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Social Evaluation of Asian Accented English

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Abstract

This paper examines evaluations of Asian accented English by American listeners. Despite widely circulating stereotypes about Asian accents, and the substantial body of work on attitudes toward different language varieties, relatively few studies have looked at American attitudes toward Asian accented English, and those that exist have produced rather ambiguous results. In an online survey, respondents from across the United States rated different voices on several traits grouped into three dimensions: Attractiveness, Status, and Dynamism. Three different Accent Conditions were tested: Mainstream US English [MUSE], Asian Accented English [AA], and Brazilian Portuguese Accented English [BP]. Results indicate generally negative evaluations of Asian accented English. RM ANOVAs ($N = 69$) reveal that AA voices were rated significantly lower than MUSE voices on all dimensions, and significantly lower than BP voices on Attractiveness and Dynamism. Even on intelligence, a trait that forms a cornerstone of the 'Model Minority' stereotype of Asian Americans, AA voices were rated significantly lower than the other two groups. There were also differences according to Speaker Gender, with a tendency for female speakers in the AA and BP conditions to be rated more favorably than male speakers. Overall, this study provides important evidence of the significant attitudinal obstacles that anyone who speaks English with an Asian accent in the US is likely to encounter, and points to the need for further work that explores the social and linguistic factors behind accent bias.

Social Evaluation of Asian Accented English

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1 Introduction

This paper examines evaluations of Asian accented English by English-speaking American listeners. Despite widely circulating stereotypes about Asian accents (Reyes and Lo 2009), and the substantial body of work on attitudes toward different language varieties (see Giles and Billings 2004 for one recent overview), few quantitative studies have looked at American attitudes toward Asian accented English, and those few have produced rather ambiguous results (Podberesky, Deluty, and Feldstein 1990, Cargile 1997, Cargile and Giles 1998). This study improves on the methodology of previous research to address this gap in the language attitudes literature.

The present study consisted of an online survey in which participants rated different voices on measures of 'Attractiveness', 'Status', and 'Dynamism'. Three different Accent Conditions were used: Mainstream U.S. English [MUSE] (Lippi-Green 1997), Asian Accented English, and Brazilian Portuguese Accented English. As predicted, the Asian Accented speakers were rated significantly lower than the MUSE speakers on all measures, and significantly lower than the Brazilian Portuguese speakers on two out of the three measures, supporting the hypothesis that Asian accents specifically are viewed negatively. Even on intelligence, a characteristic that forms a cornerstone of the 'Model Minority' stereotype of Asian Americans, Asian Accented voices were rated significantly lower than the other two groups. There were also differences according to Speaker Gender, with a tendency for female speakers to be rated more favorably than male speakers in the foreign accent conditions. These results highlight the need for greater general awareness of language-based discrimination, as well as further research into the often subtle, unconscious ways that attitudes about language manifest themselves in social interaction.

2 Background

2.1 Language Attitudes

The field of language attitude studies has grown exponentially since Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, and Fillenbaum's pioneering 1960 study of attitudes toward Canadian French and English. Cargile and Giles (1998: 340) provide an overview of the field up to that point and summarize some of the general findings:

Most [language varieties] can be classified by the degree to which they are considered 'standard' or 'non-standard' within a particular community. A 'standard' variety is that most often associated with status, the media, and power, whereas a 'non-standard' variety is one that is often associated with a lower level of socioeconomic success...[Speakers of the standard variety] are rated highly on traits related to competence, intelligence, and social status, whereas [speakers of non-standard varieties] are evaluated less favorably on these same traits, even by listeners who themselves speak [a non-standard variety].

Non-native language varieties are, by definition, non-standard. A foreign accent, defined as the non-native phonology of a second-language (L2) speaker of a language, is not only a marker of non-standardness, but is often a highly salient marker of national and cultural group membership as well. Listener evaluations of foreign-accented voices, then, are likely to reflect their attitudes toward non-native speakers generally, and toward members of the cultural group indicated by the accent more specifically. While non-standard pronunciation may be generally downgraded, not all foreign accents receive the same evaluation. As Lippi-Green (1997: 238) points out, within the United States, it is usually 'accent linked to skin that isn't white, or which signals a third-world homeland' that is stigmatized.

