



Learners' attitudes towards Norwegian accents

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Accent and dialect variation in Norway

- High dialectal variation in Norway across linguistic domains
i.e. **morphosyntax, phonology, lexicon**
- Broadly, there are 4 regional dialect areas, but in fact many more, including various sociolects within one region
(Helleland and Papazian 2005)
- South-Eastern accents seen as the (most) standard
(Johnsen 2015)



Dialectal areas

Four larger dialectal areas (Kristoffersen 2000):

- Western Norwegian – Vestnorsk,
- Eastern Norwegian – Østnorsk,
- Trøndelag dialect – Trøndersk,
- Northern Norwegian – Nordnorsk



Why are some accents seen as better or worst than others

- Accents as proxies / indexes of how people from the region are seen
- Dependent on salient, easily identifiable linguistic features
(Llamas et al. 2016)
- The person “down the street” will always have a stronger accent than the person you are talking to (Preston and Niedzielski 2003)
- Voice parametrics (F0 especially, creaky voice etc.)
- Intelligibility + mergers potentially causing misunderstandings (Labov 2010)



Perceptions of Norwegian accents

- Accents in Norway stratified socially (**Johnsen 2015**)
- Western Oslo accents perceived as more prestigious than the working-class or multicultural Oslo accents (**Aasheim 1995, Johnsen 2015, Svendsen and Røyneland 2008**)
- Northern Norwegian accents often perceived more negatively than the Southern (**Sollid 2014**)
- Mixing dialects or switching between dialects seen negatively in Norway (**Røyneland 2017**)
- Speaking a non-Oslo-dialect viewed as more Norwegian (**Røyneland 2017**)
- Boys with foreign appearance seen as less Norwegian when they use the Oslo-dialect than when they use other dialects (**Røyneland 2017: 101**).



Previous studies

- Positive attitudes in Tromsø towards other dialects (Satermo and Sollid 2021)
- Changing one's dialect seen as incorrect (Satermo and Sollid 2021)
- Negative attitudes by urban Vika speakers towards upper Oslo dialects (Jensen 2006, Lund 2006)
- A lot of studies on how upper / West Oslo accents and dialects are perceived, both using the verbal guise technique, as well as surveys in different forms (Dahl 2002; Jensen 2006: 73, Lund 2006, Hult 2008, Kristiansen 1995)
- Nine Norwegian accents tested on a scale from 'nice' to 'ugly' Voje (1979)



Study: aims and rationale

- To investigate learners' attitudes towards Norwegian accents
- To compare the perceptions towards Norwegian accents by three groups of respondents:
 - Polish learners of Norwegian living in Poland (**"Learners"**)
 - Polish learners of Norwegian residing in Norway (**"Naturalistic"**)
 - Norwegian native speakers as controls (**"Native"**)
- What are potential across-group differences in attitudes towards Norwegian accents?
- To what extent the changing perceptions of Norwegian accents are dependent on social attributions of the speakers representing the accents?



Study design

- An online survey in Qualtrics
- **Reading passages** by speakers of Norwegian (*Nordavinden og sola*)
- Selected speech samples N=14
 - 10 native Norwegians from five dialect areas in Norway i.e. the Tromsø area, Trondheim, Stavanger, Kristiansand, and Oslo
 - and 4 controls - non-native accents of Norwegian of different strength (L1 Polish)
- Each region was represented with two speech samples of middle-aged native speakers of Norwegian (female and male).
- Recordings taken from the **Norwegian dialects database** <https://www.hf.ntnu.no/nos/>



Nordavinden og sola

[²nu:ɾɑ,ʊɪŋ' ɔ 'su:ɾɑ]

En norsk dialektprøvedatabase på nettet



naviger:

[Kart](#) | [Liste](#) | [Søk](#) | [Kildetekst](#) | [Om databasen](#) | [HJELP!](#)

Nordavinden og sola er en database med opptak og transkripsjoner av [historien om Nordavinden og sola](#) lest på ulike norske dialekter.

