

‘A NATIVE ACCENT IS ALWAYS ATTRACTIVE’: PERCEPTION OF BRITISH ENGLISH VARIETIES BY EFL SPANISH STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT: Within the field of sociolinguistics, dialect variation and speech perception of English varieties have been largely studied (Giles and Powesland 1975; Labov 1972; Preston 1996), and the expected results have been empirically proved. Nevertheless, the perceptions that Spanish students of English might have concerning English variation, has received less attention. The present paper uses a series of recordings belonging to different accents of British English; a group of Spanish students are exposed to these recordings and required to fill in a questionnaire which will reflect their impressions about the varieties. The results from this study will show that students of English as a Foreign Language have been traditionally exposed almost exclusively to Standard varieties only, and that their perception of other varieties may not coincide with that of the native speakers of English; in fact, it can be very different. Moreover, the findings to be obtained in this work could have implications on the teaching of EFL.

KEY WORDS: speech perception, linguistic prejudice, language awareness, sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics.

*“UN ACENTO NATIVO ES SIEMPRE ATRACTIVO”: PRECEPCIÓN DE VARIEDADES DE INGLÉS
BRITÁNICO POR PARTE DE ESTUDIANTES DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA*

RESUMEN: En el área de la sociolingüística, la variación dialectal y la percepción del habla de variedades del inglés han sido ampliamente estudiadas (Giles and Powesland 1975; Labov 1972; Preston 1996), a la vez que los resultados han sido probados empíricamente. Sin embargo, las percepciones que los estudiantes de inglés de nacionalidad española pudieran tener con respecto a las variaciones en inglés han recibido menor atención. El presente trabajo utiliza una serie de grabaciones de diferentes acentos de inglés británico con el propósito de recoger en un cuestionario las impresiones que un grupo de estudiantes españoles tiene acerca de dichas variedades. Los resultados de este estudio demuestran que los estudiantes de inglés

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como lengua extranjera se han visto tradicional y casi exclusivamente expuestos a variedades estándar y su percepción de otras variedades puede no coincidir con aquella de los hablantes nativos, de hecho, puede ser muy diferente. Aún más, los hallazgos del presente estudio podrían tener implicancias en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera.

PALABRAS CLAVE: percepción del habla, prejuicio lingüístico, conciencia lingüística, sociolingüística, lingüística cognitiva.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Within the field of sociolinguistics, perception of dialect variation by everyday people, or “Folk linguistics” (Preston 1996), has been an important issue throughout the last years. It has brought together the disciplines of dialect variation description, and speech perception (Clopper and Pisoni, in press). So, the study of distinctive features which belong to different dialects, and how people perceive speech are no longer isolated from each other. *How* users of a language perceive salient features is a new challenge to be investigated in this field.

The fact that we have mental images and social stereotypes attached to different accents –within our mother tongue– is out of question. When a conversation through the telephone takes place, for instance, and we do not know the person at the other side of the line, we create a mental image of him/her on the basis of his/her speech (accent, voice quality, lexis, etc.). “Accent variation is very important to sociolinguistics because of the significance people attach to different accents” (Stockwell 2002: 27).

A considerable number of studies have been carried out, in which the aim was to obtain the mental stereotypes, possible prejudice, awareness, and social attitudes towards the different varieties of the English language that its native speakers have.

The salient linguistic features of a given variety, in their grammatical, lexical and phonological dimension are perceivable by speakers. Kristiansen (2008), focusing on the phonological variants, asserts that speakers of a language do possess a receptive competence which enables them to successfully identify linguistic stereotypes and then link them to social stereotypes. This receptive competence Gitte Kristiansen speaks about, is oral, and conceived within the context of native speakers of the given language.

Previous studies concerning linguistic prejudice towards English varieties have been carried out mainly amongst English native users of the language. The prejudice that Spanish speakers of English as a Foreign Language may have, is something that has received less attention. The present study, instead of focusing on the perception of native speakers, aims to find out the perception of accent variation, by Spanish advanced students of EFL, concerning British English varieties.

2. PREVIOUS STUDIES ON PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS LANGUAGE VARIETIES

The origins of the study of language attitude are not in dialect diversity, but in bilingual settings. It was Wallace Lambert and his colleagues in the 1960's who carried out the first experiments (Lambert 1967), in order to find out the degree of acceptance and inner feelings towards French and English in Francophone and Anglophone Canada. They used indirect methods to find it out, such as *semantic differential rating* or the *matched guised technique*, which is explained below. They believed that direct questioning was inappropriate since respondents might not want to openly reveal their prejudices (Preston 1989: 50).

In the early 70's, Labov (1972), in New York, using as well a subjective reaction technique, wanted to find out the very particular and specific features which gave rise to stigmatization in the mind of New Yorkers. He used recordings in which those precise characteristics were produced, and New Yorkers exposed to them were asked to situate the speakers on a scale of jobs from television personality to factory worker. Only one specific linguistic variable was changed (postvocalic /r/). He discovered that the pronunciation of postvocalic /r/ is an important sociolinguistic factor in that city.

Not long after those first experiments, one of the most important groups of pioneering authors were Giles and Powesland (1975). They used the *matched guised technique* in order to elicit language attitude judgments from non-linguist respondents. It consisted of a series of tape recordings read by one speaker, which represented distinct varieties of British English. The speaker who performed the different accent varieties was the same one all the time; a virtuoso spokesman able to imitate a multiplicity of dialects. This way, Giles and Powesland believed they would avoid judgments to be influenced by extra-accent factors: such as voice quality, tone, or any other speaker-intrinsic characteristics. Then, respondents were exposed to these recordings and asked to fill up a questionnaire containing multiple choice questions. These questions were designed to extract opinions and thoughts regarding the pleasantness, prestige, social status, or success that respondents could have about the given accents. Their studies revealed that RP English was considered to be used by wealthy and successful speakers. RP also obtained the highest rankings in prestige, intelligence, and intelligibility. Giles and Powesland also proved that 'broadest' and urban accents were considered unattractive, and also spoken by low status people. Rural accents, according to their findings were, in turn, regarded as aesthetically pleasing but subordinate to RP in terms of social status and intelligibility.

Giles and Coupland (1991) revisited Giles and Powesland's work, with a similar method, and also discovered the same stereotyped reactions amongst British People: RP received high and positive judgments from respondents in dimensions such as social status, quality of language, education, intelligence, and prestige; whereas Cockney English received low and negative evaluations from respondents in dimensions such as social status and quality of language.

Preston (1996, 1999) has also contributed to the branch of language attitude. He published a series of works in the 1990's. He used in most of the cases a direct

approach. He put into practice what is known as “Folk linguistics” that is, getting everyday people’s perceptions and non-linguistic, but social beliefs. He used a dialect categorization method, or map-drawing direct method, in which respondents were asked to categorize/select the main dialect regions, and to characterize them in their own words. His method is known as the *map-drawing technique*, and his research took place in the U.S.A.

Preston used a variety of talkers and discovered that, although listeners were not accurate they did make broader distinctions (Preston 1996; 1999). As a result he proved that there is indeed a perception and awareness of variation, since geographic labels from respondents, though less accurate, were considerably close to the actual isoglosses. Preston highlighted the importance of the differences between actual dialectological boundaries, and perceptual dialectological boundaries. These differences, as he claimed, can help us understand the cognitive processes that people use to classify language.

More recently, Peter Stockwell (2002) and one of his students (Sarah Wood)² have revisited Giles and Powesland’s British experiments (1975), and have carried out a similar study in order to find out to what extent language variation attitudes remain the same after decades. They again used a series of recordings representing various accents, and a multiple choice questionnaire to elicit respondents’ attitudes (Stockwell 2002: 28).

Nonetheless, they slightly and sensibly changed the methodology of the study. They reduced the number of recordings used down to 8 (RP, West London, Norwich, North-east England, Nottingham, Cheshire, Burnley, and Sheffield). They also used genuine native speakers in order to represent the various accents. Both respondents and speaker participants were all homogeneous: female students in their early 20’s. These participants, by being similar in terms of age, status, and gender ensured that there was a control of variation, in order to impede answers of respondents to be based on other judgment than accent. There was also, a remarkable consensus across informants, since they were very uniform in their impressions from the various accents evaluated.

