

## **Proper English Usage : a sociolinguistic investigation of attitudes towards usage problems in British English** Ebner, C.

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## 9. Current Usage Attitudes in England: the Interview Sessions 9.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will turn to my analysis of the interview sessions with informants who completed two indirect elicitation tests: an open-guise test and a usage judgment test (see § 5.3). In combination with the latter, a direct attitude elicitation test was also conducted with the respondents who were asked to agree or disagree with a set of usage rules. The results of each of these elicitation tests will be discussed in detail in this chapter. Firstly, the openguise test ( $\S$  5.3.3) will be analysed for which I will also describe the data and the statistical tests used in the analysis. Since this is a sociolinguistic investigation, it is again important to identify any possible significant correlations between attitudinal ratings and social variables. Secondly, the usage judgment test will be analysed and contrasted to the attitudes expressed in the direct elicitation test. Based on this analysis, the social salience of usage problems will be foregrounded. With the methodological approach taken in this study I will attempt to avoid the pitfalls and drawbacks of earlier usage studies. Despite avoiding some of these, this study also encountered various drawbacks which will be discussed at the end of the analysis.

#### 9.2. Results of the Interview Sessions in the "Golden Triangle"

As mentioned in Chapter 5 (§ 5.3.2), I also conducted interviews with 63 informants in three cities situated within the so-called Golden Triangle: London, Oxford and Cambridge. In these interviews, which have an average length of 16:30 minutes, informants were asked to complete two further tests which aimed at eliciting attitudes towards usage problems in a more indirect manner. Since previous usage studies did not include spoken stimuli, as discussed in Chapter 5, the aim of this part of my study was to incorporate an open-guise test, a variant of the matched guise test which was considered most appropriate. The particularities of this test have already been discussed in the previous chapter (§ 5.3.3). Furthermore, I developed a usage judgment test which aimed at eliciting attitudes indirectly as informants were asked to correct a letter of application which included nine instances of six usage problems (§ 5.3.4). Before I discuss the results of these tests, the informant sample will be briefly described.

The interviews were conducted within three inconsecutive weeks in the summer of 2014. Given the limited time available to me during the relevant fieldwork trips, quota sampling (Milroy & Gordon, 2003, p. 30) was chosen based on two simple factors: age and gender. These two factors had shown significant correlations with acceptability judgment in the online questionnaire analysis (see Chapter 7). For the variable age two categories were chosen with the dividing line being drawn at the age of 50 to divide the population into two large age groups. In the age group of informants aged 50 or below, the youngest informant was 20 years old and the oldest was 50, while the youngest informant in the age group of informants over 50 was 53 years old and the oldest informant was 86 years old. The mean age of participants in the young group is 31 years, while it is 66 years for the participants in the old group. The sample's overall mean age is 47.9. An overview of the informants' ages can be found in Appendix G. The aim was to interview at least fifteen informants in each subgroup resulting in a total of 60 informants. Table 9.1 shows the final result of the quota sampling.

Tabl	le 9	9.1	Quota	samp	ling	for	in	terview	session
					<u> </u>				

	Female	Male	Total
Young (18–50)	18	15	33
Old (over 50)	18	12	33
Total	36	27	63

As can be seen from Table 9.1, the quota sampling was not completely successful due to the limited time available to me. Falling short of three informants to complete the desired fifteen, the Old-Male-informants category consists of only twelve informants. Both Young subcategories exceeded the set goal of fifteen informants by three in each category. Most of the interviews had to be arranged prior to my arrival, which required making use of various ways of recruiting informants. Not only did I draw on my own personal network for this, making the applied sampling technique take on traits of the friend-of-a-friend sampling technique, but I also made use of other social networks and platforms such as the U3A Cambridge and Daily Info Oxford, an online service for placing advertisements (see § 5.3.2). The informants received a small remuneration for their participation as well as coffee or tea. The interviews were all held at public places, such as cafés and restaurants, in line with the ethics committee regulations discussed in Chapter 5.

The statistical tests used for the analysis of the two elicitation tests reported on in this chapter are included in the software package statistics program SPSS 23 and were chosen due to their suitability for the analysis of non-parametric data. A Friedman's two-way ANOVA, also known as Friedman test, enables the testing of any possible differences between a number of related groups (Field, 2013, p. 251). As the data consist of semantic-differential scale ratings on four recordings (cf. § 5.3.3) provided by the participants in the open-guise tests, the Friedman test is the appropriate test to determine any rating differences. However, before the results of these Friedman tests are presented, a factor analysis was conducted on the twelve semantic-differential scales, not only to identify any underlying variable according to which these scales can be group, but also to identify any semantic-differential scales which showed a singularity in the informants' responses (Field, 2013, pp. 665–682). Furthermore, I use Wilcoxon's signed rank tests

as a Post hoc test to determine any differences between the two age and gender groups. As for the usage judgment test, Kendall tau-b correlation coefficients are calculated to identify any statistically significant correlations between the salience of usage problems and the social variables investigated: age and gender (see § 5.3.4).

#### 9.2.1. Open-guise test

Having described and briefly summarized the test's sample and sampling technique, I will now discuss the findings of the statistical tests used for the analysis of the open-guise test. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the open-guise test consisted of four recordings of a female and a male speaker, who were recorded using eleven stimulus sentences in each recording. While one recording included unmarked stimuli, i.e. variants considered to be part of Standard English, the other recording used the descriptive and marked variants of these same stimulus sentences. The informants were asked to rate each recording on twelve 5-point semantic differential scales.

In order to analyse the data collected in the open-guise test, I made use of Friedman tests and Wilcoxon's signed rank tests. These non-parametric tests were chosen because the data was not distributed normally (Field, 2013, p. 228). They will allow for an identification of any statistically significant differences in the informants' judgments of the four recordings. I also conducted factor analyses for each of the four recordings, which resulted in the reduction of variables and the identification of underlying relations between the variables. A principal component analysis was used and a Varimax rotation applied to extract factors (Field, 2013, pp. 681–682), which showed that recordings 1, 3 and 4 produced two factors each, while the factor analysis for recording 2 showed three factors. Since the factor analysis should be considered an exploratory instrument, I decided to extract only two factors for recording 2, which is in line with the results of the other recordings. The variables "clever – unintelligent", "pretty – unattractive", "friendly – mean" and "honest – untrustworthy" were excluded as they could have caused problems due to their singularity in the informants' responses (Field, 2013, pp. 693– 694). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measures for each recording as well as the results of the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which essentially shows whether there are relationships between the variables included in the factor analysis and thus tests the null-hypothesis (Field, 2013, pp. 684–685), are provided in Table 9.2 below.

