

“OH, YOU SPEAK ENGLISH SO WELL!”

*U.S. American Listeners’ Perceptions of
“Foreignness” among Nonnative Speakers*

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I work in a bank and I’m constantly helping customers. Most of the time I can just tell by the way that they look at me, that they don’t expect me to have very good English skills. They probably think I speak with an accent, because when I do talk most of them will say, “Oh, you speak English so well! You were born here weren’t you?” When I sit back and think about it, you know, they’ve judged me and I know it’s because of the way I look.

—Student journal entry

THE UNITED STATES IS A COUNTRY of immigrants, yet some citizens are considered more foreign than others. The most striking example of this is undoubtedly the internment of Japanese American citizens during World War II. As the officer in charge of the Western Defense, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt, said at the time, “You needn’t worry about the Italians at all except in certain cases. Also, the same for the Germans except for individual cases. But we must worry about the Japanese all the time until he is wiped off the map.”¹ Of course, such race-based discrimination is no longer allowable under law. Even so, the country’s long history of differentiating immigrants on the basis of national origin suggests that not all U.S. citizens are perceived to be equally “American,” even today.

Soon after the country was founded, the Naturalization Act of 1795 set the parameters for who could become a citizen: free, white persons.² Although persons of non-European origin were integral to the founding (and literal building) of the country, they did not “belong” in the sense

that they were entitled to the rights and privileges of citizenship. With passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, however, the first nonwhites became eligible for citizenship: “Africans” were allowed to become “American” after the Civil War. Despite this victory for civil rights, the change in the law served to further alienate persons from Latin America and Asia; their status as “outsiders” was now firmly fixed in “a society only able to see in black and white.”³

Nearly a century later, immigration and nationality acts had finally lifted racial restrictions on citizenship and had abolished national-origin quotas for immigration. By 1968, civil rights laws stipulated that a person’s race or place of origin could no longer be used to deny him or her access to the American dream. Even so, centuries of practice judging “fit” and “belonging” among the population meant that related attitudes and customs did not disappear overnight. Indeed, even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, people are still deciding which fellow immigrants and citizens should be considered “real” Americans.

Undoubtedly, among the most significant events in the new century have been the attacks of September 11, 2001. The experience surfaced fault lines drawn long ago to distinguish European American “selves” from non-European American “others.” Whereas before the attacks Americans of Arab descent or Islamic religious beliefs had lived in relative tranquility, afterward they found themselves under surveillance and under assault as enemy “others.”⁴ These post-9/11 fault lines were so broad that almost any non-European, non-Christian attribute qualified an American for suspicion. For example, the first post-9/11 hate-crime murder victim, Balbir Singh Sodhi, was neither Arab nor Muslim—he was an immigrant from India of the Sikh faith. Likewise, one Cuban American author of this study has been repeatedly subjected to added airport security screenings that fellow authors of ascribed European American heritage have not.

As much as September 11 dramatically resurfaced questions about who “belongs,” it is important to recognize that the questions had never really disappeared. Indeed, practices and judgments that continue to “otherize” people of color—including those of Latin or Asian descent—keep occurring. For example, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency officials routinely deport U.S. citizens of Latin origin and/or descent as

these officials go about administering immigration law.⁵ As Hernández puts it, “Latino migrants and U.S.-born Latinos . . . bear the burden of the U.S.’s increased capacity to surveil, control, and detain noncitizens and persons perceived to be immigrant.”⁶ Similarly, Wu contends that Asian Americans have long been seen as “the perpetual foreigner,” though these perceptions have most recently assumed a veiled form (for example, commenting “Oh, you speak English so well!” and labeling the boutique of Vera Wang—an American bridal gown designer—a “foreign venture,” and so forth).⁷