Peter Stockwell and Sarah Wood (Stockwell 2002) found out that RP and other Southern accents obtained the highest and most prestigious overall ratings in most categories, throughout all interviewees. RP was still ranked as the highest variety in terms of intelligence ratings, but it was considered equal concerning social status, and judged as less pleasing than the rest of the accents. They concluded that Received Pronunciation was becoming to be seen as “too posh” by Britons and therefore untrustworthy (Stockwell 2002: 29). Hence, according to them, it can be said that RP is diminishing in Great Britain at the present time, both in terms of use and prestige.

Nowadays, the vast majority of Britons do not use RP in their everyday speech, as a matter of fact it is considered as “too posh” especially by younger people who not only do not use it, but even mock it. It is Estuary English the model which is

² It has a Sara Wood’s research supervised by his professor Peter Stockwell and published by him in his book *Sociolinguistics* (Stockwell 2002: 27).

spreading amongst younger population and may become the future standard, as the present author believes. This claim is also supported by authors such as Paul Coggle (1993). According to Coggle (1993) the social factors of Estuary development are of vital importance: young people cultivate it, it seems that using this variety brings an urban image rather than a rural one, which is something appealing to teenagers and young adults; A number of Cockney English speakers feel the need to modify their speech in order to fit better into society and not to be regarded as uneducated and common because of their accent, a social factor which makes them modify their speech towards Estuary; finally there are RP speakers who do not wish to be regarded as Posh and to be associated with the establishment due to the negative connotations that it evokes to a large part of British population. Thus many RP speakers may also change their accent towards Estuary English.

After referring to this social factors, one can mentally situate Estuary English somewhere in between Cockney and RP; in fact, Paul Coggle (1993) asserts that Estuary English is situated in a continuum with RP and Cockney at either end (see table 1). So Estuary speakers can be closer to one end of the spectrum or the other depending on the number of salient features they use in their speech. In the same way, one individual speaker of Estuary may be close to the Cockney End of the spectrum in his teen years, and then in his adulthood change towards the RP end, by dropping stigmatised features –such as the continuous use of the word ‘mate’ as ‘friend’– in order to go up in the social scale and be accepted in a working place, for instance.

Hence, speaking about social accents within England, and specially Southern England and London, there is a scale of stratified prototypes ranking from Cockney at one end to RP at the other. From working “tough” class, to educated high class. Estuary would be in the middle and it is gaining more and more importance and usage amongst British English native speakers.

Table 1. According to Paul Coggle (1993) Estuary English is situated in a continuum with RP and Cockney at either end



The present study will follow the methods and investigation techniques of the authors cited above, in order to explore perception of accent variation. Nonetheless the language attitudes to be explored and investigated here do not belong to those from native speakers’, but from Spanish advanced students’ of EFL attitudes regarding British English varieties. The British varieties to be used in the experiment will be

the social ones situated in the continuum cited above (Cockney, Estuary, and RP); and also a geographically distinct one: Scottish English.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

3.1. Respondents

The respondents are Spanish students of English as a foreign language at an advanced level (around a B2-C1 level according to the Common European Framework (CEF)). The experiment has been carried out on two separate groups of Spanish students, a first pilot experiment on a small group, and the definitive study carried out at a higher scale, on a bigger group.

The first group, where the pilot study took place, is a class composed of 12 students from the *Escuela Oficial de Idiomas de Alcorcón* (EOI). They are in the 6th and last year, and about to get their Certificate on Aptitude in the English Language (CEF: B2-C1). It is a heterogeneous group formed by male and female learners aged from 20 to 55 years old. They have studied English language for years and have generally been in contact with Anglo-Saxon culture.

The second group, where the final experiment took place, consists of 60 undergraduate students of English Philology. They are in their 2nd university year at *Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM)*, faculty of Philology. Their command of the English language is also around a B2-C1 level. They are all studying English language, linguistics and literature.

3.2. Procedure

The study was carried out within the context of an EFL class and an English linguistics class. Participants were informed that the study was about getting information about perception of English varieties from Spanish EFL students. For this purpose, students listened to 4 recordings representing 4 different English accents.

In the case of the smaller group *Escuela Oficial de Idiomas* EFL class, the pilot experiment was conducted within the real classroom, where I carried it out in person. The order in which the accents were presented to students was random, being Accent 1 London Estuary English, Accent 2 Scottish English, Accent 3 Cockney English, and Accent 4 Received Pronunciation English. After each sample, we facilitated a pause of approximately 3 minutes so that students could fill the questionnaire.

As for the second bigger group (from *Facultad de Filología, UCM*), the final experiment has been individually realized by each student at home, as a compulsory activity which belongs to their subject "English varieties". They were provided with the audio files containing the 4 accents, as well as the questionnaire. They both did it and sent it back via the virtual platform of the subject.

3.3. *The questionnaire*

The questionnaire consists of 4 quantitative indirect questions and 1 qualitative direct question (see appendix). It has been based, in part, on Sarah Wood's questionnaire (from Stockwell 2002: 28-29).

The 4 quantitative questions deal with attitudes to the different accents by asking about the following issues:

- **Speaker's Level of studies.** From answers to this question we will infer attitudes to the accent concerning, mostly, intelligence and education.
- **Speaker's type of house.** By looking at the responses to this question, it will be possible to deduce respondents' attitudes to the 4 varieties regarding, mainly, success and social status.
- **Speaker's type of job.** Answers here will reveal a broad view of hearers' perception of success, intelligence, correctness and social status attached to each accent.
- **Suitability of the speaker as an EFL teacher.** Respondents' feedback to this query will let us know their impressions about the given accent concerning quality of language, correctness, intelligibility, and prestige.

These multiple choice questions take the shape of a range of possible answers; so that respondents will rate the speaker on a scale from a lower to a higher value (see Appendix 1).

Question 5 is qualitative and direct; in which students state their subjective impressions and reactions in a few words. This will help us shape up the results with more data, apart from the percentages obtained from the fixed multiple choice questions. Ideas and comments written in this last query will shed light on the thoughts and reactions from respondents and the reasons for their answers.

Hudson (1980) highlighted the use of indirect questions as a way to elicit the unconscious variables from the interviewees. However, later, Garret (2007) stated that either direct or indirect approaches provide very equal results, with nearly no differences (Garret 2007:119).

Garret concluded by saying that the best way to carry out this kind of studies is by combining quantitative (using either direct or indirect questions) and qualitative methods. It is due to these reasons, that it has been decided to design a questionnaire which takes these two types of questions.

3.4. *Accent samples: Speaker participants*

Each of the accent samples is represented by a different, genuine native speaker. All of the speakers are comparable, since they are white young male adults from a middle/middle-high social class. By using speakers with similar characteristics, we make sure that respondents will base their judgements on accent rather than other features related to voice qualities related to gender or age.

The content of their speeches is neutral and homogeneous. It does not contain any personal reference of the speaker uttering it: they do not talk about their background, origins, occupation or social position. All of them talk about the same topic: a film that they have recently seen or they specially like. Thus, all of them narrate similar issues concerning a given film: story, plot, characters, and so on, for the duration of one or two minutes approximately.

Two of the recordings are in the form of a monologue, whereas the other 2 contain a dialogue. Estuary and RP speaker samples consist of a monologue in which the speakers were told *“to speak about a film in a casual and natural way, that is, as if he was talking to a friend in an informal situation”*. No written passage was prepared for them to be read. The result has been, thus, spontaneous oral production.