Table 9.2 KMO measures and Bartlett's test of sphericity

Recording	KMO measure	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity
Recording 1	.705	$\chi^2(28) = 137.659, p = .000*$
Recording 2	.628	$\chi^2(28) = 92.519, p = .000*$
Recording 3	.727	$\chi^2(28) = 118.496, p = .000*$
Recording 4	.644	$\chi^2(28) = 86.137, p = .000*$

\* Statistically significance ( $p \le .05$ )

Despite the above-mentioned KMO measures falling either into the mediocre category of measures in the .60s or in the middling category of measures in the .70s, the KMO measures indicate that the sampling adequacy is acceptable (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999, pp. 224–225). The extracted factors neatly circumscribe two broader concepts. Factor 1 comprises variables related to the agreeableness of a person (cf. McCrae & Costa, 1997, p. 513), while factor 2 includes variables which seem to describe a status-oriented person. For this reason, the second factor was labelled status-orientation. Table 9.3 below shows the variables composing the two factors for each recording and the factor loadings which indicate the relatedness of the variables (Field, 2013, p. 668).

recording 1		recording 2	
Agreeableness		Agreeableness	
humble – arrogant	.811	authentic – fake	.798
authentic – fake	.733	generous – selfish	.793
generous – selfish	.699	hard working – lazy	.604
-		humble – arrogant	.576
		determined - wavering	.461
Status-orientation		Status-orientation	
orderly – sloppy	.775	literate – illiterate	.769
wealthy – not wealthy	.760	wealthy – not wealthy	.678
literate – illiterate	.652	orderly – sloppy	.493
determined – wavering	.550		
hand monthing to the set	100		
hard working – lazy	.488		
recording 3	.488	recording 4	
recording 3 Agreeableness	.488	recording 4 Agreeableness	
recording 3 Agreeableness humble – arrogant	.818	recording 4 Agreeableness generous – selfish	.830
recording 3 Agreeableness humble – arrogant generous – selfish	.488 .818 .801	recording 4 Agreeableness generous – selfish authentic – fake	.830 .661
recording 3 Agreeableness humble – arrogant generous – selfish authentic – fake	.818 .801 .742	recording 4 Agreeableness generous – selfish authentic – fake humble – arrogant	.830 .661 .576
recording 3 Agreeableness humble – arrogant generous – selfish authentic – fake	.818 .801 .742	recording 4 Agreeableness generous – selfish authentic – fake humble – arrogant hard working – lazy	.830 .661 .576 .531
recording 3 Agreeableness humble – arrogant generous – selfish authentic – fake Status-orientation	.818 .801 .742	recording 4 Agreeableness generous – selfish authentic – fake humble – arrogant hard working – lazy Status-orientation	.830 .661 .576 .531
recording 3 Agreeableness humble – arrogant generous – selfish authentic – fake Status-orientation hard working – lazy	.818 .801 .742 .741	recording 4 Agreeableness generous – selfish authentic – fake humble – arrogant hard working – lazy Status-orientation literate – illiterate	.830 .661 .576 .531 .768
nard working – lazy         recording 3         Agreeableness         humble – arrogant         generous – selfish         authentic – fake         Status-orientation         hard working – lazy         literate – illiterate	.818 .801 .742 .741 .700	recording 4 Agreeableness generous – selfish authentic – fake humble – arrogant hard working – lazy Status-orientation literate – illiterate orderly – sloppy	.830 .661 .576 .531 .768 .631
recording 3 Agreeableness humble – arrogant generous – selfish authentic – fake Status-orientation hard working – lazy literate – illiterate orderly – sloppy	.818 .801 .742 .741 .700 .640	recording 4 Agreeableness generous – selfish authentic – fake humble – arrogant hard working – lazy Status-orientation literate – illiterate orderly – sloppy wealthy – not wealthy	.830 .661 .576 .531 .768 .631 .590
nard working – lazy         recording 3         Agreeableness         humble – arrogant         generous – selfish         authentic – fake         Status-orientation         hard working – lazy         literate – illiterate         orderly – sloppy         wealthy – not wealthy	.818 .801 .742 .741 .700 .640 .560	recording 4 Agreeableness generous – selfish authentic – fake humble – arrogant hard working – lazy Status-orientation literate – illiterate orderly – sloppy wealthy – not wealthy determined – wavering	.830 .661 .576 .531 .768 .631 .590 .567

Table 9.3 Factor composition and factor loadings

It needs to be pointed out here that recordings 2 and 4, which both consist of the marked variants described in Section 5.3.3 above, display a change in the variable components of the factors identified. The status-orientation factor seems to be more concrete in that fewer variables are loading onto this factor. Variables such as "literate – illiterate", "wealthy – not wealthy" and "orderly – sloppy" are frequently associated with a degree of superiority (Zahn & Hopper, 1985, p. 118). While these three variables make up the status-orientation factor for recording 2, the variable "determined – wavering"

is added to this factor for recording 4. The reason for this shift will be investigated in more detail using Wilcoxon signed-rank tests and analysing the informants' comments. After having identified the two factors, I computed the scores by averaging the variables which make up each factor. This procedure was chosen in order to maintain the rating scale established through the semantic differential scales ranging from 1, representing a positive judgment, to 5 marking the opposite, negative end of the scale. The initial eigenvalues identified in the factor analyses, which are described by Child (2006, p. 47) as "the sum of all the variance in a factor", showed that for recording 1, the statusorientation factor accounted for 29 per cent of all variation while the agreeableness factor did so for 28 per cent. The eigenvalues for recording 2 explained for the status-orientation factor 21 per cent and for the agreeableness factor 29 per cent, for recording 3 27 per cent and 30 and recording 4, 25 per cent and 27 per cent for the status-orientation and agreeableness factors respectively.