Despite the fact that some citizens are considered more foreign than others, direct expression of this inegalitarian ideal is often frowned upon in today’s post-civil rights society. Instead, prejudicial attitudes such as this are often expressed implicitly in forms that David Sears calls “symbolic racism.”⁸ For example, although it is inappropriate to publicly state a dislike of Latinos, it is perfectly fine to support the prosecution of “illegal” immigrants and state policies enforcing “English only.” As our knowledge about these implicit forms of judgment develops, the significance of their continued investigation grows.⁹ Fortunately, language-attitude researchers have recognized that investigations of reactions to speech provide an ideal study of latent and socially inappropriate mores.¹⁰ Thus, although U.S. Americans may be reluctant to agree that persons of Chinese ancestry are any less “American” than those of German ancestry, the long-standing and shared prejudice against non-Europeans as full participants in U.S. society may find expression in judgments that native speakers of Mandarin sound more “foreign” than native speakers of German, to cite one example.

Language-attitudes research has a rich history that stretches across several decades and social scientific disciplines.¹¹ In essence, it recognizes that language is a powerful social force that does more than convey intended referential information. For better or worse, hearers can react to linguistic and paralinguistic variation in messages as though they indicate both personal and social characteristics of the speaker. Although this research has explored a host of language behaviors (for example, language intensity, lexical diversity, politeness, gender-linked language), the most central and widely researched behavior has been accent.¹² Accent has been shown to have a variety of effects on both a listener’s behavior (for example, com-

municative responses, job discrimination, housing discrimination) and their judgments (for example, status, attractiveness, dynamism, integrity, intelligibility).¹³ Despite all that is known about accent, however, no study has ever directly investigated the sort of judgment most pertinent here—namely, perceptions of “foreignness.”¹⁴

The closest language-attitude research has come to identifying the degree of perceived belonging among varieties of English is a study by Lindemann, which explored judgments regarding who speaks “good” or “bad” English. The results potentially confirmed the pattern outlined above.¹⁵ Namely, among U.S. participants, western Europeans were perceived to speak “good” English, while Latin Americans and Asians were both perceived to speak “bad” English. While “foreign” often connotes “bad,” it is important to note that they are not equivalent judgments.¹⁶ Moreover, the data in the study were derived from hypothetical perceptions; respondents never listened to any actual speakers. The present study, therefore, aims to address two lacunae: first, to develop and employ a multi-item measure of perceived foreignness; and, second, to measure reactions to a wide variety of actual speakers from Europe, Asia, and Latin America. By doing this, we hope to observe whether the deeply rooted view of American qua European emerges in speaker evaluation data even forty years after the civil rights movement. Specifically, we hypothesized that

H1: Speakers from Latin American and Asian nations will be rated more foreign than speakers from western European nations. Speakers of Mainstream U.S. English (MUSE) will be rated least foreign.

Despite the fact that the primary focus of this study is perceptions of foreignness, we are also interested in whether data regarding a wide variety of speakers will confirm the most robust extant evaluation patterns within language-attitude research: those of status and attractiveness.¹⁷ As described by Ryan, Hewstone, and Giles, speakers who use a standard language or accent tend to be rated highly on traits related to competence, intelligence, and social status, whereas nonstandard speakers are evaluated unfavorably along these same dimensions.¹⁸ However, when speakers are evaluated along traits related to kindness, solidarity, and overall attractiveness, speakers with a nonstandard accent often compare much more favorably.

Although all nonnative varieties are, by definition, nonstandard, the preceding discussion suggests that nonnative varieties from Europe may be perceived as more standard (that is, less deviant, less different) than nonnative varieties from Latin America or Asia, and thus may rate more favorably on status-related traits. Moreover, in her discussion of linguistic ideology in the United States, Lippi-Green claims that “not all foreign accents [are denigrated], but only accent[s] linked to skin that isn’t white, or which signal a third-world homeland.”¹⁹ Indeed, at least two studies conducted in North America have found that while status-related judgments are highest for native English speakers, nonnative English spoken by Europeans runs a close second and is preferred to nonnative English spoken by non-Europeans.²⁰ Despite this, a purely racialized language ideology may not hold here, as several studies indicate that nonnative varieties of Asian English also rate favorably in terms of status²¹—quite likely as a reflection of perceived economic and educational competitiveness among Asians in the United States.²² Viewing this, we hypothesize that

H2: Speakers from western European and Asian nations will be rated more status-possessing than speakers from Latin American nations. Speakers of MUSE will be rated most status-possessing.