As for the 2 samples in the form of dialogues (Scottish and Cockney), I personally recorded and interviewed the speakers in a naturalistic way. My interventions during the dialogue were minimal, prompting them to be speaking most of the time, so that respondents would concentrate only on the interviewee’s voice and accent.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results from the pilot study

The quantitative results obtained from the EOI class respondents are detailed below in table 3:

Table 3. Results, in percentages, obtained from the multiple choice quantitative questions in the pilot study regarding level of studies, type of house, appropriateness as a teacher of English, and type of job

<u>Multiple choice answers</u>	<u>Accents</u>			
	Estuary	Scottish	Cockney	RP
Q1. Level of studies (rates mainly intelligence and education)				
Illiterate	0%	16.7%	0%	0%
Primary education	0%	25%	0%	0%
Secondary education	9.1%	8.3%	0%	0%
Professional training	9.1%	25%	7.7%	0%

Undergraduate	0%	25%	30.8%	0%
Graduated	54.5%	0%	53.8%	23.1%
Postgraduate/ Master's course	27.3%	0%	7.7%	61.5%
Phd/ doctor	0%	0%	0%	15.4%
	Estuary	Scottish	Cockney	RP
Q2. Type of house (rates mainly social status, success and power)				
Homeless	0%	16.7%	0%	0%
Council/housing association rented	10%	33.3%	0%	0%
Council/ housing association owner- occupied	0%	25%	16.7%	0%
Rented private housing	60%	8.3%	41.7%	23.1%
Terrace owner occupied	10%	8.3%	25%	15.4%
Average-sized owner-occupied	10%	8.3%	16.7%	23.1%
Large owner- occupied	10%	0%	0%	30.8%
'Mansion'-size owner occupied	0%	0%	0%	7.7%
	Estuary	Scottish	Cockney	RP
Q3. Appropriateness as a teacher of EFL (rates mainly quality of language, prestige and correctness)				
Completely unsuitable	0%	25%	0%	0%
Not appropriate	0%	50%	0%	0%
Neutral	36.4%	25%	53%	0%

Appropriate	45.4%	0%	46.2%	38.5%
Absolutely appropriate	18.2%	0%	0%	61.5%
	Estuary	Scottish	Cockney	RP
Q4. Type of job (rates mainly again intelligence, success, correctness and status)				
Unemployed	0%	0%	0%	0%
Unskilled manual (e.g. rubbish collector)	0%	45.5%	0%	0%
Semi-skilled manual (e.g. factory worker)	20%	18.2%	8.3%	0%
Skilled manual (e.g. engineer)	20%	18.2%	8.3%	0%
Routine non-manual (e.g. clerical, sales)	10%	9.1%	25%	0%
Low professional (e.g. civil servant)	10%	9.1%	16.7%	16.7%
Self-employed	20%	0%	16.7%	16.7%
Management	10%	0%	16.7%	8.3%
Higher professional (doctor, lawyer)	10%	0%	8.3%	58.3%

4.2. Results from the final study

The quantitative results obtained from the final study, in the larger UCM's group, are detailed in table 4 below:

Table 4. Results, presented in percentages, obtained from the multiple choice quantitative questions in the final study regarding level of studies, type of house, appropriateness as a teacher of English, and type of job

Multiple choice answers	Accents			
	Estuary	Scottish	Cockney	RP
Q1. Level of studies (rates mainly intelligence and education)				
Illiterate	3%	4%	6%	0%
Primary education.	0%	21%	6%	0%
Secondary education	25%	35%	9%	5.3%
Professional training	2%	4%	15%	5.3%
Undergraduate	8%	11%	4%	5.3%
Graduated	30%	9%	26%	18.4%
Postgraduate/ Master's course	18%	5%	9%	39.5%
Phd/ doctor	0%	0%	13%	26.3%
	Estuary	Scottish	Cockney	RP
Q2. Type of house (rates mainly social status, success and power).				
Homeless	2%	2%	4%	0%
Council/ housing association rented	21%	28%	15%	0%

Council/ housing association owner- occupied	2%	16%	13%	2.6%
Rented private housing	26%	18%	19%	23.7%
Terrace owner occupied	2%	2%	4%	5.3%
Average- sized owner- occupied	25%	19%	17%	23.7%
Large owner- occupied	7%	2%	13%	34.2%
'Mansion'-size owner occupied	2%	0%	4%	10.5%
	Estuary	Scottish	Cockney	RP
Q3. Appropriateness as a teacher of EFL (rates mainly quality of language, prestige and correctness)				
Completely unsuitable	3%	14%	9%	0%
Not appropriate	18%	44%	26%	2.6%
Neutral	20%	16%	26%	7.9%
Appropriate	34%	11%	21%	21.1%
Absolutely appropriate	10%	2%	6%	68.4%
	Estuary	Scottish	Cockney	RP
Q4. Type of job (rates mainly again intelligence, success, correctness and status).				
Unemployed	3%	11%	8%	2.6%
Unskilled manual (e.g. rubbish collector)	0%	23%	6%	0%

Semi-skilled manual (e.g. factory worker)	20%	30%	15%	0%
Skilled manual (e.g. engineer)	21%	2%	13%	13,2%
Routine non-manual (e.g. clerical, sales)	3%	9%	2%	0%
Low professional (e.g. civil servant)	7%	4%	11%	5.3%
Self-employed	13%	5%	11%	7.9%
Management	10%	4%	2%	5.3%
Higher professional (doctor, lawyer)	8%	2%	21%	65.8%

4.3. Discussion of quantitative results: level of studies

The quantitative results concerning the impressions on the level of studies attributed to the 4 speakers/accents in both the pilot and the final experiments are shown in tables 5 and 6 below:

Table 5. Level of studies: perceptions and impressions from the respondents in the pilot study. Visual representation in a bar diagram based on the percentage results provided in table 3

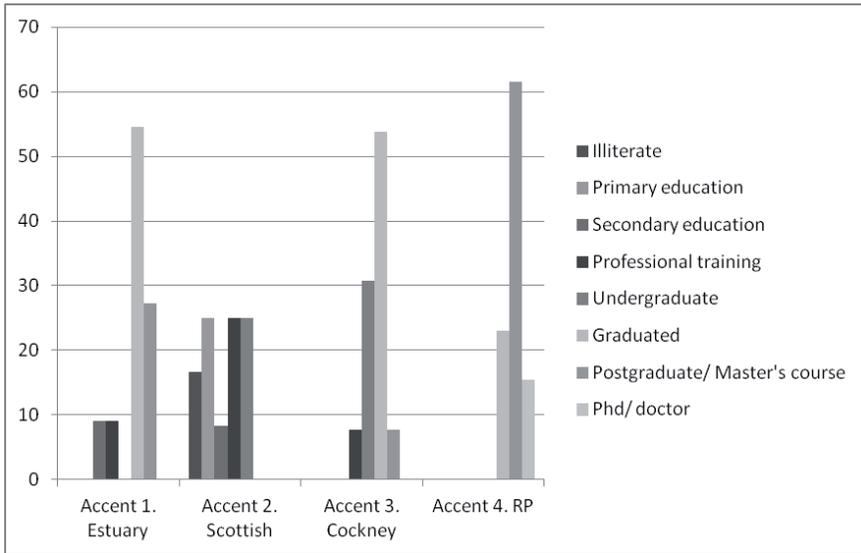
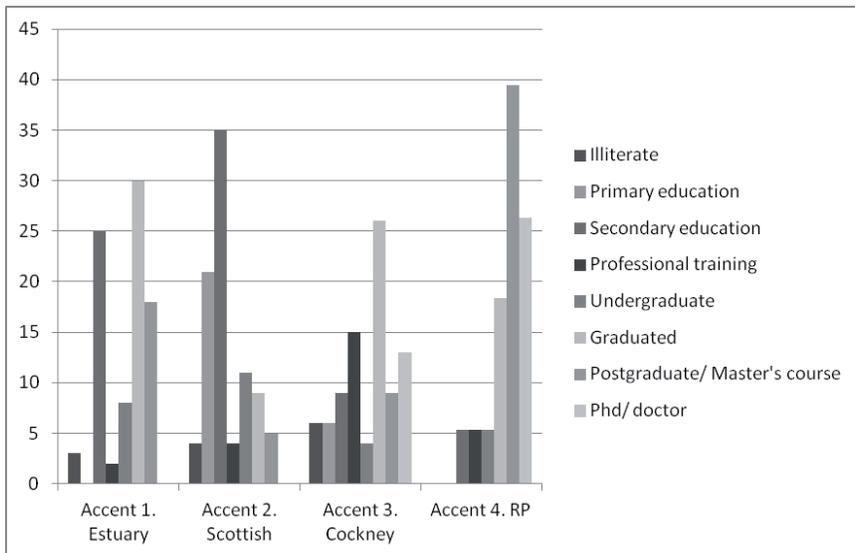


Table 6. Level of studies: perceptions and impressions from the respondents in the final study. Visual representation in a bar diagram based on the percentage results provided in table 4



As it can be observed above, RP is the accent considered “best” in the pilot study (table 5) as far as the level of studies is concerned. 100% of the participants think that the RP speaker possessed university studies, and nearly 77% thought he had either postgraduate studies or a PhD. Received pronunciation also obtained the most favourable impressions in the definitive experiment as for this first question (table 6). The absolute majority of respondents in the final study (84.2%) regarded the speaker of this variety to be in possession of finished university studies, and most of them (65.8%) considered him to have postgraduate studies. No respondent considered the speaker of this variety to be illiterate or to have only a primary education level; and merely 5.3% of the interviewees judged him to have a secondary education, professional training, or undergraduate level respectively.

