the educational programs of Dutch high schools, and to investigate ways in which this could be done. As a starting point, additional data that was gathered in the process of this study about learners' and teachers' suggestions for English education in the Netherlands could be analyzed. This data includes discussions about how a choice for BrEng and AmEng could be introduced in Dutch high schools.

Secondly, further research could look into the notion of NS variety mixing by the Dutch, for example, with regard to its acceptability or its effects on intelligibility. This could be beneficial in prioritizing goals for English teaching in the Netherlands.

Lastly, an interesting phenomenon that warrants further study is that of the naturalness of NS Englishes. The present research shows some occasions in which Dutch natives' "exaggerated" NS English accent is rejected because this discredits the authenticity of their Dutch identity. It would be interesting to explore this phenomenon, as well as to gain a more detailed description of what makes NS English "inauthentic" or "too" exaggerated. This would provide insight into the reasons behind this perceived inauthenticity and a better understanding

of the contrast between the rejection of an inauthentic Dutch identity and the desire for an international identity.

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## 8 Appendices

### Appendix A: Information letter (in Dutch)



Universiteit Utrecht

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#### Informatie over deelname aan de focus groep:

*Een reflectie op het soort Engels dat wij in Nederland leren.  
Het perspectief van de gebruiker*

---

##### 1. Wat is het onderzoek?

Je bent gevraagd deel te nemen aan wetenschappelijk onderzoek van de master Interculturele Communicatie aan de Universiteit van Utrecht. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om erachter te komen waar jullie Engels voor gebruiken en wat voor soort Engels jullie willen spreken/leren. De uitkomst hiervan kan effect hebben op het Engels wat wordt aangeboden in het onderwijs.

##### 2. Waarom ben ik gevraagd deel te nemen?

Je bent uitgenodigd omdat jij als gebruiker en lerende van het Engels een waardevolle mening hebt over het onderwerp.

##### 3. Wat wordt er van je verwacht?

De focus groep houdt in dat je samen met 5 andere deelnemers een discussie voert over het onderwerp. In 45 minuten komen er een aantal vragen en stellingen aan bod. Dit alles gebeurt in een informele sfeer en er zullen drinken en snacks aanwezig zijn. Je deelt mee aan aan één enkele focus groep.

##### 4. Vrijwillige deelname

Deelname is vrijwillig. Je hoeft niet mee te doen als je dat niet wilt. Als je wel meedoet, kun je je altijd bedenken en stoppen op ieder gewenst moment -- ook tijdens het onderzoek.

##### 5. Wat zijn mogelijke voor- en nadelen van deelname aan dit onderzoek?

Je hebt zelf geen direct voordeel van deelname aan dit onderzoek. Jouw inzichten en die van anderen kunnen nuttige inzichten bieden in het onderwerp.

##### 6. Geluidsopnames

De discussie zal worden opgenomen om ervoor te zorgen dat de opmerkingen van alle deelnemers waarheidsgetrouw kunnen worden verzameld. In geen enkel verslag zullen namen genoemd worden. De opnames zijn alleen toegankelijk voor één onderzoeker, Adriaan Walpot. De opnames zullen confidentieel behandeld worden en worden verwijderd nadat de analyse gemaakt is.

**7. Is er een vergoeding wanneer je besluit aan dit onderzoek mee te doen?**

Er is geen vergoeding. Omdat dit onderzoek onderdeel is van een master scriptie is er geen budget beschikbaar vanuit de Universiteit Utrecht. Wel wordt er onder de deelnemers een bol.com bon van 20 euro verloot.

**8. Meer informatie over dit onderzoek?**

Voor het verdere vragen voor, tijdens en na het onderzoek kun je terecht bij Adriaan Walpot. Telefoon: [removed for privacy reasons] / E-mail: [a.h.l.walpot@students.uu.nl](mailto:a.h.l.walpot@students.uu.nl).

**9. Wanneer en waar vindt het onderzoek plaats?**

Er vinden in totaal 3 focus groepen plaats. Je kunt je opgeven voor het onderzoek door Adriaan te mailen ([a.h.l.walpot@students.uu.nl](mailto:a.h.l.walpot@students.uu.nl)) o.v.v. je naam, leeftijd en beroep (dit kan ook bijv. student zijn). Je kunt slechts aan één focus groep deelnemen. Als je een voorkeur voor een specifieke datum hebt dan kun je dit doorgeven.