Cargile and Giles (1998: 349–350) similarly point out that not all accents (L1 or L2) are treated the same, summarizing a body of research on American English speakers' evaluations of

different language varieties. According to the studies they cite, Spanish-accented, Appalachian, and AAVE varieties are consistently downgraded on status-related measures, but equally well-liked as Standard American English speakers; Norwegian- and Italian-accented speakers are downgraded on measures of both status and attractiveness; while British and Malaysian varieties are rated favorably on status-related measures but downgraded on attractiveness. If, as Lambert et al. (1960) argue, listeners' evaluations of a speaker's language reflect their perceptions of the group associated with that language variety, then it is not surprising (in fact, it is expected) that different accents elicit different evaluative profiles.

2.2 Asians and Language in American Popular Culture

As the title of Mia Tuan's 1998 book, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?*, highlights, the stereotypes associated with Asians in America are often contradictory and by no means uniformly positive. The most salient stereotype today of Asians in America is probably the 'Model Minority'. The Asian immigrant who comes to this country with nothing and achieves success by dint of intelligence and hard work is the archetypal American success story, and 'this miracle is the standard depiction of Asian Americans in fact and fiction, from the news media to scholarly books to Hollywood movies' (Wu 2002: 41). Of course, the Model Minority stereotype ignores the long history of vicious and demeaning stereotypes of Asians in America, and the negative stereotypes that still co-exist with the Model Minority image. The most prominent of these is probably the 'Yellow Peril/Forever Foreigner' stereotype, which portrays Asian immigrants as an unassimilable alien element and a racial threat to white American superiority.

When Anti-Asian sentiment manifests in the United States today, it is often implicitly or explicitly tied to language use. Moreover, the *actual* language ability of the target is often irrelevant: for example, during the high-profile O.J. Simpson murder trial, New York Senator Al D'Amato ridiculed Judge Lance Ito on a nationally syndicated radio show by adopting a mock Asian accent and speaking in 'singsong pidgin' (Tuan 1998: 2). Ito, a third-generation Japanese American who was born and raised in Los Angeles, and who can be heard to speak with no trace of a nonstandard accent, was nonetheless subject to caricature and ridicule as a foreigner and deficient user of language because of his racial and ethnic background. That D'Amato, also a third-generation American, apparently did not see the irony in characterizing Ito as a foreigner with a non-native accent, highlights the racial prejudice that often undergirds language-based prejudice.

Incidents of language-based mocking like the above reflect widely circulating ideas about how Asian people speak (both Asian languages and English). Chun (2009: 267) calls the set of stereotyped features associated with these ideas 'Mock Asian'. The label 'Mock Asian' reflects both the invented nature of this imagined monolithic 'Asian' way of speaking, and the derogatory way in which it is used. Given that the popular discourse surrounding Asian language use is overwhelmingly negative, we can hypothesize that Asian accented speech is likely to elicit mainly negative evaluations from listeners. The picture from previous research, however, is not so clear.

2.3 Previous Studies

Podberesky, Deluty, and Feldstein 1990 is the first major study to look at evaluations of Asian accented American English. Podberesky, Deluty, and Feldstein (hereafter, PDF) compared Asian accented and Spanish accented speakers to 'unaccented' (native English) speakers. They hypothesized that Spanish-accented speakers would be evaluated less positively than other speakers because of past research that has found negative stereotyping of Hispanics in the United States (54). Interestingly, they included Asian accented speakers as a control condition, to see if foreign-accented speakers were judged more negatively in general, citing claims by some authors that Asian Americans are perceived as hard-working, decent, intelligent, and law-abiding (PDF 1990: 54). However, as I have argued in the previous section, the mainstream perception of Asian Americans is by no means so straightforwardly positive, and the perception of Asian accents specifically is often outright negative. Thus, positing Asian accented speakers as a control group that ought to receive generally positive evaluations is highly problematic.