Using a Friedman test, a statistically significant difference could be identified in the responses of the informants between the four recordings and the two factors ( $\chi^2(7) = 119.861$ , p = .000). As mentioned above, Wilcoxon tests were conducted to investigate these findings further. By comparing not only the results for the two recordings of the male and female speakers to each other, but also by comparing the male speaker's marked and unmarked recordings to the recordings of the female speaker, a clearer picture of the significant differences can be obtained. Hence, an intra- and inter-speaker comparison was conducted. To minimise the risk of Type I error, which in essence describes the risk of assuming effects where there are none, I applied a Bonferroni correction (Field, 2013, p. 69). According to this correction, the significance level is reduced to .0042. Overall, statistically significant differences could be determined only on the intra-speaker level. On this level, the perception of the marked recording of the male speaker shows a statistically significant difference between the two established factors status-orientation and agreeableness, showing a more favourable rating by the informants on the agreeableness factor (Mdn = 3.20), T = 13, p = .000, r = -.55, than on the status-orientation factor (Mdn = 3.67). Similar results were found for the marked recording of the female speaker, which was also rated more favourably on the agreeableness factor (Mdn = 3.00), T = 12, p = .000, r = -.50 than on the status-orientation factor (Mdn = 3.50). Additionally, on the intraspeaker level, however across the usage dimension, three comparisons showed highly significant differences. Hence, the male speaker was rated more favourably on the agreeableness factor (Mdn = 2.67), T = 17, p = .000, r = -.53, and on the status-orientation factor (Mdn = 2.80), T = 7, p = .000, r = -.76 when using the unmarked utterances. The female intra-speaker comparison paints a similar picture for the status-orientation factor. The female speaker is rated significantly more favourably on this factor (Mdn = 2.40), T = 8, p = .000, r = -.77, when using the unmarked utterances. The female speaker's marked recording did not show any statistically significant rating differences according to the Bonferroni correction. These findings indicate how the use of unmarked variants can affect perceptions in that both the male and female speakers' unmarked recordings were rated more favourably by the informants than their marked counterparts on the status-orientation factor. However, this analysis also brings to light how both speakers' marked recordings were more favourably rated on the agreeableness factor. Comparing the different recordings to one another, none of the inter-speaker comparisons shows a statistically significant difference, which is due to the Bonferroni correction and the consequent lowering of the significance level to .0042.

While no significant differences between the recordings of the male and female speakers could be identified, the informants noticed the different accents of the two speakers. What needs to be borne in mind is that the female speaker's accent was possibly more characteristic of Standard English than that of the male speaker (cf. 5.3.3). These slight differences in accents may well have had an influence on the informants' perceptions of the speakers, so this is a factor that needs to be reckoned with in the interpretation of the results, despite the non-significant outcome of the Friedman test. The informants' comments bear evidence of noticing the speakers' accents. Some of these comments indicated that the female speaker was believed to have originated in the south or is thought only to have a "slight accent", as comments (127) and (128) illustrate; at the same time these comments confirm the perception of the female speaker as a more standard speaker than her male counterpart.

- (127) No disguised accent (southern South London?)(Freelance editor, female, 30 years old)
- (128) slight accent or an English tone.(Retired computer engineer, male, 69 years old)

On the other hand, the male speaker's accent seemed to be less obvious and proved more difficult for informants to identify. Being placed in various regions by the informants, as can be seen in comments (129) - (131), the male speaker's accent seems to have disguised his origin.

- (129) His accent sounded Scottish.(PhD candidate in psychology, female, 26 years old)
- (130) accent northern UK/American? (Editor, female, 30 years old)
- (131) slight London accent.(PhD candidate (Natural Sciences), male, 24 years old)

In order to get a more detailed overview of the informants' judgments. I decided to investigate in more detail the original variables of which the two factors consist, i.e. the semantic differential scales. Conducting another set of Wilcoxon signed-rank tests following the same intra- and inter-speaker comparison scheme as applied above, I needed to calculate a new Bonferroni correction, as the number of tests had increased considerably, resulting in a new significance level of .0016. According to these findings, the male speaker is considered significantly more hard working (Mdn = 3.00), T = 6, p = .000, r = -.45, literate (Mdn = 2.00), T = 1, p = .000, r = -.78, orderly (Mdn = 2.00), T = 6, p = .000, r = -.59, and wealthier (Mdn = 3.00), T = 2,p = .000, r = -.48, when using the unmarked variants. The female speaker is also considered more hard working (Mdn = 3.00), T = 7, p = .0012, r = -.41, literate (Mdn = 2.00), T = 4, p = .000, r = -.72, orderly (Mdn = 2.00), T = 4, p = .000, r = -.63, and wealthier (Mdn = 3.00), T = 1, p = .000, r = -.56, in the recording including the unmarked variants. On the inter-speaker level, none of the variables show a low enough significance level. The findings of the Friedman test therefore show how speakers making use of usage features falling into the prescriptive paradigm are considered significantly more hard working, literate, orderly and also wealthier.

By splitting the file into two groups based on age and gender respectively, the perceptions of the recordings of the male and female informants on the one hand and of the old and young informants on the other can be identified and compared. For this comparison, the Bonferroni correction of .0042 needs to be applied. The results for the Wilcoxon signed-rank tests for both gender groups can be found in Table 9.4.