I tillegg til å få en sorterbar [liste over dialektprøvene](#) kan du [se dialektprøvene på kartet](#). (Hvis du bruker modem kan det ta et par minutter å laste kartsiden).

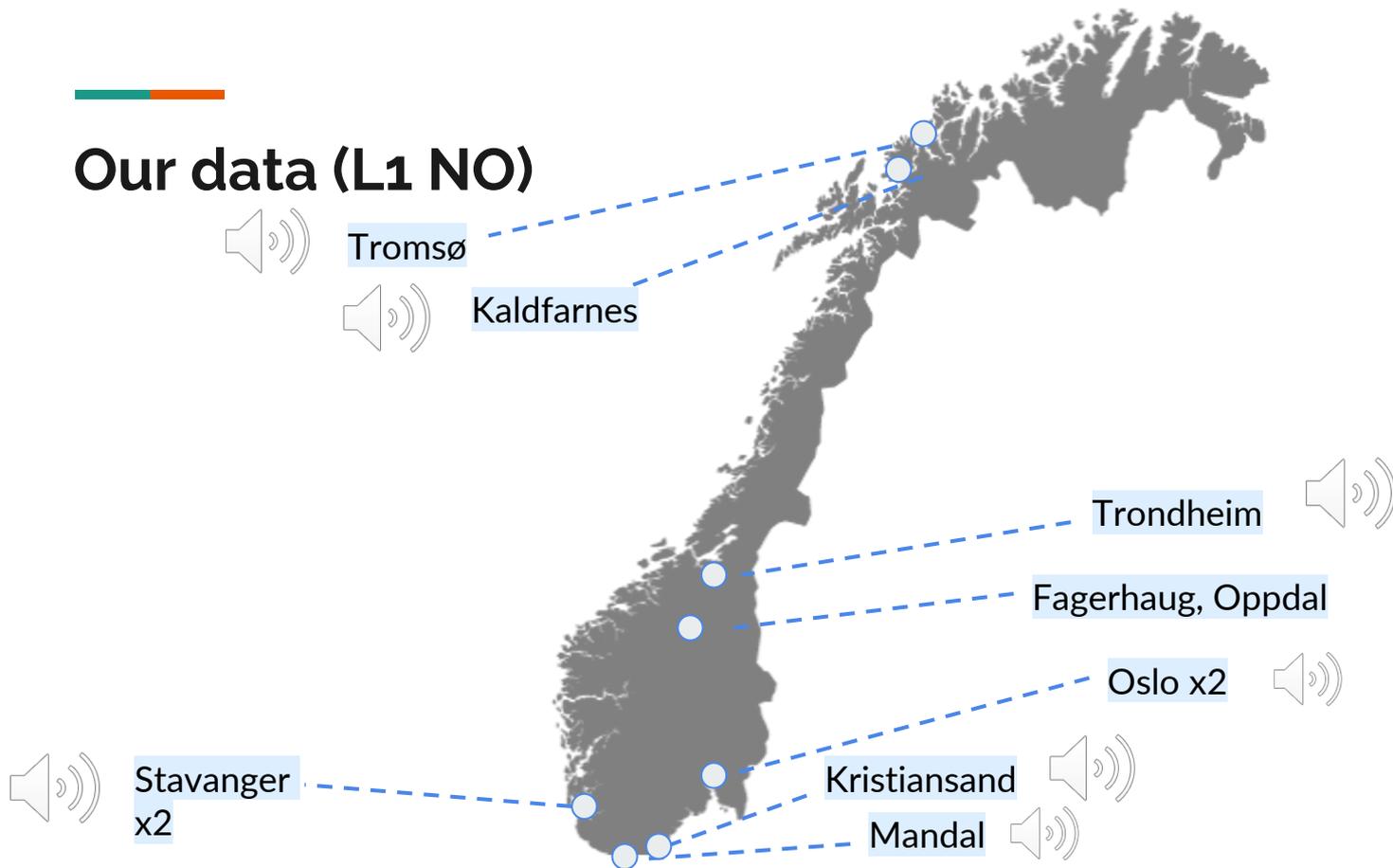
Opptakene er i [MP3](#)- og [WAV](#)-format, og transkripsjonene foreligger både i vanlig [IPA-notasjon](#) og i [X-SAMPA](#), i tillegg til en gjengivelse som benytter [tradisjonell ortografi](#).