The consistency of the results is in accordance with previous research in which RP was rated best in terms of quality of language and the model of pronunciation to be followed by Danish EFL students (H. J. Ladegaard and I. Sachdev 2006). These results also agree with previous attitudinal research amongst British native speakers (Giles and Powesland 1975; Giles and Coupland 1991) in which stereotyped attitudes to RP in terms of quality of language, prestige, intelligence, or success were proved.

In contrast, Scottish English received the least favourable evaluations in the level of studies dimension. Nobody attributed to the speaker of this accent completed university studies in the pilot experiment. In this first study all participants believed that this speaker had primary studies, a professional training course, unfinished university studies or that he was even illiterate.

In the final study, working with the bigger group of respondents, results were similar: the absolute majority of respondents (56%) attributed the Scottish accent speaker “only” a primary (21%) or a secondary (35%) level. A much lower percentage of results regarded him as to be in possession of university studies: undergraduate, 11%; graduated, 9%; postgraduate 5%; PhD/ doctor, 0%.

Cockney English was not downgraded to that point, in fact, the ratings were fairly positive as obtained in the present experiment. In the pilot study, the level of studies attributed to the Cockney sample speaker had its highest peak at “graduated” (53.8% of the respondents chose it), followed by “undergraduate” (30.8%). Hence, most of the participants in the first experiment regarded this speaker to have a university level, whereas none of them thought him to be illiterate, or to have “only” primary or secondary studies.

In the second and final experiment, Cockney English had again its highest peak of impressions in the “graduated” option (26%). The second highest peak is at “professional training” (15%), from which there is a decreasing scale going back to “illiterate”. Results are not as palpable as in the pilot study, but similar lines of evaluation can be observed, where most of the respondents gave this variety a reasonably positive impression and opinion.

These results are in contrast with previous research where Cockney was systematically and notoriously downgraded by British speakers. This accent has been traditionally downgraded by Britons (Giles and Powesland 1975; Giles and Coupland

1991) as a “lower” variety in dimensions such as intelligence, quality of language or success, within the stereotype of the “rough” working class man. Other studies such as the one from H.J. Ladegaard and I. Sachdev (2006), carried out with Danish EFL students, were in accordance with inner British attitudes, and showed results in which Cockney was rated inferior to the rest of the accents in that study (Scottish, RP, Australian, and Standard American), in the dimensions of status and quality of language (Ladegaard and Sachdev 2006: 100).

Finally, within question 1, regarding level of studies, Estuary English has obtained “second best” results: slightly higher than Cockney in the pilot study; and similar to it in the final one. In the first study Estuary English was considered by more than half of the respondents (54.4%) to have a “graduated” level of studies, followed by a 27.3% who thought the speaker of this accent to have a postgraduate/master’s course level. Thus, the absolute majority of interviewees regarded the user of this variety to have a higher level of studies.

In the second and final experiment, Estuary English obtained again the highest number of respondents attributing to its user a “graduated” level of studies (30%). Another good number of participants regarded this accent’s speaker to have a postgraduate level of studies (18%). So, nearly half of the Spanish students considered that the user of this variety had a higher level of studies. The surprise came out from the 25% of respondents who rated this speaker to have a secondary school level. This last figure could be due to the fact that Estuary English is the “fresh” urban model used by younger English speakers nowadays; a feature that could have been perceived by some of the young Spanish university students of EFL.

4.4. Discussion of quantitative results: type of house

The quantitative results regarding the impressions on the type of house attributed to the 4 speakers/accents in both the pilot and the final experiments are shown in tables 7 and 8 below:

Table 7. Type of house: perceptions and impressions from the respondents about the 4 accent samples in the pilot study. Visual representation in a bar diagram based on the percentage results provided in table 3

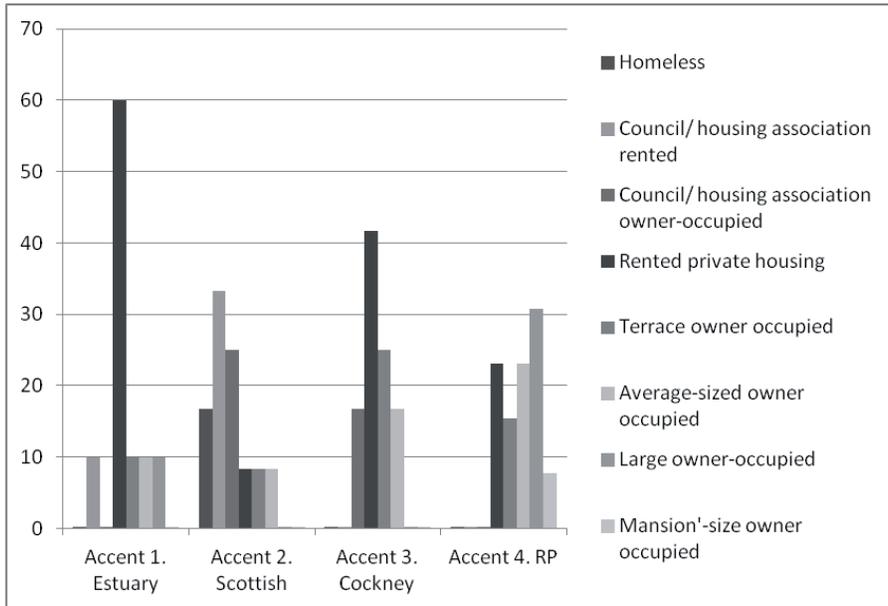
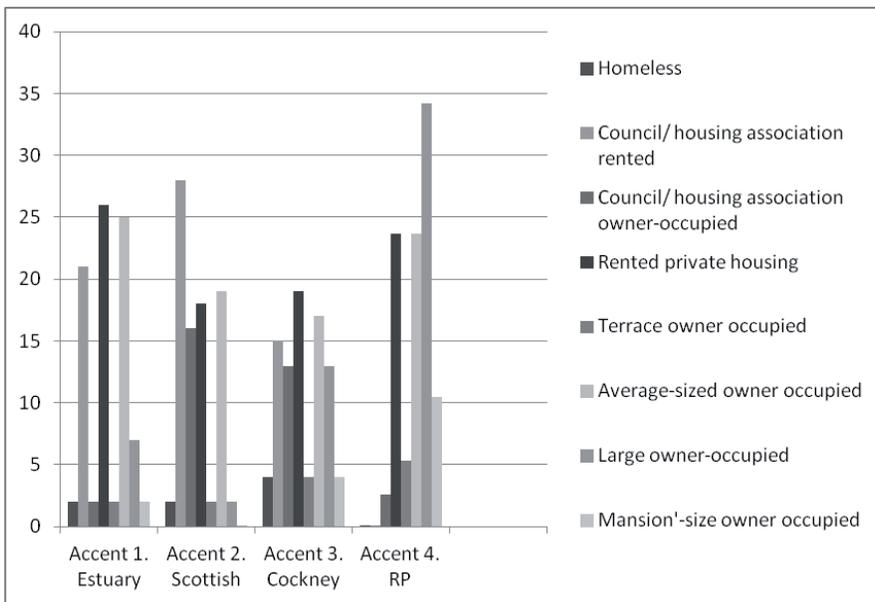


Table 8. Type of house: perceptions and impressions from the respondents about the 4 accent samples in the final study. Visual representation in a bar diagram based on the percentage results provided in table 4



Figures show that Received Pronunciation is, once again, and in accordance with previous research, the accent that has received highest considerations both in the pilot and the final study. In the pilot study the highest peak is at “Large owner occupied” (30.8%), it decreases at either side followed by “average size” and “rented private housing” with a 23.1% of respondents who chose those options respectively; and a 15.4% of choices attributed to “terrace owner occupied”. At the other side of the range there was a 7.7% of EFL students who picked the “mansion sized owner occupied” option. It is also remarkable to point out that none of the participants thought the speaker of this accent to be homeless, or to live in an either rented or owned council association house.