As can be seen from the findings presented in the table below, the intraspeaker comparison shows two instances in which the judgments made by the female informants differ significantly while those of male informants do not. The first rating difference can be identified for the marked recording of the male speaker, who is rated considerably more favourably on the agreeableness factor than on the status-orientation factor (Mdn = 3.00), T = 6, p = .000, r = -.67. The same tendencies could be identified for the female speaker's marked recording, which was rated more favourably on the agreeableness factor than the status-orientation factor by women (Mdn = 3.00), T = 5, p = .000, r = -.65. One further statistically significant rating difference between male and female informants was identified, which is found in the ratings of the male informants when comparing the male speaker's unmarked with its marked counterpart. As can be seen from the table above, the male speaker's unmarked recording was rated more favourably on the agreeableness factor (Mdn = 2.33), T = 7, p = .001, r = -.61. It is also worth mentioning the identified rating differences in the comparison of the status-orientation factors, which showed that the speakers were rated more favourably on the status-orientation factor when using the unmarked variants. However, no rating differences were identified between men and women with respect to this factor. The findings of the openguise test with regard to gender differences show that women tend to make more significant rating differences when compared to the male informants in my sample. The reason for this could be women's higher degree of statusconsciousness, which Trudgill (1974, p. 94) argued seems to be reflected in women's greater awareness of the significance and social consequences of language use. Since the status-orientation factor consists of variables such as "literate - illiterate" and "wealthy - not wealthy" (cf. Table 9.3), this factor seems to be more associated with the standardness and correctness of the unmarked recordings, which was shown for both gender groups. It therefore does not come as a surprise to see that female informants rated the marked recordings of the male and female speakers more favourably on the agreeableness factor than on the status-orientation factor.

Intra-speaker						
		male speaker (u)	male speaker (m)	female speaker (u)	female speaker (m)	
gende	er	S - A	S - A	S - A	S - A	
	Ζ	904 <sup>b</sup>	-4.004°	-1.697 <sup>b</sup>	-3.919°	
Female	р	.366	.000*	.090	.000*	
	Ζ	-1.602°	-2.198°	-1.702 <sup>b</sup>	-1.423°	
Male	р	.109	.028	.089	.155	
	male speaker			female	speaker	
gende	er	A(m) - A(u)	S(m) - S(u)	A(m) - A(u)	S (m) – S (u)	
	Ζ	-2.818°	-5.147°	-2.190°	-5.053°	
Female	р	.005	.000*	.028	.000*	
	Ζ	-3.188°	-3.379°	844°	-3.303°	
Male	р	.001*	.001*	.399	.001*	

Table 9.4 Wilcoxon signed-rank test results by gender

Inter-speaker						
	female vs male speaker (unmarked)			female vs male	e speaker (marked)	
gende	er	$A\left(f\right)-A\left(m\right)$	S(f) - S(m)	$A\left(f\right)-A\left(m\right)$	S(f) - S(m)	
Female	Z	177 <sup>b</sup>	-1.249 <sup>b</sup>	165°	134°	
	р	.907	.212	.869	.893	
Male	Z	-2.431°	-1.292 <sup>b</sup>	-1.458 <sup>b</sup>	-1.918 <sup>b</sup>	
	р	.015	.196	.145	.055	
b. Based on positive ranks						
c. Based of * Signific	on neg	gative ranks	erroni correction (n <	0042)		
u = Unma	arked	recording	errom correction (p <	m = Marked reco	rding	
S = Status	s-orie	ntation factor		A = Agreeablene	ss factor	

Splitting the file into young and old informants. I obtained the following results, presented in Table 9.5 below, which will form the basis for an analysis of rating differences between age groups. Table 9.5 shows a few instances in which both age groups make significantly different judgments. However, only four of the significant rating differences identified affect one of the two age groups, namely the group containing older speakers. These differences can be identified on the intra-speaker comparison level. A comparison between the obtained ratings on the status-orientation factor and the agreeableness factor showed that the old group rated the male speaker's marked recording more favourably on the agreeableness factor (Mdn = 3.20), T = 5, p = .000, r = -.64. Similar rating tendencies were identified for the female speaker's marked recording, which also showed a more favourable rating on the agreeableness factor (Mdn = 3.00), T = 4, p = .000, r = -.66, than on the status-orientation factor. The group of old informants furthermore showed statistically significant rating differences across the usage dimension, i.e. comparing the unmarked recording to the marked one. One of the two sets of rating differences was identified in the comparison of the agreeableness factors for the male speaker's recordings, which showed that older informants rated the speaker more favourably on the agreeableness factor when using the unmarked variants (Mdn = 2.50), T = 4, p = .000, r = -.77. Similar tendencies have also been identified for the female speaker, who was rated more favourably on the agreeableness factor (Mdn = 2.67), T = 4, p = .000, r = -.71, when using the unmarked utterances than the marked ones.

As can be seen from Table 9.5 below, significant rating differences between the unmarked and marked recordings of both speakers have been identified, which show that the speakers were rated more favourably on the statusorientation factor when using the unmarked variants. However, these findings did not vary according to age. The sociolinguistic analysis of age differences in the open-guise test has confirmed the findings of greater linguistic intolerance found among older speakers in the online questionnaire discussed in Chapter 7 (cf. § 7.2.1).

Intra-speaker					
		male speaker (u)	male speaker (m)	female speaker (u)	female speaker (m)
age gr	oup	S - A	S - A	S - A	S - A
	Ζ	-1.741 <sup>b</sup>	-2.638°	-2.611 <sup>b</sup>	-2.103°
young	р	.082	.008	.009	.035
ald	Ζ	-2.207°	-3.488°	513 <sup>b</sup>	-3.631°
olu	р	.027	.000*	.608	.000*
		male speaker		female	speaker
Age gr	oup	A (m) – A(u)	S(m) – S (u)	A (m) – A (u)	S (m) – S (u)
	Ζ	-1.628°	-4.340°	134 <sup>b</sup>	-3.906°
young	р	.103	.000*	.894	.000*
ald	Ζ	-4.195°	-4.380°	-3.913°	-4.542°
olu	р	.000*	.000*	.000*	.000*

Table 9.5 Wilcoxon signed-rank test results by age group

Inter-speaker						
		female vs n (unm	nale speaker arked)	female vs male	e speaker (marked)	
age group $A(f) - A(m) = S(f)$		$S\left(f\right) - S\left(m\right)$	$A\left(f\right)-A\left(m\right)$	S(f) - S(m)		
	Z	-1.877°	435 <sup>b</sup>	480 <sup>b</sup>	-1.114 <sup>b</sup>	
young	р	.061	.664	.631	.265	
1.1	Z	544°	-2.102 <sup>b</sup>	682 <sup>b</sup>	377 <sup>b</sup>	
old	р	.587	.036	.495	.706	
b. Base c. Base * Signit u = Uni S = stat	d on p d on r ficanc marke	positive ranks negative ranks ee according to Bonfo ed recording ientation factor	erroni correction (p <	$m = Marked reco\Delta = agreeablenes$	rding	