In contrast to their perceived status, nonstandard speakers are often judged more favorably in terms of their social attractiveness. This has resulted in a mixed pattern of evaluations for nonnative speakers in the United States: compared to MUSE speakers, nonnative speakers have been judged as less attractive,²³ equally attractive,²⁴ and even more attractive.²⁵ These diverse findings make it difficult to predict results here and thus lead us to ask the following research question:

RQ1: Will there be any significant differences across speakers on traits related to attractiveness?

In order to test these two hypotheses and one research question, a verbal guise experiment was designed and conducted as described below.

METHOD

Sixty-five undergraduates at a large, urban university in the western United States listened to audio-recordings of fourteen male speakers

reading the same text (a relatively bland account of items needed by an arriving visitor; see Appendix) in English. Participants were instructed to “simply record [their] impression of each speaker by using the rating system provided” and were told nothing about the speakers or their backgrounds. After each recording was played, participants completed twelve scale items regarding their impressions (four items each comprising three scales described below: status, attractiveness, and foreignness), as well as two additional items regarding their impression of the strength of the speaker’s accent (unaccented to very accented), as well their impression of the speaker’s background. Finally, participants completed several demographic items, which indicated that the sample had an average age of 22.79 years, consisted of 43 women and 20 men (2 did not state), 30 Anglos, 4 African Americans, 12 Hispanics, 13 Asian Americans, and 6 other/declined to state. All participants in the study identified themselves as “U.S. Americans.”

In order to enhance the generalizability of the study’s findings, a “verbal guise” design²⁶ was used here—a design that employed multiple speakers for each experimental condition. Although other designs, such as the “matched guise” technique,²⁷ minimize threats to internal validity more effectively, they typically use a single speaker and thus provide a poor foundation for claims about accents.²⁸ Consequently, we elected to represent each accent condition in this study with two speakers carefully matched for length of residence in the United States and rates of speech across all conditions. Although such matching helps to control the uniformity of the accent conditions, ultimately each accent condition, as well as each speaker within each accent condition, is different in ways that may affect the participants’ evaluations (for example, pitch, intonation, vocal quality, stress patterns, and so forth). Despite giving up a degree of control over potentially important variables through use of a verbal guise design, we hope that our use of a wide variety of speakers in this study will help to provide a broad basis for this initial description of the evaluative similarities and differences among accents.

Provided the pragmatic motivations for this study (that is, we were most interested in describing how U.S. American listeners perceive the “foreignness” of nonnative speakers), we thought it most appropriate to

choose speakers with accents corresponding to the most populous immigrant groups in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, most immigrants have come most recently from (in rank order): Mexico, China, the Philippines, India, and Vietnam. Over the course of the entire twentieth century, most immigrants have come from (in rank order): Mexico, Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Italy.²⁹ Thus, aiming to study the perceived foreignness of nonnative varieties of English (eliminating Canada and the UK from representation) and simultaneously looking to take advantage of a wonderfully rich public database of accents, the Speech Accent Archive, we used audio-recordings of male speakers with the following native languages: Spanish, German, Italian, Mandarin, Hindi, and Vietnamese.³⁰

As just mentioned, all recordings came from the Speech Accent Archive, a resource that “uniformly presents a large set of speech samples from a variety of language backgrounds.”³¹ The uniform presentation is achieved by having each recorded speaker recite the same sixty-nine-word text, in English (see Appendix). For this study, we selected two Archive speakers for each accent condition; each condition included one speaker with extensive English experience (that is, mean of 17.1 years of residence in the United States) and relative fluency (that is, mean speech rate of 25.7 seconds), alongside one speaker with limited English experience (that is, mean of 1.8 years of residence in the United States) and less fluency (that is, mean speech rate of 29.3 seconds). As a point of comparison, two speakers native to the Midwest region of the United States were also included to comprise a MUSE accent condition. Thus, fourteen speakers in total were used here to represent a broad variety of seven English accent conditions: Spanish-accented English, German-accented English, Italian-accented English, Mandarin-accented English, Hindi-accented English, Vietnamese-accented English, and MUSE.³²