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[Med mange takk til...](#)

Arbeidet med *Nordavinden og sola* er delvis finansert av [Det humanistiske fakultet, NTNU](#).

Our data (L1 NO)

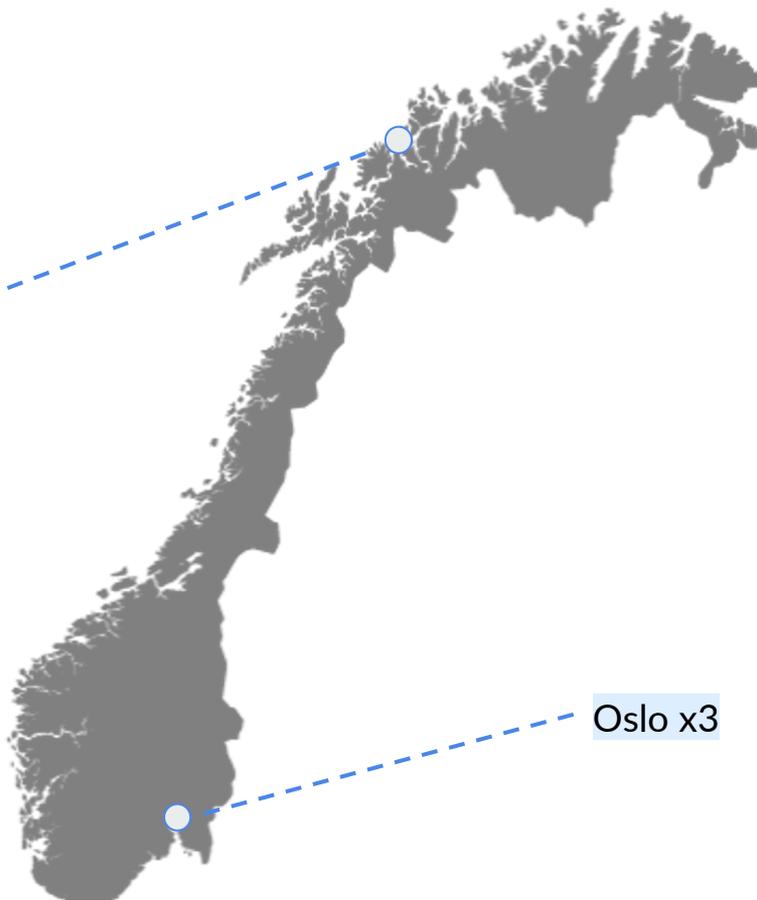




Our data (L3 NO)



Tromsø x1



Oslo x3



What do you think about the following accent of Norwegian?

▶ 0:00 / 0:38   ⋮

1 = not at all, 4 = neutral / in the middle, 7 = very

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
pleasant	<input type="radio"/>						
intelligent	<input type="radio"/>						
friendly	<input type="radio"/>						
self-confident	<input type="radio"/>						
distant to where I live	<input type="radio"/>						
educated	<input type="radio"/>						
prestigious	<input type="radio"/>						
native	<input type="radio"/>						

Where in Norway is this accent from? What makes you think so?

▶ 0:00 / 0:38   ⋮

Do you like this accent? What language (or accent / dialect) features make you like or dislike this accent?

▶ 0:00 / 0:38   ⋮



Study procedure

- The respondents listened to and evaluated the samples on a 7-point Likert scale according to perceived:
 - Education level
 - Pleasantness
 - Intelligence
 - Prestigious accent
 - Friendliness
 - Self-confidence
 - Distance / proximity
 - Likes / dislikes
 - Characteristic features
 - To identify the region of origin
- The samples were presented in randomised order
- The experiment took ca 20 mins



Research questions

1. Are some accents of Norwegian perceived differently than others?
2. Do L2/L3 learners of Norwegian attribute similar aesthetic judgments to Norwegian speech as Norwegian speakers do?
3. Are there any acoustic correlates of these judgments (e.g., high-pitched voice, female/male voice, the presence of uvular /r/ phonemes)?