Locatie: Universiteitsbibliotheek Binnenstad – Drift 27, 3512 BR Utrecht. Zaal: *wordt in latere mailing bekend gemaakt.*

Data:

Woensdag 21 februari (19.15u - 20.15u)

Donderdag 22 februari (20.15u - 21.15u)

Vrijdag 23 februari (19.15u - 20.15u)

## **Appendix B: Standardized message (in Dutch)**

Beste ...,

Ik wil je uitnodigen om deel te nemen aan een focus groep over het effect van verschillende soorten Engels en welke wij in Nederland zouden willen leren. Deze focus groep houdt in dat je samen met mij en vijf andere deelnemers in gesprek gaat over dit onderwerp. Jouw mening is hier erg belangrijk. In 45 minuten komen er een aantal vragen en stellingen aan bod. Dit alles gebeurt in een informele sfeer en er zullen drinken en snacks aanwezig zijn. De uitkomst van de discussie kan bijdragen aan de toekomst van het Engels onderwijs.

Onder de deelnemers wordt een bol.com bon van 20 euro verloot.

De focus groepen vinden plaats in een zaaltje in de Universiteitsbibliotheek Binnenstad op woensdag 21, donderdag 22 en vrijdag 23 februari (19.15u - 20.15u). Je kunt je aanmelden door mij te mailen op [a.h.l.walpot@students.uu.nl](mailto:a.h.l.walpot@students.uu.nl)

Vriendelijke groet,  
Adriaan

## Appendix C: Statement of consent (in Dutch)



Universiteit Utrecht

### Toestemmingsverklaring

Onderzoek: *Een reflectie op het soort Engels dat wij in Nederland leren. Het perspectief van de gebruiker*

Ik heb de informatie voor deelneming gelezen. Ik kon aanvullende vragen stellen. Mijn vragen zijn genoeg beantwoord. Ik had genoeg tijd om te beslissen of ik meedoe.

Ik weet dat meedoen helemaal vrijwillig is. Ik ben me ervan bewust dat ik op ieder moment kan beslissen om toch niet mee te doen. Daarvoor hoef ik geen reden te geven.

Ik weet dat sommige mensen mijn gegevens kunnen zien. Die mensen staan vermeld in de informatiebrief. Zelf heb ik het recht om de wijze waarop mijn gegevens zijn opgeslagen in te zien.

Ik geef toestemming om mijn gegevens te gebruiken, voor de doelen die in de informatiebrief staan. Mocht er aanleiding zijn om de gegevens te gebruiken voor een ander onderzoeksdoel dan zal opnieuw toestemming aan mij worden gevraagd.

Ik geef toestemming om gegevens nog 10 jaar na afloop van dit onderzoek te bewaren voor nadere analyse in het kader van dit onderzoek (indien van toepassing).

Naam deelnemer:

Handtekening:

Datum: \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_

---

Ik verklaar hierbij dat ik deze deelnemer voldoende heb geïnformeerd over het genoemde onderzoek.

Als er tijdens het onderzoek informatie bekend wordt die de toestemming van de deelnemer zou kunnen beïnvloeden, dan breng ik hem/haar daarvan tijdig op de hoogte op een wijze waardoor ik er zeker van ben dat de informatie de deelnemer bereikt heeft.

Adriaan Walpot

Handtekening:

Datum: \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_

## Appendix D: Question list focus groups (in Dutch)

Legend:

- \* **Bold** indicates main questions.
- \* *Italics* indicate probes to help instigate discussions.
- \* Underlining indicates notes for the moderator.

### Openingpraatje

Goedenavond en welkom bij mijn focus groep sessie. Bedankt dat jullie de tijd hebben genomen om mee te praten over het gebruik van verschillende vormen van Engels in Nederland. Ik zal mijzelf even voorstellen: Mijn naam is Adriaan Walpot en ik volg de master interculturele communicatie aan de UU.

Nog even wat context: Er is in de academische wereld veel discussie over welke vorm van Engels er gegeven moet worden op scholen in Nederland. Ik wil graag jullie mening horen en wat jullie motivatie is om Engels te gebruiken. Dit is omdat tot nu toe alleen maar academici onderling hierover discussiëren terwijl het juist gaat om de gebruikers van Engels: jullie. Zijn hier vragen over?