Once selected from the Speech Accent Archive, each speaker’s audio-recording was downloaded and randomly arranged for playback on a digital audio device using external speakers. Participants then listened to each speaker and completed the accompanying speaker evaluation items. Because this study targeted fourteen speakers in a within-subjects design, participants were required to make many different evaluations. In order

to minimize fatigue, only eight items from the original thirty-item Speech Evaluation Instrument were used here to measure both the status- and attractiveness-related evaluations. The four status (“intelligent/unintelligent,” “rich/poor,” “upper class/lower class,” “educated/uneducated”) and four attractiveness (“kind/unkind,” “sweet/sour,” “likeable/unlikeable,” “friendly/unfriendly”) items were selected on the basis of their consistently high factor loading scores and demonstrated reliability in previous studies.³³

As stated earlier, one aim of the present study was to develop and employ a multi-item measure of perceived foreignness. This task was undertaken by first selecting seven pairs of adjectives frequently used in literature discussing foreignness (for example, ordinary/exotic)³⁴ and then pretesting them among a separate sample of twenty-seven undergraduate respondents. Their ratings of four nonnative English speakers (obtained from the Speech Accent Archive and not used in the main study) across these seven items were factor analyzed (using Principle Components Analysis with Varimax rotation) and found to fit a two-factor solution (that is, eigenvalue > 1). Although immigrant “foreignness” may indeed be comprised of two (or more) component meanings, the second factor accounted for relatively little variance (18.1 percent compared to 51.2 percent for the first factor alone) and was uninterpretable as a distinct dimension. Thus, the measure of perceived foreignness used here was constructed out of four items that loaded highly on the first factor (local/alien, similar/different, strange/native, like us/like them). When employed in the main study, this scale of perceived foreignness was found to be highly reliable (Cronbach’s alpha equaled .93). Indeed, all of the scales demonstrated good reliability (.87 for both the status and attractiveness scales); thus item scores were averaged for each subscale and used as dependent measures for all analyses.

RESULTS

In order to gauge the effect of speaker accent, a single factor, repeated measures MANOVA was undertaken. A significant main effect was found for accent, $\lambda = .90$, $F(18, 112) = 56.51$, $p < .001$, and subsequent univariate tests revealed significant differences among all three evaluation

measures [attractiveness ratings: $F(6, 774) = 7.17, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$; status ratings: $F(6, 774) = 92.06, p < .001, \eta^2 = .42$; foreignness ratings: $F(6, 774) = 202.85, p < .001, \eta^2 = .61$]. All of the mean speaker ratings for each scale have been plotted in Figures 1–3, and all of the mean differences have been listed in Tables 1–3. All three tables are tables of mean *differences*—thus the bigger the number, the bigger the mean difference between the corresponding groups.

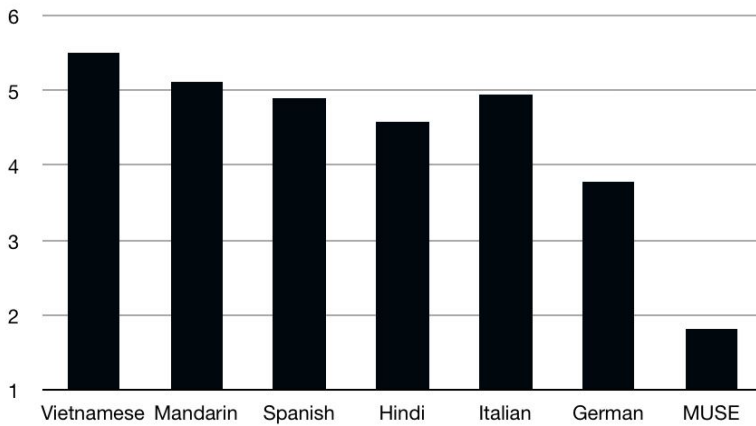


Figure 1. Mean foreignness ratings.

