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**Tyneside accent perceived by French L2 learners of English: a comparison with perception of American, Irish, Nigerian, Southern English and Welsh accents.**

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I, Léa Mandaliti, confirm that the work presented in this Master's thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the Master's thesis.

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## Introduction

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Perception tests have been done multiple times in the past in order to see if nonnative listeners are able to recognize different varieties of a language spoken by native speakers (Janssoone, 2013: intelligibility of Yorkshire vowels by French learners of English; Edensor, 2008: comprehension of French listeners when hearing English regional accents; Floccia et al., 2009: comparison of the adaptability of listeners when hearing regional and foreign accents in English). Most of the time, a clear opposition between British and American accents is added to the tests and the goal is to see if nonnative students are able to distinguish them, it is the case with the study conducted by Carrie & McKenzie (2017) for instance.

Other experimentations, like the one done by Scales (2006) included non-native variations such as South American or Asian accents to their perception tests to measure how these accents are perceived compared to native accents. Perception tests have also been done with both native listeners and speakers. It is the case with the study made by Hiraga (2005) who analysed how British reacted to different varieties of English from Great Britain and the United-States.

Working on perception is very important because it can reveal a lot of information on the way a variety is apprehended and understood by other people. Giles & Bourhis (1976) have highlighted how the matched-guise technique (Lambert, 1967) is used in order to “elicit people’s immediate evaluative reactions to tape-recorded speakers of various accents, dialects and languages” (p. 294). Meaning that perception has a direct influence on listeners’ reaction as they have shown it in their study using tape-recorded message to ask people to fill a questionnaire in an auditorium (Giles & Bourhis, 1976).

The listeners can either be native or nonnative speakers of the language; either way, perception tests can be relevant because biases and prejudices exist both within a language and between different languages. Nowadays, with social medias for example, it is easier to have access to other languages and more specifically to different varieties of a said language. As Moriuchi (2021) showed in her article, accents are being used for financial and commercial benefits since various accents can have different effects on listeners, it is especially the case for foreign accents as she explained: “Foreign accents may attract attention. However, studies on accents are mixed” (p. 192). She continues: “While accents are able to gain attention in entertaining materials, foreign accents may have either a neutral or negative effect for information-oriented materials” (p. 192).

Indeed, access to videos and recordings of people from the other side of the world has been significantly facilitated. Medias that are based on video content such as Instagram and TikTok for example are widespread around the globe, meaning that for a French user it is as easy to find content creators who are based in the United States of America or in South Africa for example. These social medias are a mirror of the large varieties of English that are spoken around the world.

Although the access to these various accents is facilitated, it does not necessarily mean that lesser-known accents are better perceived. Indeed, stereotypes are being more present and widespread due to social media or medias more broadly speaking, like Berry and Asamen (1993) detailed in their book dealing with children and television. It is essential to teach people about varieties and accents, and to bring awareness on the large varieties of English that can exist in order to counterbalance these tendencies to oversimplify accents. Most importantly to teach to young learners of English that there are countless English accents beyond the British and the American accents that are usually taught in English class in French middle and high schools as Michari (2023) pointed out in his conference presentation.

This is why for this master thesis, the goal is to focus on Tyneside English, a variety of English spoken in the Northern part of England. The focal point is to analyse how this accent is perceived by French students who are studying English as their major. To do so, a questionnaire has been created in order to do a perception test using several stimuli. Native speakers of Tyneside English and other varieties of English such as Southern English, American English, Welsh English, Irish English and Nigerian English have been asked to record themselves so that these audios could be used as stimuli for the perception test. Participants to this test were asked to listen to six different native speakers in order to compare their familiarity, preferences, recognition and perception of Tyneside English with other varieties of English. Two groups took part in the perception test: a group of first-year students (Y1 students) from Limoges University and a group of Master students from the same university.

Knowing these different parameters, and the fact that the Tyneside English is the most local variation of English present in the perception test, leads to the following hypotheses:

- The less an accent is known by student the less it will be recognised.
- If students are not familiar with a variation, they might find it less intelligible.
- Students' accent preferences can have an influence on the way they perceive accents.

In order to know if these hypotheses can be validated, the following global question will be answered: How is Tyneside English perceived by students majoring in English compared to

other varieties of English? This main question can be divided into other questions: Is accent perception influenced by factors such as accent preferences and familiarity? To what extent do these factors play a role in the perceived intelligibility of each accent?

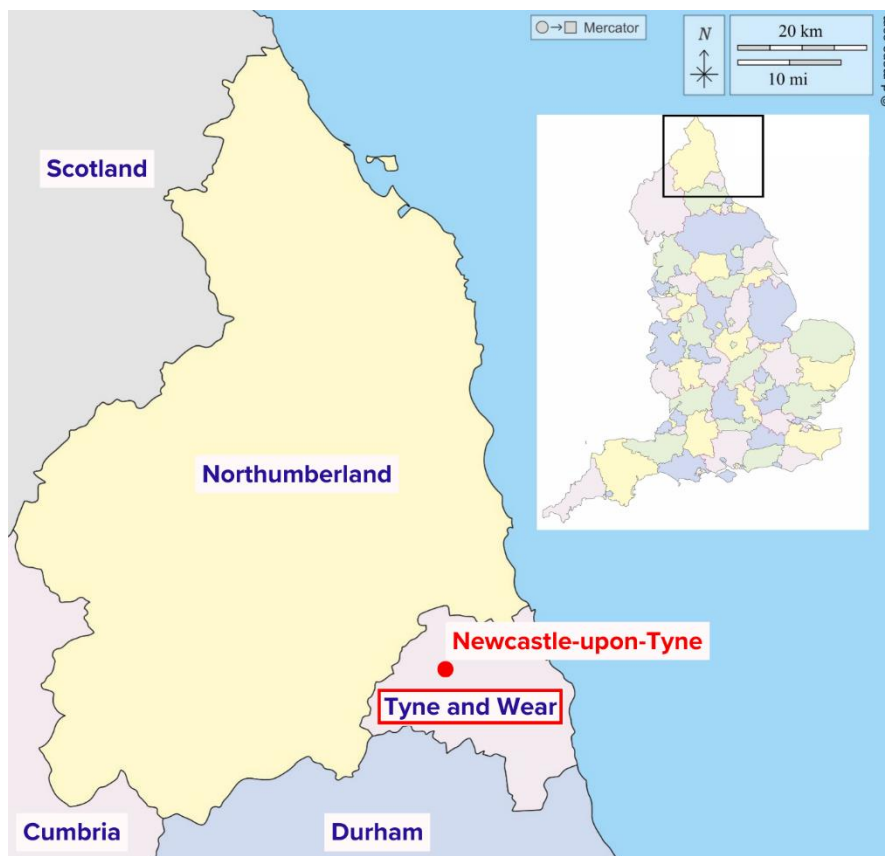
In order to answer these questions, the focus will first be put on Tyneside English by describing its historical, sociological and phonological aspects. Then the other accents will be described in order to see in what way they differ from each other and finally; the process of perception will also be explained through two main models: the Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM) (Best, 1994) and the Speech Learning Model (SLM) (Flege, 1995). Once the theoretical framework has been introduced and explained, the methodology will be detailed, showing first, which text was chosen for the recordings and which criteria were picked when compiling the stimuli from the text. Then, the different readers will be described, explaining what their profiles were like: how and why the readers were selected. Finally, the results of the perception test will be detailed in the last part, the results from the two groups will be described and analysed in order to compare them.

## Part I. Theoretical Background

### I.1. Tyneside English

The inhabitants of Newcastle are part of a larger region called Tyneside located in the North-East of England (Figure 1). It corresponds to the ceremonial county Tyne and Wear shown below. This area situated around the River Tyne covers the metropolitan boroughs of Jarrow, Gateshead, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The residents of this region called themselves Geordies. These people speak a dialect of English called Tyneside English, or more familiarly, they are considered as having a Geordie accent. In 2003, it was estimated that more than 800 000 speakers had a Tyneside accent when speaking English. (Watt & Allen, 2003, p. 267)

**Figure 1.** *Map of Newcastle located in the North-East of England*



*Note.* Adapted from: [https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num\\_car=18336&lang=en](https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=18336&lang=en)

### **I.1.1. Historical and sociological elements**

Newcastle is the seventh largest population centre in the United Kingdom, with a total population of Tyneside of approximately 900 000 inhabitants (Nettle, 2015). In order to understand the differences between parts of the city and its inhabitants, it is important to take a look at the way the city developed.

From the very beginning of the history of the city, the landscape, and the resources available have played a major part in the development of the city. Indeed, after the Romans left the North of England, the Normans took control of the town and built a castle in 1080 – the *novum castellum*. Around this castle a village started to expand, and people found pieces of coal on the fields surrounding the area (Gordon Joseph, 1958). Thanks to its river, its proximity with the sea and its large quantity of coal available, the town kept growing and gained power and influence. As Bourne (1736) explained: “It is the money arising from the coal trade, that almost entirely circulates in this great Town and adjacent County” (p. 158). In the fifteenth century and during the Tudor times, Newcastle was “one of the earliest precursors of the Industrial Revolution, two hundred years before the rest of Britain or Europe underwent the experience” (p. 210) according to Gordon Joseph (1958). Later, the Reformation was a great help for the development of the industry because the lands were taken from the Catholic Church and became private – in other words, a shift from feudal to capitalistic economy was occurring. In his analysis of Dobb studies on the transition from a feudal system to a capitalistic one, Brenner (1978) said: “He ends up by explaining not only the rise of capitalism but also the overthrow of feudalism by the emergence of a new class of industrial and agricultural capitalists alongside the still feudal order during the early modern period” (p. 122)

Through the centuries, the development of the town and of the market surrounding coal kept increasing thanks to new technologies that allowed to create and dig mines, to improve the exportation of the products by sea - and by lands later with the railroads. As the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) Territorial Review pointed out: “During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the region was a centre of considerable innovation and resulting economic growth. The region was for example one of the birthplaces of railways” (2006, p. 38). Many people were attracted by this industrial area where many job opportunities were available, Watt (2002) wrote that: “according to Mess (1928), County Durham and Tyneside at this time were the ‘melting pot of the U.K.’; the 1851 Census reveals that 54 percent of Newcastle’s population were born elsewhere” (p. 50).

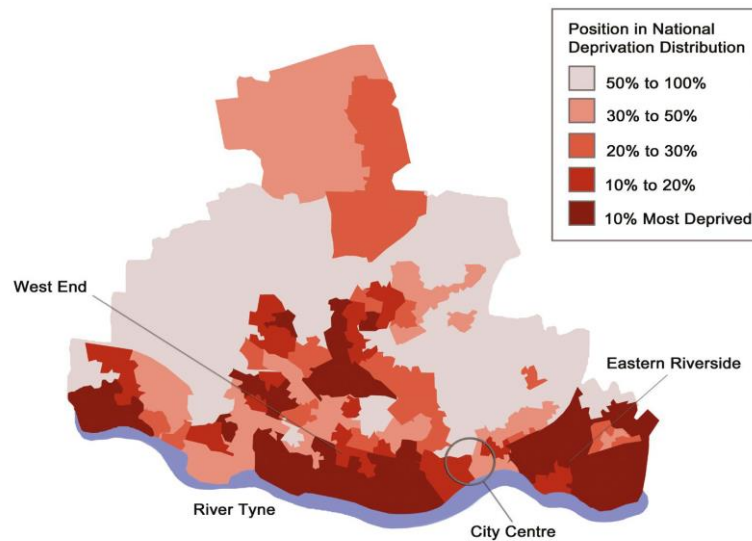
Although this period of rapid industrial growth attracted many people, the living conditions of the working class were not taken care of, and most people lived in very high-density buildings that increased the risk for epidemics and death. Gordon Joseph (1958) wrote about this social context and explained that even though the city had to follow laws that were imposed upon them, they still did not react quickly to try and improve the situation:

Newcastle was among the more backward of the larger cities in building working-class houses, in spite of the fact that a number of *Acts of Parliament* empowered the Corporation to acquire space by compulsory purchase and to raise loans to finance municipal housing. Nothing was done throughout the nineteenth century in this respect, and even up to the First World War overcrowding densities in some parts were as bad as fifty years previously. (p. 212)

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the living conditions of the working-class started to get better. After the end of the Second World War, the coal industry started to decline and few decades later, most mines were closed and the industry of shipbuilding declined, leaving numerous people unemployed (Nettle, 2015). New sources of employment started to appear, mainly in services which helped to bring back the prosperity of the city.

Because the city has suffered a great shift in its industrial and economic powers, the “growth [of the city] has been spatially uneven. As a result, architecturally and historically fairly similar neighbourhoods in different parts of the city have taken very divergent trajectories” (Nettle, 2015, p. 9). The following map is based on deprivation and helps to visualise this uneven growth across the city and what the consequences are even nowadays. It shows the different parts of the city that are the most deprived, and they correspond with the areas where the working class used to live: in high-density neighbourhoods.

**Figure 2. Deprivation map of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne**



*Note.* The map is based on the 2010 English Indices of Deprivation. © Jason Zampol, CC BY. Retrieved from Nettle, D. (2015). *Tyneside Neighbourhoods: Deprivation, Social Life and Social Behaviour in One British City*, p. 10.

Nettle conducted research and published the results in 2015 about a comparison he has done between two neighbourhoods in Newcastle. One is located in the North-East of the city, and the other is the West End of the city. He described the neighbourhoods as being: “similar in many respects, but [falling] at opposite ends of the spectrum of socioeconomic deprivation” (Nettle, 2015, p. 111). The neighbourhood in the West End of the city being the most socially deprived neighbourhood. His findings showed that socially speaking, the people living in the most deprived neighbourhood had more social interactions and were less likely to be alone, but that on the other hand, it was in this neighbourhood that most antisocial behaviours were recorded: “we observed more littering” and, according to his observations, lost letters “were much less likely to find their way home. Crime and antisocial behaviour were much more frequent” (Nettle, 2015, p. 112). Less trust and more paranoia were observed compared to the other neighbourhood. According to Nettle, there are not enough records and data about the social life in the different neighbourhoods in the past in order to compare them chronologically and see if social life was in better condition when the city was more industrialised. Still, maps show that the most deprived neighbourhoods are along the river, and it corresponds to the places were working class used to live when the coal industry was thriving. More research needs to be done in order to see if it is actually linked.

This analysis of the social differences that exist between neighbourhoods in Newcastle is a way to show that the history of the city is linked to the way the population behave nowadays depending on the neighbourhood they live in and the social class they are part of.

### **I.1.2. Toward a Standardisation of Tyneside English?**

The history of the development of the city can also be linked with the dialect that can be found nowadays in the Tyneside region. Indeed, the dialect has been quite stable and is not showing major evidence of standardisation toward London English as it can be the case for other types of dialects in Britain. Even if Tyneside English has been globally more stable compared to other dialect, it does not mean that the area has been unchanged through the centuries. Indeed, some social groups show signs of vowel levelling when speaking (Haddican et al., 2013). Amand (2019) talks about a “levelling process towards a Northern standard” (p. 321), meaning that even though some levelling might be occurring in the phonetical realisation of certain phonemes, it is not a change toward RP, but rather towards a Northern influenced and accepted standard. The way the city developed, and the exchanges multiplied with the rest of the country have played an important role in the development of a strong Tyneside identity. Watt (2002) explained that the inhabitants of the region described themselves as “holding a strong sense of North-East regional identity”, according to his analysis, “they felt much closer affinity with Scotland than with other parts of England” (p. 54). It has been noted that “Many Tynesiders view RP very negatively: resentment against any perceived form of ‘Southern hegemony’” (Watt, 2002, p. 55). According to Watt (2002), this resentment against any form of South-Eastern influence is being rejected because people have felt left out by London. The former chairman of Newcastle United Football Club, Sir John Hall illustrated this idea when he said: “The Geordie nation – that’s what we’re fighting for, London’s the enemy. The South-East’s the enemy. You exploit us, you use us, you take everything you can from us but never recognise our existence” (from *The Independent* 21.6.94, cited by Watt, 2002, p. 55).

Nevertheless, the Tyneside English has been facing many prejudices due to the accent being perceived as having “accent features stereotyped as parochial, unsophisticated, old-fashioned” (Watt, 2002, p. 55), it is difficult to predict if the Tyneside English would move toward a more standardised version because of the strong identity and pride that the inhabitants of the region feel toward the Tyneside area and its dialect:



In many ways the rise of a distinct North-Eastern identity – Hall’s ‘Geordie nation’ – seems based as much on a reaction to the marginalisation or suppression of North-Eastern interests by the South-Eastern establishment as it is on a shared set of traditions and vales in the region, and thus it might be predicted that incoming speech forms are more likely to be rejected if perceived as ‘Southern’ than forms perceived as originate elsewhere (Watt, 2002, p. 55-56)

Therefore, it is difficult to know where the ongoing changes that can be seen in Tyneside English are moving toward. Still, many distinctive features can still be perceived and analysed when dealing with Tyneside English.

## **I.2. Phonological characteristics of varieties used in the perception test**

In order to analyse how French students perceive Tyneside English, other accents and dialects needed to be added to the perception test so that the results could be compared. Some aspects and specificities of these accents are being described. The goal is not to give a complete description of these accents, but rather to give more details and information in order to see in what way these accents are different from one another, using Wells’ Lexical Sets (1982) when describing vowel sounds. This part will therefore focus on accents from Newcastle, South England, Wales, Ireland, Nigeria, and the United-States. Tyneside English

### **I.2.1. Tyneside English**

#### **I.2.1.1. Consonants**

This dialect has some specific phonological features that distinguish it from other dialects. According to Docherty & Foulkes (1999) “Newcastle English however is characterised by having two distinct types of glottal variant” (p. 54). The first type of glottalization that has been noted several times is the glottalization for the voiceless consonants /p/, /t/, /k/ and it is considered as a typical feature for the Tyneside English speakers. Indeed, for the consonants [p, t, k] in Tyneside English, it has been noted that “a combination of an occlusion at the appropriate place of articulation and a glottalization” happened creating “a short period of laryngealised

voice before and/or after and often during the stop gap” (Watt & Allen, 2003, p. 268). Wells (1970) also pointed out this specificity of the Tyneside English: “Several accent regions may be tentatively distinguished within the urban North”, he continued by giving the example of “The Northeast, including Tyneside (the Newcastle-on-Tyne conurbation)” where the “intervocalic /p/, /t/, /k/ are glottalized” (p. 250). When dealing with this same phonological feature, Docherty & Foulkes (1999) talked about “a glottal stop reinforcing any of the voiceless stop /p/, /t/, /k/” (p. 54). According to Watt & Allen (2003) this glottalization combined with the occlusion is “auditorily one of the most distinctive features of the accent” (p. 268).

The variations in glottalization that can be encountered when studying Tyneside English are the glottalization of the consonant /t/ that is not done the same way as in other English dialects. Indeed, it has been noted that:

Contrary to the patterns observed in many contemporary urban varieties of British English, use of [ʔ] instead of /t/ in words like *carter* or *kite* is rare in TE, although the speaker can be heard to use it in, for example *disputing*. [ʔ] is used almost exclusively for /t/ where it precedes /l/, as in *bottle*. (Watt & Allen, 2003, p. 268)

Docherty & Foulks (1999) agree with this statement and even go beyond by saying that: “a plain glottal stop occurs categorically before syllabic /l/ (e.g. in *battle*)” (p. 54).

Many analysts have shown that /l/ is considered as clear regardless of its position in a word (Wells, 1970, p. 247; Watt & Allen, 2003, p. 268). Tyneside English does not have evidence of /h/-dropping (Watt & Allen, 2003, p. 268; Wells, 1970, p. 250). There is no evidence of TH-fronting either (Watt & Allen, 2003, p. 268).

### **I.2.1.2. Vowels**

Some vowel sounds are also typical of this dialect of English. It is mainly the case for some pairs of vowels that are not really being distinguish as it can be done in other parts of England for example. There is a lack of distinction between the vowels that can be found in STRUT and in FOOT, that is to say between /ʌ/ and /ʊ/. Indeed, different researchers have pointed out this feature in Tyneside English and contrasted it in light of other accents in England where the distinction can be heard. Watt & Allen (2003) put the emphasis on this absence of contrast: “It will be noticed that there is no contrast between e.g. put and putt, as per /ʌ/ ~ /ʊ/ distinction

found in accents of England outside Northern England” (p. 269). According to Watt & Milroy (1999) [ə] is used a lot by middle class speakers and more specifically by female speakers.

It has also been noticed that speakers of Tyneside English tend to use a monophthong instead of a diphthong when pronouncing the vowel sound in FACE /eɪ/. [e:] is mostly used but can also varies, and [ɛ:] is quite common among female speakers (Watt & Milroy, 1999).

The use of the sound [ɜ:] and [ɝ] is quite common in Tyneside English for words using the START /ɑ:/ vowel. Yet it appears that the /ɑ:/ sound is considered as more “standard-like” (Watt & Allen, 2003) is being more used. Watt & Milroy (1999) reiterate this argument when they wrote that the constat made by Wells in 1982 concerning the use of the sound [ɑ:] before a voiced consonant is not necessarily noteworthy anymore in contemporary Tyneside English.

### **I.2.2. South England English**

The other reader who recorded herself for the perception test and who has English origins comes from Sussex. It is a county that is next to London and therefore that is influenced phonologically by its accent. As Wells (1982) pointed out: this county, like the other counties surrounding London are “dominated, linguistically as well as in other matters, by London, and their urban speech has strong affiliations to that of London” (p. 335). These counties are also called ‘home counties’ since they are adjacent to London, meaning that they share most of their phonological specificities with London. Therefore, it means that this variety of English is quite close to what might be considered the standard British English, also called Received Pronunciation (RP).

This is the case for most vowels: “The vowel system of London English is thus almost isomorphic with that of RP” (Wells, 1982, p. 304). The realisation of the FACE vowel is usually [ʌɪ] instead of /eɪ/. It has also been noted that this pronunciation varies largely among different social classes: “the diphthong ranges from popular London [ɛɪ] or [ʌɪ] to broad Cockney [æɪ ~ aɪ]” (Wells, 1982, p. 307). Another variation in vowel pronunciation is when they are followed by a nasal sound such as /m/, /n/ or /ŋ/; the vowel tends to become nasal as well and the consonant is less pronounced. Wells gave some examples to illustrate this phenomenon: “Thus we may have [ə? 'ʌõ] *at home*, [wẽ?] *went*” (Wells, 1982, p. 317).