Jullie zijn uitgenodigd omdat jullie in Nederlandstalige gezinnen opgegroeid zijn en Engels gebruiken. Jullie zijn daarom bekend met hoe het is om Engels als een tweede taal te leren en te gebruiken in Nederland.

Er zijn geen foute antwoorden, maar alleen maar verschillende meningen. Deel alsjeblieft je mening, ook al is deze anders van wat de rest van de groep heeft gezegd. Ik ben in iedereen's mening geïnteresseerd, ook als je negatief beeld van de situatie hebt. Negatieve opmerkingen zijn soms zelf het waardevolst. Ik zelf zal op de achtergrond blijven en jullie aan het woord laten met elkaar. Het is dus geen interview. Er is wel een regel. Ik wil graag dat jullie om de beurt praten.

Je zult misschien wel de audio recorder gezien hebben. Ik record de sessie omdat ik niets van jullie opmerkingen wil missen. Mensen zeggen vaak hele goede dingen en ik kan niet alles opschrijven of onthouden. Vanavond wil ik dat wij elkaar bij onze voornaam aanspreken en ik zal geen namen gebruiken in mijn onderzoek. Er zijn 6 vragen en het duurt ongeveer 45-60minuten.

### Bullet points openingspraatje

- Welkom
- Context: academische discussie vs. Gebruikers
- Jullie zijn uitgenodigd vanwege NL achtergrond
- Recorder
- Geen foute antwoorden → meningen
- Negatief is waardevol
- Om de beurt praten
- Voornamen (anonimiteit)
- Ik blijf op achtergrond



## Vragen

Oke, laten we beginnen. Ik heb naamkaartjes op de tafel voor jullie gezet zodat wij elkaars naam kunnen onthouden. Laten we eerst wat meer van elkaar leren kennen door een rondje om de tafel te gaan. **Kun je mij je vertellen wat je naam is, hoe oud je bent en wat je ervaring met Engels is?**

Mooi. Eerste vraag:

1. 5min:

**Denken jullie dat er verschillende varianten van Engels zijn en wat denken jullie dat deze zijn?**

Wat zijn de verschillen tussen deze varianten?

*Zou het voor een Brit uitmaken of die Brits of Amerikaans Engels spreekt?*

2. 5min:

**Als er iets als Nederlands Engels zou bestaan, hoe zouden jullie dit dan omschrijven?** Jullie mogen hier echt in detail gaan en alles telt.

*Denk aan: uitspraak, woorden, zinsconstructie.*

3. 5min:

**Welke variant van Engels gebruik jij of zou je willen spreken?**

Lukt dit?

**Wat is je streven in beheersing van deze variant?** Noem een percentage tussen de 0 en 100, waarbij 100% beheersing als een native is en 60-80% goed verstaanbaar is.

4. 10min:

**Denken jullie dat het per situatie kan verschillen welke variant van Engels je zou gebruiken?**

*Dit mag ook een variant zijn die je niet beheerst.*

*Maakt het voor je uit tegen wie je spreekt? Brit/NS, Nederlander, Europeaan?*

5. 10min:

**Kun je een situatie bedenken waarin je Nederlands Engels zou gebruiken en wanneer juist niet?**

6. 10min:

**Wat zou je moeten leren om dit te kunnen?**

7. 5min:

Samenvatting belangrijkste punten discussie

**Zijn jullie het met deze samenvatting eens?**

Is er iets wat jullie willen toevoegen?