Participants

- Three groups:
 - Polish instructed learners of Norwegian living in Poland N = 16
 - Polish naturalistic learners of Norwegian residing in Norway N = 17
 - Norwegian native speakers as controls N = 10
- Participants profiles:
 - Gender, Age
 - Residence in Norway (present or past)
 - Length of learning Norwegian
 - Language use frequency
 - Proficiency level in Norwegian, English, Polish

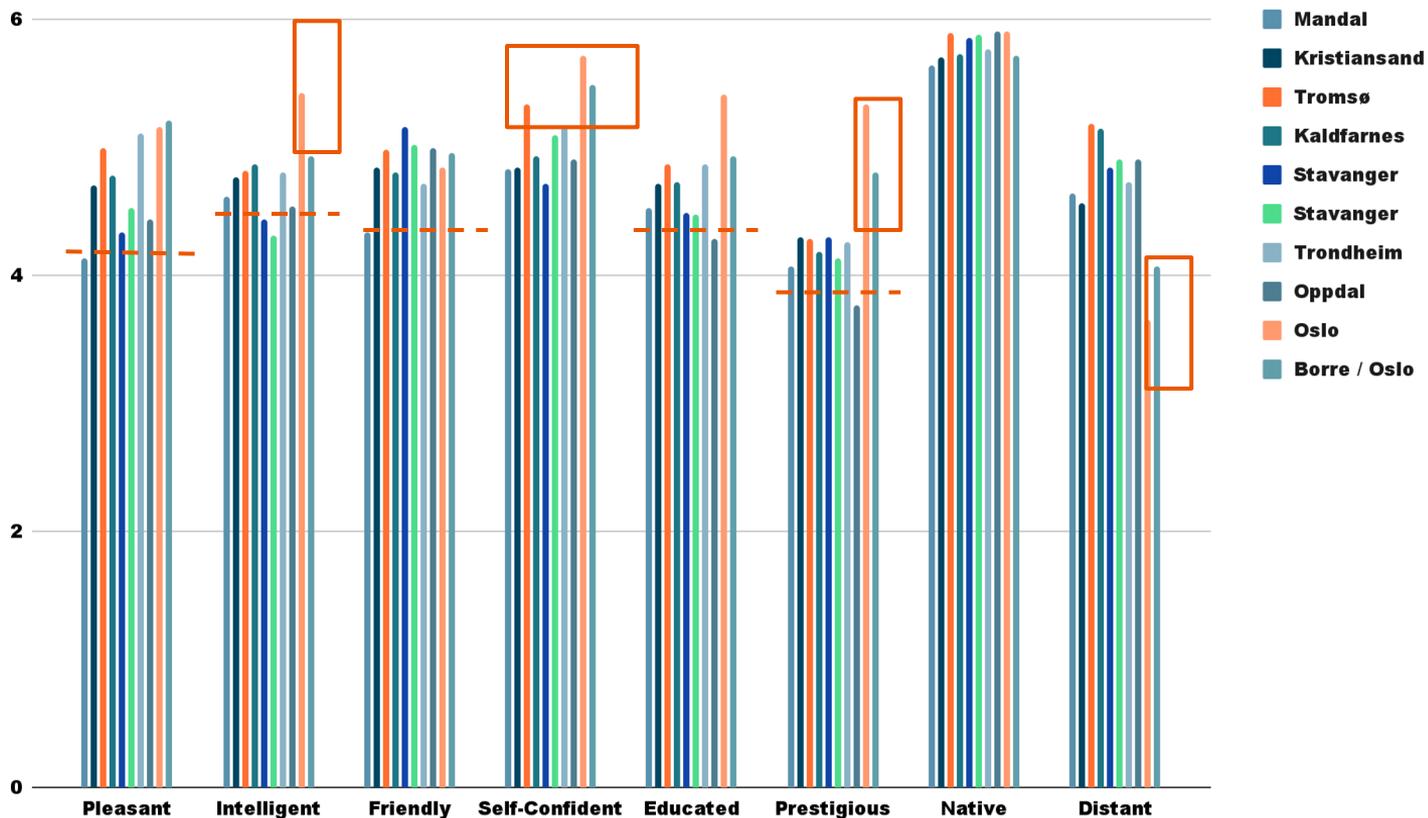


Analyses - accent perceptions and attitudes

- Ratings: 8 adjectives on a 7-point Likert scale
 - Joint group analysis
 - Across groups comparison
 - Across accents comparison
- Attitudes to individuals accents (likes/dislikes)
- Accent identification
- Characteristic features of accents identified by respondents
 - Qualitative analysis

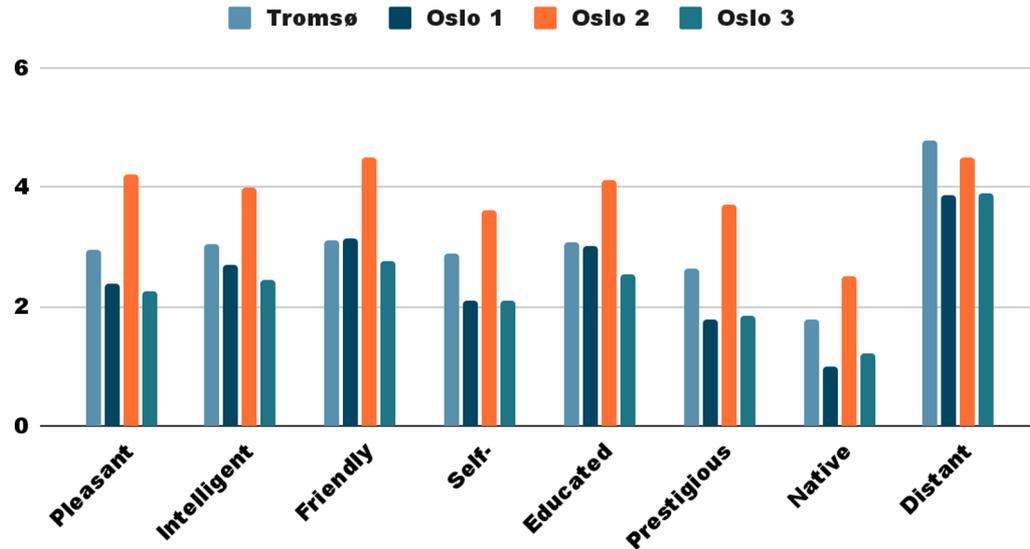
Mean scores for accents (joint group analysis)

Results



Results for L3 learners accents - joint group analysis

Scores attributed do L3 NO accents





Results - accent identification for Mandal (southern)

- 9 correct attributions
 - (“Agder”, “Sørlandsk”, “Kristiansand?”, “South of Norway”, “Kristiansand”, “Vest-Agder”, “close to Kristiansand”)
- Many raters identified it as Bergen
- No instructed L3 learners guessed where the accent was from



Results - accent identification for Kristiansand (southern)

- 7 correct identification for “Kristiansand”
- 5 correct identification for “Agder”
- 5 correct identifications for “the South”



Results - accent identification for Tromsø (northern)

- 12 people guessed it was from the North
 - (“Nordlandet”, “North”)
- 3 people have guessed it was Tromsø
- Some raters were mistaken
 - “Lofoten”, “Trondheim”, “Telemark”, “Finnland”, “close to Denmark”



Results - accent identification for Kaldfarnes (northern)

- 9 people have guessed the Northern accent correctly
- Many guessed incorrectly
 - “Trondheim”, “Trøndelag”, “Bergen”, “Oslo”, “Drammen”
- This was one of the more difficult accents to identify for all groups



Results - accent identification for Stavanger (western)

- 10 native speakers overall have guessed the area (4) or the exact origin of the accent (6)
- No instructed learners guessed correctly
- Confused with “Oslo”, “North-West”, “Bergen” (x3), “Nordland” (x2)