Having provided the informants with the opportunity to comment on the recordings, I was able to obtain a more elaborate insight into the respondents' usage attitudes. This qualitative addition to the quantitative analysis of attitude data has already been shown to be indispensable in my discussion above of the informants' comments on the speakers' accents. The 63 informants provided a total of 144 comments which were distributed as follows over the four recordings: male unmarked recording (n = 38), male marked recording (n = 35), female unmarked recording (n = 35) and female marked recording (n = 36). In addition to the above-mentioned perceptions of the recordings, comments on each recording will be discussed below in order to illustrate the different informants' usage judgments. Various informants commented on the interplay between accent and usage in the male speaker's unmarked recording, as can be seen in comments (132) and (133).

- (132) Grammatical accuracy (for the most part) seemed set against the accent but the accent did not really affect judgements about character
   (Teacher trainer & education advisor, female, 66 years old)
- (133) Interesting consideration of precise grammar (e.g. fewer road accidents) & mistakes (media are); speaker sounded unenthused, self-conscious, distant (but not hostile) and camp; seemed to try to correct (northern) accent on words 'bus' & 'foot' (Freelance editor, female, 30 years old)

The informant in (132) states how there seems to be a mismatch of expectations between the grammatical accuracy of the utterances and the speaker's accent. This is interesting in that this also seems to invoke an association of regional accents with ungrammatical speech. The grammatical accuracy of the utterances is also mentioned by the informant in (133), who further provides an insight into her perception of the speaker's character, which she identifies as self-conscious and distant. Interestingly, the informant in (133) identified the speaker's northern accent and his attempt to accommodate to a more standard pronunciation. These comments demonstrate how both informants in (132) and (133) argue that the utterances were only partly grammatically correct, even though the stimuli used in the recordings were strictly standard. This stresses the importance of the informants' awareness of stigmatised usages I have discussed already in this study.

The two comments on the male speaker's marked recording below provide an insight into how the speaker is perceived with regard to the attitude he seems to convey through the recording.

- (134) Had a slightly couldn't care less attitude. (Unemployed, female, 45 years old)
- (135) Sounds like wasn't worried about what other people thought about him.(Secretary, female, 28 years old)

Both informants in (134) and (135) comment on the speaker's perceived carefree attitude. This is in line with the findings of the Friedman test, which showed that the unmarked recording of the male speaker obtained a significantly more favourable rating than the marked one did on the agreeableness factor.

Various comments on the female speaker's unmarked recording deal with her character, evaluating her in a positive way, as illustrated in comments (136) - (138):

- (136) She sounds like a reasonable person.(Postdoctoral researcher in biology, male, 32 years old)
- (137) She sounded educated and spoke clearly. An interesting person. (Unemployed, female, 45 years old)
- (138) Sounds like a normal middle class, well educated person. (IT coordinator, male, 34 years old)

While the informant in (136) describes the speaker as a "reasonable person", the informants in (137) and (138) point out the speaker's good education. Sounding "educated" contributes to her being perceived as an "interesting person" by informant (137). The informant in (138) describes the female speaker as "a normal middle class, well educated person". Unsurprisingly, the marked recording of the female speaker is not evaluated as positively as the unmarked counterpart.

- (139) It's a weird combination of using incorrect forms and sounding quite middle class. It makes her sound even "worse" because you expect her to have the education to be able to know better. (Student experience manager, female, 44 years old)
- (140) Sounds more working class despite having the same accent as before. Some of the non-standard grammar makes her speech more passionate but perhaps less powerful. (Teacher, male, 44 years old)
- (141) She could be very clever etc. but from a poorer background (Librarian, female, 67 years old)

An interplay between accent and grammatical accuracy can be identified in comment (139). The informant argues that the speaker sounds "even 'worse" due to the failed expectations that come with a standard-like accent and the expected education the speaker was presumed to have received. The female speaker is perceived in a similar way in (140), in which an informant observes how the speaker "[s]ounds more working class" when using the unmarked set of utterances, despite retaining the same accent. Although being perceived as "more passionate", the female speaker's use of the marked and disputed variants entails a lack of power. This evokes a clear association of the prescribed usages used in the unmarked utterances with power and prestige. Since the informant suggests that the female speaker sounds more working class, power is attributed to the middle and upper classes. This notion of a linguistically powerless working class is also picked up by the informant in (141), who comments on the perceived economic well-being of the female speaker who she thinks could come "from a poorer background". These comments high-light how unmarked variants are associated with economically prosperous and powerful classes.

#### 9.2.2. Usage judgment test

After completing the open-guise test, the informants were asked to correct a letter of application which contained nine usage problems (see § 5.3.4). This test builds on the assumption that specific usages are only considered problematical if speakers are aware of their stigmatised status and approve of the stigmatisation. Therefore, the usage judgment test clearly falls under the indirect approach to studying attitudes, as discussed in Chapter 3, as informants are told to correct anything they found inappropriate for a job application, which without doubt constitutes a formal text type. The corrections made by the informants cover a wide topical range. Besides correcting the language of the letter, informants also corrected stylistic issues and criticised the contents of the application, which was said to lack detailed information, for instance. The application letter can be found in Appendix C. Nonetheless, a focus is put on the identification and correction of the usage problems incorporated. In order to analyse the usage problems, I coded the results according to whether informants noticed and corrected a particular item, merely noticed it by underlining the usage problem in question, or whether they failed to do so, which indicates a lack of the feature's salience to the informants concerned. Figure 9.1 contains an overview of the frequencies of this categorisation.

Figure 9.1 below shows that both flat adverbs in the letter were the most frequently noticed and corrected usage problems, followed by the two instances of sentence-initial *And*. Interestingly, the dangling participles can be found on the other end of the frequency scale, with the first one (*Having*)

worked as an IT administrator, the job seems ...) being the least noticed and corrected usage problem.