## Appendix E: Question list interviews (questions in Dutch)

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank interviewee in advance</li> <li>• Time frame is 20-30 min</li> <li>• Purpose is master thesis</li> <li>• Setting:</li> </ul> <p><i>Zoals ik al eerder aangaf heb ik een aantal focus groepen gehouden met Nederlanders tussen de 18 en 28. Hierin hebben wij het gehad over de verschillende varianten van Engels die wij in Nederland gebruiken en wat zij hierbij belangrijk vinden om te kunnen. In dit interview wil ik graag de uitkomsten van deze focus groepen aan je voorleggen.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask permission to record audio</li> <li>• State anonymity</li> <li>• Ask whether interviewee has any questions</li> <li>• background information: <b>name, age, home country, years of teaching experience, experience with English</b></li> </ul>
Introduction first sentence	<p><i>Als eerste heb ik een aantal definities die ik ook aan de focus groepen heb gevraagd. Ik zou graag willen weten wat jij hieronder verstaat.</i></p>
First part	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wat versta jij onder varianten van Engels?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Wat zijn de verschillen hiertussen?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Als er iets als Nederlands Engels zou bestaan, hoe zou je dit dan omschrijven? <i>Bijv. uitspraak, woorden, zinsconstructie</i></li> <li>3. Welke variant van Engels wordt gegeven op jouw school?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Wat vind je hiervan?</li> <li>b. Zou je hier iets aan willen veranderen?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
Second part introduction	<p><u>Wensen Engels leerders:</u> Per item:</p> <p>Wat vind je hiervan? - merk je dit bij jouw leerlingen ook? - had je dit verwacht? - is dit realistisch?</p> <p>Wordt er op jouw school hier aandacht aan besteed? - zo nee, is dit iets waar je tijd aan zou willen besteden? Hoe?</p>
Second part (needs of the users)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Er zijn verschillende wensen voor varianten, waarvan AmEng een grote is. <i>Iedereen heeft Brits Eng op school gehad, dit resulteert soms in verwarring</i></li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Consistentie in de variant die je gebruikt is belangrijker dan de keuze voor de variant.</li> <li>3. Deelnemers willen zich kunnen aanpassen aan hun gesprekspartner. Dit gaat eigenlijk wel automatisch zolang je maar een hoog niveau van Engels beheersing hebt.</li> <li>4. Deelnemers willen kunnen wisselen tussen varianten wanneer nodig. <i>Bijv. een publicatie voor een Amerikaanse journal (spelling en stijlregels van AmEng).</i></li> <li>5. Ze willen NL's Engels inzetten in bepaalde situaties <i>Bijv. om sympathie uit te lokken. Een enkeling wil NL'se identiteit uitstralen.</i></li> <li>6. Ze willen NL's accent verbergen en voor NS aangezien worden. <i>Bijv. om geen vragen te krijgen over waar je vandaan komt en het is het grootste compliment dat mogelijk is.</i></li> </ol>
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End interview</li> <li>• Ask if there's anything the interviewee would like to add</li> <li>• Thank interviewee again</li> <li>• Restate purpose of interview: research for thesis</li> <li>• Restate anonymity</li> <li>• Ask whether the interviewee wants results of the research</li> <li>• If yes, provide contact details</li> </ul>

**Appendix F: Original codes (in Dutch)**

Table 4

*Codes and their corresponding theme*

Codes (in Dutch)	Theme
Amerikaans; Brits; Engels Engels; Australisch Engels; moedertaal sprekers; India; dialecten; Steenkolen Engels; grenzen; taal; land spelling; uitspraak; woordgebruik	Defining language varieties
monotoon; duidelijk; overzichtelijk; simpel; kleiner vocabulaire; lager spreektempo; slordig; geen grammaticaregels; woordvolgorde; goed verstaanbaar; (spreekwoorden) letterlijk vertalen; Nederlandse uitspraak; Steenkolen Engels; accent; Louis van Gaal; fout; niet echt	Defining Dutch English
interesse; verstaanbaarheid; informeel; niet serieus; culturele associatie; aanpassen; WK Zuid Afrika; identiteit; niet nationalistisch	Dutch English; Would they use it?
anoniem; erbij horen; distantiëren; aanpassen; goodwill; aanzien; verstaanbaarheid; wetenschap; televisie; presentaties; internationaal	The value of native speaker English
onnatuurlijk; irritatie; overdreven; verbeterlijk; bekakt	The acceptability of native speaker English
Amerikaans: vakantie; informeel; media brits: universiteit; wetenschap; formeel; bekakt consistentie; verstaanbaarheid; mengeling	Native speaker Englishes; Attitudes and preferences

## Appendix G: Transcription conventions

- [ ] Text within brackets are additions of me to help explain the quote. They are not part of the citation.
- [...] Brackets with three dots represent a deleted part of a conversation.
- A hyphen indicates that a speaker's utterance continues in another line.
- ? A question mark is used to represent a noticeable rise in tone.
- ! An exclamation point indicates elevated enthusiasm behind a phrase.
- Italics* Indicates that the text is translated.