The consonant system of London English and its surrounding counties are also very close to RP, which means that there is a broad tendency to drop the /h/ and to delete the fricative such as /θ/ and /ð/ and use labiodentals instead, mainly [f] and [v]. This phenomenon is called TH-fronting. It is illustrated by Upton & Widdowson (2006):

The use of [f] in place of /θ/; irrespective of whether the sound is at the beginning (THREE), in the middle (ARTHUR), or at the end (BATH) of a word, is well known to be a feature of London ‘Cockney’ speech, and is seen from the map to be located more widely in the Home Counties and Suffolk. (p. 55)

The glottal stop [ʔ] is considered as being one of the most typical aspects of London English. Matthews (1938) even said: “the chief consonantal feature of the dialect is the prevalence of the glottal stop” (p. 80). This glottal stop is quite common at the end of word to replace a /t/, especially if the word that follows starts with a vowel sound. Wells (1982) gave the following examples: “[ðæʔ 'ɪz] *that is*, [kwaiʔ 'ɪzi] *quite easy*” (p. 324). If a word ends with the voiceless plosives /p, t, k/ and have a nasal sound preceding them, these consonants will also be glottalized. It can also be the case for /p, t, k/ when they are occurring in the middle of a word, but it is less frequent, and it has been noticed that most of the time they are aspirated. [p<sup>h</sup>, t<sup>h</sup>, k<sup>h</sup>] are considered as the norm when it comes to the realisation of /p, t, k/ consonants (Wells, 1982, p. 322-324).

### **I.2.3. Welsh English**

The main characteristic of Welsh English compared to English English would be its intonation. Indeed, Wells (1982) points out: “It is perceived as ‘sing-song’ [...] this impression is no doubt reinforced by difference in timing, with Welsh medial consonants in particular tending to be of longer duration than is usual in England” (p. 378). Welsh English is considered mostly as non-rhotic although some variations of Welsh English are considered as rhotic. Since our speaker comes from Cardiff, her English is considered as non-rhotic.

Welsh accent tends to emphasise on the long monophthongs such as the /i:/ of FLEECE, the /u:/ of GOOSE, the /ɛ:/ of SQUARE, the /a:/ of START and the /o:/ of THOUGHT, which is not the case of all accents of English. Concerning diphthongs, Welsh English tends to use monophthongs for FACE and GOAT for example, using [e:] and [o:] instead of the RP /eɪ/ and /əʊ/. Interestingly, Wells (1982) noted that: “In the more anglicised places such as Cardiff and Newport the norm is diphthongal, so that a monophthongal realisation [fe:s, go:t] is associated with particularly old-fashion speech” (p. 382). Other examples of differences when pronouncing diphthongs can be noted for PRICE and MOUTH for example. Here, a historical

explanation can be found to analyse this difference. It is known that Welsh has many diphthongs available in the language, and some of them are very close to English, still some of them that seemed to be the most fitting were not chosen. Wells (1982) took the examples of PRICE and MOUTH that are pronounced [əi] and [əu] compared to /aɪ/ and /aʊ/ in RP. Knowing that monophthongs such as [ai] and [au] exist in Welsh that are quite close to /aɪ/ and /aʊ/, it can seem unexpected to have other diphthongs used. Yet Wells' historical explanation is the following: "The explanation presumably lies in the fact that English PRICE and MOUTH had still not acquired fully open starting point in RP at the crucial period when Welsh English pronunciation was becoming fixed" (Wells, 1982, p. 383-384).

Consonants also differ from RP English due to their duration. Indeed, similarly to vowels, Welsh consonants tend to be longer. Cardiff and Newport are exceptions when dealing with the realisation of /p, t, k/ for examples. Glottalization is not common in Welsh English, but it can be found in these cities, especially when /t/ is followed by /l/. Wells (1982) gave the following example: "*little* ['lɪʔl]" (p. 388). Concerning the /l/, its pronunciation is quite variable across the region. It is mostly clear in the South, and it tends to be dark in the North – with more pharyngealization. It is possible to hear both clear and dark /l/ in the South-East and more specifically in Cardiff.

#### **I.2.4. Irish English**

The reader coming from Ireland is originated from county Kildare, therefore this part will focus on Irish accent in general and will explain some specificities from this region close to Dublin. Irish English is known to be rhotic using largely a dark /r/, a type of realisation also known as retroflex. The /h/ is widely preserved in the country. The /l/ on the other hand tends to be clear in all circumstances as Wells (1982) showed: "[fi:l] *feel*, [mɪlk] *milk* (compare RP /fi:l/, /mɪlk/)" (p. 431).

One noticeable element concerning this accent is the monophthongisation of /eɪ/ and /əʊ/ found respectively in FACE and GOAT. These words are commonly pronounced [fe:s] and [go:t] and some variations can be found in Dublin where diphthongs can be found for these two words, ranging from [feis ~ feis] for FACE and from [goot ~ goot] for GOAT according to Wells (1982, p. 425). Words like *many* and *any* are not pronounced using /e/ but are instead said using [æ], meaning that *any* and *Annie* are homophones. Concerning weak vowels, very few distinctions are being made between schwa and the KIT vowel, meaning that "phonologically

there is only one reduction vowel” (Wells, 1982, p. 427). Wells (1982) gives some examples of first syllables in Irish English that all have [ə] when RP would have used /ɪ/: “the first syllables of *prefer*, *tremendous*, *peculiar*, *secure*, *hilarious*, *specific* all have [ə]” (p. 427).

Another aspect specific to Irish English is the realisation of /t, d/ and /θ, ð/. The distinctions between /t/ and /θ/, and between /d/ and /ð/ exist but are not always heard, especially in urban areas like Cork and Dublin. In the North of the island, mostly in Ulster which includes counties from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, /θ/ and /ð/ are realised as fricatives, whereas in the rest of the island, people tend to not do it: “Elsewhere phonetic /θ/ and /ð/ are on the whole restricted to the speech of sophisticates or of those making a conscious effort at elegance” (Wells, 1982, p. 429).

Another example of consonant sounds that have a very typical way to be pronounced in Irish English are /tj/ and /dj/ in RP who are realised as [kj] and [gj] respectively. These changes are due to the Irish ‘slandering’ explained by Wells (1982) as follows:

Here the Irish ‘slender’ [t̪, d̪] were phonetically affricated, and thus similar to English /tʃ, dʒ/, with which they were accordingly identified. This led to the use of Irish [k, g] as replacements of English /tj, dj/ in words such as *tune*, *dew*. (p. 434)

### **I.2.5. Nigerian English**

The reader coming from Nigeria mentioned that she is coming from the Western part of the country, when possible, this part will focus on the Western part of Nigeria or will give information about Nigerian English more generally.

English is a language that has been imported in Africa because of colonialism, and many countries use English as a second language. Other countries, especially in West Africa, have English as their official state language as it is the case in Nigeria. It is important to keep in mind that these countries have been influenced by British English and therefore tend to follow British norms.

In Nigeria, similarly to other countries, the type of English spoken can be designated as Pidgin English, or as Wells (1982) referred to it in his book: “West African Pidgin English” (p. 633) because these dialects are heavily influenced by West African languages and follow many of their linguistic and phonological features. According to Wells (1982), RP is composed of “twelve monophthongs and eight diphthongs” (p. 636) which is a much larger range of vowels

than most African languages, meaning that it can be difficult for L1 speakers of African languages to learn and produce all the vowels in English. Dunstan (1969) did a survey and published the results showing that among different speakers who have as their L1 one of the twelve Nigerian languages, all show difficulty in differentiating /i:/ presents in FLEECE and /ɪ/ presents in KIT which results in word pairs such as *leave* and *live* or *seen* and *sin* to be homophones. The vowels in DRESS /e/ and FACE /eɪ/ also tend to be merged by Nigerian speakers of English and [ɛ] is usually used for both DRESS and FACE sounds which means that *pepper* and *paper* would be homophones.

Speakers of Nigerian English tend to use alveolar plosives [t] and [d] instead of dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/. Consonant sounds at the end of the words usually are neutralised or reduced in African English because many African languages only admit certain sounds at the end of a word. This can be heard in English with a lack of distinction between voiced and unvoiced consonant sounds: Wells (1982) used the examples of “*bus* and *buzz*” to illustrate this phenomenon (p. 641). To describe how speakers of Nigerian English deal with final consonant sounds, two phenomena that have been explained by Wells (1982): reduction and epenthesis. The reduction corresponds to the act of deleting a consonant sound that is part of the final cluster, the examples given by Tiffen (1974) to represent the reduction of the final cluster are: [nos] *notes*, [spos] *sports*, [bus] *books*, [rũ:z] *rooms*, [ˈperẽz] *parents*. It is interesting to note that it is not the last consonant sound that is deleted, but instead it tends to be earlier sounds such as the /t/ in *notes* and *sports*, and the /k/ in *books*, which correlate with the lack of distinction between voiced and unvoiced sounds mentioned earlier. Epenthesis on the other hand corresponds to the addition of vowels in-between two final consonant sounds, Wells (1982) mentioned two examples: “[silik] *silk*, [beɛɛt] *belt*” (p. 641).

Finally, Wells (1982) mentioned the social pressure that can exist within African countries that have English as an official language but is learned by the population as a second language and is mainly used as a second language. When learning to speak English, they need to learn to produce new and unfamiliar sounds and it is not always done since “the social pressures favour remaining within the local vowel system” (p. 639). This observation suggests that it is better perceived to keep the vowel system of the first African language rather than learning new sounds that could be recognised as closer to the RP.

## I.2.6. American English

Since the readers who recorded themselves for the questionnaire were all coming from Oklahoma, this part will focus on this state and the region surrounding it in order to describe the accent used for this research. When looking at Thomas (1958) division of the United States, Oklahoma State is part of Centre Midland since it is located rather in the centre of the United States. According to many searchers such as Bronstein (1960), Francis (1958) and Kurath (1949) states that were not part of the thirteen original states tend to have an accent that is quite similar to General American English (GenAm). People living in these different states will obviously not all sound exactly the same but there are many resemblances.

GenAm has a few characteristics that are typical of this variety of English such as the “three-way homophony in sets such as *merry-marry-Mary*, all [ˈmɛri]” mentioned by Wells (1982, p. 482). These three words would be pronounced the same way in GenAm, but it would not be the case in RP, where they would be pronounced respectively: /ˈmɛri/, /ˈmæri/ and /ˈmɛəri/. When dealing with vowel sounds in general, Wells (1982) observed the following statement: “The vowels /ɪ, ɛ, ʊ, ʌ/, while normally monophthongal, tend to have centring-diphthong allophones” (p. 485) which means that speakers of GenAm tend to add schwa after these vowels and this variant is quite present in the Southern part of the Midlands. Examples of this pattern are given by Wells (1982): “*bed* [bɛəd], *good* [gʊəd], *rub* [rʌəb]” (p. 485).

Consonant wise, there are some variations that can be noted from RP such as the fact that GenAm is rhotic. /r/ is present in all environments with the exception of the process of R Dissimilation that occurs when the “historical /r/ in unstressed non-final syllables [is] adjacent to /r/ in another syllable” (Wells, 1982, p. 490). Following this pattern, *governor* is pronounced [ˈgʌvənər] when *to govern* is pronounced [ˈgʌvɔrn]. The intervocalic /r/ is often realised as a tap. This phenomenon is referred to as t-tapping, it means that this type of /r/ will be realised “with voicing, so that latter/ladder are homonyms” (Kretzschmar, 2004, p. 267) and will therefore be transcribed using /r/ (Durand & Navarro, 2015). Speakers of General American tend to delete the /r/ from clusters such as -nt- that are present between vowels. Durand & Navarro (2015) used “the words winter/winner” as examples to illustrate this phenomenon (p. 267).

Having described these different accents, it appears clearly that each reader speaks differently and will therefore be perceived differently as well. Speech perception is described in the following section in order to have some notions laid out about this phenomenon.



### **I.3. Speech perception**

Perception is defined by the Cambridge English Dictionary as: “being aware of things through the physical senses, especially sight.”<sup>1</sup> This definition corresponds to the primarily meaning that is used through this research – French listeners will listen to native speakers and will distinguish and understand different elements through their listening. Yet, other definitions are given by the dictionary: “a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem.” This interpretation of the word perception is also a key to the research. Indeed, the way listeners might understand and feel about certain types of accents might reflect some beliefs they had beforehand, even before starting the test. This idea that prejudices already existent might influence the way listeners perceive accents is indispensable to keep in mind and is also a central point in sociolinguistics when dealing with perception. As a matter of fact, Edwards (1982) wrote: “people’s reactions to language varieties reveal much of their perception of the speakers of these varieties.”

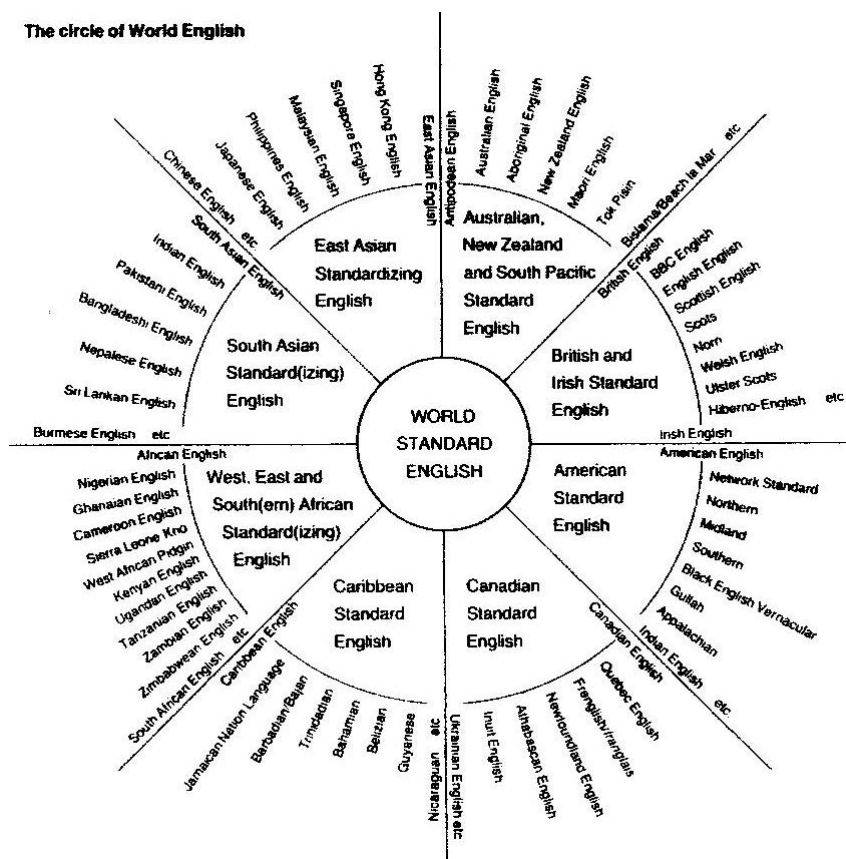
#### **I.3.1. Sociolinguistic aspects of perception**

The mindset that some varieties of English are considered as better compared to others by listeners can be linked with the social myth of the Standard English. Milroy and Milroy (1985) suggest that standard language should be understood as: “an idea in the mind rather than a reality - a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser extent” (p. 22-23). In fact, no proper standard English can exist since that would mean that a Standard English would be needed for each large English varieties of English that exist such as British English, American English, or Australian English for example. All these widespread varieties would need a standard each in order to define the sub-varieties that exist on each continent, this is what Tom McArthur’s Circle of World Englishes (1987) has done.

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<sup>1</sup> Link to the dictionary entry: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/perception>

Figure 3. McArthur's Circle of World Englishes (1987)



Note. From McArthur's article 'the English languages?' (1987)

This is already an issue because it means that several Standard English can co-exist. Considering that these Standard English are established, they would then need to be properly defined – explaining their syntactical, phonetical and lexical specificity. This is another issue because every speaker has their own individual speech variation, as Trousdale (2010) words it: “The more common term for the language of an individual is ‘idiolect’.” Which means that some personal factors can influence the way one talks. So, even within a group of people who are considered as speakers of Standard English, variations would then be found even inside that specific group. Other kinds of variations exist inside what might be considered as Standard English depending on how the language is used: written or spoken, and the level of formality wanted for example (Trousdale, 2010). All these elements combined illustrate how difficult it can be to define what Standard English is.

In order to analyse how a speech is perceived from a quantitative and qualitative point of view, it is necessary to have some models to use as a reference. These models have been created to have a base that would represent how speech and sounds can be perceived in a global and systematic way. Two models are important in the field of phonological research: the

Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM) developed by Catherine Best (1994) and the Speech Learning Model (SLM) described by James Emil Flege (1995). These two models have been invented in order to understand and then systematise the way L2 sounds and phonemes are perceived and then categorised by non-natives. The main difference between these two models is the fact that the PAM has naïve listeners as participants whereas the SLM has L2 learners as participants.

### **I.3.2. PAM and naïve speech perception**

The PAM uses as a premise the concept that adults will tend to recognise first the similarities and differences between their native language and the nonnative speech that they listened to. It means that a nonnative phoneme or sound will be either recognise as similar to their L1 or as different from it. In order to understand how these phonemes are being perceived and then assimilated, Best (1994) suggested to “conceptualize the native phonetic domain as the range of vocal tract sounds that are globally speechlike in their gestural properties” (p. 260). Outside of this domain are all the sounds that are “vocal tract-generated sounds such as coughs, chokes, laughs [...]” (Best, 1994, p. 260).

When a nonnative sound is heard for the first time by a naïve speaker or by someone who has little experience with the language heard, the sound will be perceived according to the L1 phonetic domain. Three different cases exist for a phonetic segment to be classified.

First, it can be perceived as similar to the native speech domain and therefore be classified within the native category. It can be perceived as an identical native sound, or as an acceptable example of native language, meaning that it is reasonably similar to the native sound it is assimilated to. Or it can be considered as somewhat similar but with some noticeable differences, the nonnative sound become then a “deviant exemplar of native category” (Best, 1994, p. 261).

Then, a nonnative sound can be heard as a speechlike sound but not resembling any of the native category. It means that the phonetic segment will be perceived a speech sound, but not as one that already exists or is similar to their native language. It will therefore be assimilated but considered as unfamiliar.

Finally, some sounds might not be recognized as speech sounds and therefore be considered as being outside of the phonetic space. It means that they are not assimilated as speech and therefore will be perceived as nonspeech events – so, outside of the phonetic domain.

According to the kind of assimilation that is done, different types of discrimination will be done in order to have a more precise perception of the sound when it is compared to the native language. The table below summarises the different discrimination depending on the assimilation that has been done by the listeners (Best & Tyler, 2007, p. 23).

**Table 1. Different types of assimilation done by a naive listener when hearing two nonnative phonemes according to the Perceptual Assimilation Model (Best, 1995)**

<b>Assimilation</b>	<b>Discrimination</b>	<b>Description</b>
Categorised	Two-Category (TC)	Two nonnative phonemes assimilated as two different native phonemes.
	Category Goodness (CG)	Both nonnative phonemes assimilated as one native phoneme but with one nonnative phoneme being considered as closer to the native phoneme than the other nonnative phoneme.
	Single-Category (SC)	Both nonnative phonemes assimilated as one single native phoneme.
Uncategorised	Uncategorised Categorized (UC)	One nonnative phoneme is perceived as a native phoneme, but the other nonnative phoneme is not and is considered as uncategorised speech.
	Both Uncategorized (UU)	Both nonnative phonemes are considered as uncategorised speech.
Non-assimilated	Nonassimilable (NA)	Both nonnative phonemes are far from the articulatory properties of native phonemes.

*Note.* Adapted from Tyler & Best (2007, p. 23)

### **I.3.3. SLM and L2 speech perception**

In their article, Best and Tyler (2007) explained the difference between SLM and PAM and they tried to offer an adaptation of PAM to L2 listeners. PAM was originally conceptualised for naïve listeners and SLM for L2 speakers, so they decided to adapt PAM to L2 listeners as well in order to have the same kind of listeners as SLM.

According to them, there is more than simple differences in exposure between a naïve and an L2 listeners when dealing with perception. Acquiring a language also means that the learners are in contact with the environment and culture linked with the language, but it also implies that new lexical items are being added to the learner range of vocabulary for example. It has also been noted that when learning another language “linguistic pressure for the L2 learner to ‘re-phonologize’ perception of the target contract” may occur (Best & Tyler, 2007, p. 32). Meaning that they might be more aware of phonetical differences because they are trying to replicate them when they speak that language, a preoccupation that does not concern naïve listeners.

Flege (1995) listed in his article the various postulates and hypotheses that composed the SLM. First of all, he considered that “the mechanisms and processes used in learning the L1 sound system, including category formation, remain intact over the life span, and can be applied to L2 learning” (Flege, 1995, p. 239). So, in other words, he believed that it was possible even for adults and this throughout all their lifespan to be able to learn new phonemes but also to create new categories in order to assimilate the said phonemes. He also considered that speech sounds are being organised into different “phonetic categories” and according to him, these categories, that have been formed in childhood, will change over time as new sounds are being added (when learning an L2 for example) and these changes will be noticed both for the L1 and the L2 when the learner will speak (Flege, 1995, p. 239).

Then, Flege hypothesised that speech sounds from the L1 and the L2 are related at a “position-sensitive allophonic level, rather than at as more abstract phonemic level” (Flege, 1995, p. 239). It means that the listeners will focus more on the various ways to pronounce one sound - on the allophones - rather than on theoretical phonemes. He then explained the different kind of assimilations and categorisations that can happen when a listener hears new L2 sounds. According to Flege, it is possible for a new category to be created for an L2 sounds that is considered as different from existing L1 sounds from the listener point of view, only if there is a distinction between these two sounds that has been made by bilinguals speaking both L1 and L2.

When explaining the conditions and the quality of the categorisation, similarly to Best, Flege (1995) also put the emphasis on discrimination between phonemes, even though he does not use this term: “The greater the perceived phonetic dissimilarity between an L2 sound and the closest L1 sound, the more likely it is that phonetic differences between the sounds will be discerned” (p. 239). That description would be very similar to the categorised phonemes described by Best in 1994 and the three types of discrimination – Two-Category (TC); Category Goodness (CG) and Single-Category (SC) – described above.

Next, the mechanism of “equivalence classification” is mentioned and explained (Flege, 1995, p. 239). It corresponds to the assimilation of an L2 phoneme as an equivalent of an already existing L1 phoneme. The learner will consider the new phoneme as the same, or as very close allophone of a L1 phoneme that has been previously assimilated. Nevertheless, Flege also noted that it is possible for monolinguals and bilinguals to categorise phonemes differently. Indeed, as stated in his article, bilinguals may create categories in order to add separation between a L1 and a L2 phoneme that could be very similar to each other. By doing this, the goal is to “maintain phonetic contrast between categories” since bilinguals have a common space for both L1 and L2 phonemes (Flege, 1995, p. 239). Another reason for bilingual to form categories would be due to the motoric abilities, therefore a bilingual could be able to distinguish two phonemes from the two different languages based on features more easily compared to a monolingual.