Figure 9.1 Degrees of salience of usage problems (raw figures in bars)

To see whether any correlations exist among the usage problems themselves, and also with the social variables age and gender, I conducted correlation analyses using Kendall tau-b. Instead of using the two age groups, as I did in the analysis of the open-guise test, I used the actual age of the informants for the tests to provide a more fine-grained analysis of correlations with this particular social variable. The results of this analysis can be found in Table 9.6, in which I have only present the results that proved significant.

age	flat	split infinitivo	flat advorb (2)	very	impact
Correlation	auverb (1)	mmmuve	auverb(2)	unique	
coefficient	289	269	206	329	237
Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.009	.046	.001	.019
Ń	63	63	63	63	63
dangler (1)	dangler (2)	And (1)	And (2)	impact	
Correlation	501	120	200	207	
coefficient	.581	.438	.289	.297	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.017	.012	
flat advarb	03	danglar	03	03	flat
(1)	age	(2)	infinitive	And (1)	adverb (2)
Correlation	• • • •		• 40		
coefficient	289	.402	.340	.300	.253
Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.001	.005	.014	.037
Ν	63	63	63	63	63
	very unique	And (2)	impact		
Correlation			212		
coefficient	.302	.241	.312		
Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.047	.008		
N	03	63 flot	03		
dangler (2)	(1)	llat adverb (1)	spiit infinitive	And (1)	very unique
Correlation	(1)		mmmuvc		итцис
coefficient	.581	.402	.261	.280	.277
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.031	.022	.020
Ń	63	63	63	63	63
	And (2)	impact			
Correlation					
coefficient	.263	.322			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.030	.007			
N	63	63		~	
split infinitive	age	flat adverb (1)	dangler (2)	flat adverb (2)	very unique
Correlation					
coefficient	269	.340	.261	.261	.418
Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	.005	.031	.030	.000
Ν	63	63	63	63	63
	And (2)	impact			
Correlation					
coefficient	.271	.484			
Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.000			
Ν	63	63			

Table 9.6 Significant correlations between salience of usage problems and age

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And (1)	dangler	flat	dangler	flat	And (2)
Correlation	(1)	adverb (1)	(2)	adverb (2)	
coefficient	438	300	280	321	681
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.014	.022	.008	.000
N	63	63	63	63	63
flat adverb		flat	split	4 7 (4)	
(2)	age	adverb (1)	infinitive	And (1)	And (2)
Correlation					
coefficient	206	.253	.261	.321	.348
Sig. (2-tailed)	.046	.037	.030	.008	.004
N	63	63	63	63	63
very unique	age	flat adverb (1)	dangler (2)	split infinitive	And (2)
Correlation					
coefficient	329	.302	.277	.418	.235
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.011	.020	.000	.047
Ν	63	63	63	63	63
	impact				
Correlation					
coefficient	.461				
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
Ν	63				
And (2)	dangler (1)	flat adverb (1)	dangler (2)	split infinitive	And (1)
And (2) Correlation	dangler (1)	flat adverb (1)	dangler (2)	split infinitive	And (1)
And (2) Correlation coefficient	dangler (1) .289	flat adverb (1) .241	dangler (2) .263	split infinitive .271	<i>And</i> (1)
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	dangler (1) .289 .017	flat adverb (1) .241 .047	dangler (2) .263 .030	split infinitive .271 .024	<i>And</i> (1) .681 .000
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	dangler (1) .289 .017 63	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63	dangler (2) .263 .030 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63	<i>And</i> (1) .681 .000 63
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2)	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i>	dangler (2) .263 .030 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63	And (1) .681 .000 63
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2)	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i>	dangler (2) .263 .030 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63	And (1) .681 .000 63
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235	dangler (2) .263 .030 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63	And (1) .681 .000 63
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348 .004	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235 .047	dangler (2) .263 .030 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63	And (1) .681 .000 63
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348 .004 63	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235 .047 63 dangler	dangler (2) .263 .030 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63	And (1) .681 .000 63
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348 .004 63 age	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235 .047 63 dangler (1)	dangler (2) .263 .030 63 flat adverb (1)	split infinitive .271 .024 63 dangler (2)	And (1) .681 .000 63 split infinitive
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N <i>impact</i>	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348 .004 63 age	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235 .047 63 dangler (1)	dangler (2) .263 .030 63 flat adverb (1)	split infinitive .271 .024 63 dangler (2)	And (1) .681 .000 63 split infinitive
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N <i>impact</i>	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348 .004 63 age 237 .010	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235 .047 63 dangler (1) .297	dangler (2) .263 .030 63 flat adverb (1) .312	split infinitive .271 .024 63 dangler (2) .322	And (1) .681 .000 63 split infinitive .484
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N <i>impact</i> Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348 .004 63 age 237 .019	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235 .047 63 dangler (1) .297 .012 63	dangler (2) .263 .030 63 63 flat adverb (1) .312 .008 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63 dangler (2) .322 .007 63	And (1) .681 .000 63 split infinitive .484 .000 63
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N impact Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348 .004 63 age 237 .019 63	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235 .047 63 <b>dangler</b> (1) .297 .012 63	dangler (2) .263 .030 63 63 flat adverb (1) .312 .008 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63 dangler (2) .322 .007 63	And (1) .681 .000 63 split infinitive .484 .000 63
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N impact Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348 .004 63 age 237 .019 63 very unique	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235 .047 63 <b>dangler</b> (1) .297 .012 63	dangler (2) .263 .030 63 63 flat adverb (1) .312 .008 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63 dangler (2) .322 .007 63	And (1) .681 .000 63 split infinitive .484 .000 63
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N impact Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348 .004 63 age 237 .019 63 very unique	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235 .047 63 <b>dangler</b> (1) .297 .012 63	dangler (2) .263 .030 63 63 flat adverb (1) .312 .008 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63 dangler (2) .322 .007 63	And (1) .681 .000 63 split infinitive .484 .000 63
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N impact Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348 .004 63 age 237 .019 63 very unique .461	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235 .047 63 <b>dangler</b> (1) .297 .012 63	dangler (2) .263 .030 63 63 flat adverb (1) .312 .008 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63 dangler (2) .322 .007 63	And (1) .681 .000 63 split infinitive .484 .000 63
And (2) Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N impact Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N Correlation coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	dangler (1) .289 .017 63 flat adverb (2) .348 .004 63 age 237 .019 63 very unique .461 .000	flat adverb (1) .241 .047 63 <i>very</i> <i>unique</i> .235 .047 63 dangler (1) .297 .012 63	dangler (2) .263 .030 63 63 flat adverb (1) .312 .008 63	split infinitive .271 .024 63 dangler (2) .322 .007 63	And (1) .681 .000 63 split infinitive .484 .000 63

