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Evaluative Reactions to Nonnative Spanish

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Motivations

On voice alone, listeners make "moral, intellectual, and aesthetic" judgments of others (Lindemann, 2000, p. 2).

Previous work on evaluative reactions to accented speech consider:

- judgments of regional varieties of the same language (e.g., Wilson & Baynard, 1992; Bourhis, Giles & Lambert, 1975; Arthur, Farrar & Bradford, 1974)
- native speaker judgments of second-language learners with a common L1 (e.g., Young 2003; Lindemann 2002; Cargile 1997)

Present Study

We investigate native Spanish listeners' evaluative reactions to second-language Spanish spoken by learners—all who have distinct first languages.

Speaker L1s are grouped into three linguistic distances in relation to Spanish: **close, mid, and far.**

RESEARCH QUESTION:

Is there a relationship between speaker language distance and listener evaluative reactions?

Background

Young (2003) reports ethnocentric and group-membership judgments by listeners who "consistently rate those speakers with whom they identify the highest," (p. 110).

Students enrolled in bilingual programs are found to rate nonstandard varieties favorably (Lambert, Giles & Picard, 1975).

Methods: Participants

Participants - Talkers:

- 6 learners of Spanish, each with different L1s
- enrolled in an intermediate-level Spanish course
- ages 18-22

Close L1: Brazilian Portuguese & French
Mid L1: Polish & Serbian
Far L1: Korean & Chinese

Participants- Raters:

- 50 native listeners
- Spanish was their primary language from ages 0-5
- ages 18-22
- enrolled in Spanish courses for heritage speakers

Methods: Materials

Audio-recordings:

90 second (reading 'La liebre y la tortuga')

In the following order:

- Polish (mid)
- Brazilian Portuguese (close)
- Chinese (far)
- Serbian (mid)
- French (close)
- Korean (far)

Rating form:

7-point Likert-scale
15 antonym pairs of adjectives

Three open-ended questions:

- Would you be friends with this person? Why or why not?
Where do you think this person is from? How can you tell?
Is there anything else you would like to add?

Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unintelligent
Unsophisticated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sophisticated
Trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Untrustworthy

Status:

Intelligent – Unintelligent
Very educated – Uneducated
Wealthy – Poor
Sophisticated – Unsophisticated
Competence:
Very Fluent – Not at all fluent
Very accented – Unaccented
Advanced Spanish – Beginning Spanish
Easy to understand – Difficult to understand

Personality:

Shy – Outgoing
Serious – Fun
Friendly – Unfriendly
Open minded – Narrow minded
Reliable – Unreliable
Hardworking – Lazy
Trustworthy – Untrustworthy

Future Considerations

ORDER

Raters may be less likely to judge near the beginning of the task and more likely to judge at the end:

- 1) *Would you be friends with this person? Why or why not?*

- T1: I'm not sure because I cannot accurately guess their personality based on this listening.
T2: I'm not sure.
T3: I'm not sure.
T4: I can't guess their personality & the Spanish is not very good.
T5: His accent makes the Spanish hard to understand, so I guess not.
T6: I don't think I would. (R31)

TALKERS

- More than 1 Talker from each L1
- Both genders represented for each L1
- decrease likelihood that Talkers are judged due to the person and increase likelihood that they are judged on their L1
- use an oral proficiency test (e.g. Elicited Imitation Task) to be sure that Talkers are of the same proficiency level

Results

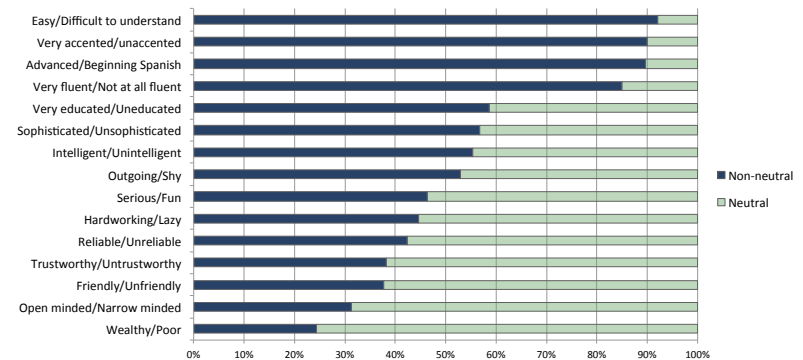
1964 of 4500 reported scores were neutral (43.6%), obscuring findings

Neutral scores (4) were removed and ratings were collapsed into two scores (1-3 & 5-7)

Table 1. Percentage of non-neutral ratings in evaluative categories by Talker language distance

	Competence					Status					Personality															
	Beginning Spanish	Advanced Spanish	Difficult to understand	Easy to understand	Not at all fluent	Very fluent	Uneducated	Very educated	Unintelligent	Intelligent	Unsophisticated	Sophisticated	Poor	Wealthy	Lazy	Hardworking	Serious	Fun	Unreliable	Reliable	Unfriendly	Friendly	Narrow-minded	Open-minded	Shy	Outgoing
Close	43	57	51	49	28	72	5	95	30	70	11	89	21	78	18	82	52	48	31	69	12	88	21	79	19	81
Mid	77	23	75	25	81	19	36	64	49	51	62	38	57	43	54	46	82	18	52	49	38	62	37	63	69	31
Far	90	10	74	26	84	16	51	49	60	40	68	32	71	29	48	52	88	12	65	35	42	58	58	42	75	25
p-value	p = .000	p = .001	p = .000	p = .000	p = .000	p = .004	p = .000	p = .002	p = .001	p = .000	p = .009	p = .009	p = .010	p = .010	p = .009	p = .009	p = .009	p = .009	p = .009	p = .009	p = .009	p = .010	p = .010	p = .010	p = .010	p = .010

Table 2. Percent of neutral versus non-neutral ratings in each evaluative category



Results: Non-significant Categories

Accent

$p = 0.262$
may be due to different understandings of the word *accent*
R7: (T2.2) Probably Hispanic, they don't have an accent.
R8: (T2.3) Accent is stronger. Is not as shy as first person.
R7: (T3.2) Not Hispanic, awful accent.
R9: (T3.2) American. Have no accent.

Trustworthy

$p = 0.615$
 $? \rightarrow$ neutral $n = 185$, non-neutral $n = 115$;
 \rightarrow RELIABILITY was significant ($p = .009$)

Conclusion

Is there a relationship between speaker language distance and listener evaluative reactions?

Yes \rightarrow We find a statistically significant relationship between the Talkers' language distance group (close, mid, far) and Raters' scores for 13 of the 15 evaluative categories.

In addition mid and far groups are scored within 6% of one another in 7 of the 13 significant categories demonstrating a distinction between *close* and *not close*.

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