Understanding how listeners assimilate new phonemes is essential in order to be able to analyse their perception whereas they might be naïve listeners or L2 learners. As it has been illustrated, Best and Flege started from different listeners in order to analyse the perception and assimilation that is done; but some of their hypothesis and conclusions are the same. This has been highlighted with Best & Tyler (2007) article where they adapted PAM to L2 learners, showing that some elements could be transferable.

Now that the theoretical framework has been explored, the focus will be on the methodological aspect of the research in order to see how these theories can be applied in the research.

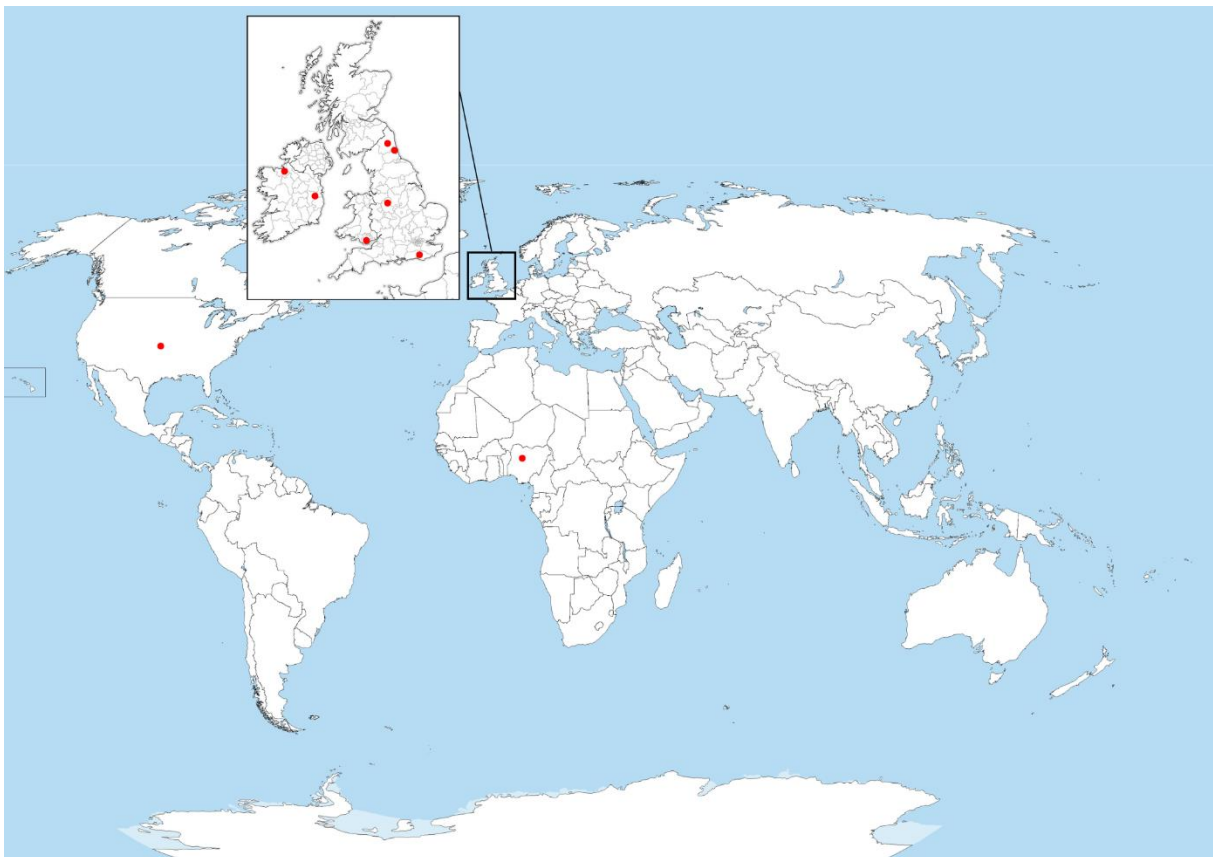
## Part II. Methodology

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### II.1. Readers

In order to have different accents represented in the questionnaire, readers from different parts of the world were asked to record themselves reading a text. All the readers were sent the children story mentioned earlier written by Maelle Amand, and they were asked to read it the same manner they would be reading it to a child. Below is a map displaying the location of all the readers who recorded themselves.

**Figure 4.** *Location of all the readers who recorded themselves*



*Note.* Adapted from:

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cf/A\\_large\\_blank\\_world\\_map\\_with\\_oceans\\_marked\\_in\\_blue.PNG](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cf/A_large_blank_world_map_with_oceans_marked_in_blue.PNG) and <https://bencrowder.net/blog/2013/outline-map-of-britain-and-ireland/>

### II.1.1. Readers from Newcastle

In order to find readers from the region around Newcastle, an email has been sent to the Language Centre of Newcastle University in order to ask for participant. The email sent can be found in Appendix 2. After a few email exchanges to give all the details, a notice has been sent to both the members of the staff and the students at Newcastle University in order to ask for volunteers. In total, twelve people reached out asking for the documents to record themselves. Appendix 3 shows the email that was sent to the volunteer in order to give them the documents. Eight people sent the recording and the consent form, they all considered themselves as native from the Tyneside region, coming from the area around Newcastle, Gateshead, Jarrow. All of them were female except for one, and the average age of the readers who recorded themselves from Newcastle was higher than the other readers: 47 years old. Table 2 compiles the information concerning the readers from Newcastle. The average age is higher because most of the readers from Newcastle who reached out to ask for the documents to record themselves after reading the board notice were mostly members of the university staff and are usually older than the students.

**Table 2. Places of origin and age of readers from the Tyneside Region**

Anonymous code	Region of origin	Age
NC01F	Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, England	56
NC02M	Northumbria, England	25
NC03F	Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, England	54
NC04F	South Tyneside, England	35
NC05F	Tyne and Wear, England	52
NC06F	Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, England	52
NC07F	Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, England	54
NC08F	Tyneside, England	47



### **II.1.2. Readers with other accents**

Native speakers of English from various part of the British Isles, Ireland, the USA, and Nigeria were asked to record themselves. In total, sixteen people were asked: six were native speakers of English from the USA, two from England, two from Wales, five from the Republic of Ireland, and one from Nigeria. Since the speakers from the USA, England, Wales and Ireland were friends, a Direct Message has been sent to them in order to explain the project and ask for their participation, a copy of the content can be read in Appendix 4.

Out of the sixteen people that were asked to record themselves, eleven of them sent both the recording and consent form that have been asked. Two were from Ireland, one was a male aged 22 years old who grew up in the Northwest of the Republic of Ireland, in county Sligo. He moved in France a few years ago. The other one was a female aged 23 years old who lived in County Kildare in the Southeast of the Republic of Ireland. One reader from Wales sent the recording. She is a female aged 19 years old and she grew up in Cardiff, then she lived in France for a few years and when back to the United Kingdom. Two readers from England sent their recording. One was a female aged 21 years old from the South of England, near Sussex. She grew up in France with an English mom. The other reader was a female aged 22 years old who lived in county Staffordshire in England, she lived in France for a year before going back to the United Kingdom. The reader from Nigeria was a female aged 44 years old and she is from the Western part of Nigeria, she moved to France a few years ago. Five readers from the USA sent their recordings, all of them were coming from Oklahoma State. All these readers were female aged 19 years old. One of them perceived herself as having a Hispanic accent when speaking English because her family is from Mexico.

**Table 3. Places of origin and age of readers from Ireland, The United Kingdom, The United-States and Nigeria.**

Anonymous code	Region of origin	Age
IR01F	County Kildare, Ireland	23
IR02M	County Sligo, Ireland	22
WA01F	Cardiff, Wales	19
EN01F	County Staffordshire, England	22
EN02F	Sussex, England	21
US01F	Oklahoma, USA	19
US02F	Oklahoma, USA	19
US03F	Oklahoma, USA	19
US04F	Oklahoma, USA	19
US05F	Oklahoma, USA	19
NI01F	Western part of Nigeria	44

### II.1.3. Recordings used for the perception test

It has been decided to only keep one recording that would be representative of the region because scholars have shown that having several recordings for the same region could bias the answers given by the listeners and therefore change the final results and conclusions: “It has been noted that using more than one speaker can give poorer results” (Edensor, 2008, p. 3).

Because most of the readers who recorded themselves were female, it has been decided to only keep female voices for the questionnaire to prevent unexpected biases induced by gender. It meant that the recordings from Nigeria, Wales and Ireland were already chosen based on the gender of the readers. To represent England, the recording of the woman from the South of England has been kept for the questionnaire because it was more interesting to have an accent that was as far as possible from Newcastle. To represent the USA, the criteria used to choose the reader that would represent the accent was the clarity and the quality of the recording. The average age of the five readers chosen for the questionnaire is 25,2 years old.

The speaker from the Tyneside region who has been picked was a female aged 35 years old who grew up in South Tyneside. She was the youngest female who recorded herself, and it is the main reason she has been chosen in order to be the closest possible to the age of the other recorders.

Overall, six recordings were kept in order to create the questionnaire, all of the readers are female and the average age is 26,83 years old. The age was an important factor when choosing which recordings to keep because as Hay (2006) explained: “our processing of phonetic information seems to be heavily influenced by social facts about the speaker” (p. 96). Therefore, it has been decided to use the recording of young adult readers for the stimuli since the perception test was intended for French learners of English who usually are in their twenties and thirties. Table 4 summarises the information about the six readers that were chosen in order to create the perception test. Appendix 5 lists the consent forms that were filled by the readers.

**Table 4. Places of origin and age of readers chosen for the questionnaire**

Anonymous code	Region of origin	Age
EN02F	Sussex, England	21 years old
IR01F	Kildare, Ireland	23 years old
NE04F	Newcastle, England	35 years old
NI01F	Western part of Nigeria	44 years old
US01F	Oklahoma State, USA	19 years old
WA01F	Cardiff, Wales	19 years old

## II.2. Text used for the recordings

It has been decided that all the speakers would read the same text so the content will be identical, the focus would be more easily put on the accents and the way the sentences are pronounced rather than on what is actually said. The text *The Purple Bird Travels the World* was chosen because it was written by Maelle Amand and it was a child story, meaning that the storyline would not be difficult to understand for the French listeners. The full text is available in Appendix 1, and here is the part that was chosen for the perception test:

The purple bird had flown and flown around the world.  
 Had met and met again Dolly the orange fox, Claire the hairy bear, Tucker the funny duck,  
 Brownie the crowned cow, Glenn the scarlet hen and Oz the hot odd dog  
 ... Willy the pink rabbit, Olive the bossy frog, Maggie the glad bat.  
 But Wiley the white tiger was NOWHERE to be found.

In despair, the purple bird decided to go home.  
In despair, Myrtle circled one last time above its nest.  
But below was the most noble white tiger it'd ever seen.  
Wiley the white tiger was there!! Below its nest!  
Wiley the white tiger climbed all the way up to the bird's nest, licked its lips, and looked at  
Myrtle in the eyes and roared:  
"I need a place to sleep!"  
"I need a soup to sip!"  
And Myrtle the purple bird said: "Me too!"  
"Let's make a soup to sip, and see where we can sleep"

If you travel around the world to look for something, you might find a pleasant surprise when you go home.<sup>2</sup>

The final part of the text has been kept for the perception test because it lists all the characters which have appeared in the story, which permits to have all of them successively. Plus, since it is the end of the text, the readers were more comfortable with the text and were less conscious about their accent which make them sound more naturally, as Spear-Swerling (2006) defines it: "Oral Reading fluency (ORF) in text can be viewed as an indicator of general reading competence, involving facility with and integration of a range of important sub-word, word and comprehension-level processes" (p. 199). She also emphasised on the idea that the more a person is exposed to text, the more their ORF will increase. Spear-Swerling (2006) also mentioned that: "the strength of the relationship between ORF and reading comprehension appears to decline with age" (p. 200). In our case, because no data were available on the reading frequency of the readers, using the end of the text seemed to be the most appropriate way to let readers accommodate to oral reading and to get more familiar with the characters names and the style of the text.

The interest of this text in general is that many characters are mentioned, and they all have name that sounds very similar to their species, making it a great pronunciation exercise for the readers and is therefore a way to highlight the differences in pronunciation from the listeners' point of view. Indeed, if we take the examples of these two characters: "Claire the hairy bear" and "Maggie the glad bat", it appears clearly that the name of the first character focuses on the sound /eə/ in RP because it can be found in the three words that composed the

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<sup>2</sup> Extract from the text *The Purple Bird Travels the World* written by Maelle Amand

name when transcribing it to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) using RP: /kleə ðə 'heəri beə/. The same phenomenon happened for the other example, here the focus is put on the sound /æ/ in RP, and it is highlighted with the IPA transcription of the name: /mægi ðə glæd bæet/. These wordplay on sounds in the names can be found in all the characters names in this story, which makes it more interesting to analyse because with the different accents that were described in the above sections, it has been shown that some sounds are not pronounced the same way depending on the origins of the speaker. Having a text that repeats the same sound three times in a row is an effective way to highlight the way the sound is pronounced and, it can make it more prominent for the listeners.

### **II.3. Questionnaire content**

The questionnaire was created with the website PsyToolKit developed by Professor Gijbert Stoet<sup>3</sup> in order to have French students listening to different accents and see what impression they had. Inspiration was drawn from different articles and research in order to create the content of the questionnaire (Scales et al., 2006; Hiraga, 2005 and Janssoone, 2013). This questionnaire can be divided into three sections: inquiry on the linguistic profile of the participant, questions on their accent awareness and preferences; and finally, the perception test. The entire code used to create the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 6.

#### **II.3.1. Linguistic profile of the listeners**

First, the participants were asked questions about themselves in order to establish a linguistic profile. They had a series of multiple-choice<sup>4</sup> questions asking about their studies: what they were majoring in and their level of education (how many years of studies after graduating from high school). Then, the focus was put on the languages surrounding the participant while growing up. They were asked about their first language(s) and if they grew up surrounded by other languages that they consider as their first language. Figure 5 shows how this part was organised in the questionnaire using true-false questions and specific open questions (Dörnyei, Z. & Dewaele, J.-M., 2023).

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<sup>3</sup> See PsyToolKit website: <https://www.psytoolkit.org/copyright.html>

<sup>4</sup> The names for each type of question were chosen using Dörnyei, Z. & Dewaele, J.-M. (2023).

**Figure 5. Screenshot from the questionnaire asking for linguistic background information**

Perception of English accents | 13% of items completed

What is (are) your first language(s)?

Is English (one of) your first language(s)?

Yes

No

Did you grow up surrounded by another language than French?

Yes

No

Click this button to continue

If the participants answered yes to that last question, they were asked what the languages were, and what skills they considered having in that language, meaning if they could speak it, understand it when it was spoken, read it, and write it. Once this background was established, the questionnaire targeted the foreign languages that the participants had learned and were learning. They were asked about the languages they learned in middle school and in high school. After that, they were asked if they were currently learning another language than English and if so, which one. Then, participants were questioned about their habits in English. They were requested to evaluate how often they speak, hear, read, and write in English by selecting the option that best matched their use of English in a multiple-choice question. Figure 6 illustrates how the choices were displayed for the participants.

**Figure 6. Screenshot from the questionnaire asking for the participants English habits**

Perception of English accents | 31% of items completed

What best reflects your habits of **speaking** English? "I speak English..."

- Everyday
- More than twice a week
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Twice a month
- At least once a month
- Less

What best reflects your habits of **listening** to English? "I listen to English..."

- Everyday
- More than twice a week
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Twice a month
- At least once a month
- Less

After that, they had to reflect on their decision to study English by explaining why they wanted to study English and what was their main goal when studying English: was it to be understood clearly or to have a native accent.

### **II.3.2. Accent awareness and preferences of the participants**

Next, the questionnaire explored the accent awareness of the participants, more specifically how familiar they were with certain accents, and which accents they preferred, and which one they considered as their least favourite accent. They had a Likert Scale question with ten different English accents: American accent, Australian accent, Zimbabwean accent, British accent, Canadian accent, Nigerian accent, Indian accent, New Zealand accent, Irish accent, and South African accent; and they were asked to rate their familiarity. They could tick the following answers: "Never heard it", "Unfamiliar", "Familiar", "Very familiar". These accents were chosen in order to have more options than the ones that were recorded in order to collect broader data and also to avoid any influence or deduction made by the participants. Figure 7 presents the table that was available for participants in order to evaluate their familiarity with the different accents.

**Figure 7. Screenshot from the questionnaire: Likert Scale interrogating about the participants familiarity with English accents**

Perception of English accents | 44% of items completed

How would you rate your familiarity with each accent?

Item	Never heard it	Unfamiliar	Familiar	Very familiar
American accent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Australian accent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Zimbabwean accent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
British accent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Canadian accent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nigerian accent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Indian accent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Zealand accent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Irish accent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
South African accent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Click this button to continue

The Tyneside accent was not in this list because more specific questions were asked about this accent later in the questionnaire since the focus of the research for this thesis is to compare the perception of the Tyneside accent with the other accents.

After that, participants were questioned on their favourite and least favourite accents. Figure 8 shows how the questions concerning the favourite accent were displayed for the participants. They could choose from the same ten accents and an “other” option (Dörnyei, Z. & Dewaele, J.-M., 2023) has been added in case they wanted to answer with a different accent. They also needed to explain they answer by choosing one or more answers from a multiple-choice question. The following list shows the options that were given to the students in order to explain their favourite accent:

- “I have an emotional link with it”,
- “I understand it more easily”,
- “I hear it most often”,
- “It sounds prestigious”,
- “it sounds friendly”,
- “other”.

They could choose from this list to give a reason for their least favourite accent:

- “It is difficult to understand”,
- “I do not hear it often”,
- “It does not sound prestigious”,
- “It sounds annoying”,
- “other”.



**Figure 8. Screenshot from the questionnaire: part inquiring about the participant's favourite accent**

Perception of English accents | 46% of items completed

Which accent is your **favourite** English accent?

- American accent
- Australian accent
- Zimbabwean accent
- British accent
- Canadian accent
- Nigerian accent
- Indian accent
- New Zealand accent
- Irish accent
- South African accent
- [Another accent (fill in)]

Why is it your **favourite** accent?

- I have an emotional link with it
- I understand it more easily
- I hear it most often
- It sounds prestigious
- It sounds friendly
- [Another reason (fill in)]

Once all these information have been collected, the participants answered a few questions on the Geordie accent. The term ‘Geordie accent’ has been chosen willingly because it is the familiar term to refer to the Tyneside accent and the goal was to see how familiar participants were with this specific notion. Participants were asked if they knew what the Geordie accent was: if they knew were Newcastle-upon-Tyne was located in the United Kingdom, if they have been to this city before and if they have ever heard someone from Newcastle speak English. If they answered yes to the previous question, they were asked if they found this person easy to understand and if they could explain why they were easy or not easy to understand. The figure below illustrates how these questions appeared for the participants.

**Figure 9. Screenshot from the questionnaire listing the questions about the Tyneside accent**

Perception of English accents | 54% of items completed

Have you heard about the Geordie accent before ?

Yes  
 No

Do you know where Newcastle is located in the United Kingdom?

Yes  
 No

Have you been to Newcastle before?

Yes  
 No

Have you ever heard someone from Newcastle speak English?

Yes  
 No

### II.3.3. Perception test

The questionnaire is followed by the perception test. It includes the above-mentioned selected recordings. For each perception task, the participants could only listen to the recording once, so as to make sure that everyone had the same amount of information and familiarity with the recording. The participants were asked to tell where they thought the speaker was from. They could choose from a list of fifteen answers: Newcastle (North of England), The USA, Australia, Zimbabwe, England, Wales, Scotland, Canada, Nigeria, India, New Zealand, Ireland, Northern Ireland, South Africa, other. After this, a table was created so the participants could give their opinions on the extract they just listened to. Four statements were listed:

- “This speaker is easy to understand.”
- “This speaker is nice to listen to.”
- “This speaker sounds educated.”
- “This speaker has an annoying or irritating accent.”

For each of the statement, the participants could choose one answer among the following options: “I disagree”, “I slightly disagree”, “I slightly agree”, “I agree”. These same questions were asked for the six recordings, keeping the same order for the answers so the participants would not select an answer by error. Figure 10 is an example of how the questions were organized during the listening task. The same display was done for the six recordings.

**Figure 10. Screenshot from the questionnaire: listening task for one speaker**

Perception of English accents | 71% of items completed

Where do you think this speaker comes from?

- Newcastle (north of England)
- The USA
- Australia
- Zimbabwe
- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Canada
- Nigeria
- India
- New Zealand
- Ireland
- Northern Ireland
- South Africa
- [Another accent (fill in)]

Please select what best suits your impression concerning the speaker

Item	I disagree	I slightly disagree	I slightly agree	I agree
This speaker is easy to understand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This speaker is nice to listen to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This speaker sounds educated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This speaker has an annoying or irritating accent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Lastly, participants were able to listen to the speakers another time, and as many times and they wanted to in order to indicate how easy they thought the speakers were to understand. For each speaker, a slide going from 0 to 10 was available. 0 meant “Not easy at all to understand” and 10 meant “Very easy to understand”. Figure 11 presents how the semantic differential scale were organised in the questionnaire.

**Figure 11. Screenshot of the final ranking asked to participants**

Perception of English accents | 96% of items completed

This is the last question. Please listen to all the speakers again and use the slider to indicate how easy to understand the speakers are.

Speaker 1

Not easy at all to understand Very easy to understand

Speaker 2

Not easy at all to understand Very easy to understand

Speaker 3

Not easy at all to understand Very easy to understand

Speaker 4

Not easy at all to understand Very easy to understand

Speaker 5

Not easy at all to understand Very easy to understand

Speaker 6

Not easy at all to understand Very easy to understand

After this last question, participants were able to leave a comment if they wanted to before ending the questionnaire. Table 5 lists the main parts of the questionnaire in a concise form.

**Table 5. Summary of the questionnaire content and the perception test**

Section n°	Focal point	Types of questions
1	Linguistic profile	Personal information: gender, age, studies
		Language surrounding: L1 and skills
		Languages learned
		Habits in English
2	Accents awareness	Familiarity
		Favourite accent and why
		Least favourite accent and why
		Knowledge on Geordie accent
3	Perception test	Six speakers
		Guessing place of origin
		Opinions on speakers
		Ranking based on understandability

## **Part III. Results and Discussion**

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The questionnaire and the perception test were done in class with a group of French first-year students (Y1 students) majoring in English. Answers from twenty different students were collected in total. Then, the link to the questionnaire has been given to French Master students majoring in English as well, and half the class answered: data from three different students were collected. The goal of this part is to analyse the results collected from Y1 students from a quantitative point of view in order to see how the different accents were perceived. Then these results will be compared to the Master students' answers, and these results will be analysed from a qualitative point of view. In order to analyse all the results, the answers were put into a large table and some parts were selected to be analysed more closely.