## Appendix H: Original excerpts (in Dutch)

### Excerpt 1: English varieties; Where to draw the line?

- Jaap: ja dat is natuurlijk een beetje je interpretatie daarin. van wat is een verschillende soort?
- Adriaan: wat bedoel je daarmee?
- Jaap: in de zin van, waar trek je de lijn? is dat als er op grammaticaal gebied echt een verschil is. of op uitspraak zodanig een verschil is dat je denkt zo van hier trek ik de lijn, dit zijn twee verschillende soorten. maar het gaat zoveel in elkaar over ofzo en er zijn zoveel overeenkomsten dat het dan ook weer moeilijk is om echt echt een duidelijk onderscheid te maken.
- Merel: misschien zijn er wel net zoveel verschillende soorten Engels als dat er mensen zijn die Engels spreken.
- Jaap: ja. ja, echt hè! dat vind ik wel een leuke gedachte-
- Daan: ja.
- Jaap: dat je je eigen individuele Engels hebt.

### Excerpt 2: Dutch English's legitimacy

- Pieter: als een bepaald gebied een taal spreekt, dan kun je het [sic] een taal noemen. omdat het dan bij dat gebied hoort wel. maar dat is raar, want wij spreken hier namelijk al Nederlands. [...] als je een dialect hebt heb je dat van huis uit meegekregen. en om dat een beetje goed te organiseren praat iedereen met een dialect- praat ook ABN, leert ook ABN. maar nu kan iedereen al Nederlands. en iedereen in Nederland communiceert in het Nederlands. en dan probeer je een andere taal te leren. en dat is geen dialect want je

probeert zo'n taal aan te leren en dan krijg je daar een accent in. en het is ook niet per se een Engels dialect, omdat het aangeleerd is in plaats van dat je het van huis uit hebt meegekregen.

### **Excerpt 3: Nationalism in the Netherlands**

- Fleur: we zijn niet zo nationalistisch denk ik.  
 Anne: ik denk ook niet dat het Nederlandse accent iets is waar veel mensen trots op zijn denk ik.  
 Fleur: nee precies. ja.  
 Tim: dat is eigenlijk wat jij [Adriaan] ook al net zei. we zijn er [Dutch English] niet trots op.  
 Adriaan: ja, maar wat jij [Fleur] zegt is weer iets anders. dat wij eigenlijk helemaal niet nationalistisch zijn en dat we daarom ook niet willen laten zien dat wij Nederlanders zijn.  
 Jaap: ik denk dat het inderdaad is dat wij ons heel erg internationaal willen uiten ook.  
 All: ja.

### **Excerpt 4: Dutch English; Not taken seriously**

- Anne: blijkbaar vinden andere mensen [NSs] het [een DuEng accent] niet erg. maar omdat je het idee hebt dat anderen het erg vinden, ga je juist zeg maar voor die anderen heel erg je best doen om het te verbergen. maar dat is eigenlijk meer een soort onzekerheid dan dat het echt ergens op slaat.  
 Jaap: ja het is inderdaad wel echt een dingetje. dat we er alleen al een term voor hebben. Steenkolen Engels. het is wel een soort van schande ofzo. die groep Engels sprekers waar je niet bij wilt horen.  
 Tim: het is ook zo. wij kunnen het verstaan. we kunnen er allemaal om lachen. [...] het is grappig, we nemen het niet eens serieus.  
 Anne: ja dat is het misschien ook inderdaad. dat Nederlands Engels, als het echt Nederlands klinkt. dat we het niet meer serieus nemen.  
 Tim: het klinkt alsof je niet genoeg Engels hebt gehad.  
 Anne: ja dat is misschien ook wel. alsof je er niet genoeg energie in stopt om daadwerkelijk Engels gaan te spreken en meer gewoon een beetje half maar wat aan het doen bent.