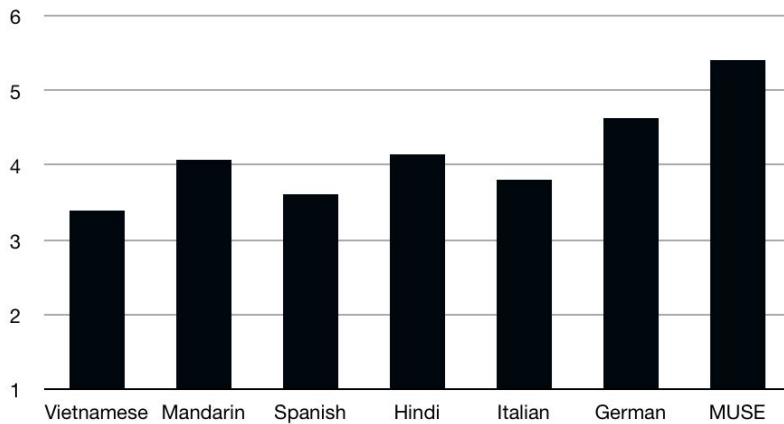


Figure 2. Mean status ratings.

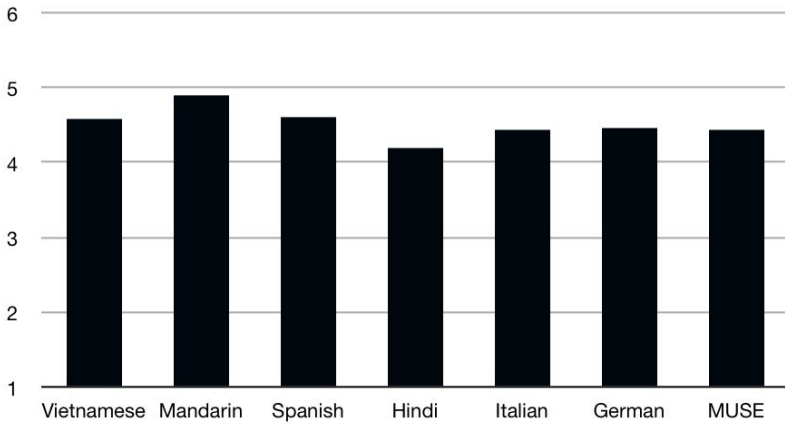


Figure 3. Mean attractiveness ratings.

Describing these results very generally and based only on the seven-point scale used, we might say that Vietnamese and Mandarin speakers were rated as foreign ($M > 5$); Spanish, Hindi, and Italian speakers were rated as moderately foreign ($M > 4$); German speakers were rated as neither foreign nor native (near the midpoint of the seven-point scale); and MUSE speakers were rated as native ($M < 2$) (see Figure 1). With regard to status, MUSE speakers were rated as status-possessing ($M > 5$); German, Hindi, and Mandarin speakers were rated as moderately status-possessing ($M > 4$); and Italian, Spanish, and Vietnamese speakers were rated near the midpoint of the seven-point scale (see Figure 2). With regard to attractiveness, what emerged here was largely a pattern of few (and little) differences (see Figure 3).

DISCUSSION

With some exceptions, these data generally indicate support for our hypotheses. To begin, this study was designed to investigate U.S. Americans' perceptions of foreignness among a wide variety of speakers from Europe, Asia, and Latin America. We hypothesized that speakers from Latin American and Asian nations would be rated more foreign than speakers from western European nations and that speakers of MUSE would be rated least foreign (H1). With the exception of Italian speakers, this was found to be true.

Table 1.
Matrix of mean differences: Foreignness ratings.