### **III.1. First-year students**

#### **III.1.1. First-year students' linguistic profile and habits**

First, it is important to have an idea of the linguistic environment the listeners grew up in and what are their habits in English according to them. Out of the twenty students who answered the questionnaire, nine grew up surrounded by another language than French, meaning that they grew up in a bilingual environment, and for some of them a multilingual one: a student considers that their first language is French, and they declared that they grew up surrounded by English, German and Spanish. In total, three students replied that they grew up surrounded by English. The other languages mentioned were Arabic, Bulgarian, Moroccan, Spanish, German, Turkish, and a language spoken in Cameroon (the student did not mention the name).

Then, the students were asked about the languages they learned in middle school and high school. The following table summarises the languages that the Y1 students learned in middle school and high school. Overall, the answers correspond to the languages that are generally taught in French middle school and high schools: English and either Spanish or German.

**Table 6. Languages learned in middle school and high school by Y1 students**

Languages learned in middle school and high school	Percentage of students who learned the language
English	95%
German	20%
Arabic	5%
Spanish	75%
Italian	10%
Chinese	5%
Russian	5%
French Sign Language	5%

Then, 85% of the students replied that they were learning another foreign language when they answered the questionnaire, which means that most of the students show an interest in languages in general, beyond the English language that they are majoring in.

#### **III.1.1.1. Habits in English and motivation when studying English**

Then, the questionnaire focused on their habits in English and what were the students' motivation and goal when studying English. First, students were asked about their habits in English, more precisely, they had to tell how often they spoke, listened, read, and wrote in English. The possible answers were ranging from "everyday" to "less than once a month". The most used answer was "everyday". For each question, the average answer is between "everyday" and "more than twice a week". According to their answers, students tend to listen to English more often than they speak English. Reading and writing are done less often even though the average answer remains between "everyday" and "more than twice a week", students seem to read English less often that they write in English. For example, one student replied that they read English "twice a month" which is the lowest answer that was given. According to the

list of courses that are mandatory for the Y1 students, they have to attend 11h30 of class a week that are given in English for the first semester and 14h30 a week for the second semester. This data does not include the time students spend studying outside of class nor the time they spend surrounded by English in their spare time.

When students were asked about their motivations for studying English, students could choose multiple answers: 90% replied that have chosen to study English because they liked the language, 65% answered that they were studying English because it fitted their professional project. 25% mentioned that it was because they had an emotional bound with the language.

Finally, students were asked about their goal when learning and studying English, they could choose between “to be understood clearly” or “to have a native accent”. This question was added in order to compare the results with the questionnaire that was done by Scales, et al. (2006). In their survey, 62% of the English learners answered that their goal was to sound like a native speaker and 38% replied that intelligibility was more important for them (Scales, et al., 2006). Surprisingly, the answers from the Y1 students were the opposite. Indeed, 80% answered that wanted to be understood clearly, and 20% replied that they wanted to have a native accent. This difference could be explained because Scales, et al. (2006) asked a group of language learners and not a group of students majoring in English, therefore they would have different objectives when learning a language. The results obtained by the students from Limoges University can also be explained with the different teaching theories and techniques that have been used in school when teaching English as a foreign language for French students. Indeed, as Rolland (2004) pointed out, several teaching theories tend to be less and less used such as nativist theories that state that children have an innate ability to understand how a language is constructed; or the behavioural learning theory that state that people learn a language through interactions with their environment. According to him, teaching methods are moving away from nativist theories because they tend to be too formal: “behaviourism theories seem to seriously be questioned, similarly to theories that are said to be nativist, because they are considered as too much oriented toward a formal study of the language” (Rolland, 2004, p. 11; translated).<sup>5</sup>

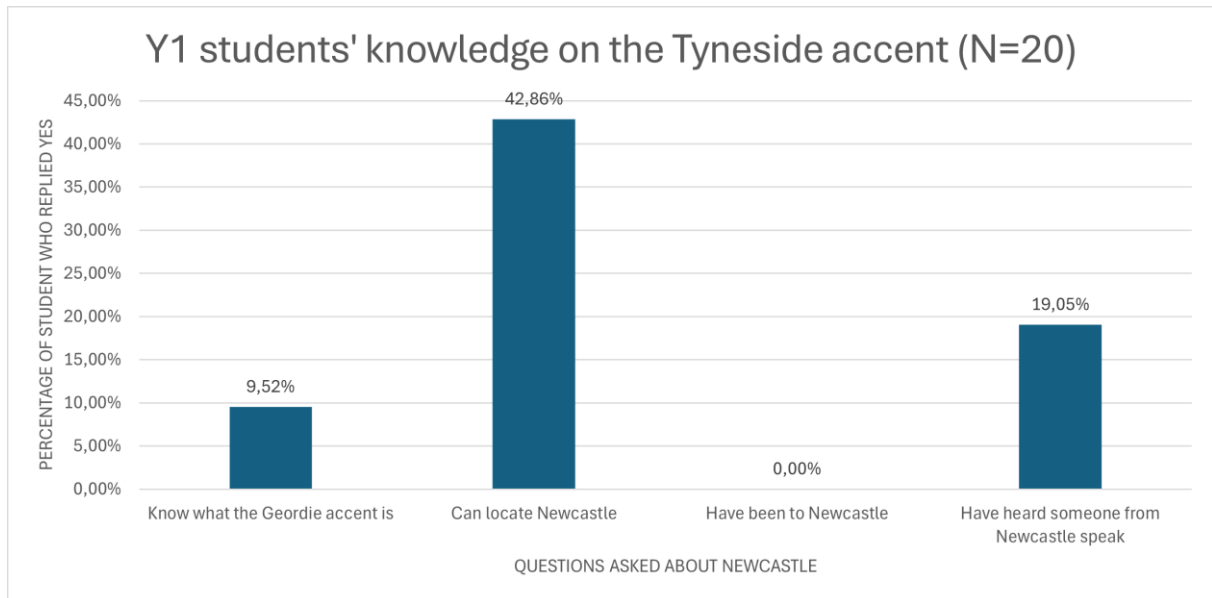
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<sup>5</sup> Original quote: « Le behaviorisme semble sérieusement remis en question, de même que les théories dites nativistes, car trop orientées sur l'étude formelle de la langue » (Rolland, 2004, p. 11)

### III.1.1.2. Tyneside accent familiarity and knowledge

Several questions were asked to students before doing the perception test in order to get a better idea of their familiarity with the accent present in Newcastle and how much they knew about this place.

**Figure 12.** *Y1 students' knowledge on the Tyneside accent and Newcastle (N=20)*



The first question was about the “Geordie accent”, the familiar name that is given to the Tyneside accent. Students were asked if they knew what this accent was and only two out of the twenty students replied that they knew it (less than 10%). When students were asked if they have ever heard someone from Newcastle speak, four of them answered that they did, two of them were the students who knew the term Geordie accent. Amongst the four students who claimed to have heard Newcastle speakers in the past, three of them replied that they found the accent easy to understand. One of them said that their penfriend was from Newcastle and that they became used to the accent overtime; another one replied that they were of English origin and that they liked Northern English accents.<sup>6</sup> The student who replied that the accent was hard

<sup>6</sup> The last student who thought the Newcastle was easy to understand explained that the “accent was actually very good” and that it helped them “to understand” (answers to the questionnaire, February 20, 2024). The student did not specify why the accent was “good” – it can be the pronunciation, or the speed, or simply a way to say that they liked to listen to the accent. It is difficult to interpret what this answer could actually mean, more precision are needed in order to be able to use this answer.



to understand said that it was “hard to keep track” (answer to the questionnaire, February 20, 2024).

None of the students have been to Newcastle before but nine replied that they knew where the city was in England. So overall, students are not familiar with the Tyneside accent since only four of them have heard the accent before and that over half of them do not know where the city is located.

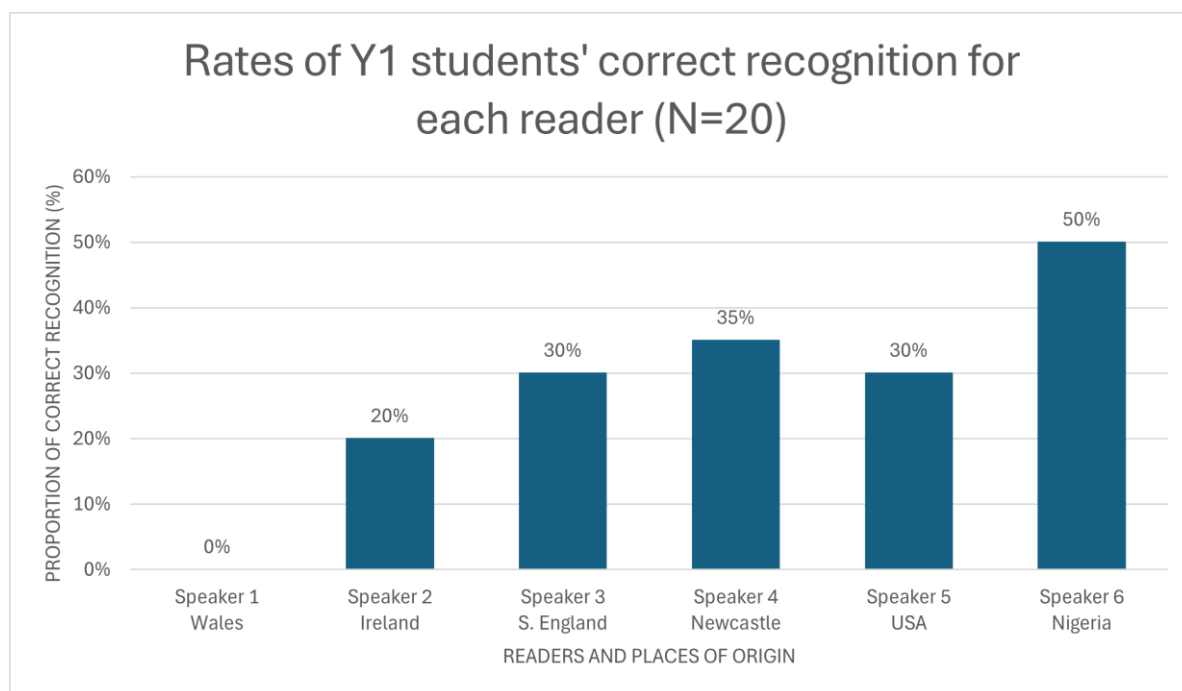
Since the level of familiarity for the Tyneside accent has been collected differently from the level of familiarity of the other accents, an equivalence has been made using the results presented above and it is this equivalence that is used in the following parts in order to have the same scale for all accents when comparing them.

### **III.1.2. Rate of accurate recognition**

First-year students were asked to guess where the six readers were from. The point of this part of the perception test was to evaluate the capacity of students to recognise different varieties of accents; this is a numerical way to measure their ability since their answers are analysed as correct or incorrect answers. Only the precise correct answers were taken into account when analysing the results. Indeed, if a student replied that a reader came from England and the reader actually came from Wales, the answer was not considered as correct. The same processus was done for Newcastle for example: England was not considered as right answer since Newcastle was in the options list.

The accent that was the best recognised was the Nigerian accent, and the one that was the least recognised was the Welsh accent. The following graph shows the percentage of correct answer for each reader.

**Figure 13. Correct recognition from Y1 students' perception test (N=20)**



No student recognised the Welsh accent, although most of them replied that the reader came from England 75% of them. Other places in the British Isles were mentioned such as Newcastle (one answer), Scotland (one answer), Ireland (one answer). Overall, the students sensed that the reader came from the British Isles, but they were not able to recognise the precise place. For this reader, six different answers were given; and the reader who received the least diverse answers is the reader coming from Nigeria: only four incorrect alternative places were mentioned. The Nigerian accent was also the one that was the best recognised out of the six different accents. 50% of the students guessed correctly that the reader came from Nigeria, four replied that it was a Zimbabwean accent, two said it was an Indian accent, and four answered it was a South African accent. Although the countries mentioned by the students are quite far away from each other, they all are former British colonies, and it appears that the students were aware of the fact that it was an English accent present in a former colony when they heard the reader. Since English was imposed to the population as a new language, people learned it as a second language at the time and it has been explained in the first part that some sounds in the Nigerian accents are being done on purpose by some parts of the population as a form of protest in order to sound differently from RP (Wells, 1982).

The Newcastle accent and the American accent were the two accents for which students gave the most alternative answers: nine different places were selected by students for each

accent. The Newcastle accent had a recognition rate of 35%, many other incorrect answers mentioned places from the British Isles: England (three answers), Wales (one answer), Scotland (one answer), Ireland (three answers) and Northern Ireland (two answers). The American accent has been recognised by six students (30%) and the answers were quite diverse and countries from all across the globe were mentioned: Australia (one answer), Canada (two answers), New Zealand (one answer), South Africa (two answers). Places in the UK were also mentioned: Newcastle (one answer), England (one answer), Wales (three answers), Scotland (three answers).

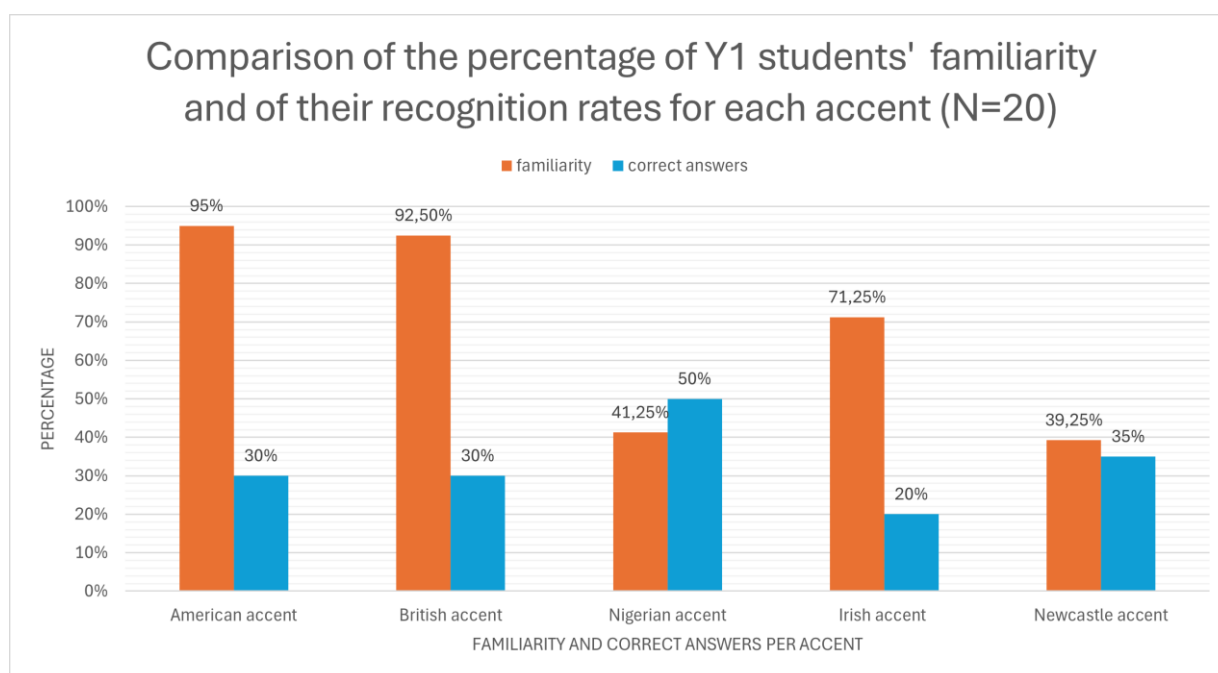
The reader from Ireland had a recognition rate of 20%. The answers were also quite varied, and many students mentioned places outside of the British Isles: USA (three answers), Australia (four answers), Canada (one answer). Six students (30%) guessed correctly the origin of the Southeast English accent, but other parts of the British Isles were also mentioned such as Newcastle (one answer), Wales (two answers), Scotland (four answers) and Ireland (one answer). These results are very interesting because it shows that even if the students are not able to specifically define the origin of the speaker, most of them still manage to have a global idea of where they come from, it was the case for the Nigerian accent as shown previously and the same phenomenon happened for the recognition rate of the southern English speaker.

The recognition rate has been analysed, the next part will therefore focus on using different factors such as familiarity and preferences to see if one of them can explain the results obtained.

### **III.1.2.1. Influence of accent familiarity on recognition**

One may believe that the more students consider themselves familiar with an accent, the better they would be able to recognise it. Yet, the results suggest otherwise. Indeed, for most accents, except one, the students' familiarity is higher than the rate of correct recognition. The only exception is for the Nigerian accent, as it has been explained previously, this accent has the highest recognition rate even though students considered that they had little familiarity with this accent. The graph below illustrates the percentage of Y1 students' familiarity for each accent compared to their rates of correct answers.

**Figure 14.** *Y1 students' familiarity and recognition rates for each accent compared (N=20)*



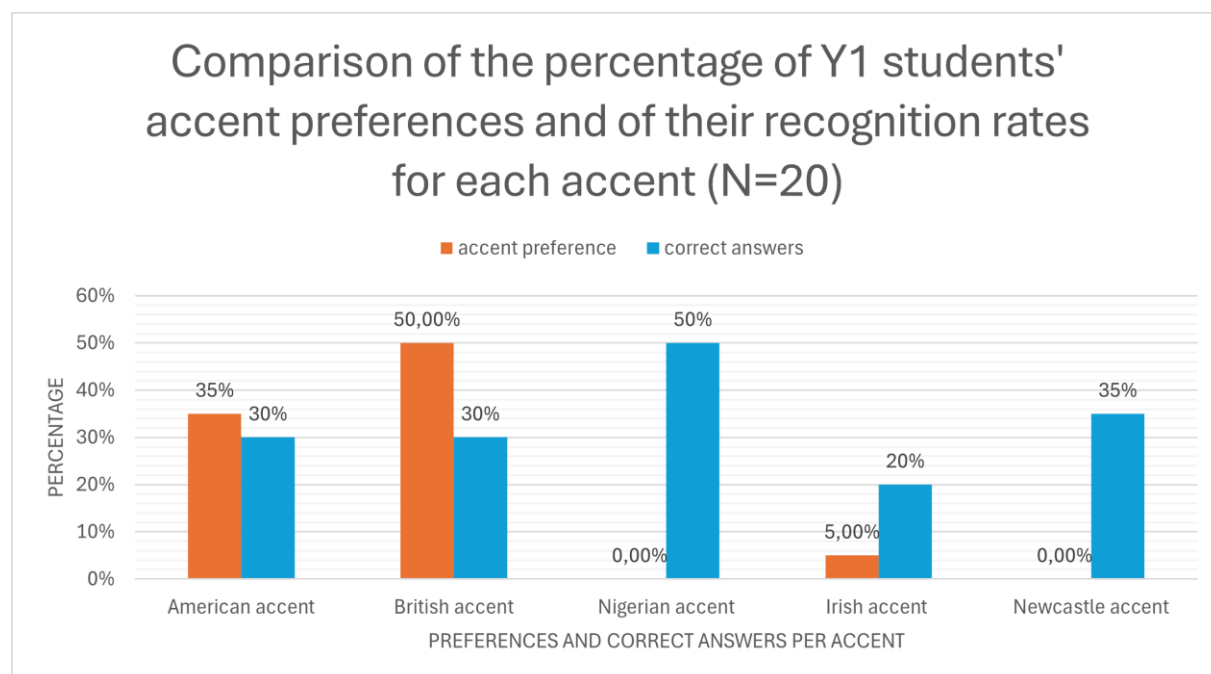
The fact that British and American accents have the highest familiarity rate – above 90% for both accents – is not a surprise since these are the two accents that are the most popular. When talking about the British accent, the rate of the reader coming from South English was used in this graph because the reader coming from Wales had no correct recognition. Since students were asked about their familiarity with British accent in general and not with each accent specifically – namely English, Welsh, and Scottish accents – this familiarity is compared with the English accent. Then, the students considered themselves as very familiar with the Irish accent – more than 70% of familiarity. This rate can be explained because this group of students had a class with an Irish tutor who therefore has an Irish accent when speaking English. The perception test has been done in February 2024; therefore, the students had the time to get used to the accent and become familiar with it. The Nigerian accent had less than 50% familiarity rate and yet, it is the accent who was the best recognised, probably because students recognised the reader came from a country that was under British domination in the past, and it made the choice easier when deciding the origin of the reader, since English has been imposed to the population. The Newcastle accent had the lowest familiarity rate, and this can be explained because it is an accent that is associated to a city or a small region and not a whole country or territory. And yet, it had a higher recognition rate than most accents: 35% for the Tyneside accent, compared to 30% for British and American accents and 20% for Irish accent.

With these results, it is difficult to say that the more students are familiar with an accent, the better they are at recognising it. In fact, it seems that it rather tends to be the opposite: the less they are familiar with an accent, the better they are at identifying it. This can be explained maybe because they have less pressure since they have less references to compare the accent to, student might tend to go for their first intuition.

### III.1.2.2. Influence of accent preferences on recognition

Y1 students were asked about their accent preferences in order to analyse if their preferences had an influence on the way they recognised an accent. The results show that preferences do not influence their recognition rates. Indeed, very similarly to accent familiarity, it tends to be the opposite, the less an accent is preferred by students, the best it is recognised. The graph below compares the percentage of accent preferences and accent recognition.

**Figure 15.** *Y1 students' accent preference and recognition rates compared (N=20)*



The Nigerian and the Tyneside accents were the best recognised accents and yet, they are the two accents that had 0% of students saying that it was their favourite accent. On the other hand, the British accent that had the highest rate of accent preference according to Y1 students' answers, is not the accent with the best recognition. It shows, once again, that in the

case of this recognition test, accent preferences do not have an influence on the way accents are being identified by the students. Still, it is interesting to note that the two accents that students considered themselves the most familiar with are also the two accents they prefer, with 50% of students who replied that the British accent was their favourite and 35% of them saying that American accent was the one they preferred. Although the British accent is the one that had the most answers as the favourite accent, there are some students who declared that British accent was their least favourite accent (10%), none of them declared American accent as their least favourite accent.

The links between familiarity, preferences and recognition are not as evident as one can think, but familiarity and preferences are clearly linked because when students were asked to select one or more options to explain their accent preferences, 60% replied that the accent they preferred was the accent they heard the most often, and 55% replied that it was the accent that was the easiest to understand for them. In the next part, we are going to analyse the perception and intelligibility of each accent according to Y1 students and we will see if, similarly to accent preferences, intelligibility has an influence on their accent perception and the opinion they have on these accents.