### **Excerpt 5a: The naturalness of native speaker accents**

- Lotte: het wekt bij mij wel heel veel irritaties als iemand expres super Engels, overdreven Engels gaat spreken. terwijl ik hoor dat iemand Nederlands is. en dan zeg maar super overdreven Engels accent op gaat zetten daar kan ik mij echt heel erg aan irriteren. En dan denk ik, praat dan maar gewoon Nederlands Engels, want ik weet dat je Nederlands bent. en dan, zeg maar in dat geval zou ik liever hebben dat die met z'n eigen accent spreekt in plaats van heel overdreven.
- David: maar misschien is dat wel zijn eigen accent geworden? na heel veel oefening en dat soort dingen.
- Lotte: jaa..
- David: dat hij niks hoeft op te zetten meer, maar dat het gewoon voor hem normaal is geworden ofzo.
- Lotte: ja en toch voel je het wel zo op een bepaalde manier. een beetje exaggerated, overdreven ofzo.
- David: ja dat [natuurlijke beheersing van een dergelijk Engels accent] is uitzonderlijk misschien.

### **Excerpt 5b: The naturalness of native speaker accents in codeswitching**

- Fred: als je bijvoorbeeld gewoon met vrienden praat en je wil inderdaad een uitspraak, een zin in het Engels ofzo. als je iets naar iets verwijst. weet ik veel, naar een serie die je gekeken hebt of. zoiets. als je dan probeert in die ene zin te switchen naar een authentiek Engels accent en dan weer terug, dat klinkt ook heel gemaakt. mensen vinden dat vaak ook irritant. dus dan kan je beter soort van het op de makkelijke, het op de Hollandse manier zeggen. dan past het in het gesprek ofzo.
- Pieter: het lijkt ook dan alsof je niet echt jezelf bent meer. dat als je zwaar in het Engels gaat praten dat je je identiteit dan laat zitten. ik kan mij ook voorstellen dat het een beetje verbeterlijk klinkt. als iemand gewoon probeert Engels te praten en dat jij in een beter accent, in een gepaster accent.
- Rosa: dat je het een beetje een wedstrijd probeert te maken.
- Fred: je klinkt een beetje als een lul gewoon.
- All: hahaha.

### **Excerpt 6: American English's effect on a classroom**

Camila: ik heb wel opgemerkt dat als ik Amerikaans praatte dan is het alsof ze het meteen heel serieus nemen. omdat het het Engels is die ze kennen van hun series. terwijl Brits meteen super fancy, ze kunnen niet relateren met Brits.

Adriaan: dus ze nemen je serieuzer als je Amerikaans praat?

Camila: ja dat wel! tenminste, in vergelijking met andere docenten die Brits hanteren.

[...]

Camila: ze zeggen het niet van ik vind Amerikaans leuker, maar aan hun gedrag merk je wel van, ze gaan echt dan: waaaaw die mevrouw kan echt goed Engels. terwijl er een andere docent Engels loopt die ook goed Engels kan, maar dan alleen Brits.



## **Appendix I: Additional characteristics of the participants**

During the focus groups and interviews, several characteristics of the participants emerged.

Although this information may not seem directly relevant for the research questions of this study, it may be valuable to have access to additional background knowledge in order to understand participants' remarks

### *Learners*

In terms of proficiency, almost half of the participants want to attain a NS-like English, while the others are content with being intelligible. However, with regard to writing, in comparison to speaking, NS-like command of English seems more important. The majority of those who aim for a NS-like proficiency in writing and speaking argue they do this because of the challenge. They explain that they are aware that they do not need NS-like proficiency to be more intelligible or to have better career opportunities.

### *Teachers & schools*

Only one of the teachers' schools had school-wide regulations for which English variety should be taught, which was BrEng in this case. In all the other schools, the choice was up to the teachers. Nevertheless, all schools had course books that are modeled after BrEng, the interviewees said.

The teachers are aware of the mixture of BrEng and AmEng that is spoken in the Netherlands. Some acknowledged that they themselves are sometimes confused whether a phrase or word is AmEng or BrEng. One teacher said she sometimes had to check her dictionary in order to see what BrEng spelling of a word was. There are various opinions toward the acceptability of mixed accents among the teachers. Some believe it is important for their students to know the differences between varieties of English. These teachers say they sporadically

explain differences between AmEng and BrEng in class, when an example arises in context.

Many others, especially those who teach in the first years of high school or in vocational education, argue that a focus on variety differences is not their primary concern. Instead, they work on helping their students become intelligible. Furthermore, most of them said that they do not correct students who mix AmEng and BrEng.