	Vietnamese	Mandarin	Spanish	Hindi	Italian	German	MUSE
Vietnamese	x	-.41*	-.63***	-.92***	-.58***	-1.74***	-3.70***
Mandarin	.41*	X	-.22	-.51**	-.17	-1.33***	-3.29***
Spanish	.63***	.22	x	-.30	.05	-1.11***	-3.08***
Hindi	.92***	.51**	.30	x	.34	-.81***	-2.78***
Italian	.58***	.17	-.05	-.34	x	-1.12***	-3.12***
German	1.74***	1.33***	1.11***	.81***	1.12***	x	-1.97***
MUSE	3.70***	3.29***	3.08***	2.78***	3.12***	1.97***	x

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level; ** .01 level; *** .001 level, Tukey HSD.

Table 2.
Matrix of mean differences: Status ratings.

	Vietnamese	Mandarin	Spanish	Hindi	Italian	German	MUSE
Vietnamese	x	.67***	.20	.75***	.40**	1.22***	2.01***
Mandarin	-.67***	X	-.47***	.09	-.27	.55***	1.34***
Spanish	-.20	.47***	x	.55***	.20	1.02***	1.81***
Hindi	-.75***	-.09	-.55***	x	-.35*	.47**	1.26***
Italian	-.40**	.27	-.20	.35*	x	.82***	1.61***
German	-1.22***	-.55***	-1.02***	-.47**	-.82***	x	.79***
MUSE	-2.01***	-1.34***	-1.81***	-1.26***	-1.61***	-.79***	x

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level; ** .01 level; *** .001 level, Tukey HSD.

Table 3.
Matrix of mean differences: Attractiveness ratings.

	Vietnamese	Mandarin	Spanish	Hindi	Italian	German	MUSE
Vietnamese	x	.33	-.04	.38*	.15	.10	.14
Mandarin	-.33	X	-.29	-.71***	-.48**	-.43*	-.47**
Spanish	-.04	.29	x	.42*	-.19	-.14	-.18
Hindi	.38*	.71***	-.42*	x	.23	.28	.24
Italian	.15	.48**	.19	-.23	x	.05	.01
German	.10	.43*	.14	-.28	-.05	x	-.04
MUSE	.14	.47**	.18	-.24	-.01	.04	x

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level; ** .01 level; *** .001 level, Tukey HSD.

Based on the differences among listeners' foreignness ratings (see Table 1), four significantly different levels of foreignness were attributed here: Vietnamese speakers were rated as the most foreign; Mandarin, Spanish, Italian, and Hindi speakers were rated as the second most foreign; German speakers were rated as the third most foreign; and MUSE speakers were rated as least foreign. Thus, it appears that the long-standing U.S. American habit of attributing different degrees of belonging is still manifest in the guise of contemporary speaker evaluations. Indeed, native speakers of Mandarin were judged to sound more foreign than native speakers of German, and this finding helps give context for why the comment, “Oh, you speak English so well!” is more likely to be directed at persons of Chinese, rather than German, ancestry.

As noted above, H1 was confirmed except in the case of Italian speakers. We believe that this exception can be accounted for by the fact that Italian speakers were identified as Italian only 7 percent of the time and were thought to be of Latin origin 42 percent of the time. In fact, across all three dimensions of evaluation assessed in this study, there were never any significant differences between the ratings of Italian and Spanish speakers. This suggests an obvious lack of familiarity with the Italian language on the part of our participants despite the fact that large-scale Italian immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon—in 1970 more immigrants came from Italy than from any other nation.³⁵

These findings also suggest that generalizations about European speakers might apply only to “northern” European speakers (that is, Anglo, Saxon, Teuton, and/or Nordic); among Americans, distinctions between different types of Europeans (for example, Mediterranean, Slav, Hebrew, and so forth) have long been salient in the United States.³⁶ Thus, although Italians have largely been integrated as white Americans over generations, they were initially treated as “other”/“outsider” vis-à-vis Anglo-Saxons and other northern European immigrants.³⁷ Consequently, the present perception of Italian speakers as more foreign than German speakers may reflect vestiges of historically discriminatory attitudes. Of course, this is highly speculative, and further study would certainly be needed to determine this.