The data in Table 9.6 above show mainly weak negative correlations between the salience of a usage feature and the social variable age. Hence, it is clear that older informants tend to notice and correct the two incorporated flat adverbs (flat adverb 1 (*work close with*),  $\tau_b = -.289$ , p = .005; flat adverb 2 (*responsible*),  $\tau_b = -.206$ , p = .046), the split infinitive (*to effectively set goals*) ( $\tau_b = -.269$ , p = .009) and the use of *impact* as a verb ( $\tau_b = -.237$ , p = .019) more frequently than younger informants. With a moderate negative correlation between age and the usage problem *very unique* the same pattern can be identified ( $\tau_b = -.329$ , p = .001).

Using the Kendall tau-b correlation coefficients, further significant correlations could be identified. Thus, the first dangler (Having worked as an IT administrator, the job seems ...) shows a strong positive correlation with the second dangler (Having worked in my previous company for four years, my aspiration ...),  $\tau_b = .581$ , p = .000. This means that those who noticed and corrected the first dangling participle in the application letter also tended to notice and correct the second one. Additionally, both instances of sentenceinitial And (And 1,  $\tau_b$  = .438, p = .000, And 2,  $\tau_b$  = .289, p = .017) tended be noticed and corrected by those informants who corrected the first dangling participle as well. A weak positive correlation was moreover identified between the first dangling participle and the use of *impact* as a verb ( $\tau_{\rm b}$  = .297, p = .012). Those informants who noticed and corrected the first flat adverb were also more likely to notice and correct the second dangling participle,  $(\tau_b = .402, p = .001)$ , the split infinitive  $(\tau_b = .340, p = .005)$ , both instances of sentence initial And (And 1,  $\tau_b = .300$ , p = .014, And 2,  $\tau_b = .241$ , p = .047), the second flat adverb ( $\tau_b$  = .253, p = .035), very unique ( $\tau_b$  = .302, p = .011), and the use of *impact* as a verb ( $\tau_{\rm b} = .312$ , p = .008). Apart from the correlations already mentioned, which are also illustrated in Table 9.6, the second dangling participle also showed a positive correlation with the split infinitive ( $\tau_b = .261$ , p = .031), both sentence-initial *And*s (*And* 1,  $\tau_b = .280$ , p = .022; *And* 2,  $\tau_b = .263$ , p = .030), as well as *very unique* ( $\tau_b = .277$ , p = .020), and *impact* ( $\tau_b = .322$ , p = .007). Besides the first flat adverb and the second dangling participle as mentioned above, informants who noticed and corrected the split infinitive were also more likely to notice and correct the second flat adverb ( $\tau_b = .261$ , p = .030), *very unique* ( $\tau_b$  .418, p = .000), the second sentence-initial *And* ( $\tau_b = .271$ , p = .024) and *impact* as a verb ( $\tau_b = .484$ , p = .000). In addition to its correlation with the dangling participles and both flat adverbs, the first sentence-initial *And* correlates, unsurprisingly, with the second sentence-initial *And* (*And* 2,  $\tau_b = .681$ , p = .000). Lastly, those informants who noticed and correct the use of *very unique* also tended to notice and correct the second sentence-initial *And* (*And* 2,  $\tau_b = .681$ , p = .000). While age showed a number of significant correlations with the usage problems investigated, gender showed no such differences, as can be seen in Table 9.7.

	dangler (1)	dangler (2)	flat adverb (1)
Mann-Whitney U	408.000	464.000	442.000
Z	-1.373	366	804
Sig. (2-tailed)	.170	.714	.421
	flat adverb (2)	very unique	And (2)
Mann-Whitney U	439.500	459.000	408.500
Z	763	412	-1.231
Sig. (2-tailed)	445	.680	218
	And (1)	split infinitive	impact
Mann-Whitney U	459.000	462.000	435.000
Z	440	397	780
Sig. (2-tailed)	.660	.691	.435

Table 9.7 Results of Mann Whitney U-tests for gender and usage problem's noticing

These findings confirm the importance of age in the usage debate, and highlight how context plays a crucial role when discussing usage attitudes in so far as the dangling participle, which was one of the least acceptable usage problems in the questionnaire (cf. § 7.2.1.8), proved to be less problematical in the usage judgment test as both instances of the dangling participle were among the least noticed and corrected usage problems. This difference is most likely explained by dangling participles occurring in context rather than in isolation.

For the purpose of debriefing the participants in the interview sessions, I presented them with the corresponding usage rules for the investigated usage problems as well as one guise rule. The usage rules, which can be found in Appendix D, either condemned the use of the usage feature investigated, hence following the prescriptive tradition, or expressed a more lenient view on the issue at hand. The informants were asked to read the usage rules and state whether they agreed or disagreed with them, or did not have an opinion on the matter. I coded the informants' responses according to three categories: "agree", "disagree" and "neither agree, nor disagree". Connecting these findings with the usage judgment test, I was thus able to see whether and how social desirability could come into play, as it was assumed that the informants would tend to agree with the normative rules, even if they had not noticed or corrected the usage problems in the usage judgment test. Before discussing the results of the Kendall tau-b correlations, I will illustrate the general frequencies of the three categories in Figure 9.2 below.