In the final study, RP’s statistics take a similar shape with the highest number of responses at “large owner occupied” as well (34.2%). Then, figures decrease, as in the pilot experiment, at either side of the array with a 10.5% of choices attributed to “mansion size owner occupied”; and, at the other side, with a 27.5% of choices endorsed to “average size” and “rented private” correspondingly; and a 5.3% attributed to the “terrace owner occupied” option. Only 2.6% of the respondents regarded the speaker of this accent to live in a council/housing association owner occupied house, and no respondent at all considered him to live in a council/housing association rented house, or to be homeless.

Scottish English, one more time, as in the previous question, received the lowest ratings from the Spanish EFL learners, both in the pilot and in the final study. In the first experiment the highest number of opinions, 33.3%, regarded this accent to belong to a person who resides in a council/housing association rented house. The figures decrease at either side of the spectrum, with a 16.7% of respondents regarding this speaker to be homeless on one side; and a 25% who believed him to inhabit a council/housing association house as owner occupied. No more than 8.3% of the interviewees regarded the Scottish user to live in a rented private house, a terrace owner occupied house, or an average size owner occupied house respectively. Finally, no respondent at all considered him to possess either a large or a “mansion size” house in the pilot study.

In the final experiment, Scottish English was also downgraded in our EFL context, below all other accent samples. As in the first pilot test, the option chosen by most of the respondents (28%) was “council/housing association rented”. Figures this time also decrease at either side of the range of multiple choice responses, though less uniformly. At the “lower” side, only 2% of respondents thought this speaker to be homeless; and at the “higher” side there are three crests: Council housing association owner occupied (16%), “rented private housing” (18%), and “average size owner occupied” (19%). Merely 2% thought this speaker to own a terrace or a large house, and no student at all attributed him to be the owner of a “mansion size” house.

Though results are not as palpable in the final experiment as in the pilot one, it is visible in both of them that the Scottish English variety was downgraded in this second question below all other accent samples. It is also to be appreciated that the crest of results is, in both charts, at the second lowest option (“council/ housing association rented”), from which the rest of figures decrease, drawing a similar curve of results both in the pilot and in the final studies.

The Cockney English user was considered in the pilot study, by most EFL Spanish students, to live in a private rented house (41.7%). This figure falls at either side of the range of options in stages. At the “low” side there is the “council/housing association owner occupied” option, with a 16.7% of choices. At the “upper” side, there are the figures of “terrace owner occupied” (25%) and “average size owner occupied” (16.7%). At either end of the range, no participant at all chose the options “homeless” or “council/housing association rented”; nor “large owner occupied” or “mansion size owner occupied”. Therefore, within this question, this variety has received a middle judgment from Spanish students, who have concentrated their answers in the center of the range.

In the final experiment, Cockney’s results draw a similar curve of figures in which answers are concentrated in the center of the array (with the exception of the choice “terrace owner occupied”). The peak is also at the option “rented private housing” (19%) and it falls gradually as well to either side of the array. At the left or “lower” side there are the choices “council/housing association” rented and owner occupied with a 15% and 13% of selections correspondingly; and merely a 4% who thought this speaker to be homeless. At the right or “upper” side of the peak, figures fall in stages from “average size owner occupied” (17%), passing through “large owner occupied” (13%), to “mansion size owner occupied” (just 4%).

So, with the exception of the choice “terrace owner occupied” (4%) in the definitive study, it is visible that figures both in the pilot and the final experiments draw a curve of results which is similar. Respondents have concentrated their responses in the center of the range, thus evaluating the Cockney speaker with a medium grade in this second question (type of house). These results are, as in the previous question, in contrast with previous research, in which Cockney English was systematically downgraded in comparison to a variety of other accents, be it by natives (Giles and Powesland 1975; Giles and Coupland 1991) or by EFL Danish learners (H. J. Ladegaard and I. Sachdev 2006). The results suggest here, is that Spanish Advanced students of English do not stigmatise working class southern English as much as natives, or other nationalities’ EFL learners (such as Danish), do.

Finally, Estuary English, in the pilot study, as it can be seen in table 7, received a great majority of choices regarding its user to live in a private rented house (60%), far above the rest of the options, which obtained either a 10% or 0%.

In the final study, as shown in table 8, Estuary English’s highest peak is again at “private rented housing” with a 26% of choices. The preponderance of this option is not so ample this time, since there are other two crests: “average size owner occupied”, 25%; and “council/housing association rented”, 21%. Only 7% percent of respondents regarded him to own a large house, and the rest of the alternatives merely received a 2% of choices respectively.

It can be stated, in the light of these results, that most of the respondents believe the Estuary speaker to live in a rented house. There is the possibility that these results could be explained due to the fact that Estuary English is the variety spoken by most of English young people, associated in turn, to living in a rented accommodation.

4.5. Discussion of quantitative results: appropriateness as an EFL teacher

Thoughts and impressions on the EFL appropriateness from the Spanish EFL learners attributed to the 4 speakers/accents in both the pilot and the final experiments are shown in tables 9 and 10 below:

Table 9. Appropriateness as an EFL teacher: perceptions and impressions from the respondents about the 4 accent samples in the pilot study. Visual representation in a bar diagram based on the percentage results provided in table

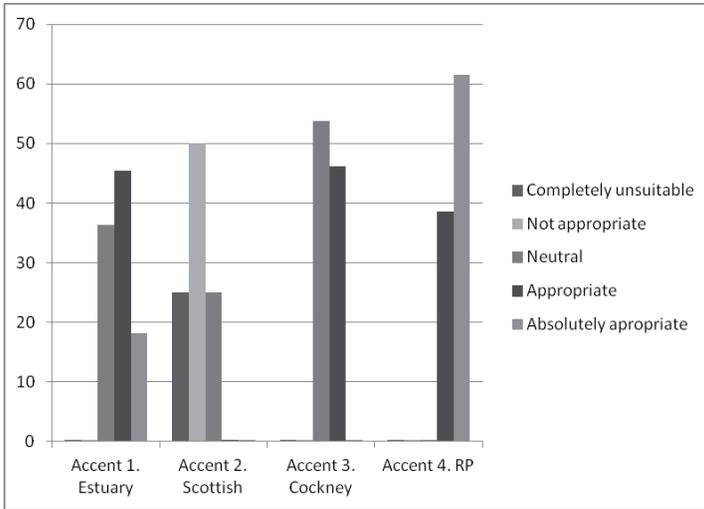
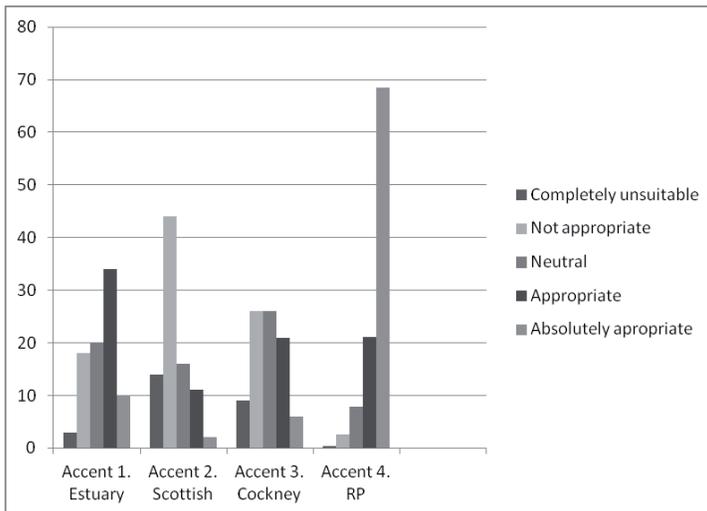


Table 10. Appropriateness as an EFL teacher: perceptions and impressions from the respondents about the 4 accent samples in the final study. Visual representation in a bar diagram based on the percentage results provided in table



Results obtained from this third question are clear-cut. Received Pronunciation is the undisputable best regarded accent by Spanish students to be used for EFL teaching. In the pilot experiment as much as 61.5% of respondents considered it as “absolutely appropriate” to be used in an EFL class; followed by a 38.5% who believed it was “appropriate”. No student at all in the pilot study thought RP to be either “neutral”, “not appropriate”, or “completely unsuitable”.