Contrary to their hypothesis, PDF did not find that either group of accented speakers was evaluated more negatively overall. One possible explanation they offer for the lack of a difference

is that their respondents were undergraduate students at a small university who (because of the demographics of the university and nearby cities) likely had significant contact with Latino/a and Asian immigrants. They suggested that the respondents' age and life experiences may have led them to have a more positive attitude toward differences, including language differences (PDF 1990:60). In fact, in all three of the studies reviewed here, the respondents were college undergraduates at ethnically diverse campuses, whose attitudes may not reflect those of the larger population. Thus, a study with a wider range of respondents may yield new findings.

Cargile and Giles 1998 investigated the evaluation of Japanese-accented English compared to standard American English. In fact, the different accent conditions were produced by the same native Japanese male speaker (344). Listeners judged the speaker on measures of attractiveness, dynamism, and status. Overall, Cargile and Giles found that a moderate Japanese accent "was evaluated significantly more negatively on traits related to attractiveness and dynamism [...] but no differently on status-related traits when compared to the standard American English" accent (349). Cargile 1997 investigated the evaluation of Chinese-accented English in two contexts. The stimuli consisted of recordings by a single 'genuinely bidialectal native Chinese speaker' (437) in both a standard American English condition and a Chinese-accented condition. Cargile conducted tests in two conditions: in one case, respondents were told that the excerpt was a response to a job interview question, while in the other case, they were told the speaker was a college professor reading an excerpt from a student's story (in fact, the recordings used were exactly the same in each case). While the Chinese-accented guise was evaluated less positively on attractiveness in the classroom condition, no significant difference was found in the job interview condition, and no difference overall was found in ratings of status or dynamism.

There are a few possible reasons for the lack of consistent findings in these previous studies. First, there are issues of experiment design: in the Cargile and Giles 1998 and Cargile 1997 studies, the different accent conditions were all produced by the same speaker. While this reflects a true matched guise design (Lambert et al. 1960), the authors' description of the speakers as 'tridialectal' or 'bidialectal' is problematic, conflating as it does dialect with non-native accent. While the authors did conduct pre-tests to ensure that the guises were successfully manipulated, it seems likely that such manipulations might result in guises that sound less than natural in some way. In fact, Cargile and Giles (1998) report that nearly half of their pre-test listeners reported hearing slight non-native qualities in the 'standard American accent' guise that was used.

The content and context of the speech samples may also have affected listeners' responses. For instance, in the PDF study, all the speakers read 'the same five-sentence paragraph on plant ecology' (PDF 1990: 56). In terms of both production and perception, there may be less potential for variation in read speech than in spontaneous speech. Also, in the Cargile and Giles 1998 and Cargile 1997 studies, listeners were told either that they were listening to a college professor or teaching assistant, or someone in a job interview, potentially biasing their perceptions of the speaker. Especially in the college professor condition, listeners might form preconceptions of the speaker's social status, intelligence, etc., before even hearing the speech sample. These considerations, among others, influenced the design of the present study.

3 Methodology

3.1 Speakers/Stimuli

This study tested listener evaluations of three 'Accent Conditions': Mainstream US English [MUSE], Asian Accented English [AA], and Brazilian Portuguese Accented English [BP]. The term MUSE is adopted from Lippi-Green 1997, and refers not to one particular language variety, but to 'a collectively held ideal' of unaccented, unmarked American English that is associated with educated, middle-to-upper class, white European-descended people from the American Midwest, parts of the Northeast, and the West Coast (41). Because non-mainstream varieties evoke their own distinct set of evaluations, it was important for this study that the American English speakers in this condition be not only native, but also 'mainstream' by these standards.