Turning to our second hypothesis, we expected speakers from western European and Asian nations to be rated more status-possessing than speak-

ers from Latin American nations, and speakers of MUSE to be rated most status-possessing. This hypothesis was confirmed in the cases of MUSE, German, Hindi, and Mandarin speakers, but not in the cases of Italian or Vietnamese speakers. In general terms, listeners attributed four different levels of status: MUSE speakers were rated as the most status-possessing, German speakers as the second most status-possessing, Hindi and Mandarin speakers as the third most status-possessing, and Vietnamese and Spanish as the least status-possessing; ratings of Italian speakers fell between the last two groups but do not represent a separate status level as the differences were not consistently significant. Although largely confirming, these results are surprising in at least two respects: first, the observed variation in responses to speakers from the same geographic region (that is, German versus Italian; Mandarin versus Vietnamese); and, second, the devaluation of “Asian”-accented English on status-related traits.

Although evaluations were generally consistent with regional/racial stereotypes, participants did differentiate among speakers in ways they may not consciously recognize. As just discussed, the evaluative differences between German and Italian speakers is likely accounted for by participants’ misattribution of Italian national origin, but such misattribution cannot explain similar evaluative differences between Vietnamese and Mandarin speakers. Like the Italian speakers, the Vietnamese speakers were correctly identified by nationality only 7 percent of the time; yet unlike the Italians, most attributions were correct at the regional level: 52 percent of the time Vietnamese speakers were identified as “Asian.” Thus, although most participants thought of both Vietnamese and Mandarin speakers simply as “Asian,” Vietnamese speakers were judged as less status-possessing (and more foreign) than Mandarin speakers.³⁸

As such, these findings highlight the importance of a complex, processual understanding of language attitudes, rather than simple stimulus-response approaches. In an article entitled “Language Attitudes as a Social Process,” Cargile, Giles, Ryan, and Bradac argue that “sometimes, an attitude may be largely, or even entirely, affective in nature.”³⁹ Thus, it may be the case that rather than evaluating Vietnamese and Mandarin speakers similarly because they are both cognitively identified as “Asian,” participants’ *feelings* about the sound of Vietnamese-accented English

may interact with their stereotypes to produce the distinct evaluative profile seen here.⁴⁰ Indeed, Vietnamese and Mandarin come from different language families,⁴¹ thus it is plausible that although participants may not make a cognitive distinction between Vietnamese and Chinese, they may continue to make an affective one based on the number of phonetic differences between the languages. Although speculative, this explanation should encourage further consideration of and research into the affective nature of language attitudes.⁴² Moreover, the unequivocal differentiation between speakers ascribed the same identity points to the importance of investigating attitudes about language (and not merely social groups)—although reactions to speech may be informed by social stereotypes, they are clearly not reducible to them.

In addition to the unexpected differences in evaluation of Vietnamese- and Mandarin-accented English, the relative depreciation of both varieties on status-related traits was also surprising. Although six studies (cited earlier) had previously found no significant status differences between varieties of “Asian”-accented English (including both Vietnamese and Mandarin) and MUSE, we found here that Mandarin speakers were judged significantly less status-possessing than both MUSE and German speakers, and that Vietnamese speakers were rated lowest on this dimension. It is possible that perceived accentedness can account for these anomalous results: despite matching the speakers for length of residence in the United States and rates of speech, the Vietnamese and Mandarin speakers were perceived as the most accented. Indeed, heavier accents have been linked to lower status evaluations, even among varieties of “Asian” English, and thus could be driving the poor status judgments here.⁴³

Even so, this causal path is speculative (or even doubtful) because perceptions of accentedness and foreignness were highly correlated in this study, $r(909) = .75, p < .01$. Consequently, we cannot be sure that accentedness is the root cause. Indeed, speaker evaluations are actively constructed. For example, listeners have reported hearing errors in perfectly grammatical (Japanese-accented) speech, and perceived accentedness has been found to be a better predictor of teacher ratings than the level of actual accent.⁴⁴ Thus, it is quite possible that judgments regarding the foreignness of both Vietnamese and Mandarin speakers could lead listen-

ers to hear a heavier accent and/or to provide lower status evaluations. There are several possibilities here, all of which underscore the need for further research.