RP was judged in a very similar way by UCM students in the final study. Figures are terraced; a fact that could probably be explained because this group is more aware of non-standard varieties, and they might think that being exposed to the standard only is insufficient. An overwhelming 68.8% of respondents considered this accent to be “absolutely appropriate”; 21.1% regarded it as “appropriate”; merely 7.9% thought it was “neutral”; as less as 2.6% believed it was “not appropriate”; and no respondent at all judged RP to be “completely unsuitable” in the final experiment.

It is not risky to affirm that Received Pronunciation, the “accent-less” variety, the BBC English, is the one that Spanish students of English feel more comfortable with (amongst British varieties). Spanish learners have traditionally been exposed to this variety in the EFL class, since early stages. It is the one they are more familiarized with and therefore the one they understand better. Thus, their attitudes coincide with those found in previous research with different groups of respondents.

Once again, Scottish English has been downgraded below the rest of the accents in the study. Half of the respondents (50%) regarded this variety to be “not appropriate” in the EFL context; and 25% of the students thought it was “completely unsuitable” or “neutral” respectively. No Spanish participant at all considered the accent to be “appropriate” or “absolutely appropriate”.

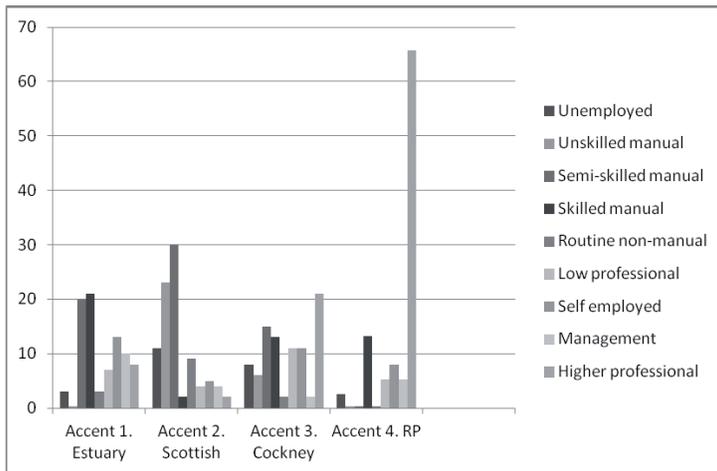
Results in the final study confirm the ones stated above in the pilot experiment, as Scottish English was also downgraded. As many as 44% of the Spanish students believed that the Scottish English variety was “not appropriate” to be used by an EFL teacher. Then a 14% thought it was “completely unsuitable” and 16% thought it was neutral. Only 11% regarded it to be “appropriate” and merely 2% regarded this accent as “absolutely appropriate”.

Figures are clear both in the pilot and the final experiments. Scottish English is downgraded below all other accents under study. Spanish students of EFL do not feel comfortable with it, since they do not know it and hardly understand it. It appears improper to them.

Cockney English received again an intermediate evaluation regarding this third question. In the pilot study it obtained a medium-high evaluation since all students considered it either “neutral” (53.8%) or “appropriate” (46.2%). In the final study figures are more distributed, in a terraced way, attributing a medium-low evaluation to the accent: the peak is at “neutral” and “not appropriate” (26% of choices each); 21% believed it was “appropriate”; no more than 9% regarded it as “completely unsuitable”; and only 6% considered it “absolutely appropriate”.

Estuary English achieved similar, though slightly higher results than Cockney English in this EFL dimension. 45.4% of participants considered it “appropriate”,

Table 12. Type of job: perceptions and impressions from the respondents the final study about the 4 accent samples in. Visual representation in a bar diagram based on the percentage results provided in table 4.



The one accent above all in the forth question (type of job) is, as in the preceding ones, Received Pronunciation. As many as 58.3% of respondents considered the RP speaker to be a “higher professional” in the pilot study. Then 16.7% believed that the speaker was either “self employed” or “low professional” correspondingly, and 8.3% thought he had a “management” post. Finally, no Spanish respondent at all believed the RP speaker to be a routine non manual, skilled manual, semi-skilled manual, unskilled manual, or an unemployed worker in the experimental study.

In the ultimate experiment, in a very comparable way as in the pilot experiment, and as it is showed in table 12, RP accent rises above the rest of varieties. An absolute majority of respondents, 65.8%, regarded the RP speaker to be a “higher professional”; 13.2% regarded this speaker to be a “skilled manual”, and the rest of the jobs attributed to him obtained results below 10%. Scottish English was valued one more time, in this forth question, below the rest of accents, both in the pilot and in the final experiments. In the former study, 45.5% of respondents attributed an “unskilled manual” job to the Scottish speaker. At the “lower” side of that peak, as shown in table 11% of the participants thought the SE speaker to be “unemployed”. Then, at the “upper” side of the peak, figures fall in stages: Both the “semi-skilled manual” and the “skilled manual” options received an 18.2% of choices respectively; in the same way, the options “routine non-manual” and “low professional” obtained 9.1% of selections correspondingly; and no student at all in the pilot study thought that the Scottish English user could be either “self employed”, in “management”, or a “higher professional”.

In a similar way, as it has been said before, Scottish English, was downgraded by the respondents of the final study. Most of the participants, 64%, regarded the Scottish speaker to be either “unemployed” (11%), an “unskilled manual” worker (23%), or a

“semiskilled manual” worker (30%). The rest of the possible options were all below 10% (see table 12).

Estuary and Cockney English obtained, as in the three preceding questions, an intermediate judgement from the Spanish respondents. In the first tentative study Cockney English was rated ‘second best’, after RP. The peak was at “routine non-manual”, chosen by 25% of students. Subsequently, 50.1% of respondents concentrated their choices attributed to this speaker/accents in the options “low professional”, “self employed”, and “management” (16.7% each option). The rest of the choices were all below 10%. It is also remarkable that no student at all regarded the Cockney speaker to be either “unemployed” or an “unskilled manual” worker (see table 11).

Surprisingly, the peak at Cockney English evaluation, in this fourth question is at “higher professional” (21%). Next, there are the choices “semi-skilled manual” 15%, and skilled manual 13%. 11% of choices were obtained by the options “low professional” and “self employed” respectively. The rest of the figures fall below 10% (see table 12). Results here are more irregular than, and therefore not as clear as the ones from the pilot study. Nonetheless, it is observable that the judgements that Cockney has received are intermediate, visibly above the ones obtained by Scottish English.

Estuary English was also regarded as an intermediate variety in this fourth question. In the first experiment there were three peaks in which most of the judgements from respondents, 60%, coincide: “semi-skilled manual”, “skilled manual” and “self employed” (20% each option). No student at all considered the Estuary speaker to be an unskilled manual worker or to be self employed. And, finally, the rest of possible options obtained a 10% of choices correspondingly.

In the final experiment, the 3 peaks are the same ones: “skilled manual” (21%), “semi-skilled manual” (20%), and “self-employed” (13%). More than half of the responses are concentrated in those three options. The rest of possible choices received all either 10% or less than 10% of the responses. Estuary English received then a medium-low evaluation from the Spanish respondents in this fourth question.