Results - accent identification for Stavanger 2 (western)

- Many exact correct identifications for “Stavanger” (11)
- Often confused with Kristiansand and Bergen



Results - accent identification for Trondheim (Trøndelag)

- Guessed correctly: Trøndelag (8), Trondheim (9)
- Some incorrect identification; confused with Oslo a few times
- 2 instructed learners guessed correctly



Results - accent identification for Oppdal (Trøndelag)

- Only one correct identification (“Trondheim area”)
- Commonly confused with “the South” or “Oslo”



Results - accent identification for Oslo

- Only three incorrect identifications (“Trondheim”, “Stavanger”)
- Raters from all groups were able to identify the speaker’s accent
- A few null responses (“I don’t know”)



Results - accent identification for Oslo / Borre

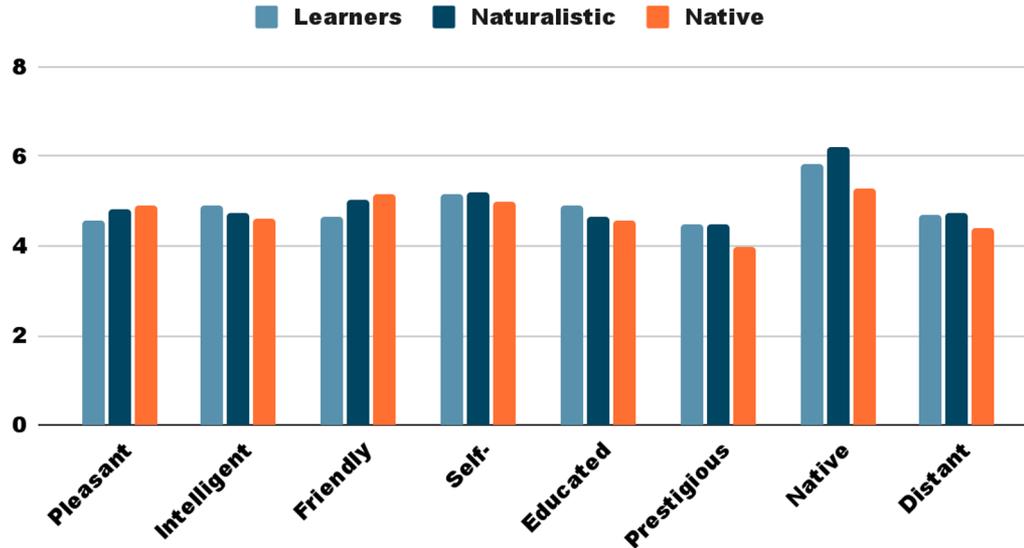
- “Oslo” (12), “South” (8), “East Norway” (9)
- 1 incorrect identification (“Vestlandet”)
- 9 null responses (“I don’t know”)

Results (Kaldfarnes)