Both the MUSE and Asian Accented conditions consisted of four speakers, two male and two

female. In the Asian Accented condition, two of the speakers were L1 Korean and two were L1 (Mandarin) Chinese.¹ All four speakers were recent arrivals to the United States, attending graduate school in New York City. The MUSE condition consisted of native speakers of English from the Northeastern and Midwestern United States. All four speakers had at least a college education. Two of the speakers were of white European descent and two were of Chinese descent. The Chinese American speakers were included to ensure that what was being tested was accent, rather than race or ethnicity.² In fact, statistical tests revealed no difference in ratings of Chinese and white American speakers, so in the rest of this paper they will not be differentiated.

Finally, the Brazilian Portuguese Accented English condition consisted of two college-educated native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese, one female and one male. Like the Asian Accented speakers, they were recent arrivals to the United States, attending graduate school in New York City. The rationale for including the BP condition was, first, to lessen the chance that respondents would become aware of the comparison of MUSE and Asian Accented voices as the focus of the study; second, to discern if respondents' ratings of Asian Accented voices reflected attitudes about non-native speakers in general, or about Asian accents specifically. Brazilian Portuguese was selected as an accent that was noticeably foreign, but that American listeners were likely to have few preconceptions about, thus providing a sort of baseline for measuring respondents' attitudes toward non-native accents. Table 1 summarizes the makeup of each accent condition.

	Speaker	Gender	Age	Other information
MUSE	MK	F	24	White
	AM	F	25	White
	JL	M	25	Chinese American
	CL	M	22	Chinese American
AA	WY	F	24	L1 Chinese
	SL	F	30	L1 Korean
	RW	M	27	L1 Chinese
	SH	M	30	L1 Korean
BP	ID	F	28	L1 Brazilian Portuguese
	AR	M	24	L1 Brazilian Portuguese

Table 1: Speakers in each Accent Condition.

An 'apartment description' prompt, based on Linde and Labov 1975, was used: each speaker was asked to describe the layout and appearance of their current house or apartment to someone (the author) not familiar with it. This prompt was designed to elicit relatively casual, natural speech samples that would be similar in content yet not identical across speakers. An excerpt 25–30 seconds long was selected from each speaker's description, and these formed the stimuli for the experiment. An example of such a description, from speaker AM, is given below:

You walk in the door, and on your right is a walk-in kitchen with a fridge and a pantry, and...in front of the kitchen is the living–family room, with the TV and the futon...and you continue walking through the apartment, and on your right is the bathroom, and there are two bedrooms that split off.

¹This grouping relies on the assumption that the difference between a Korean and a Chinese accent is not salient to listeners. There is some experimental evidence to support this assumption (PDF 1990:56, Akbik et al. 2013). For detailed comparisons of the Korean and Chinese speakers in this experiment, see Bauman (2013).

²See Newman 2010, Newman and Wu 2011, for evidence that at least some American English speakers can distinguish Asian Americans from native English speakers of other ethnicities.

3.2 Survey/Respondents

The experiment consisted of an anonymous online survey, using Qualtrics survey software (Qualtrics Labs, Inc. 2011). Participants were recruited through online social networks and told that the survey was intended to evaluate attitudes toward different voices. For each speaker, participants were asked to rate the person they heard on nine five-point semantic differential scales. The scales were grouped into three evaluative dimensions, based on Zahn and Hopper 1985: *Attractiveness*, *Status* (what Zahn and Hopper refer to as *Superiority*) and *Dynamism*. The scales in each category are listed in Table 2.

Attractiveness	Status	Dynamism
Friendly-Unfriendly	Organized-Disorganized	Shy-Talkative
Dishonest-Honest	Lower Class-Upper Class	Unsure-Confident
Rude-Polite	Intelligent-Unintelligent	Energetic-Lazy

Table 2: Semantic differential scales.

As Table 2 shows, five of the items were presented with the negative adjective on the left, and four were presented with the positive adjective on the left. The left-right order of the adjective pairs was fixed for all speakers and all participants. In coding the data, the raw scores were adjusted so that a higher score always represents a more positive evaluation (1 = most negative, 5 = most positive). The order of presentation of the nine scales was randomized for each participant (but fixed across speakers for each participant).