5. FURTHER DISCUSSION SUPPORTED BY QUALITATIVE DATA

In this section it will be attempted to understand the thoughts and feelings of the respondents towards the four accents under study; and also the reasons which moved them to choose their qualitative responses. It will be done with the help and support of their qualitative comments.

Received Pronunciation, as shown in the previous section, has obtained highest results in all dimensions under study: intelligence, status, language quality, or success. Students have chosen this variety above the rest for a series of reasons that could be explained by observing their qualitative observations.

Practically all participants consider RP accent not only intelligible, clear, and easy to understand, but also pleasant, prestigious, attractive, successful, and appropriate to be used in an EFL context. The following qualitative comments, provided as examples, illustrate it:

- ❖ I think he has a high qualification. He speaks very clearly and he speaks softly. His language has a great intelligibility and attractiveness; it is even pleasant to hear him. It's obvious this boy has studied at least a degree, he has a high culture level (respondent n°1, final study).
- ❖ He is the best speaker of the four listenings. He speaks slowly and very clearly. I understand everything that he says. (Respondent n°2, final study).
- ❖ His accent is perfectly understandable and prestigious. (Respondent n°4, final study).
- ❖ ... This speaker represents the ideal English speaker. He would be considered pleasant to listen to; having a pronunciation of highest prestige, possessing ultimate intelligibility... it may be good to have in the classroom as a model to imitate. (Respondent n°5, final study).
- ❖ The speaker seems to be a well educated person. His accent is quite pleasant to listen to and attractive. The speaker seems to be a successful person... (Respondent n°12, final study).
- ❖ This speaker speaks in a very clear and slow way, very good for understanding it. It shows a high prestige, and he has a very attractive accent... (Respondent n°22, final study).
- ❖ He speaks very properly and his speech is totally intelligible... (Respondent n°28, final study).
- ❖ Good domain of the language, fluent, intelligible and pleasant to be heard... (Respondent n°38, final study).

Spanish students have traditionally been exposed to Standard English in their EFL classes (be it Received Pronunciation or General American). They look up to RP (or GA) as the model to be followed, they are more familiarized with it, and it is also the variety they understand better. Incidentally, there were two students who attached to RP accent some quite negative connotations:

- ❖ His accent is quite close to what people would say is a posh accent... (Respondent n°18, final study).
- ❖ In my opinion, the person who's talking comes across a big snob. The way he talks makes me picture a man who knows everything better and always gives his opinion, even if you don't want it. I picture him in a suit (which he would wear, even if it is not necessary) and always very neat. He is tall and quite attractive, but not as successful as he would like people to think. (Respondent n°26, final study).

Those two students are such a small number that no generalization can be made out of their remarks. However, they could represent a small minority of Spanish learners, who regard RP as a high-class, elitist variety which is not particularly appealing to them. A certain degree of contact with British culture and language would be necessary in order to acquire those feelings and impressions towards RP accent. This incidental minority of attitudes is in accordance with recent findings in language attitude amongst

Britons discovered by authors such as Peter Stockwell and his student Sara Wood (Stockwell 2002), mentioned above, who discovered and sustained the fact that RP was diminishing in Great Britain and it was becoming to be seen as “too posh” by Britons, and therefore unreliable.

Scottish English, on the other hand, as it is visible in the quantitative results, obtained the lowest results in all the dimensions under study. This could be due to the fact that they are not familiarised with this variety and it sounds anomalous to them. Apparently, they find it difficult to understand and not pleasant to listen to. It also appears that they perceive it as erroneous, and therefore to be avoided. Virtually all of the qualitative comments from respondents about Scottish English are negative. The qualitative example comments listed below, about the Scottish sample, may shed some light on these assertions:

- ❖ This person hasn't got in my opinion a pleasant accent. He speaks a variety which is too far from a standard one... I think this accent is not considered as prestigious since it is not intelligible at all. (Respondent n°7, final study).
- ❖ His accent was terribly bad; I didn't understand all that he said, only a few words... (Respondent n°13, final study).
- ❖ It is definitely unpleasant to hear this guy talking. His accent sounds coarse, his use of the /r/ becomes quite annoying after a while and it is not completely intelligible as he speaks very fast and with that strange accent... (Respondent n°27, final study).
- ❖ The speaker seems to have a working class background. His accent is difficult to understand, his pronunciation seems to be neglectful... (Respondent n°45, final study).

Neither they found Scottish accent intelligible, nor appealing or correct, but the opposite. Students did not understand well the sample, nor did they find it interesting. It was very unfamiliar to them, they did not recognize it, and, furthermore, a number of them perceived it as non-native English, as the comments below illustrate:

- ❖ He appears to be a foreigner from Germany. (Respondent n°4, pilot study).
- ❖ This time it was harder to understand the whole speech; I would say the speaker wasn't native in English... (Respondent n°3, final study).
- ❖ Both speakers speak too fast and unclearly. The two are probably foreigners. (Respondent n°12, final study).
- ❖ I think these speakers are not native. Their accent is a rhotic one... (Respondent n°28, final study).
- ❖ ... I found this accent very different from any other I have heard before. (Respondent n°49, final study).
- ❖ I find the accent very different. I think that the speakers are from the Middle East or from Asia. (Respondent n°51, final study).

The disdain Spanish EFL students felt towards Scottish English could be explained, therefore, due to their ignorance about the variety, and their belief that it is out of the norm, and even non native.

Cockney English, as it has been revealed in the previous section, obtained intermediate results in the four quantitative questions and hence, in all the dimensions they imply. It was not downgraded by Spanish students, as Scottish English was. In spite of the fact that it is not a standard accent, they did not despise it: They found it broad, informal, strong or hard to understand; but at the same time they recognized it as British English, and found it pleasant, interesting, useful, or “real English”. Some examples of their qualitative comments are listed below to exemplify their impressions:

- ❖ They don't speak clearly and have a BE accent. (Respondent nº1, final study).
- ❖ Although this type of speech should be learnt so that one can understand anyone in conversation, it is not a good bases for the classroom. (Respondent nº2, final study).
- ❖ This speaker seems native, but his speech is not very clear. He speaks very fast and linking most of its words, but I guess this is the kind of speech we can find in the street when traveling to an English speaking country... Although his speaking is perfectly acceptable I don't think he is doing a bachelors degree... (Respondent nº4, final study).
- ❖ It has been very difficult for me to understand the whole listening. The prestige of the accent is very low and unpleasant. But a native accent is always attractive, even more when it is a different variety or slang from we are used to listen to. (Respondent nº6, final study).
- ❖ I could not understand most of the things he was saying, although he spoke a standard variety. (Respondent nº17, final study).
- ❖ I personally believe that he has a strong accent, but it is not hard to understand what he is saying... I think he is educated because of the prestigious accent he has. (Respondent nº25, final study).
- ❖ The accent of the speaker is very difficult to understand ... It is an everyday used language. (Respondent nº36, final study).
- ❖ I don't think he is really suitable for an English teacher, but he would be a perfect partner for a tandem in a pub or something like that. (Respondent nº41, final study).
- ❖ It was pleasant to hear him, although he spoke really quickly and sometimes it was hard to understand all of what he said. (Respondent nº42, final study).

Apart from the “positive-negative” comments shown above, the rest of the comments where half positive (15 positive comments) and half negative (12 negative comments) roughly. The rest of the students did not answer the qualitative question, or did not provide a clear idea of positivity or negativity about the accent.

It could be stated, from the light shed by the students' comments, and the quantitative results shown in the previous section, that even though Spanish students

perceive Cockney English as a marked accent, and difficult to understand; in general terms, they do not look down on it. They recognise it as a form of British English, in an informal variant which is valuable to know (for instance in everyday casual-informal communication).

Consequently, it can be asserted that Spanish EFL students attitude towards working class English –Cockney– does not coincide with that of native British English speakers, who stigmatise it (Giles and Powesland 1975; Giles and Coupland 1991) Spanish students' feelings towards Cockney are also in contrast with those of other EFL learners such as Danish, who totally downgraded this accent below RP, GA, Australian, and Scottish in an experiment carried out by H. J. Ladegaard and I. Sachdev (2006).