Figure 9.2 shows that 47 informants agreed with the prescriptive rule condemning the gradation of *unique*, making it the most agreed-with usage rule. The least agreed with rule discusses flat adverbs, which expresses a lenient attitude towards their usage. Only 29 informants agreed with this rule, while sixteen informants disagreed.



Figure 9.2 Informants' rule agreement categorisation (raw figures in bars)

When comparing these results to the findings of the salience of usage problems, as illustrated in Figure 9.1, a few intriguing differences came to light. While 47 informants agreed with the prescriptive rule on *very unique*, only 21 informants noticed and corrected this usage problem in the usage judgment test, and a further ten informants merely noticed it. An even stronger contrast between the findings of the salience of usage problems and informants' agreement with the usage rules can be identified in the case of the dangling participle. The two dangling participles were among the least noticed and corrected usage problems in the letter of application, yet Figure 9.2 above reveals that about sixty per cent of all informants agree with the prescriptive rule. This suggests that there is a difference between customary usage and usage norms. Lastly, the use of *impact* as a verb was noticed and corrected by only nineteen informants, while 35 of my informants agreed with the prescriptive rule. These findings are indicators of the existence of a social desirability bias triggered by the directness of the approach I took in eliciting these usage attitudes. The attitudes obtained in the direct elicitation test can thus be identified as socalled subconsciously offered attitudes which describe the respondents' inclination to offer responses which they considered to be socially acceptable. In this case, the social desirability bias is directed towards usage norms which respondents believe to be accepted within the speech community they are part of. Figure 9.3 below illustrates this potential bias.



Figure 9.3 Comparison between salience and rule agreement

Making use of the Kendall tau-b correlation test, I attempted to identify any significant correlations between the informants' judgments with regard to the salience of the usage problems and their respective rule agreement. Table 9.8 below contains the results of these correlation tests.

Kendall tau-b correlation		
dangling participle (pres. rule)	dangler (1)	dangler (2)
Correlation coefficient	.034	.079
Sig. (2-tailed)	.780	.515
IN	03	05
flat adverb (des. rule)	flat adverb (1)	flat adverb (2)
Correlation coefficient	.116	.007
Sig. (2-tailed)	.324	.952
N	63	63
And (pres. rule)	And (1)	And (2)
Correlation coefficient	.094	.040
Sig. (2-tailed)	.040	.734
N	63	63
split infinitive (des. rule)	split infinitive	
Correlation coefficient	245	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.039*	
N	63	
<i>very unique</i> (pres. rule)	very unique	
Correlation coefficient	.364	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.002*	
N	63	
<i>impact</i> (pres. rule)	Impact	
Correlation coefficient	.082	
Sig. (2-tailed)	.478	
N	63	

Table 9.8 Results of the correlation test between salience judgment and rule agreement

\* Statistically significance level p < .05

The table shows two significant correlations between the salience of usage problems and rule agreement. The findings in the table suggest that those informants who noticed and corrected the split infinitive in the usage judgment test tended to disagree with the descriptive rule on the use of split infinitives,  $\tau_{\rm b} = -.245$ , p = .039. In addition, informants who agreed with the prescriptive rule against gradable *unique* also tended to notice and correct this usage problem in the usage judgment test,  $\tau_{\rm b} = .364$ , p = .002.

#### 9.3. Concluding Remarks

Both the open-guise test and the usage judgment test enabled a more intricate investigation of usage attitudes as they focussed on eliciting subconsciously held usage attitudes. The findings of the open-guise test suggest that the unmarked recordings of the male and female speakers tend to be rated more favourably than their marked counterparts which contained disputed language features. A detailed analysis of the variables of which the two factors, i.e. status-orientation and agreeableness, are composed shows that speakers who use the unmarked variants are considered more hard working, literate, orderly and wealthier. While rating differences have been identified on the intraspeaker level, a comparison between the recordings of the male and female speakers showed no significant rating differences. There were some respondents, however, who commented on the different accents of the speakers. My analysis of comments made by the informants allowed a more detailed insight into the informants' judgments and brought to light an association of prescriptive usage with the middle and upper classes and well-educated speakers.

The usage judgment test highlighted the salience of usage features, since respondents were asked to correct anything they found unacceptable and inappropriate in an application letter that was presented to them. The test showed that flat adverbs were the most frequently noticed as well as corrected usage problem, while dangling participles were less easily identified. This indicates a crucial component which is often forgotten or neglected in usage attitude studies: the role of context. As was shown with the example of the dangling participle, a usage problem which had been included in all three elicitation tests, respondents were more likely to label a dangling participle as unacceptable when presented without any context. The usage judgment test also highlighted the dangers of obtaining socially desirable answers. By asking respondents to agree or disagree with usage rules for the usage problems investigated, I was able to show how the social desirability bias can cause respondents to agree with a particular usage rule despite having failed to notice or correct the corresponding usage feature. This was the case for the usage problems *very unique* and the split infinitive. It therefore needs to be concluded that the explicitness of an elicitation technique can have an impact on both the depth and validity of speakers' attitudes obtained. However, conscious usage attitudes should not be discarded as they are part of the speakers' overall attitudes towards a specific usage problem and users of this feature. By applying a mixed-methods approach, I was able to obtain a complete picture of the speakers' usage attitudes consisting of both conscious and subconsciously held attitudes.

The complexity of usage attitudes is highlighted in the analysis of the usage attitude data which I obtained by applying a mixed-methods approach. What is essential and needs to borne in mind when conducting attitude studies is the realisation that the outcome and obtained depth of information on usage attitudes greatly depends on the approach applied. While speakers' attitudes towards usage problems have traditionally been studied through direct elicitation techniques in the form of questionnaires (see § 4.3), indirect elicitation techniques, in particular the open-guise test and usage judgment test, have shown that speakers will offer subconscious attitudes towards usage features which are free from any influence exerted by the researcher or the test itself. Hence, the social desirability bias is minimised and the speakers' awareness of usage problems is foregrounded and becomes crucial in the attitude formation process of the speaker. By combining different elicitation techniques with an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, I was not only able to obtain elaborations and explanations from the respondents on their conscious usage attitudes, but was also able to elicit subconscious usage attitudes towards the usage problems investigated.