In all, there were 69 respondents (all of whom self-identified as native speakers of American English) whose data I analyzed. The respondents ranged in age from 18–63, with a mean age of 27.03, and a median age of 25. They came from all over the United States, although not all areas were equally represented; the majority of respondents were from the Northeastern and Western United States (30 and 28, respectively), with many fewer from the Midwest (6) and South (5). The gender and race/ethnicity of the respondents was also unevenly distributed: 72% of the respondents were female, and 75% were white. The skewed demographics of the respondents reflect the limitations of the survey distribution method. I primarily distributed the survey through my own online social networks, relying on friends and acquaintances to pass the survey on to their own friends, and so on. Statistical tests including respondents' region and race as factors were performed, but did not reveal any significant patterns, so they are not reported on in the following section. Future research will seek to characterize the attitudes of a more demographically diverse set of respondents.

4 Results

4.1 Overall Results

Mean scores (with standard deviations in parentheses) by Accent Condition and dimension are given in Table 3.

	Attractiveness	Status	Dynamism
MUSE	3.64 (.427)	3.35 (.319)	3.47 (.367)
Asian Accented	3.40 (.414)	3.09 (.261)	2.83 (.371)
BP	3.65 (.505)	3.21 (.464)	3.07 (.484)

Table 3: Mean scores and standard deviations by Accent Condition and dimension.

It can immediately be seen that the Asian Accented speakers are rated the lowest on all three dimensions. BP speakers are rated slightly higher than MUSE speakers on Attractiveness, but lower on Status and Dynamism. To test whether these differences are statistically significant, I performed three repeated measures ANOVAs: one for each dimension (Attractiveness, Status,

Dynamism). In all statistical results reported below, a significant result is defined as a p value of less than .05. Pairwise comparisons, where mentioned, are Bonferroni-adjusted t tests.

The effect of Accent Condition on Attractiveness ratings was significant, $F(2, 136) = 18.214$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons confirm that Asian Accented speakers are rated significantly lower than both MUSE and BP speakers, while MUSE and BP speakers are not rated significantly differently.

The effect of Accent Condition on Status ratings was significant, $F(2, 136) = 10.988$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons reveal that Asian Accented speakers are rated significantly lower than MUSE speakers, but not significantly lower than BP speakers. MUSE and BP speakers are not rated significantly differently.

The effect of Accent Condition on Dynamism ratings was significant, $F(2, 136) = 52.585$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons reveal that Asian Accented speakers are rated significantly lower than both MUSE and BP speakers. BP speakers are also rated significantly lower than MUSE speakers.

Figure 1 presents the same information graphically, along with 95% confidence intervals for the means. In this figure, blue (circles) represent the MUSE condition, green (diamonds) represent the Asian Accented condition, and red (squares) represent the BP condition. Non-overlapping confidence intervals represent a significant difference between two means.