### **III.1.3. Accent perception and intelligibility**

When doing the perception test, students were asked for each reader to say if they agreed or not with four statements:

- “This speaker is easy to understand.”
- “This speaker is nice to listen to.”
- “This speaker sounds educated.”
- “This speaker has an annoying or irritating accent.”

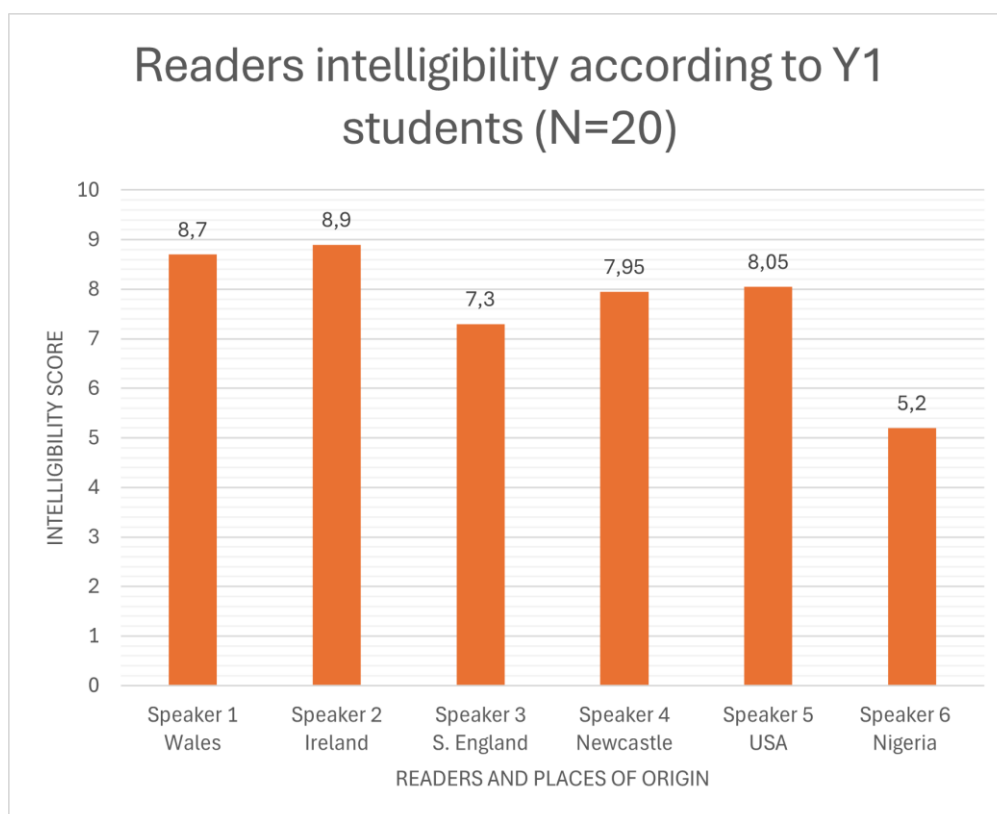
First, we are going to analyse the answer to the first statement for each reader. Three readers have an average answer of 91,65% of agreement, meaning that the students largely agreed with the statement. These three accents are the Welsh accent, the Tyneside accent and the Irish accent. Then, the Southern English accent and the American accent both have 86,25% of agreement for this statement, which correspond to an answer between “I agree” and “I slightly agree”. The Nigerian accent has the lowest answer: a 75% agreement, meaning that the average answer is “I slightly agree”.

The overall intelligibility according to the level of agree for this first statement is:

- first place: Welsh accent, Tyneside accent and Irish accent (91,65% of agreement)
- fourth place: American accent and south English accent (86,25% of agreement)
- sixth place: Nigerian accent (75% of agreement)

At the end of the perception test, students had to listen to each reader one last time and to rate them from one to ten according to how easy to understand they thought the reader was. What is interesting is that when the students had the possibility to listen to all readers, one after the other and only focus on intelligibility, the results are quite different than the one that were presented previously. The following graph summarises the level of intelligibility for each accent according to the answer to the final question in the perception test.

**Figure 16. Y1 students' perceived intelligibility for each accent according to the answers to the final intelligibility test (N=20)**



As the graph shows, the speaker who is considered as the most intelligible is the one coming from Ireland. It fits with the first ranking that was analysed previously, but the rest of

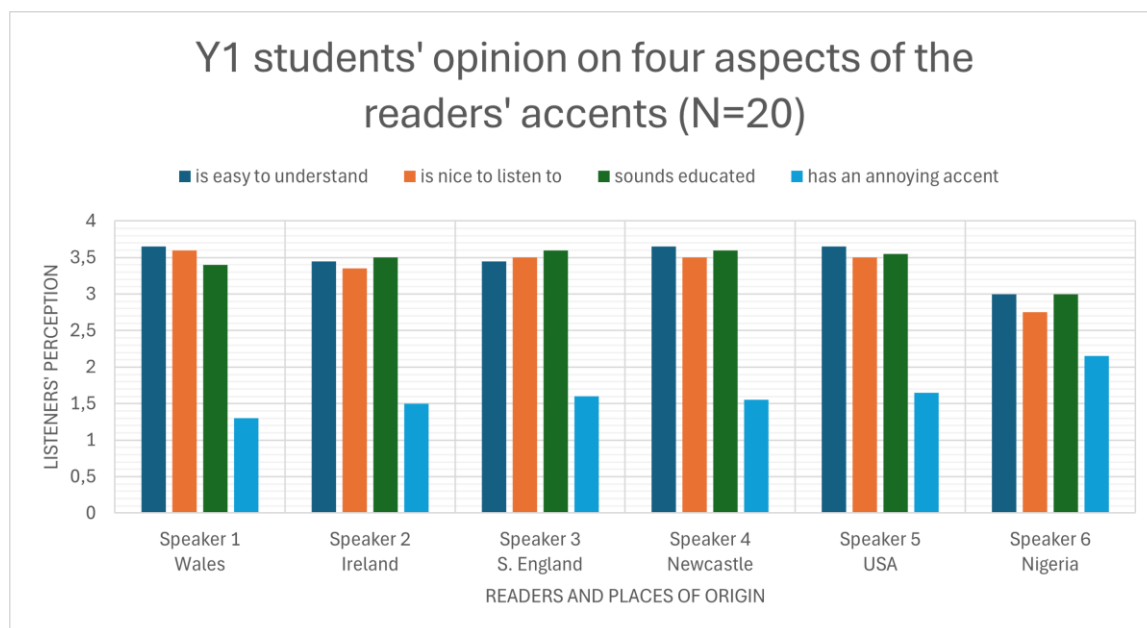
the scores varies a little more. Indeed, the ranking for each accent intelligibility according to the answers given for the last question is:

- first place: Irish accent (8,9/10)
- second place: Welsh accent (8,7/10)
- third place: American accent (8,05/10)
- fourth place: Tyneside accent (7,95/10)
- fifth place: Southern English accent (7,3/10)
- sixth place: Nigerian accent (5,2/10)

The Nigerian accent being ranked with the lowest intelligibility score is in line with the first answers given, and it also fits with the fact that the students were not really familiar with it, and as it has been said before, since English is used by Nigerian as a second language, the sounds present in their first language can sometimes influence the way Nigerian talk in English and it can make their pronunciation quite distant from the accents students are more used to. The fact that the South English accent has been ranked lower than the previous time can be explained with the pace of reading. Indeed, this reader read the text quite fast compared to the other reader and this might appear more clearly when this audio was listened to right after the others. The fact that the Irish accent has the highest intelligibility score can be due to the fact that their tutor is Irish, and the students are therefore used to listen carefully to what is said in class. Three other statements were given to the students when they were listening to the readers. The graph below illustrates the answers that were given by the students.



**Figure 17. Y1 students' level of agreement on four statements concerning each reader (N=20)**



**Table 7. Equivalence between the figure on the graph and the answers students could choose from**

Figure	1	2	3	4
Statement	I disagree	I slightly disagree	I slightly agree	I agree

What is first striking when looking at this graph is that, in general, students do not consider that the readers had “an annoying accent”. The Nigerian accent is the one that had the lowest results when it comes to the statements: “is easy to understand”, “is nice to listen to” and “sounds educated”, meaning that the students tend to agree less on these statements when it is about the Nigerian accent. It cannot be said that the students fully disagree with these statements because the average answer for these three statements is “I slightly agree” as opposed to “I disagree” which would correspond to a score of 1. On the other hand, they tend to find this accent more annoying than the five others. Indeed, the average result for this statement is 2,15 which corresponds to “I slightly disagree”. Compared to the result for the same statement for the Welsh accent (1,3) that corresponds to “I disagree”, there is almost a point between the average students’ answer concerning the Nigerian accent and the Welsh accent, which confirm their tendency to find the Nigerian accent more annoying than the other accents they heard in the perception test. Another statement that helps to confirm this tendency is the statement “is nice to listen to”. In fact, most accents have an average answer that is around 3,5 which

correspond to an answer between “I slightly agree” and “I agree”. On the other hand, the Nigerian accent has a score under 3. Its score is 2,75 which is in between “I slightly disagree” and “I slightly agree”, which shows that the students did not find this accent really nice to listen to.

Another interesting element is that the data on the students’ perception of the Newcastle accent had no striking results that can differentiate it with the other accent. In fact, the Tyneside accent is part of the three accents that had the highest score (3,65) for the statement “is easy to listen to” and it also had the highest score (3,6) for the statement “sounds educated”. Since the Tyneside accent does not seem to have highly noticeable difference with the five other accents, it can be interesting to see if other factors such as familiarity and accent preferences have an influence on the way students perceived these accents.

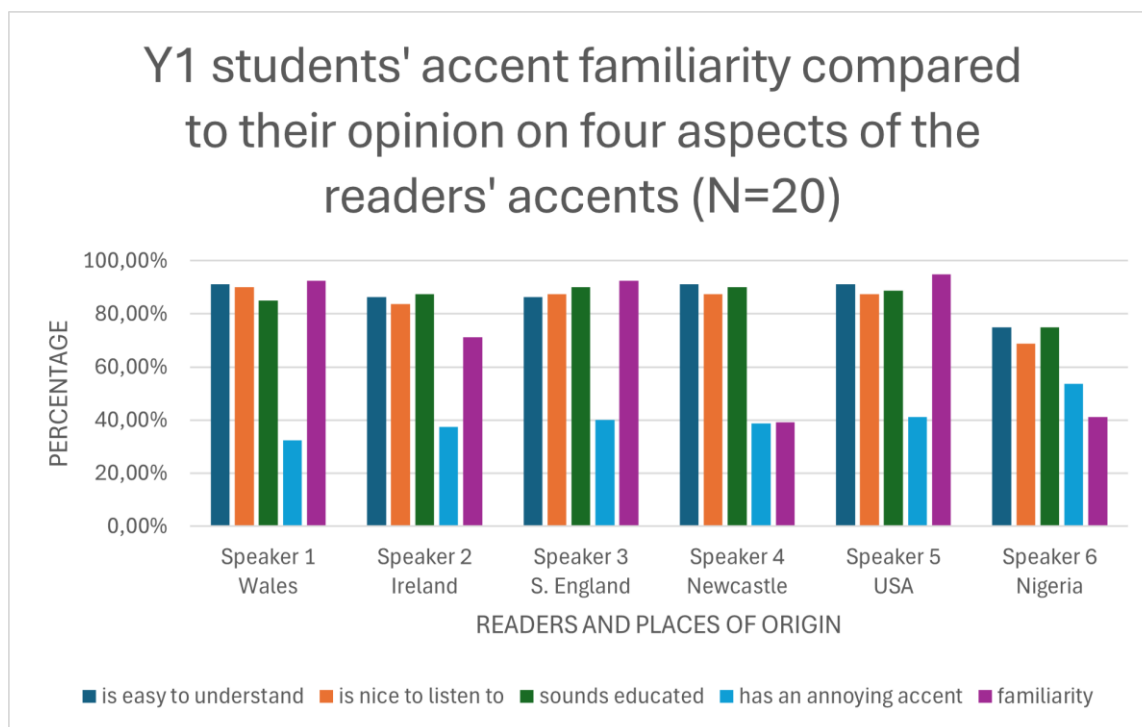
### III.1.3.1. Influence of accent familiarity on perception

It has been previously shown that familiarity does not seem to have an influence on the students’ level of recognition of accent, and the point of this part will be to see if familiarity had an influence on the students’ opinion and the way they perceived the different accents. The table and the graph below show the percentage of familiarity compared to the percentage of students’ agreement on the four statements for each reader’s accent.

**Table 8. Percentage of students' perception and familiarity for each accent**

	Speaker 1 Wales	Speaker 2 Ireland	Speaker 3 S. England	Speaker 4 Newcastle	Speaker 5 USA	Speaker 6 Nigeria
is easy to understand	91,25%	86,25%	86,25%	91,25%	91,25%	75%
is nice to listen to	90%	83,75%	87,50%	87,50%	87,50%	68,75%
sounds educated	85%	87,50%	90%	90%	88,75%	75%
has an annoying accent	32,50%	37,50%	40%	38,75%	41,25%	53,75%
familiarity	93%	71%	93%	39%	95%	41%

**Figure 18. Percentage of Y1 students' accent familiarity compared to their opinion on each accent (N=20)**



Y1 students declared to be the most familiar with the American accent (95% of familiarity) and it appears that familiarity can have an influence on the way students perceive an accent as to be easy to understand or not. Indeed, the American accent has the highest percentage of agreement on the statement “is easy to understand” with 91,25%. The Welsh accent also has this same level on agreement on its intelligibility and it can be considered as the second most familiar accent according to the students’ answer with 93% of familiarity for the British accent in general. On the other hand, the Tyneside accent is the one that has the lowest level of familiarity with 39% and yet it also has the highest level of intelligibility according to students’ answer. It can probably be said that the Tyneside accent as a local accent is not very familiar to the students, but it is still a British accent since Newcastle is located in the United-Kingdom, therefore students might hear some typical British variations in the Tyneside accent.

Familiarity also seems to have some influence on the three other statements. The data show that the American accent that has the highest level of familiarity also has the second highest percentage of agreement on the statement “is nice to listen to” and “sounds educated”, which shows that students tend to have a rather positive view on the accents they are familiar with. It is also the case for the Southern English accent that has 93% of familiarity and that has

the highest level of agreement with the statement “sounds educated” (90%) and also the second highest percentage of agreement with the sentence “is nice to listen to” (87,50%), which emphasises on the tendency that students appear to have a positive image of the accent they are very familiar with.

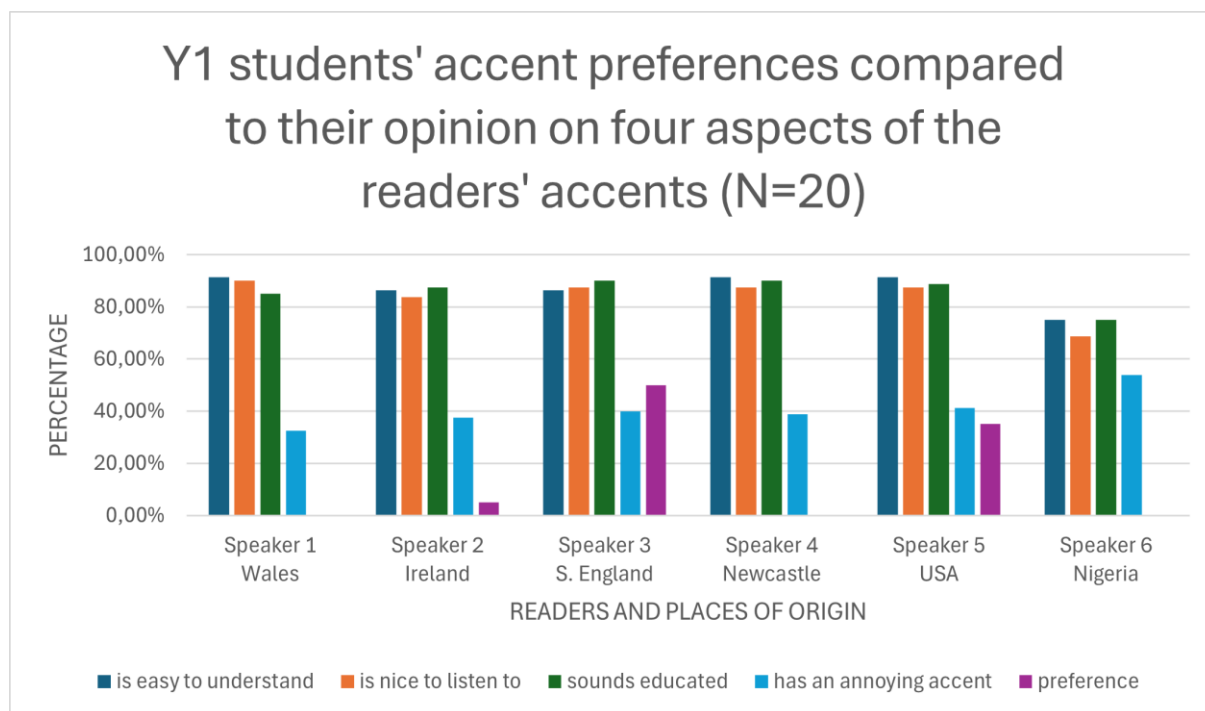
On the other hand, most students declared to be less familiar with the Nigerian accent compared to the other accent and this is clearly reflected in the answers to the different statements. As the data showed, the Nigerian accent has the lowest level of agreement with the statement “is easy to understand” (75%), “is nice to listen to” (68,75%) and “sounds educated” (75%). These percentages are still very high – more than fifty percent – but when they are compared to the percentage for the other accents that all are above eighty percent, the results for the Nigerian accent are quite low in the scale of the students’ answers.

Overall, it can be said that the more students are familiar to an accent, the more they tend to perceive the said accent positively and find it intelligible and nice to listen to. The American accent, the Southern English accent and the Welsh accent illustrate this idea and the Nigerian accent shows that the less students are familiar with an accent the lower their level of agreement is on the statement about intelligibility and pleasure to listen. Only the Tyneside accent has data that tend to contradict this tendency. First, it is important to keep in mind that the Tyneside accent is a local accent that is still part of the larger variation British English which means that broadly speaking, the Tyneside accent falls under the spectrum of the British English – as opposed to American or Nigerian English for example. As explained in a previous part, when collecting data for the Tyneside English, students were simply asked if they knew what the Tyneside English was, there were less variation in answers possible, which means that the average percentage of familiarity might be lower than if they were asked how familiar they were with this accent. The point of asking students if they knew the Tyneside accent was to get more data on this accent specifically since it is the focus of this research.

### **III.1.3.2. Influence of accent preferences on perception**

The point of this part is to explore the degree of accent preferences and see if these results can possibly explain some of the results obtained on their perception test. The graph below compared the percentage of Y1 students’ accent preferences compared to their level of agreement for each statement.

**Figure 19. Percentage of Y1 students' accent preferences compared to their level of agreement on the four statements for each accent (N=20)**



The British and the American accents are the two accents that have the highest number of students who considered one of them as their favourite. The most preferred accent is the British accent with 50% of the students who replied that it was the accent they preferred. Interestingly, it is also the accent that gets the most agreement on the statement “sounds educated”, as well as the Tyneside accent that also gets 90% of agreement on that statement. The Southern English accent also gets a rather high level of agreement on the statement “is nice to listen to”, which is an opinion closely linked with accent preference. The data concerning the American accent also are in line with this theory since the American accent is the second most preferred accent with 35% of the students who stated that they preferred the American variation. The American accent has the second highest level of agreement on the statements “sounds educated” and “is nice to listen to” which seems to reinforce the link between accent preference and the opinions on these two sentences.

Interestingly, the two accents that are the most preferred also get a high level of agreement on the statement “has an annoying accent”: 40% for the English accent, and 41,25% for the American accent. These data can be explained because even though these two accents are the most popular among Y1 students who took part in the perception test, the students who like one accent tend to dislike the other. For example, one of the students who replied that they

liked the American accent the most also replied that they liked the British accent the less and they justified their answer with: “bottle o’ wa’er” (answer to the questionnaire, February 20, 2024). They wrote this sentence using eye dialect in order to write ‘bottle of water’ the way they perceived a British person saying it. It is interesting to see that this student used a stereotypical sentence of British English in order to justify why they do not like the accent. This student also declared that they did not think that the British accent sound prestigious, which shows that preferences and the statements “sounds educated” are linked. This kind of example can be an explanation to the high level of agreement on “has an annoying accent” from students for these two accents.

On the other hand, it is difficult to say that a lack of preference for an accent necessarily means that the said accent is negatively perceived by the students. Indeed, no student declared that either the Tyneside accent or the Nigerian accent were their favourite accents and yet both accents have very different results. The fact that the Newcastle accent has a very high level of agreement on “sounds educated” (90%) and “is nice to listen to” (87,50%) can also be explained because this accent is a local accent that is part of the British accent and therefore benefits from the opinions of general British accent. The same thing can be said for the Welsh accent, and it is even more accurate for this accent since most students (79%) thought that this reader was from England. In opposition, the results obtained for the Nigerian accent actually reflect what the students think about the Nigerian accent since half of them correctly guessed the origin of the reader.

### **III.2. Master students**

Now that results from first-year students have been analysed from a quantitative point of view, and that links between recognition, perception, intelligibility, accent preferences and familiarity have been made; the same analysis will be done with answers from three Master’s students and each case will be studied individually in order to see if data can be explained in depth using answers that were collected through the questionnaire and the perception test, and later on with questions regarding the results obtained.

### **III.2.1. Case study: Student A**

The first answers that will be analysed were given by a female student. As for the first-year students, her linguistic profile will be described, as well as her English accent familiarity and preferences. Then, her answers given for the perception test will be analysed.