Finally, Estuary English, as seen in the preceding part, obtained very similar though slightly higher results than Cockney English in the qualitative questions. The high-intermediate valuation it received could be explained in a very similar way as the one given for Cockney English. They recognized this accent as distinct from standard (hence quite hard for them to understand), but at the same time they perceived it was a form of correct British English, not erroneous at all, with many positive connotations (e.g.: pleasantness, correctness, prestige, or intelligibility). The qualitative comments cast some light on their thoughts and attitudes. Some examples are listed below:

- ❖ He has a good accent, a prestige one. However, I am unable to understand him well enough... (Respondent n°1, final study).
- ❖ ... He is also nice and his speech is totally acceptable and intelligible but difficult to understand when he speaks faster... I can only say that the clip and the speech are extremely informal. (Respondent n°6, final study).
- ❖ We can understand much of what he says but I don't think he could be good as a foreign language teacher. (Respondent n°14, final study).
- ❖ It was not very clear to understand but I noticed that he was a person with some culture and some prestige. (Respondent n°16, final study).
- ❖ Despite, for me, he speaks very quickly and some words are not very clear, his accent is very pleasant and attractive, and it denotes prestige because it is clear that is a person with studies that speaks very well. (Respondent n°23, final study).
- ❖ ...His accent is nice for me though strong. I think he may be a good teacher for advance or intermediate level students because he is a native speaker... (Respondent n°42, final study).
- ❖ The speaker's accent is quite clear although it is not a BBC one... (Respondent n°46, final study).
- ❖ In my opinion he has a very pleasant accent... It was not very difficult to understand, despite that I couldn't get all that he said. In terms of prestige, I think that he uses correct English, maybe it is not RP pronunciation but I think he is an average economical and social level speaker. (Respondent n°47, final study).

The example comments provided above illustrate the Spanish students' impressions, who, as it has been said before, perceive this accent in a fairly positive manner. Apart from the –positive-negative– observations listed above, there were 24 positive comments, 11 neutral comments, and 3 negative comments about Estuary English (the rest of the students did not answer the qualitative question). Thus, based on the quantitative results, and supported by the qualitative comments, it can be asserted that our students gave this accent a high-intermediate evaluation, slightly above Cockney English on the whole.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The findings obtained on the present study suggest that the EFL Spanish student's attitude towards Cockney English differs from that of native British speakers. Previous research proved that Cockney was downgraded by Britons on the dimensions of status, intelligence, and quality/correctness of language (Giles and Powesland 1975; Giles and Coupland 1991). EFL students from other nationalities such as Danish (Ladegaard and Sachdev 2006) coincide with British prejudices and downgraded Cockney as well in those dimensions.

Nevertheless, it can be stated that, in the light of the results obtained in the present experiment, Spanish EFL students, do not stigmatise Cockney English in the dimensions cited above. They consider this variety an authentic and interesting one. This could be explained due to the fact that they lack the social associations that native speakers have. They have not acquired the British social native knowledge, and therefore they do not have those working class stereotypes in their minds. They perceive a real everyday English variety, which they would like to know, to a certain extent.

It is also a reality that when Spanish students of EFL go to an English speaking country for the first time (UK in many cases), and get in contact with real –non normative– English from the streets, in most of the cases they hardly understand native speakers in those first encounters. The desire to overcome that frustration might also explain Spanish students' fairly positive attitude towards this variety.

The findings obtained also indicate that the feelings and reactions Spanish students have shown towards Estuary English is also fairly positive. Very similar to those they have about Cockney but slightly better. It can be said that they have ranked Cockney, Estuary and RP in a continuum that goes from an intermediate judgement (Cockney), passing through an upper intermediate impression (Estuary), and ending with a higher one (RP). On the other hand, native British users rank these three varieties from a low grade (Cockney) to a high one (RP).

The results of this study also point out that Received Pronunciation is the variety that Spanish EFL students' prefer above other British accents in the dimensions of intelligence, intelligibility, quality and correctness of language, and social status. As stated above, this is in accordance with previous research amongst British

native speakers (Giles and Powesland 1975; Giles and Coupland 1991); and also in accordance with other EFL context attitudes (Ladegaard and Sachdev 2006). This could be due to the fact Spanish students have traditionally been exposed to Standard British English in their EFL classes (or General American). They have a high opinion of RP as the model to be followed in the EFL class.

Thus, in the light of our results, it can be stated that Spanish students' attitudes and reactions are in contrast with more recent inner British findings (Stockwell 2002), which pointed out that British people nowadays still rate RP highest in terms of intelligence but equal in status, and low in terms of pleasantness. Our EFL learners have shown positive attitudes in all dimensions. The recent diminishment of RP in Great Britain, has not reached, as our results suggest, the EFL context in Spain. This could be explained, once again due to the fact that Spanish learners do not have the current social associations taking place in Britain amongst the young new generations.

Our results have also revealed that the geographical variety introduced, Scottish English, was perceived in a very negative way by Spanish respondents. They did not hesitate to disapprove this accent in all the dimensions under study. By looking at their responses and comments, it can be deduced that this variety is rather unknown to them, strange, erroneous, and even foreign. This is also in contrast with British attitudes, which show more "respect" towards geographical inner varieties.

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APPENDIX
THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1. Please circle which **level of studies** you think this speaker has:

Accent 1	Accent 2	Accent 3	Accent 4
Illiterate	Illiterate	Illiterate	Illiterate
Primary education.	Primary education.	Primary education.	Primary education.
Secondary education	Secondary education	Secondary education	Secondary education
Professional training	Professional training	Professional training	Professional training
Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate	Undergraduate
Graduated	Graduated	Graduated	Graduated
Postgraduate/ Master's course	Postgraduate/ Master's course	Postgraduate/ Master's course	Postgraduate/ Master's course
PhD/ doctor	PhD/ doctor	PhD/ doctor	PhD/ doctor

Q2. Please circle the **type of house** you would expect this person to live in:

Accent 1	Accent 2	Accent 3	Accent 4
Homeless	Homeless	Homeless	Homeless
Council/housing association rented	Council/housing association rented	Council/housing association rented	Council/housing association rented
Council/ housing association owner-occupied			
Rented private housing	Rented private housing	Rented private housing	Rented private housing

Terrace owner occupied	Terrace owner occupied	Terrace owner occupied	Terrace owner occupied
Average-sized owner-occupied	Average-sized owner-occupied	Average-sized owner-occupied	Average-sized owner-occupied
Large owner-occupied	Large owner-occupied	Large owner-occupied	Large owner-occupied
'Mansion'-size owner occupied	'Mansion'-size owner occupied	'Mansion'-size owner occupied	'Mansion'-size owner occupied

Q3. Please indicate how useful, good and appropriate you think this speaker could be **as a teacher of English** as Foreign Language

Accent 1	Accent 2	Accent 3	Accent 4
Absolutely appropriate	Absolutely appropriate	Absolutely appropriate	Absolutely appropriate
Appropriate	Appropriate	Appropriate	Appropriate
Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Not appropriate	Not appropriate	Not appropriate	Not appropriate
Completely unsuitable	Completely unsuitable	Completely unsuitable	Completely unsuitable

Q4. Please circle the **type of job** you could expect this speaker to have (examples are simply guidelines):

Accent 1	Accent 2	Accent 3	Accent 4
Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed	Unemployed
Unskilled manual (e.g. rubbish collector)			
Semi-skilled manual (e.g. factory worker)			
Skilled manual (e.g. engineer)			

Routine non-manual (e.g. clerical, sales)			
Low professional (e.g. civil servant)			
Self-employed	Self-employed	Self-employed	Self-employed
Management	Management	Management	Management
Higher professional (doctor, lawyer)	Higher professional (doctor, lawyer)	Higher professional (doctor, lawyer)	Higher professional (doctor, lawyer)

Q.5. Please briefly state your opinion and impressions about the speaker and his accent (pleasantness, prestige, success, intelligibility, attractiveness, etc.)

Accent 1	
Accent 2	
Accent 3	
Accent 4	