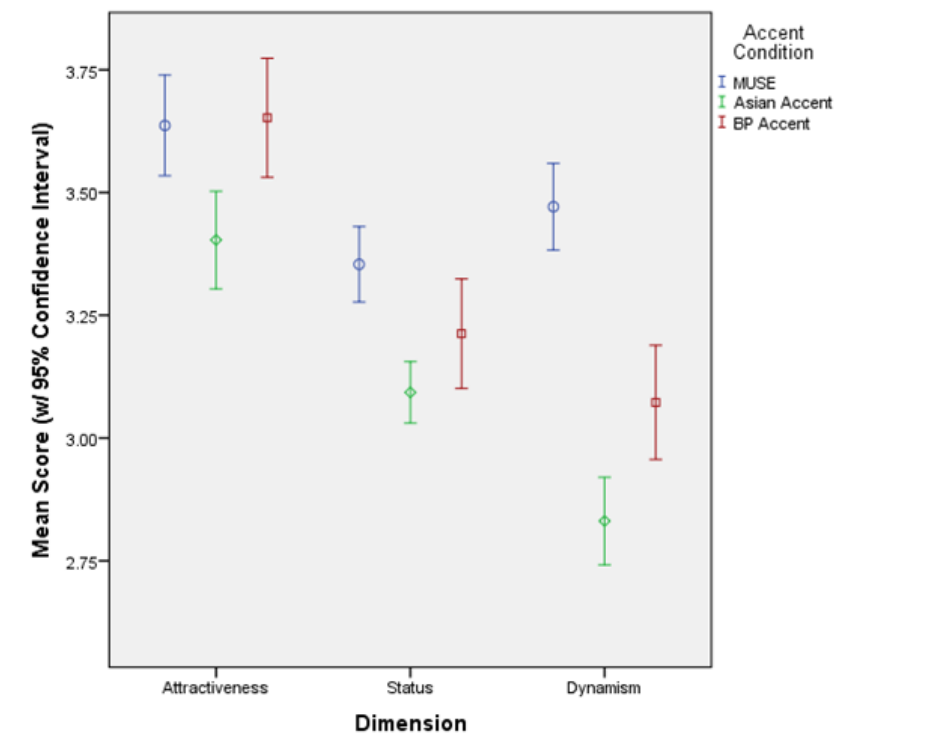


Figure 1: Mean scores and 95% confidence intervals by Accent Condition and dimension.

To sum up, Asian Accented speakers were rated significantly less favorably than MUSE speakers on all three dimensions, confirming the hypothesis that Asian accents are negatively evaluated. Furthermore, Asian Accented speakers were rated significantly less favorably than BP speakers on Attractiveness and Dynamism, while BP speakers were rated significantly less favorably than MUSE speakers on Dynamism, but not Attractiveness or Status. This supports the hypothesis that the negative evaluation of Asian accents cannot be attributed solely to a general downgrading of foreign-accented speech. Rather, these results support the idea that there is a specific negative evaluation attached to Asian accents.

4.2 Testing a Stereotype: Intelligence

As discussed in Section 2.2, one of the most salient stereotypes about Asians in current American culture is their supposed high intelligence, a cornerstone of the Model Minority stereotype. Although Asian Accented speakers were rated lower on Status (which included the ‘Intelligent-Unintelligent’ scale) overall, it’s possible that this general pattern is obscuring a more nuanced pattern, wherein Asian Accented speakers are rated highly on intelligence but low on other Status-related traits. To address this question, I looked just at ratings for the scale ‘Unintelligent-Intelligent’. Table 4 shows the mean ratings for this trait by Accent Condition.

BP	3.52 (.633)
MUSE	3.51 (.434)
Asian Accented	3.30 (.432)

Table 4: Mean ratings and standard deviations: Intelligence.

In fact, the Asian Accented speakers are rated lower than the other two groups on intelligence. A RM ANOVA confirms that Accent Condition has a significant effect on ratings of intelligence, $F(2, 136) = 6.303, p = .002$. Pairwise comparisons show that the Asian Accented speakers are rated significantly lower than both the MUSE and the BP speakers. This is a possibly unexpected result in light of the extremely prevalent stereotype of Asians as highly intelligent. However, it is consistent with the media portrayal of Asian accents discussed above (Section 2.2). Evidently, the ‘positive’ stereotype of high intelligence is not evoked by an Asian accented voice.

4.3 Gender and Accent

Finally, I performed a series of tests to examine possible interactions between Speaker Gender and Accent Condition. The interactions are shown visually in Figure 2. I will discuss the results for each dimension in detail below.