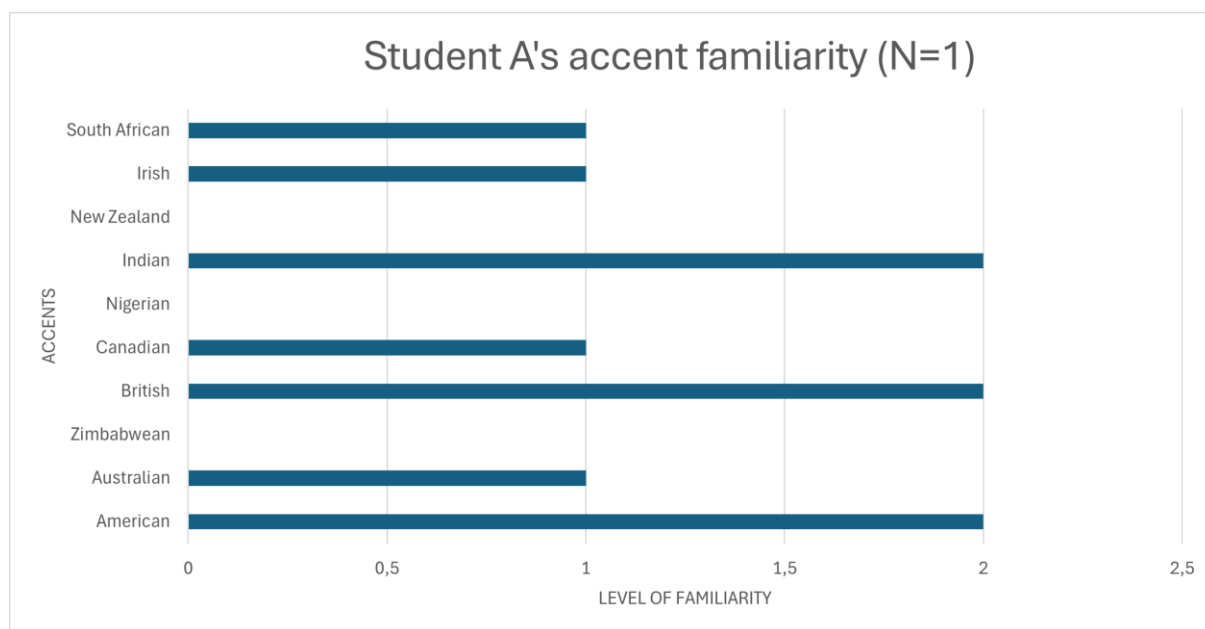
#### **III.2.1.1. Student A's linguistic profile**

She declared that French was her first language and that she grew up surrounded by another language which is Kabyle. She said that she could understand it when it was spoken but that she was unable to write, read or speak it. She studied English and Spanish in middle school and high school and she said that she was not learning any new language. She stated that she listened and read English every day and that she spoke and wrote in English more than twice a week. She decided to study English because it is necessary for her professional projects, and she preferred to be understood clearly than to have a native accent when she was asked about her goal when studying English. To summarise, it can be said that this student grew up in a bilingual environment and that French is her first language and Kabyle is her heritage language (Gomez, 2024). Some additional questions were asked to this student after she did the questionnaire and the perception test in order to collect more information about her. She said that she has never been to an English-speaking country before.

#### **III.2.1.2. Student A's accent familiarity and preferences**

Her answers indicate that she has surrounded herself with English using other tools than the immersion in an English-speaking country since she manages to read and listen to English every day, and this habit can be seen with her familiarity with English accents. She has been asked what the origin of English content she is consuming was and she replied that she consumes “more American content than any other English-speaking country regarding films and social media” (personal communication, April 9, 2024). The graph below illustrates her level of familiarity for different English accents.

**Figure 20. Student A's level of familiarity with different English accents (N=1)**



**Table 9. Equivalence between the figure on the graph and the answers student could choose from**

Figure	0	1	2	3
Statement	Never heard it	Unfamiliar	Familiar	Very familiar

Although this student did not declare to be “very familiar” with any of the accents present in the questionnaire, she has heard almost all the accents except for three out of the ten accents that were present in the questionnaire. Concerning the Tyneside accent, she seems to be quite unfamiliar with it because she replied that she did not know what the Geordie accent was and she has never heard someone from Newcastle speak English, yet she knows where the city is located in the United-Kingdom even though she has never been there.

She declared that her favourite accent was the American accent because it is the one she understands the best, and that her least favourite was the Irish accent because it was difficult to understand. For both cases, intelligibility is an important factor for her to decide whether she likes an accent or not. Since both of these accents are represented in the perception test, a focus will be put on these to see if her preference could have influenced the way she perceived them.



### III.2.1.3. Student A's accent recognition and perception

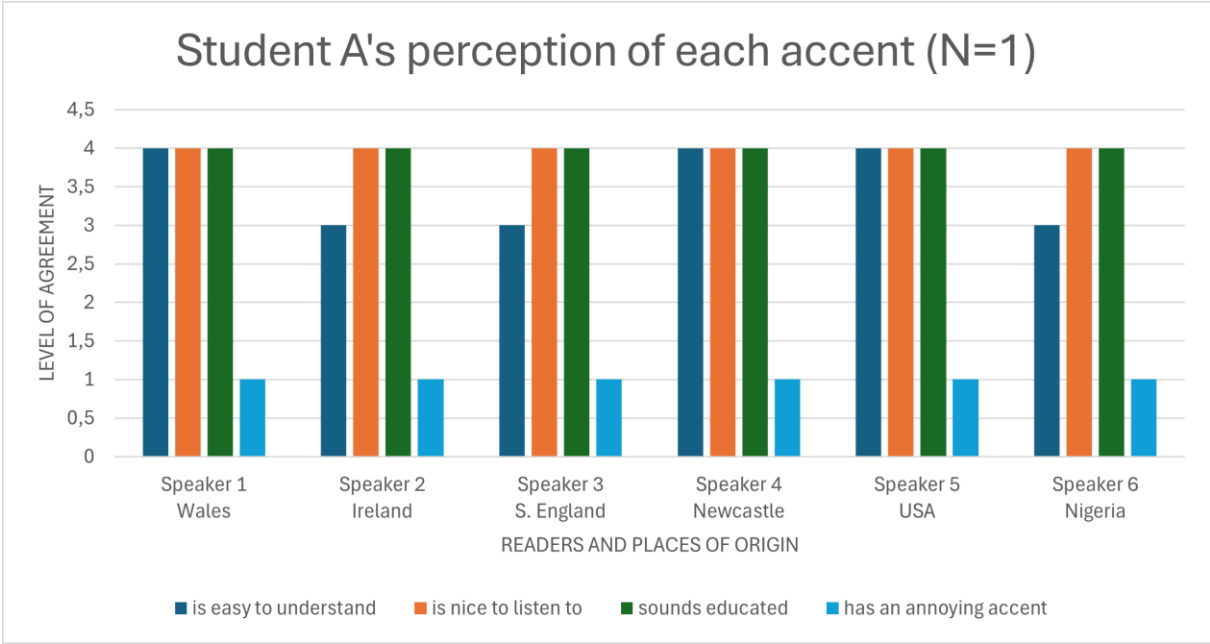
Her rate of accurate recognition is of one out of six, meaning that she gave 16,7% of correct answers. What is very interesting in her answers is that she is the only student out of the twenty-three (Y1 and Master students) who guessed correctly that the speaker 1 came from Wales. When she was asked if she had any special familiarity with the Welsh accent she declared: "I don't have any familiarity with the Welsh accent, but I think it was the only one I did not know so I estimated it was this accent" (personal communication, April 9, 2024). She also declared that she did not answer the questions randomly, meaning that she probably deduced that the speaker was coming from Wales.

Concerning her other answers, she replied that the speaker 3 came from Newcastle when they were coming from South England, she was quite close to the right answer but a bit too specific. Interestingly, she said that the speaker who came from Newcastle was coming from England. So here, she also was very close to the answer but still did not give the correct one. She did not recognise correctly the Nigerian accent because she said that the speaker was originated from Zimbabwe, an answer that is quite similar to the Y1 students. She guessed the right continent but not the right country.

Another interesting data is that she answered that the American speaker came from Wales, which means that she was not able to recognise the speaker that speaks with her favourite accent. She did not manage to recognise her least favourite accent either, she said that the Irish speaker was from Australia. So, with these results, it is difficult to say that accent preferences have an influence on her answers when it comes to recognising the origins of the different accents. Accent familiarity also seems to be rather irrelevant when it comes to her accent recognition since she declared to be the most familiar with American and British accents and yet, she did not recognise all the British accents that were present in the perception test – she recognised the Welsh accent and not the South English one – and she did not recognise the American accent either.

Now that it has been stated that her accent preferences and familiarity did not have any specific influence on her rate of correct accent recognition, these two factors will be compared to her accent perception in order to see if her preferences and familiarity play a role in her opinion on each accent present in the perception test. The graph below compiles her answers to the perception test.

**Figure 21. Student A's opinion on four statements for each accent (N=1)**

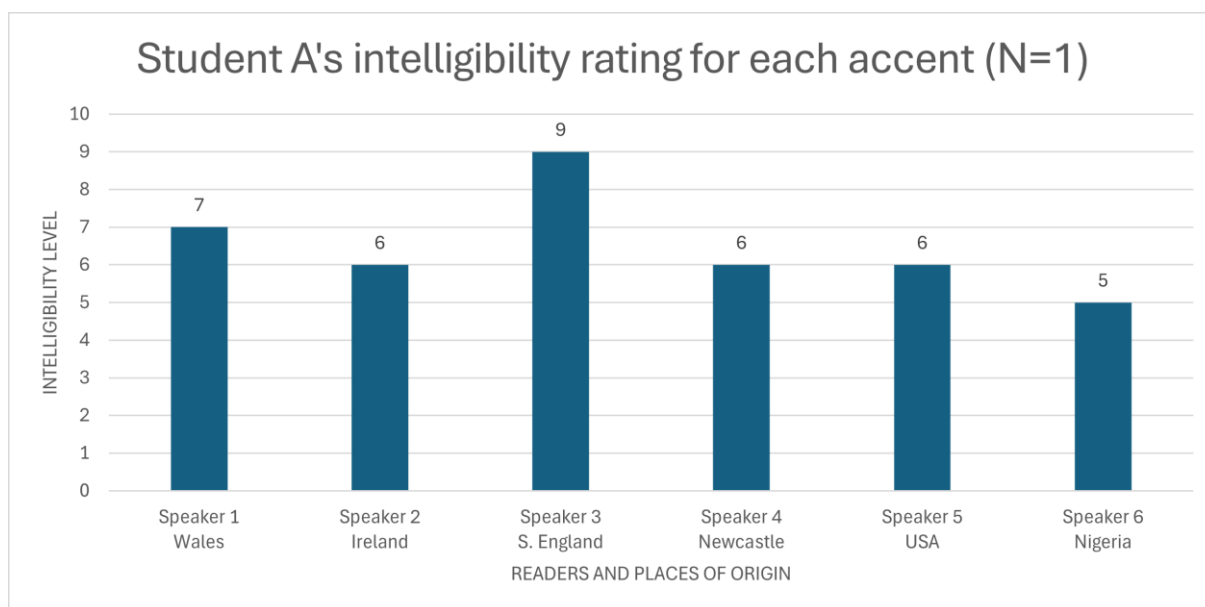


**Table 10. Equivalence between the figure on the graph and the answers student could choose from**

Figure	1	2	3	4
Statement	I disagree	I slightly disagree	I slightly agree	I agree

Overall, it can be said that there is not a lot of variation in her answers, she seems to have understood each accent and she tends to have a positive view of each accent since she agrees that all of them are nice to listen to, sound educated; and she does not think that some speakers have an annoying accent. The only variation present in her answers is about the level of intelligibility and this variation is also reflected with more intensity in the results of her final intelligibility rating. The following graph illustrates her answers when she was asked to rate from one to ten each accent based on intelligibility on the final question of the perception test.

**Figure 22. Student A's final intelligibility rating (N=1)**



What is interesting is that when the student was asked to rate each accent individually, she declared that the Irish, the Southern English and the Nigerian accent were the one she found less easy to understand. Yet, when she was able to listen to each accent at the same time and without restriction, her answers changed. Indeed, the accent that is the easiest to understand in her final rating is the Southern English accent, which is quite surprising when compared with first-year students answers who though that this accent was one of the most difficult to understand. The accent she considered as the least easy to understand is the Nigerian accent, which is in line with her previous opinion. Interestingly, the speaker originating from South England was the speaker who read the fastest and the speaker from Nigeria was the one reading the slowest, and yet the speed does not seem to affect this student's opinion on their intelligibility. On the whole, she considered the other accent as quite similar in their intelligibility level. This can maybe be explained with her following statement: "At some point I thought it was sort of difficult as each accents started to resemble the previous one" (personal communication, April 9, 2024). It is difficult to state if accent preference or familiarity have an impact on her perception of each accent since she has quite the same opinion for each of them.

### **III.2.2. Case study: Student B**

Seeing the results of this first case study, analysing the answers of two other students who are doing the same master's degree as her will be interesting in order to see if other conclusions can be drawn using their answers.

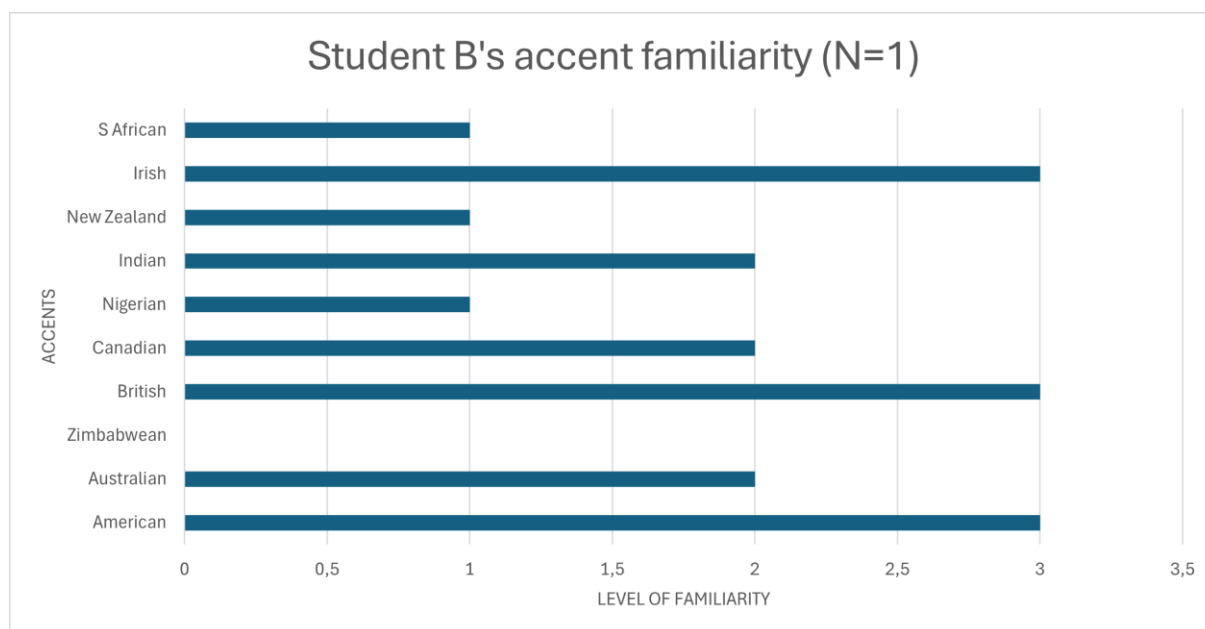
#### **III.2.2.1. Student B's linguistic profile**

This next student is a male student who also declared that French was his first language. He did not grow up surrounded by other languages and learned English and German in middle school and high school. He also declared that he kept learning English and German after leaving high school. Concerning his habits in English, they are quite similar to the previous student, except that he declared that he listened, read and wrote in English every day and that he spoke English more than twice a week. He declared that he was studying English because he liked this language and also because: “the world around us is speaking English in its globality” (answer to the questionnaire, February 21, 2024). His priority when learning English is also to be understood clearly over having a native accent. He also declared that he “went to North America and the British Isles for holidays” and that he “spent a semester in Ireland” (private communication, April 9, 2024). Overall, his answers show that he has travelled in various English-speaking countries and that he is conscious of the necessity to speak English in a globalised world. His familiarity rates reflect the vision he has a world.

#### **III.2.2.2. Student B's accent familiarity and preferences**

When asked about his habits when consuming English content online, he declared that he tends to “watch TV series and movies that are American” and that he “also hear[s] a lot of British English on social media” (private communication, April 9, 2024). The following graph shows his English accent familiarity.

**Figure 23. Student B's level of familiarity with different English accents (N=1)**



**Table 11. Equivalence between the figure on the graph and the answers student could choose from**

Figure	0	1	2	3
Statement	Never heard it	Unfamiliar	Familiar	Very familiar

This student seems to be familiar with a lot of different accents because there is only one out of the ten accents that he declared to have never heard, and he is unfamiliar with three accents: South African accent, New Zealand accent and the Nigerian accent. It means that he considers himself familiar or very familiar with more than half of the accents present in the questionnaire. When this point was raised in the questions asked after he has done the questionnaire, he said that he does not have an interest in accent but he “can recognise the most striking one and certain regions have accents with particularities that made them obvious” (private communication, April 9, 2024). Since he travelled to North American and the British Isles and that he lived in Ireland for a semester, it makes sense that he considers himself very familiar with the American, British and Irish accents. Concerning the Tyneside accent, he did not know what the Geordie accent was and has never been to Newcastle nor heard someone from there speaking English, but he knows where the city is located in England.

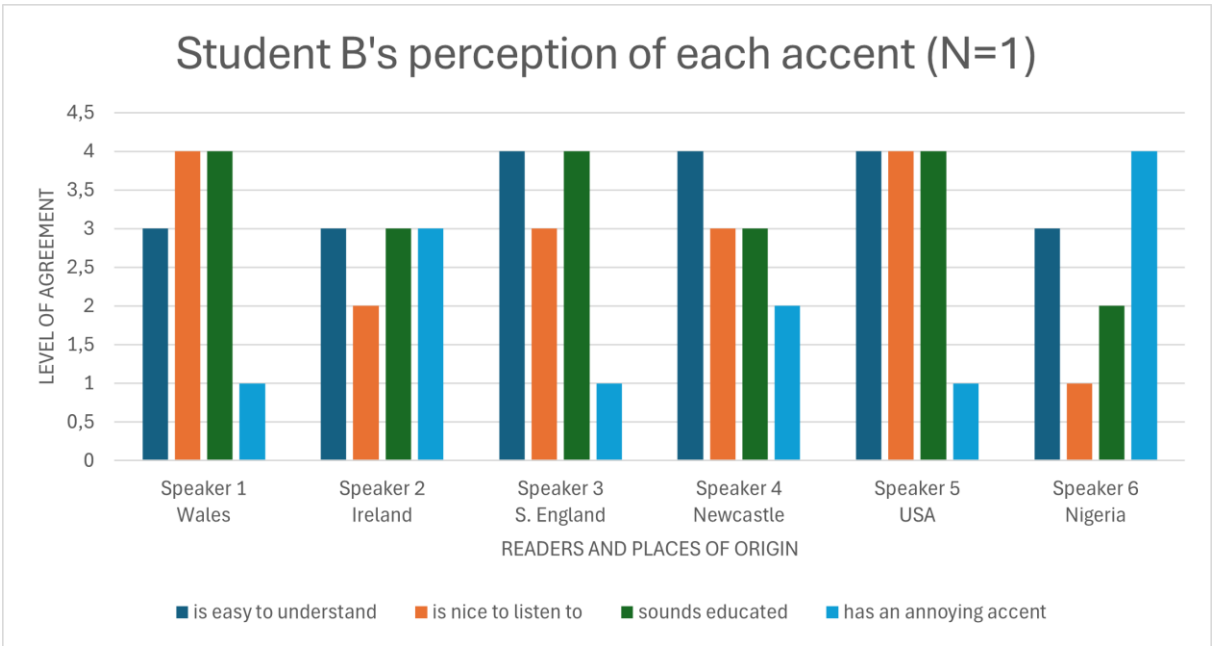
His favourite accent is the British one because it sounds prestigious in his opinion, which shows that his perception of the accent heavily influences his preferences. His least favourite

accent is the Nigerian accent because it is difficult to understand for him. Here, similarly to student A, intelligibility plays an important role when explaining the reasons behind the least favourite accent.

**III.2.2.3. Student B’s accent recognition and perception**

This student’s correct recognition rate is of 83%, meaning that he correctly guessed all of the accent except for one. The only accent that he guessed wrong is the Welsh accent: he replied that the speaker came from England. This answer is very similar to the one obtained with the Y1 students since half of them replied that this reader came from England too. In the case of this student, it can be said that his high level of familiarity with different accents helped him in recognising where each reader was coming from. He declared that he did not answer the questions randomly and that he used “all the elements [he] had that could enlighten [him] on those people’s localisation” (private communication, April 9, 2024). Although this student was able to recognise almost all the accents, his perception on each accent is quite variable depending on the accent. The graph below summarises his opinion on each accent.

**Figure 24. Student B's opinion on four statements for each accent (N=1)**



**Table 12. Equivalence between the figure on the graph and the answers student could choose from**

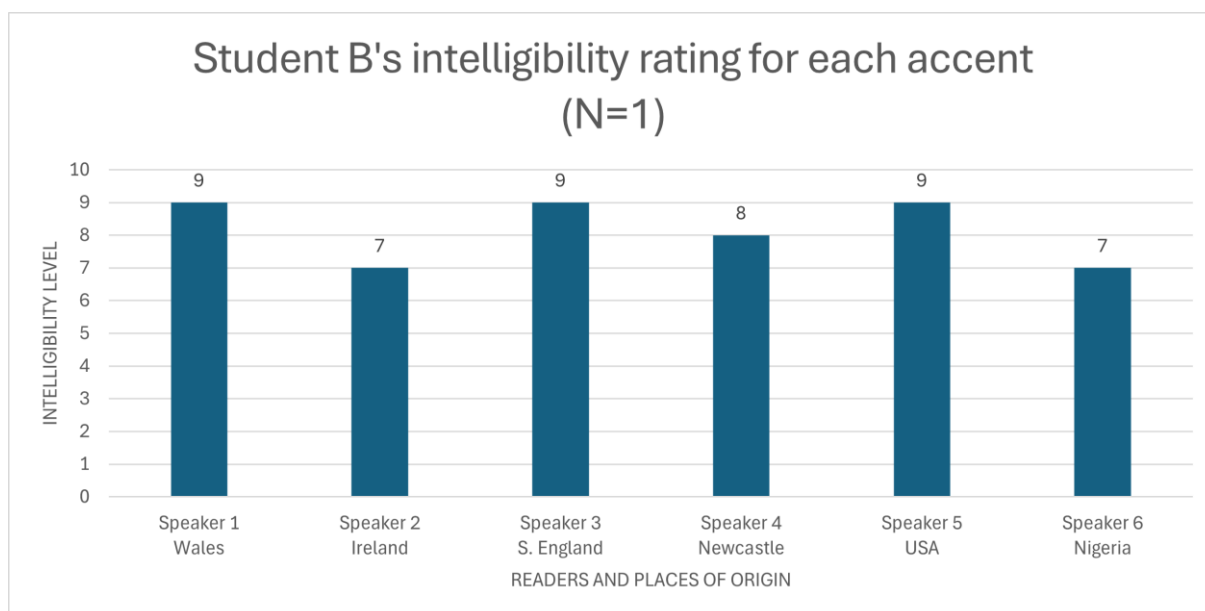
Figure	1	2	3	4
Statement	I disagree	I slightly disagree	I slightly agree	I agree

There is a lot more variation in this student’s perception of accents compared to the previous one. When it comes to his perception of the level of education for each reader, his opinion is quite in line with his accent preferences since he perceived both the Welsh and the Southern English accents as sounding educated, and he found that the Nigerian speaker sounded less educated in comparison. In fact, the Nigerian accent is the accent that have the lowest score in this statement, but also in the statement “is nice to listen to”. Here, the three British accents (Welsh, Southern English, and Tyneside accents) have a high rate of agreement on this statement, which is not the case for the Nigerian accent. The fact that this student agreed on the statement “has an annoying accent” for the Nigerian accent also reinforces the idea that his preferences influence the way he perceived the accents. Here, his accent preferences are clearly shown in the perception test and had an influence on the way he perceived these accents. Interestingly, the American accent is also perceived as educated and nice to listen to, sometimes with agreement scores that are above the Southern English accent.