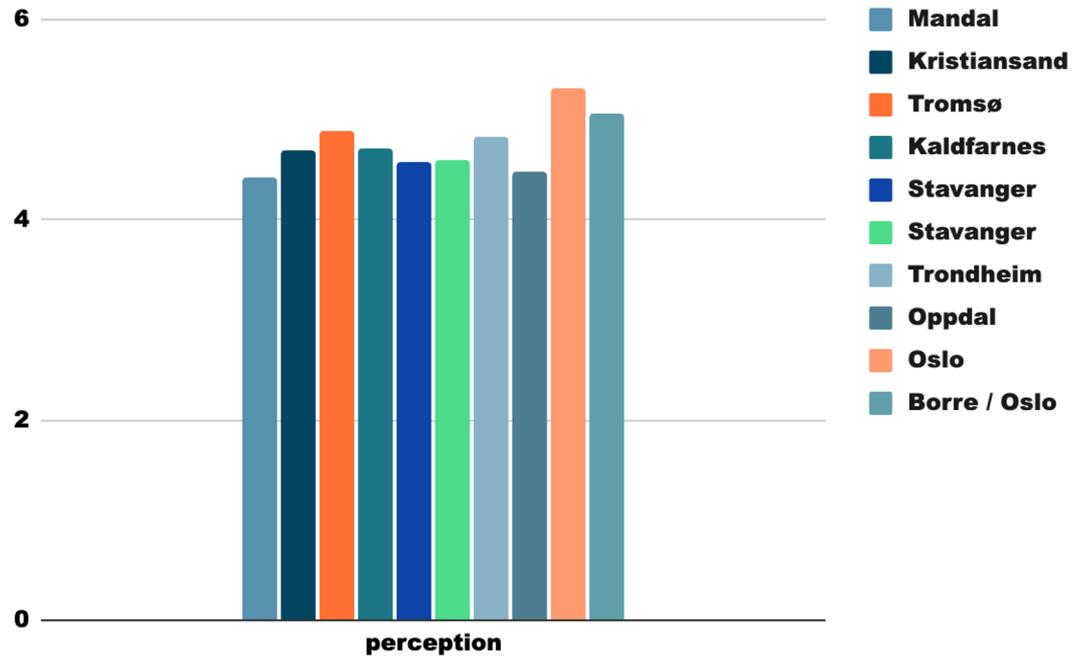
Results - across group - overall perception 1