Female speakers were rated significantly higher overall than male speakers on Attractiveness, $F(1, 68) = 9.032, p = .004$. The interaction of Accent Condition and Speaker Gender was also significant, $F(2, 136) = 11.013, p < .001$. Follow-up tests reveal that Accent Condition is significant for both female and male speakers, and Figure 2a shows that the pattern is roughly the same as the overall pattern. Further tests reveal that that significant overall gender difference actually arises from the difference between the two BP speakers. For MUSE speakers, males are rated slightly higher than females; for Asian Accented speakers, the reverse is true. However, neither of these differences achieves significance. For the BP speakers, however, the female speaker is rated significantly higher than the male speaker ($p < .001$), as shown in Figure 2b. Female speakers were rated significantly higher overall than male speakers on Status, $F(1, 68) = 4.167, p = .045$. The interaction of Accent Condition and Speaker Gender was not significant, so no further tests were performed.

Female speakers were rated significantly higher than male speakers on Dynamism, $F(1, 68) = 45.374, p < .001$. The interaction of Accent Condition and Speaker Gender was also significant, $F(2, 136) = 14.211, p < .001$. Follow-up tests reveal that the effect of Accent Condition is significant for both male and female speakers; Figure 2e shows that the pattern of means for both groups is generally the same as the overall pattern. Further tests reveal that Speaker Gender is a significant factor for the Asian Accented and BP groups, with females rated significantly higher than males. In the MUSE group, males are rated slightly higher than females, but this difference did not achieve significance.

To sum up, female speakers tend to be rated higher than male speakers, although this effect varies somewhat depending on accent (and quite possibly depending on individual speakers). To further examine this effect, I tested for an interaction between the gender of the speaker and the gender of the judge. One possibility is that listeners tend to rate speakers of their own gender more

favorably. Because there were more female than male respondents, this might give rise to the illusion of a general preference for female speakers. To test this possibility, I performed a RM ANOVA with Speaker Gender as a within-subjects factor and Judge Gender as a between-subjects factor. In fact, the interaction of Speaker Gender and Judge Gender did not achieve significance for Attractiveness, Status, or Dynamism.