Perceptions of foreignness and accentedness aside, these results nevertheless contradict most previous studies regarding status evaluations of “Asian”-accented English. When considered alongside two additional studies that found “South Asian” and Korean speakers less status-possessing, they could call into question the validity of generalizing about “Asian”-accented English.⁴⁵ Although the extant social stereotypes and demographic data suggest that Asians should be perceived favorably in terms of education and wealth, speaker evaluations may be, in certain contexts, another matter.

Lastly, to consider our research question, we had no expectations regarding a pattern of attractiveness-related evaluations due to the mixed nature of previous findings. What emerged here was largely a pattern of no differences. Although statistically significant in a few instances (cf. Mandarin and Hindi), inspection of Table 3 reveals that the mean differences for attractiveness ratings were relatively small across all speakers. Thus, we can conclude that, generally speaking, all speakers in this study were perceived to be equally friendly and kind—a finding that supports the results of most other studies investigating nonnative speaker evaluations in the United States.

CONCLUSION

Perceived foreignness has been a potent dimension of evaluation throughout U.S. history, and this study sought to bring the rich tradition of language attitudes research to bear on the question, are all immigrant citizens seen to hold equal membership in United States in the twenty-first century? The results confirm that the long-standing U.S. American habit of attributing different degrees of belonging is indeed manifest in contemporary evaluations of speech: Vietnamese speakers were rated as the most foreign; Mandarin, Spanish, Hindi, and Italian speakers were rated as moderately foreign; and German speakers were rated as neither foreign nor native. In addition to provocative and mixed findings with regard to status- and attractiveness-related evaluations, this study under-

scored the importance of continued investigation of language attitudes in various international and intercultural contexts. Specifically, the fact that most participants viewed both Vietnamese and Mandarin speakers simply as "Asian" yet rendered different judgments of them suggests that although reactions to speech may be informed by social stereotypes, they are not reducible to them. Thus, we must continue efforts to understand the specific dynamics involved in producing evaluations that intergroup interlocutors make of one another.

APPENDIX

SPEAKER TEXT

Please call Stella. Ask her to bring these things with her from the store: Six spoons of fresh snow peas, five thick slabs of blue cheese, and maybe a snack for her brother Bob. We also need a small plastic snake and a big toy frog for the kids. She can scoop these things into three red bags, and we will go meet her Wednesday at the train station.

Notes

1. U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).
2. The U.S. Naturalization Act of January 29, 1795, repealed and replaced the Naturalization Act of 1790. The act specified that naturalized citizenship was reserved only for "free white person[s]."
3. Leti Volpp, "Obnoxious to Their Very Nature: Asian Americans and Constitutional Citizenship," *Citizenship Studies* 5 (2001): 57–71; David Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); P. H. Dhingra, "Being American between Black and White: Second-Generation Asian American Professionals' Racial Identities," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6 (2003): 117–147.
4. Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber, eds., *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2007).
5. "Lawsuit Challenges Immigration Raids in New Jersey," *International Herald Tribune*, April 4, 2008; Jacqueline Stevens, "Thin ICE," *Nation*, June 14 2008, <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20080623/stevens>; Jennifer Bennett, "Operation Return to Sender: The Government's Immigration Enforcers Run Amok," *Slate.com*, June 10, 2008, <http://www.slate.com/id/2192393/>.
6. David Manuel Hernández, "Pursuant to Deportation: Latinos and Immigrant Detention," *Latino Studies* 6 (2008): 35–63.

7. Frank Wu, *Yellow: Race in America beyond Black and White* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
8. D. O. Sears and P. J. Henry, "The Origins of Symbolic Racism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85 (2003): 259–275.
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