Attitudes of different groups of raters

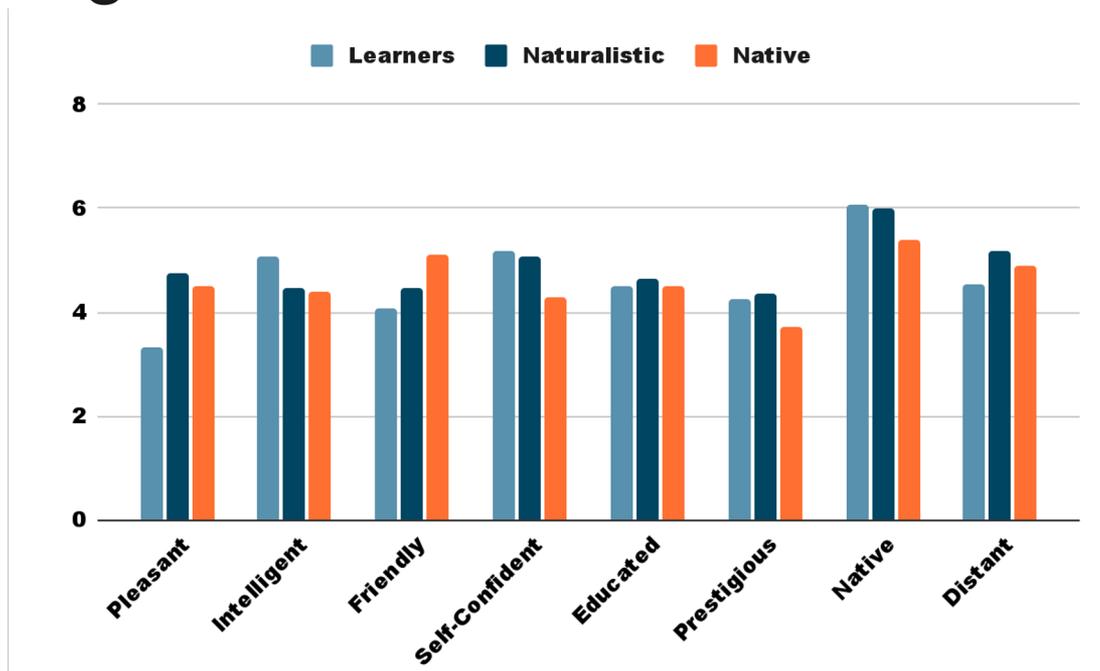




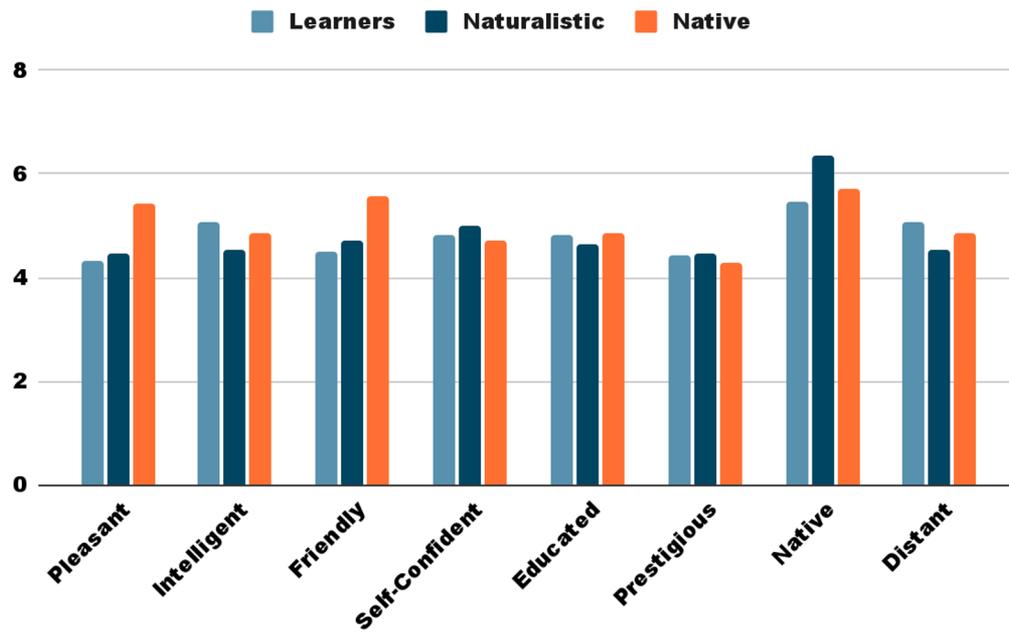
Results - across accent - overall perception 2



Results - Between group differences for particular accents (e.g. Mandal)



Results - Between group differences for particular accents (e.g. Kristiansand)





Discussion

1. Do learners of Norwegian attribute similar aesthetic judgments to Norwegian speech as Norwegian speakers do?
-> **YES, but some variation across individual samples**
1. Are some accents of Norwegian perceived differently than others?
-> **PARTIALLY YES**
1. Are there any acoustic correlates of these judgments like high-pitched voice, female/male voice, the presence of uvular /r/ phonemes?
-> **Potentially yes - differences between ratings of samples from the same region**
-> **To be investigated further**



Discussion

- Norwegian accents are perceived differently along aesthetic categories
- Speakers from the same region are not necessarily perceived similarly (esp. the South, Trøndelag)
- The differences between the three raters groups are smaller than expected
- Accent identification better for natives and naturalistic than instructed learners
- **Nativeness** seems to be a gradient category, for all groups of listeners



Conclusions & pedagogical implications

- **Future work:**
- Larger pool of respondents
- Statistical modelling to be performed
- Suggestions welcome :-)

- **Implications for L2/L3 Norwegian teaching/learning:**
- Accent awareness raising
- Diversified exposure to various accents
- Accent training as part of pronunciation courses
- ...



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ADIM project

<https://adim.web.amu.edu.pl/en/>





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[https://amuedu.qualtrics.com/jfe/
form/SV_40ersIFnsSILJgq](https://amuedu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_40ersIFnsSILJgq)





Order of the recordings

1. Mandal nos19001 (F) 1950
2. Tromsø nos03003 (F) 1941
3. Kaldfarnes, Torsken nos03001 (M) 1944
4. Stavanger nos18002 (F) 1977
5. Stavanger nos18003 (F) 1979
6. Trondheim nos09001 (F) 1969
7. Oppdal nos10001 (M) 1947
8. Oslo nos22001 (M) 1953
9. Oslo (Borre) nos23002
10. Kristiansand nos19002
11. Tromsø (F), dobry akcent
12. Oslo (F), polski akcent
13. Oslo (F), dobry akcent
14. Oslo (M), bardzo polski akcent