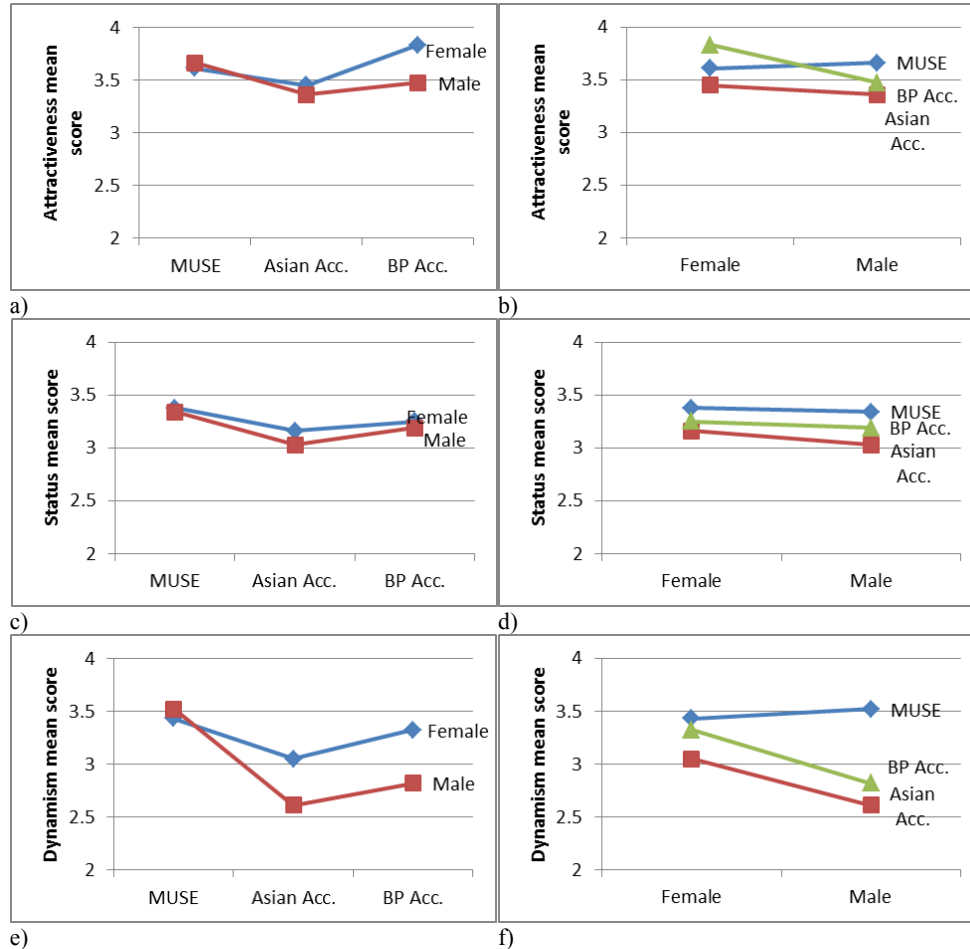


Figure 2. Interactions between Accent Condition and Speaker Gender.

Overall, the interaction of Accent Condition and Speaker Gender seems to be this: for MUSE speakers, males and females are rated about the same. For both Asian Accented and BP speakers, females are rated higher than males. Although this difference does not always achieve significance, it is a consistent tendency. These results may suggest that listeners are generally more favorable toward female speakers with a foreign accent than male speakers, although this is largely speculative at this point.

5 Discussion

Matsuda (1991) writes about the case of Manuel Fragante, a Filipino immigrant to the U.S. who was denied a clerical job with the Department of Motor Vehicles because of his accent. Fragante, who scored the highest of more than 700 applicants on a civil service examination, was turned down for the job because interviewers felt that his 'heavy' Filipino accent would make it difficult for the public to understand him. Matsuda discusses several other incidents of accent discrimination in employment decisions, and points out that accent discrimination lawsuits are almost never successful. The puzzle for the courts is that, while the law clearly prohibits discrimination based

on accent, insofar as accent is an extension of national origin, the law does *not* prohibit employers from discriminating based on ability to do the job. Because communication is an essential part of many jobs, it seems reasonable to accept that someone's accent could potentially interfere with communication, and therefore with their ability to do the job. The problem for this line of reasoning is that there is no clear guideline for how strong an accent must be to significantly impede communication and in what circumstances, or even how to objectively assess an employer's claim that an applicant's speech is hard to understand.

More troubling still, there is considerable evidence that 'hard to understand' is an extremely subjective perception, subject to a high degree of unconscious bias. As Lippi-Green (1997:70) points out, a successful communicative act requires considerable effort on the part of both speaker and listener; speaker and listener share the 'communicative burden'. How much of that burden the listener is willing to shoulder depends on the listener's attitudes toward their interlocutor and toward the particular communicative act in question. In short, the more negative attitudes we have about someone's accent, the more likely we are to reject the communicative burden as a listener, and the less likely we are to understand them (see also Rubin 1992). This process of unconscious bias, while virtually impossible to detect by current legal standards, has obvious implications for cases like Manuel Fragante's. What these legal cases highlight are the serious, life-impacting consequences that accent bias can have. Consequently, research that explores these biases (how they are shaped by social and linguistic factors, how they are expressed, and their effects both big and small) remains extremely important. This paper is an initial attempt at exploring one particular segment of this problem: attitudes of American English listeners toward Asian accented English. Overall, the initial hypothesis that listeners would tend to have negative attitudes about Asian accented voices, consistent with many cultural portrayals of Asian accented speech, was confirmed.

One question that has not yet been answered is whether Asian Americans as well as white Americans evaluate Asian accents negatively. Future research will seek to address this question, among others. Asian Americans are likely to have had complicated personal experiences with Asian accented English which may affect their evaluations. On the one hand, having friends and family members who speak English with an Asian accent may lead to positive associations; on the other hand, experiences with racial discrimination and language-based mockery may lead to negative associations and a desire to distance oneself from that way of speaking. In general, language attitudes research will benefit by moving beyond the dichotomies of standard/non-standard and majority/minority, as well as considering how language attitudes are mediated by popular culture in addition to personal experience.

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