The Irish accent is not perceived as nice to listen because the student has chosen to reply “I slightly disagree” with the statement. When comparing this result with the American and the British accents – the two other accents he declared to be very familiar with – it could be said that his familiarity with the accent had an influence on the way he perceived the Irish accent. Indeed, since he is very familiar with it, and he managed to recognise it, it probably means that he was able to recognise this accent because he knows that he does not like to listen to it as much as the American and the British accents.

Concerning his rating for the intelligibility of each reader, he found that the Southern English, the Tyneside and the American accents were the easiest to understand. There is not a major difference between these three accents and the rest of them when it comes to intelligibility: he seems to find them quite easy to understand. His perception of intelligibility changed a bit when he was able to listen to all readers without restriction. The graph below shows his intelligibility rating for each accent in the final question of the perception test.

**Figure 25. Student B's final intelligibility rating (N=1)**



It appears clearly that there are not major differences in intelligibility for any specific accent from this student's point of view, meaning that he was able to understand all accents quite easily. What is interesting is that the Nigerian and the Irish accents are considered as the least easy to understand, and the Tyneside accent is a little lower ranked than the American, the Welsh and the Southern English accents. This difference in ranking could be explained with the lack of familiarity he has with the Tyneside accent since he declared that he has never heard a person from Newcastle speak English.

### **III.2.3. Case study: student C**

Now that two case studies have been explored, this section will be used in order to analyse the answers given by a third master's student. The point will be to see if some of the tendencies found in the first two students' answers can be confirmed with this last one.

#### **III.2.3.1. Student C's linguistic profile**

For this last case study, the answers given by a female master's student will be analysed. She declared that French was her first language and that she grew up in a monolingual environment. She learned English and German in middle school and high school and she said

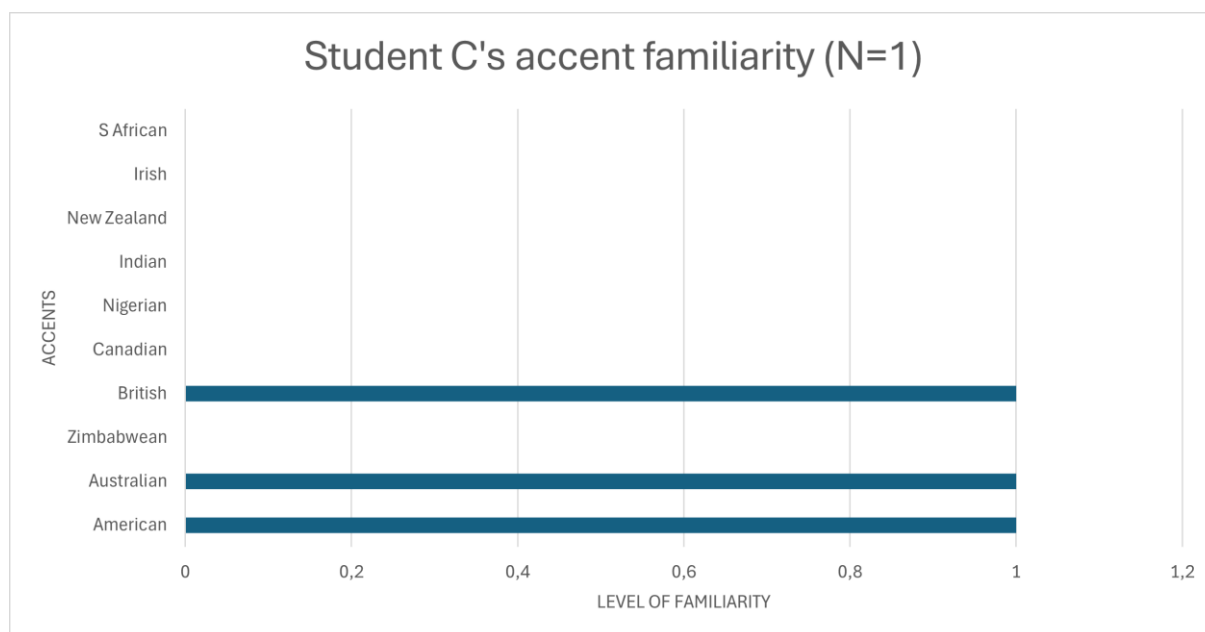


that she was learning Japanese, Korean, German and Spanish on her own, which shows that she has a deep interest in languages. Concerning her habits in English, she said that she read and wrote in English every day and that she spoke and listened to English more than twice a week. Interestingly, she focuses more on the written forms of English than oral one in her daily life, which was less the case for the past two master's students. She declared that she wanted to study English because "it is a universal language" (answer to the questionnaire, March 17, 2024). The idea of a globalised world where English is needed can be found in her answers, similarly to the previous student's motivation and answers. She also declared that she preferred to be understood clearly instead of having a native accent when speaking English. She declared that she has been to England for holidays and that she "went to Scotland (from September to December 2022)" with the Erasmus program (private communication, April 10, 2024).

### **III.2.3.2. Student C's accent familiarities and preferences**

When it comes to the type of content she watches in English, she said that "most of the content is from foreigners (France, China...) speaking in English" (private communication, April 10, 2024). It means that she tends to listen to non-native speaking English and that she is probably quite familiar with French and Chinese accents in English since she listened to them quite often. This tendency to rather listen to non-native is being reflected in her English accent familiarity level because she does not seem to be familiar with most of the accents present in the questionnaire. The graph below shows her answers.

**Figure 26. Student C's level of familiarity with different English accents (N=1)**



**Table 13. Equivalence between the figure on the graph and the answers student could choose from**

Figure	0	1	2	3
Statement	Never heard it	Unfamiliar	Familiar	Very familiar

Looking at this graph, it appears clearly that this student considers herself as very unfamiliar with most accents. Out of the ten accents, she stated that she has never heard seven of them, and that she was unfamiliar with the British, Australian, and American accents. These answers are very interesting since these three accents are usually the ones students are the most familiar with. Concerning the Tyneside accent, she does not seem familiar with this accent either because she has never been to Newcastle and she has never heard someone from Newcastle speaking English, but on the other hand, she knows where this city is located.

She declared that her favourite accent was the British accent because it is the accent she heard the most often and that she understands the best. Her answers indicate that intelligibility and familiarity appear to be important when it comes to her accent preferences. It is also the case for her least favourite accent since she declared that the Scottish accent was the one she liked the less. She replied that it was because it was difficult to understand; so overall, it can be said that intelligibility plays an important part in her accent preferences. After she has finished the questionnaire, she was asked about the reasons behind Scottish accent being her least

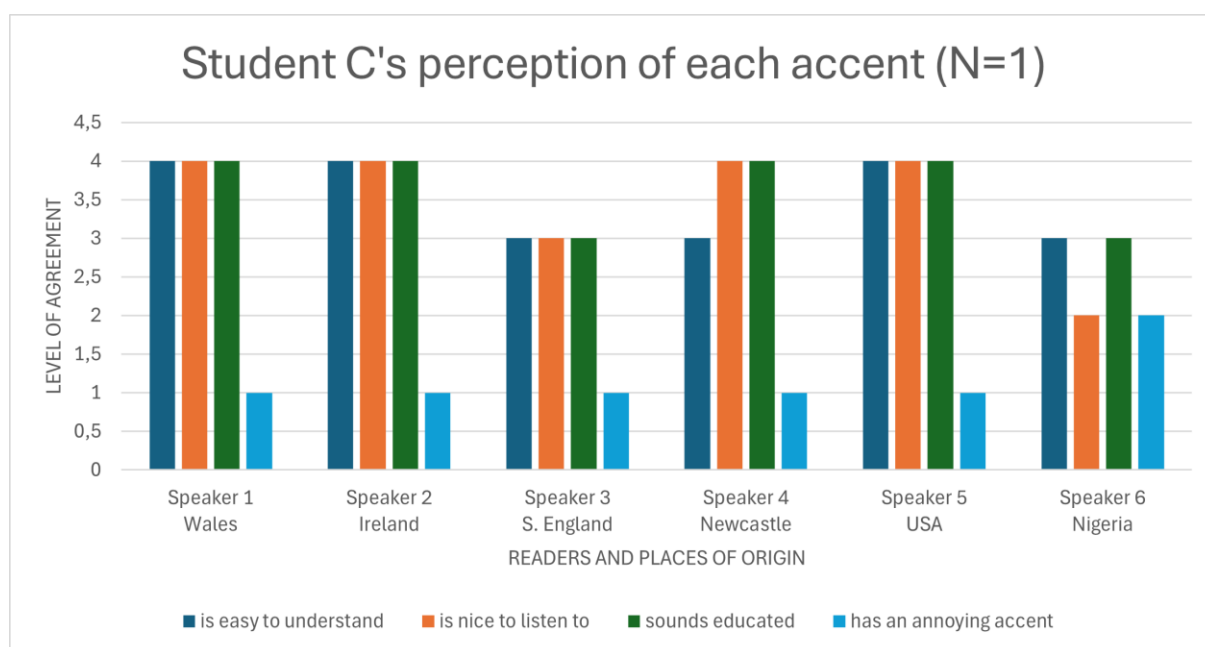
favourite accent, and if it was due to her Erasmus experience there. She replied that her “opinion about the Scottish accent is definitely linked to [her] experience abroad” (private communication, April 10, 2024). She then explained that it was hard for her to understand people who had “a strong Scottish accent” in her opinion even though she is “supposed to understand English” (private communication, April 10, 2024). When asked if living abroad in an English-speaking country helped her to improve her knowledge on accents, she said that she was not sure it helped and that she feels “that accents are sometimes hard to tell apart” (private communication, April 10, 2024). These answers are very striking because she implied that there were some expectations about her capacity to understand all varieties in English when she declared that she was “supposed to understand English”, and yet she felt quite frustrated when she was not able to do so.

### **III.2.3.3. Student C’s accent recognition and perception**

Overall, she did not manage to recognise the accents that were used in the perception test. Although she does not have accurate answers, she replied that the Welsh speaker was coming from England, which is a common answer that was given in the perception test. Concerning the other accents, her guesses were quite distant from the correct answers: she said that the American speaker came from England, and that the speaker with a Tyneside accent came from Australia. She declared that the Nigerian speaker was coming from South Africa, an answer that is rather similar to the first case study: the student guessed the correct continent but not the exact country. Interestingly, she said that British accent was her favourite because she listened to it the most often, and yet she said that the speaker with a Southern English accent was coming from South Africa. When comparing her answers to the origins of each speaker, it can be said that her rather low level of familiarity for each accent is reflected in her recognition level. Indeed, since she is unfamiliar with the two most common accents – British and American – and that she has not heard many other varieties, it can be an explanation to the fact that she did not manage to recognise the origins of the speakers. Her preference for the British accent does not seem to influence her answers either.

When it comes to her perception of the six different accents, it does not vary a lot as the following graph shows.

**Figure 27. Student C's opinion on four statements for each accent (N=1)**



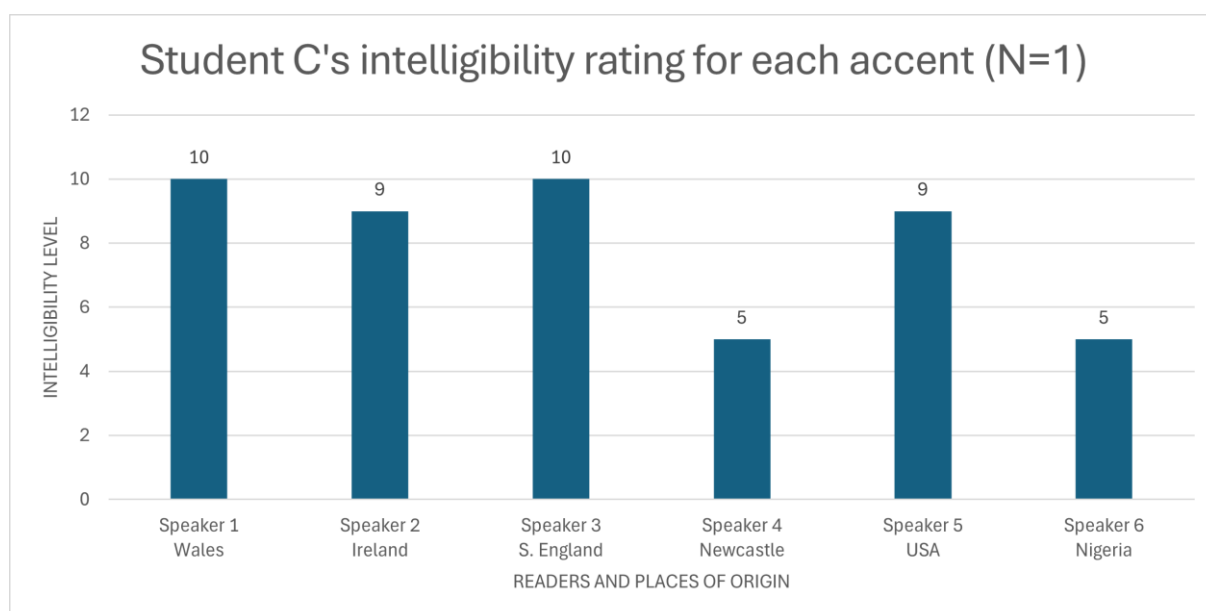
**Table 14. Equivalence between the figure on the graph and the answers student could choose from**

Figure	1	2	3	4
Statement	I disagree	I slightly disagree	I slightly agree	I agree

Overall, she considered all accents as sounding educated and she did not perceive any specific accent as being annoying. She also agreed on the statement “is nice to listen to” for most accents, except for the Nigerian accent, for which she picked “I slightly disagree”. Although she slightly disagreed on this statement for the Nigerian accent, there is not a clear distinction on the statement “has an annoying accent” between this accent and the other: she also chose “I slightly disagree” whereas she picked “I disagree” for all the other accents.

When it comes to intelligibility, she considered most accents as “easy to understand”, yet her answer changed during the final intelligibility rating, as the following graph exemplifies.

**Figure 28. Student C's final intelligibility rating (N=1)**



Indeed, her final rating clearly shows that she considered the Tyneside and the Nigerian accents as significantly less easy to understand since their intelligibility rating is 5 and that the intelligibility of all the other accents have been rated 9 or 10. These answers show that when this student was able to listen to each accent without restriction, she was able to understand the Southern English accent better than the first time since the intelligibility level rose. On the other hand, the two accents that she rated as being less easy to understand are also two accents that she has never heard before, meaning that familiarity might be a factor that can help to better understand accents. Also, her accent preferences can be seen more clearly in the perception test since she considered the Southern English and the Welsh accents as being very intelligible and nice to listen to.

### III.3. Discussion

Now that all the results have been described and analysed, the goal of this section will be to compare the results obtained by the two groups of students in order to see if they differ and if so in what way, by linking it with the theoretical framework that has been explained in the first part.

Overall, some differences can be found between the results obtained with the group of first-year students and the three Master's students, but none of these differences are major.

Indeed, when it comes to their habits in English or their motivations when studying English, a clear majority (80% of Y1 students and 100% of Master's students) preferred to be understood clearly rather than to have a native accent, which is very different from the results that were first obtained by Scales et al. (2006) with other groups of students. The familiarity rate of the two groups is globally similar, with a higher degree of familiarity with British and American accents and a lower degree with Tyneside and Nigerian accents. When it comes to preferences, the same thing can be said: the two groups are quite similar since half of the students declared to prefer the British accent.

Concerning the rate of correct recognition, the Y1 students correctly recognised 27,5% of the origins of the speakers (33 correct guesses out of the 120 guesses); and the Master's students globally guessed a third of the origins of the speakers. In the case of this group, the student A recognised one accent correctly, the student B recognised five of them and the student C recognised none of them. It makes sense that the Master's students have a higher rate since the student B has the best rate of recognition and that the size of the two groups is very different.

When it comes to the level of intelligibility for the six accents combined, the two groups are quite close since the average intelligibility given to each accent is 7,68/10 by Y1 students and 7,55/10 for Master's students, meaning that there was no major difficulty in understanding accents in general. Although, the Nigerian accent was always the one with the lowest score and the Tyneside accent also tends to have a lower score compared to the other four accents. The perception results for each group are quite similar too, both groups tend to find the Nigerian accent the least easy to understand and the most annoying to listen to compared to the other accents. And there are no striking results when it comes to the Tyneside accent.

Familiarity definitely plays a role in the perception and intelligibility ranking given by students. This factor was less visible with the group of Y1 students since it was a larger group, but when the results were explained individually with more background for Master's students, the influence of familiarity was much more noticeable. This result correlates with the statement given by Scales et al. (2006): "familiarity with an accent can affect one's opinions" (p. 718). This statement can even be validated with the case of the master's student B who showed a higher level of critical perception for the Irish accent compared to the rest of the students because he was very familiar with the Irish accent. The same way, student C declared to like the Scottish accent the least essentially because she was very used to it. The fact that these students were able to have a critical point of view on the accents they are very familiar with correlates with the idea described by Scales et al. (2006) concerning "association between familiarity with accents and the ability to make accurate judgements about them" (p. 719).

The different rates of familiarity also illustrate previous research that has been done such as Moriuchi (2021) saying that “unintelligibility of content is a major source of frustration” (p. 193) which can be used as an explanation to the fact that most answers given to justify the least favourite accents were intelligibility and difficulty in understanding said accent.

## Conclusion

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As a conclusion, and to answer the questions that were raised in the introduction, one could have expected the Tyneside accent to have lower levels of perception and intelligibility since this accent was the most local that was present in the perception test, and also the lesser known by the students. This hypothesis was reinforced by the fact that other accents that are more commonly known and more widespread such as Southern English accent and American accent were present in the perception test, as McArthur (1987) reminded us:

The roots of the language remain unaffected; they are in an island off the west of Europe.

But the centre of gravity of English, in terms of population and economics, is now North America, and the varieties of English around the world are legion. (p. 9)

The Irish accent was also present in the perception test, an accent that first-year students were very familiar with since their English tutor is Irish.

These popular accents were present in the test alongside other lesser-known accents like Welsh and Nigerian accents in order to see if familiarity was an important factor in the perception of accents. And yet, there were no striking differences between the perception of the Tyneside accent and the others. The answer to the first question is therefore quite simple, there is no major difference in perception when it comes to the Tyneside accent compared to the other accents that were used in the perception test. Although, it can be said that when students tend to be less familiar with English variations in general, they tend to find this accent less intelligible. This observation leads to the answers to the next questions that were: “Is accent perception influenced by factors such as accent preference and familiarity? To what extent do these factors play a role on perceived intelligibility of each accent?”.

According to the answers that were given to the questionnaire and the perception test, it can be said that familiarity has an influence on the rates of global recognition because the more students are familiar with various accents, the more they are able to recognise accents in general. Familiarity is also important when it comes to the perception because it can help to improve the intelligibility of an accent: the more students considered themselves familiar with an accent, the more they tended to understand it. This observation is correlated by the results obtained after the perception test of English accents done by Austrian students that was conducted by Dalton-Puffer et al. (1997): “Among the native accents, the respondents prefer the one with which they are most familiar” (p. 126).



Accent preferences on the other hand did not seem to be very influential in the perception of each accent and their final intelligibility ranking. In fact, preferences tended to be more polarised, with students liking certain accents and disliking other based on intelligibility for most of them. Although, some students have shown that their preferences were based more on the image they had of the accent – some accents sounding more prestigious than other for examples – and on stereotyped views of certain accents. This observation raises the question of the importance of awareness that can be brought to people learning languages in order to avoid any form of glottophobia to spread because it can be very harmful, as Blanchet-Lunati explained several times (2021; 2024).

To finish with, it could be interesting to do the same type of research but adding non-native accents in order to see if the students' perception and intelligibility ranking would show more variation. On the other hand, it would be enlightening to analyse if students who follow phonetic classes where accent variations are studied in depth might produce different results in such a perception test since they might have more familiarity and awareness.

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## **Appendix 1. Text read by the speakers while recording themselves**

### ***The Purple Bird Travels the World* story written by Maelle Amand.<sup>7</sup>**

Once upon a time, there was a purple bird ready to travel around the world to see a white tiger.

The purple bird had left its nest to meet an orange fox.

“Orange fox!” said Myrtle the purple bird, “bring me to the white tiger!”

“Hmpf! I don’t know where the tiger is, and I couldn’t care less!” replied Dolly the orange fox.

Dolly looked away and Myrtle flew away.

Upon its journey, the purple bird grew thirsty and met a hairy bear.

“Hi purple bird! I’m Claire the hairy bear, would you like a pear?”

The thirsty purple bird accepted the hairy bear’s pear and flew away.

It was almost dark and the purple bird had lost its way.

“Help, help, help! it’s getting dark! I need a place to sleep! I need a soup to sip!”

A funny duck heard Myrtle the purple bird grumble.

“Come with me to the farm!” the funny duck mumbled.

“You’ll have a place to sleeeeeeeep! You’ll have a souuuup to sip!”

The purple bird and Tucker the funny duck flew together to the farm.

In the farm, lived Brownie the crowned cow and Glenn the scarlet hen.

There was also Oz, their odd dog friend.

“Welcome purple bird!” Oz the odd dog said.

“Call me hhhhot dog, ‘cause I’m aaaalways hot, but don’t eat me

‘cause I’m a hot odd dog, not an odd hot dog!

The purple bird got a place to sleep, and a soup to sip.

But soon, it was time for the purple bird to go and find the white tiger.

Upon its journey, the purple bird grew hungry, and met a pink rabbit.

“Hi purple bird, I’m Willy the pink rabbit, would you like a bitter chili pepper?”

The hungry purple bird accepted the pink rabbit’s bitter chili pepper and flew away.

The purple bird ate the bitter chili pepper and became as hot as the hot odd dog

and as red as the scarlet hen.

“Chili chili, hot hot!” “chili chili, hot hot!” the purple bird chirped.

A bossy frog heard the purple bird chirp.

---

<sup>7</sup> The lines in bold correspond to the part that was used in the perception test.

“Ribit, ribit! quickly drink the water of my pond!”

“Ribit, ribit! quickly swim into my froggy pond!”

But it was time for Myrtle the purple bird to leave Olive the bossy frog and find Wiley the white tiger.

It was almost dark and the purple bird had lost its way.

“Help, help, help! it’s getting dark!

I need a place to sleep! I need a soup to sip!”

A glad bat heard the purple bird whimper.

“Let’sssssssssss go to the baobab!” whispered Maggie the glad bat.

You’ll have a place to sssssssssssssleeeeeeeep!

You’ll have a ssssssssouuup to sssssssssssssip!

Myrtle the purple bird and Maggie the glad bat flew to the baobab.

The baobab was warm and lit by the moon.

The purple bird got a place to sleep and a soup to sip.

The next morning, the purple bird thanked Maggie the glad bat,

as it was time for Myrtle to go and find Wiley the white tiger.

**The purple bird had flown and flown around the world.**

**Had met and met again Dolly the orange fox, Claire the hairy bear, Tucker the funny duck, Brownie the crowned cow, Glenn the scarlet hen and Oz the hot odd dog**

**... Willy the pink rabbit, Olive the bossy frog, Maggie the glad bat.**

**But Wiley the white tiger was NOWHERE to be found.**

**In despair, the purple bird decided to go home.**

**In despair, Myrtle circled one last time above its nest.**

**But below was the most noble white tiger it’d ever seen.**

**Wiley the white tiger was there!! Below its nest!**

**Wiley the white tiger climbed all the way up to the bird’s nest, licked its lips, and looked at Myrtle in the eyes and roared:**

**“I need a place to sleep!”**

**“I need a soup to sip!”**

**And Myrtle the purple bird said: “Me too!”**

**“Let’s make a soup to sip, and see where we can sleep”**

**If you travel around the world to look for something, you might find a pleasant surprise when you go home.**

## **Appendix 2. Email sent to the Language Centre of Newcastle University in order to ask for readers**

Dear Madam,

I am Léa Mandaliti, a student from the University of Limoges in France and I am working in the Language Centre of the University with [name].

I am currently doing a master's degree and I am writing a Master's thesis under the supervision of Maelle Amand, on the perception of the Tyneside accent by French students who are studying English. For that, I need recordings of students from Newcastle reading a text so that I can ask French students to listen to them and then answer a few questions on the way they perceive the accent.

I know that the Language Centre in Limoges proposes a virtual tandem with your University for English students learning French and French students learning English, this is why I am writing to you. Do you think that some of your students would agree on recording themselves reading a short text (no more than 5 minutes)? They would simply fill in a consent form and then record themselves reading a short text I would send to them. That would help me a lot to get authentic recording from people who grew up in the area around Newcastle.

Thank you very much,  
Kind regards,

Léa Mandaliti  
Postgraduate student in University of Limoges

### **Appendix 3. Email sent to people from the Tyneside region who agreed to record themselves**

Good morning [name],

Thank you very much for your email, I really appreciate it.

I hope you are well too. Yes, I am still looking for participants, I am trying to get as many recordings as possible so I would be able to pick and choose those that French students will be listening to after.

You will find attached a consent form that you will need to fill in so that I have the official permission to use your recording for my research. You have both the word and the pdf versions, hopefully it will be easy for you to fill it in.

Then, you will find the text called “Myrtle”. It is a short story for children that was written by my advisor. This is the text that you will have to read while recording yourself.

Once you have filled in the consent form and recorded yourself, could you please send both the consent form and the recording back to me?

Thank you very much for your help.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me.

Kind regards,

Léa Mandaliti

Postgraduate student in University of Limoges

#### **Appendix 4. Direct Messages send to friends in order to ask them to participate in the project**

Hi [name]!

I hope you're doing well,

I'm looking for native speakers to help me for my Master's thesis. Would you agree to do it please? Basically, I'm writing on the way French people perceive English accents, and so I need native speakers to record themselves reading a specific text. It would take you less than 10 minutes. If you agree, I'll send you a consent form and the text that you would have to read and then you would send me back your audio reading the text.

Of course, if you don't want to or you don't have time to do it, I fully understand.

Thank you so much in advance, take care!

**Appendix 5. Consent forms filled by the six readers who were selected to be in the questionnaire**

**Consent form**

First Name: [REDACTED] \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: [REDACTED] \_\_\_\_\_

Age: 19 \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: female \_\_\_\_\_

Country and region of origin: United States, Oklahoma \_\_\_\_\_

Contact email: [REDACTED] \_\_\_\_\_

I, Léa MANDALITI, am writing a master’s thesis on the perception of English accent by French learners of English using a story for children written by Maëlle AMAND, my master’s thesis supervisor.

I would like to study the perception of words and sounds in English and would like to raise awareness on some varieties available in the English-speaking world.

Your contributions involve the recording of the text as if you were reading this story to an audience composed of children.

By signing the consent form, you agree to a non-commercial use of your recording for research purposes (research presentations and or publications, audio material presented at teacher trainings).

By default, your contribution will be anonymised, but if you wish to be cited in the project: tick yes:  yes  no

For any further enquiries or to remove yourself from the project or get an update on the project, please write to Léa MANDALITI: lea.mandaliti@etu.unilim.fr

Filled in [REDACTED] I agree and I accept on the 25 /12/2023,

Signature (preceded by “I agree and I accept”)

## Consent form

FirstName: [REDACTED]

LastName: [REDACTED]

Age: 23

Gender: Female

Country and region of origin: County Kildare, Ireland (eastern province of Leinster)

Contact email: [REDACTED]

I, Léa MANDALITI, am writing a master's thesis on the perception of English accent by French learners of English using a story for children written by Maëlle AMAND, my master's thesis supervisor.

I would like to study the perception of words and sounds in English and would like to raise awareness on some varieties available in the English-speaking world.

Your contributions involve the recording of the text as if you were reading this story to an audience composed of children.

By signing the consent form, you agree to a non-commercial use of your recording for research purposes (research presentations and or publications, audio material presented at teacher trainings).

By default, your contribution will be anonymised, but if you wish to be cited in the project: tick yes:  yes  no

For any further enquiries or to remove yourself from the project or get an update on the project, please write to Léa MANDALITI: lea.mandaliti@etu.unilim.fr

Filled in by [REDACTED] on the 19 / December  
/ 2023,

Signature (preceded by "I agree and I accept")

I agree and I accept, [REDACTED]



## Consent form

First Name: [REDACTED]

Last Name: [REDACTED]

Age: 35

Gender: Female

Country and region of origin: South Tyneside, England

Contact email: [REDACTED]

I, Léa MANDALITI, am writing a master's thesis on the perception of English accent by French learners of English using a story for children written by Maëlle AMAND, my master's thesis supervisor.

I would like to study the perception of words and sounds in English and would like to raise awareness on some varieties available in the English-speaking world.

Your contributions involve the recording of the text as if you were reading this story to an audience composed of children.

By signing the consent form, you agree to a non-commercial use of your recording for research purposes (research presentations and or publications, audio material presented at teacher trainings).

By default, your contribution will be anonymised, but if you wish to be cited in the project: tick yes:

For any further enquiries or to remove yourself from the project or get an update on the project, please write to Léa MANDALITI: lea.mandaliti@etu.unilim.fr

I agree and I accept



\_\_\_\_\_ on the 05/01/2024

Signature (preceded by "I agree and I accept")

## Consent form

First Name: [REDACTED]

Last Name: [REDACTED]

Age: 21

Gender: FEMALE

Country and region of origin: FR - HAUTE-VIENNE

Contact email: [REDACTED]

I, Léa MANDALITI, am writing a master's thesis on the perception of English accent by French learners of English using a story for children written by Maëlle AMAND, my master's thesis supervisor.

I would like to study the perception of words and sounds in English and would like to raise awareness on some varieties available in the English-speaking world.

Your contributions involve the recording of the text as if you were reading this story to an audience composed of children.

By signing the consent form, you agree to a non-commercial use of your recording for research purposes (research presentations and or publications, audio material presented at teacher trainings).

By default, your contribution will be anonymised, but if you wish to be cited in the project: tick yes:  yes  no

For any further enquiries or to remove yourself from the project or get an update on the project, please write to Léa MANDALITI: lea.mandaliti@etu.unilim.fr

Filled in CONFOLENS on the 07 / 01 / 2024 ,

Signature (preceded by "I agree and I accept")

I agree and I accept



## Consent form

First Name: [REDACTED]

Last Name: [REDACTED]

Age: 44

Gender: Female

Country and region of origin: Nigeria, Western part of Nigeria

Contact email: [REDACTED]

I, Léa MANDALITI, am writing a master's thesis on the perception of English accent by French learners of English using a story for children written by Maëlle AMAND, my master's thesis supervisor.

I would like to study the perception of words and sounds in English and would like to raise awareness on some varieties available in the English-speaking world.

Your contributions involve the recording of the text as if you were reading this story to an audience composed of children.

By signing the consent form, you agree to a non-commercial use of your recording for research purposes (research presentations and or publications, audio material presented at teacher trainings).

By default, your contribution will be anonymised, but if you wish to be cited in the project: tick yes:  yes  **NO X**

For any further enquiries or to remove yourself from the project or get an update on the project, please write to Léa MANDALITI: lea.mandaliti@etu.unilim.fr

Filled in \_\_\_\_\_ on the 10 / February / 2024,

Signature [REDACTED] (preceded by "I agree and I accept")

## Consent form

First Name: [REDACTED] \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: [REDACTED] \_\_\_\_\_

Age: 19

Gender: \_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_

Country and region of origin: \_\_\_\_ Cardiff, Wales \_\_\_\_\_

Contact email: [REDACTED] \_\_\_\_\_

I, Léa MANDALITI, am writing a master's thesis on the perception of English accent by French learners of English using a story for children written by Maëlle AMAND, my master's thesis supervisor.

I would like to study the perception of words and sounds in English and would like to raise awareness on some varieties available in the English-speaking world.

Your contributions involve the recording of the text as if you were reading this story to an audience composed of children.

By signing the consent form, you agree to a non-commercial use of your recording for research purposes (research presentations and or publications, audio material presented at teacher trainings).

By default, your contribution will be anonymised, but if you wish to be cited in the project: tick yes: yes no

For any further enquiries or to remove yourself from the project or get an update on the project, please write to Léa MANDALITI: lea.mandaliti@etu.unilim.fr

Filled in Crawley, UK \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_27\_\_ / \_\_12\_\_ / \_\_2023\_\_,

Signature (preceded by "I agree and I accept")



**I agree and accept**

## Appendix 6. Entire code used in PsyToolKit to create the questionnaire

#Personal information

page: begin

l: name

t: textline

q: Please answer with your information: (Reminder: the data will be anonymised)

- {require} full name (example: Léa MANDALITI)

- {require} student number

l: age

t: range

q: What is your age?

- {require}

l: gender

t: radio

q: please select your gender

- Female

- Male

- Non-binary

- {other} Other (fill in)

page: end

#study\_information

page: begin

l: during\_TD

t: radio

q: When are you doing this questionnaire?

- In class (During "TD Phonétique anglaise et communication")
- At home

l: study

t: radio

q: What are you studying?

- Linguistics
- Modern language
- Social sciences
- Geography
- History
- Cultural studies
- {other} Another field (fill in)

l: study\_year

t: radio

q: What is your level of education?

- L1
- L2
- L3
- M1
- M2
- PhD

page: end

#Language background

page: begin

l: first\_language

t: textline

q: What is (are) your first language(s)?

- {require}

l: En\_first\_language

t: radio

q: Is English (one of) your first language(s)?

- Yes

- No

l: Surrounding

t: radio

q: Did you grow up surrounded by another language than French?

- Yes

- No

page: end

l: jump1

t: jump

- if \$Surrounding == 2 then goto middle\_high\_schools

l: Surrounding\_language

t: textline

q: What was the other language you were surrounded by growing up?

- {require}

l: Surrounding\_skills

t: check

q: What are your skills with that language?

- I can speak it

- I can understand it

- I can read it

- I can write it

l: middle\_high\_schools

t: check

q: What languages did you learn in middle and high school?

- English
- German
- Arabic
- Spanish
- Italian
- Chinese
- Portuguese
- Russian
- {other} Another language (fill in)

l: learning\_atm

t: radio

q: Are you learning a language at the moment?

- Yes
- No

l: jump2

t: jump

- if \$learning\_atm == 2 then goto other\_info

l: learning\_atm\_language

t: textline

q: What language are you learning?

- {require}

l: other\_info

t: textbox

q: Is there any more information about your language background that you would like to add?

-

#English background



page: begin

l: often\_speak\_English

t: radio

q: What best reflects your habits of <b>speaking</b> English? "I speak English..."

- Everyday
- More than twice a week
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Twice a month
- At least once a month
- Less

l: often\_listen\_English

t: radio

q: What best reflects your habits of <b>listening</b> to English? "I listen to English..."

- Everyday
- More than twice a week
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Twice a month
- At least once a month
- Less

l: often\_read\_English

t: radio

q: What best reflects your habits of <b>reading</b> English? "I read in English..."

- Everyday
- More than twice a week
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Twice a month
- At least once a month

- Less

l: often\_write\_English

t: radio

q: What best reflects your habits of <b>writing</b> in English? "I write in English..."

- Everyday
- More than twice a week
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Twice a month
- At least once a month
- Less

page: end

l: why\_study

t: check

q: Why did you decide to study English?

- Because I have an emotional bond or attachment with the language
- Because I like this language
- Because it fits with my professional projects
- {other} Another reason (fill in)

l: goal\_English

t: radio

q: What is your main goal when learning English?

- To be understood clearly
- To have a native accent

scale: familiarity

- Never heard it
- Unfamiliar
- Familiar
- Very familiar

l: familiar\_accents

q: How would you rate your familiarity with each accent?

t: scale familiarity

- American accent
- Australian accent
- Zimbabwean accent
- British accent
- Canadian accent
- Nigerian accent
- Indian accent
- New Zealand accent
- Irish accent
- South African accent

page: begin

l: fav\_accent

t: radio

q: Which accent is your **favourite** English accent?

- American accent
- Australian accent
- Zimbabwean accent
- British accent
- Canadian accent
- Nigerian accent
- Indian accent
- New Zealand accent
- Irish accent
- South African accent
- {other} Another accent (fill in)

l: why\_fav

t: check

q: Why is it your <b>favourite</b> accent?

- I have an emotional link with it
- I understand it more easily
- I hear it most often
- It sounds prestigious
- It sounds friendly
- {other} Another reason (fill in)

page: end

page: begin

l: least\_fav\_accent

t: radio

q: Which English accent is the one you <b>like the less</b>?

- American accent
- Australian accent
- Zimbabwean accent
- British accent
- Canadian accent
- Nigerian accent
- Indian accent
- New Zealand accent
- Irish accent
- South African accent
- {other} Another accent (fill in)

l: why\_least\_fav

t: check

q: Why do you <b>like it the less</b>?

- It is difficult to understand
- I do not hear it often
- It does not sound prestigious
- It sounds annoying

- {other} Another reason (fill in)

page: end

#Knowledge on Geordie accent

page: begin

l: Geordie\_accent

t: radio

q: Have you heard about the Geordie accent before ?

- Yes

- No

l: location\_Newcastle

t: radio

q: Do you know where Newcastle is located in the United Kingdom?

- Yes

- No

l: been\_Newcastle

t: radio

q: Have you been to Newcastle before?

- Yes

- No

l: talk\_Newcastle

t: radio

q: Have you ever heard someone from Newcastle speak English?

- Yes

- No

page: end

l: jump3

t: jump

- if \$stalk\_Newcastle == 2 then goto info

l: easy\_Newcastle

t: radio

q: Were they easy to understand in your opinion?

- Yes

- No

l: Why\_easy\_Newcastle

t: textline

q: Can you explain why they were (not) easy to understand?

- {require}

#Listening

l: info

t: info

q: You are about to start the listening comprehension. Please put your headphones on and check that the volume is on.

l: headphones\_on

t: radio

q: Do you have headphones on? (So I can know the conditions in which you are listening to the recordings)

- Yes

- No

page: begin

scale: agree

- I disagree

- I slightly disagree

- I slightly agree

- I agree

l: GuessAE

a: AE.mp3

o: no\_sound\_replay

t: radio

q: Where do you think this speaker comes from?

- Newcastle (North of England)

- The USA

- Australia

- Zimbabwe

- England

- Wales

- Scotland

- Canada

- Nigeria

- India

- New Zealand

- Ireland

- Northern Ireland

- South Africa

- {other} Another accent (fill in)

l: PerceptionAE

q: Please select what best suits your impression concerning the speaker

t: scale agree

- This speaker is easy to understand.

- This speaker is nice to listen to.

- This speaker sounds educated.

- This speaker has an annoying or irritating accent.

page: end

page: begin

l: GuessMM

a: MM.mp3

o: no\_sound\_replay

t: radio

q: Where do you think this speaker comes from?

- Newcastle (North of England)

- The USA

- Australia

- Zimbabwe

- England

- Wales

- Scotland

- Canada

- Nigeria

- India

- New Zealand

- Ireland

- Northern Ireland

- South Africa

- {other} Another accent (fill in)

l: PerceptionMM

q: Please select what best suits your impression concerning the speaker

t: scale agree

- This speaker is easy to understand.

- This speaker is nice to listen to.

- This speaker sounds educated.

- This speaker has an annoying or irritating accent.

page: end

page: begin



l: GuessEQ

a: EQ.mp3

o: no\_sound\_replay

t: radio

q: Where do you think this speaker comes from?

- Newcastle (North of England)

- The USA

- Australia

- Zimbabwe

- England

- Wales

- Scotland

- Canada

- Nigeria

- India

- New Zealand

- Ireland

- Northern Ireland

- South Africa

- {other} Another accent (fill in)

l: PerceptionEQ

q: Please select what best suits your impression concerning the speaker

t: scale agree

- This speaker is easy to understand.

- This speaker is nice to listen to.

- This speaker sounds educated.

- This speaker has an annoying or irritating accent.

page: end

page: begin

l: GuessSD

a: SD.mp3

o: no\_sound\_replay

t: radio

q: Where do you think this speaker comes from?

- Newcastle (North of England)

- The USA

- Australia

- Zimbabwe

- England

- Wales

- Scotland

- Canada

- Nigeria

- India

- New Zealand

- Ireland

- Northern Ireland

- South Africa

- {other} Another accent (fill in)

l: PerceptionSD

q: Please select what best suits your impression concerning the speaker

t: scale agree

- This speaker is easy to understand.

- This speaker is nice to listen to.

- This speaker sounds educated.

- This speaker has an annoying or irritating accent.

page: end

page: begin

l: GuessMC

a: MC.mp3

o: no\_sound\_replay

t: radio

q: Where do you think this speaker comes from?

- Newcastle (North of England)

- The USA

- Australia

- Zimbabwe

- England

- Wales

- Scotland

- Canada

- Nigeria

- India

- New Zealand

- Ireland

- Northern Ireland

- South Africa

- {other} Another accent (fill in)

l: PerceptionMC

q: Please select what best suits your impression concerning the speaker

t: scale agree

- This speaker is easy to understand.

- This speaker is nice to listen to.

- This speaker sounds educated.

- This speaker has an annoying or irritating accent.

page: end

page: begin

l: GuessGA

a: GA.mp3

o: no\_sound\_replay

t: radio

q: Where do you think this speaker comes from?

- Newcastle (North of England)

- The USA

- Australia

- Zimbabwe

- England

- Wales

- Scotland

- Canada

- Nigeria

- India

- New Zealand

- Ireland

- Northern Ireland

- South Africa

- {other} Another accent (fill in)

l: PerceptionGA

q: Please select what best suits your impression concerning the speaker

t: scale agree

- This speaker is easy to understand.

- This speaker is nice to listen to.

- This speaker sounds educated.

- This speaker has an annoying or irritating accent.

page: end

l: Speech\_perception\_final

a: AE.mp3 MM.mp3 EQ.mp3 SD.mp3 MC.mp3 GA.mp3

t: range

q: **This is the last question.** Please listen to all the speakers again and use the slider to indicate how easy to understand the speakers are.

- {min=0,max=10,start=0,left=Not easy at all to understand,right=Very easy to understand}

Speaker 1

- {min=0,max=10,start=0,left=Not easy at all to understand,right=Very easy to understand}

Speaker 2

- {min=0,max=10,start=0,left=Not easy at all to understand,right=Very easy to understand}

Speaker 3

- {min=0,max=10,start=0,left=Not easy at all to understand,right=Very easy to understand}

Speaker 4

- {min=0,max=10,start=0,left=Not easy at all to understand,right=Very easy to understand}

Speaker 5

- {min=0,max=10,start=0,left=Not easy at all to understand,right=Very easy to understand}

Speaker 6

l: Final\_comment

t: textbox

q: Would you like to add any comment? (More information about yourself, a feedback on the questionnaire...)

-

## **Tyneside accent perceived by French L2 learners of English: a comparison with perception of American, Irish, Nigerian, Southern English and Welsh accents.**

---

La façon dont un accent est perçu peut influencer la manière de communiquer, il est donc très important de l'analyser pour mieux comprendre ce phénomène de perception et savoir ce qui l'affecte. Ce mémoire se concentre sur la perception de l'accent présent dans la région Tyneside en Angleterre et offre une comparaison avec cinq autres accents (Sud de l'Angleterre, Pays de Galles, Irlande, Etats-Unis, Nigéria) afin d'analyser quels paramètres agissent sur la perception qu'ont les étudiants francophones des accents natifs anglophones. Des variables telles que le profil linguistique, les préférences d'accents ou encore la familiarité sont examinés et comparés pour comprendre les rôles qu'elles peuvent avoir sur l'intelligibilité et la perception des accents.

---

Mots-clés : perception, Newcastle, étudiants francophones, intelligibilité

## **Tyneside accent perceived by French L2 learners of English: a comparison with perception of American, Irish, Nigerian, Southern English and Welsh accents.**

---

The way an accent is perceived can influence how one communicates, and it is therefore important to analyse the phenomenon of accent perception in order to understand it and know what can affect it. This Master's thesis focuses on the perception of Tyneside English and compared it with five other English native accents (Southeast English, Welsh English, Irish English, American English, Nigerian English) in order to analyse what elements can influence the way French students perceived different variations of English. Data such as linguistic profile, accent preferences and familiarity are analysed and compared in order to better understand the role they can have on intelligibility and perception of accents.

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Keywords: perception, Tyneside English, French L2 learners of English, intelligibility

