

# Does accented English affect speaker's credibility?

- Learning pronunciation and its economic rationality -

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# Overview

- Introduction
- Review of the Literature
- Method
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Limitations
- Reference

# Introduction

## ➤ Increasingly diverse Englishes

- ESL & EFL speakers already outnumbered Native speakers

- ◆ ESL 400 mil

- ◆ EFL 750 mil

- ◆ Native 375 mil

(Crystal, 2003)

## ➤ Awareness grows about the varied forms of English

- “which English accent(s) will give an advantage over other accents in the increasingly competitive world?”

(Scott et al. 2007)

# Review of the Literature 1

## ➤ Reactions of native/ non-native speakers to different accents

- Both native/ non-native speakers were more favourable towards the standard varieties of English in terms of competence, status/ prestige.

Lambert (1960) , Giles (1971)

- Non-native speakers rated non-standard varieties of English more favourably in terms of **social attractiveness**.

Powesland & Giles (1975), Edwards (1982)

- ◆ Matched-guise technique
- ◆ Verbal-guise technique

# Review of the Literature 2

## ➤ Impact of accent on credibility

- Advertisement with standard English accent outperformed Singlish accent in terms of spokesperson credibility, attitude towards ad, and purchase intentions.

Lalwani, et al (2005)

- People judged trivia such as “Ants don’t sleep”, as less true when spoken by a non-native than a native speaker.

Lev-Ari & Keysar (2010)

# Review of the Literature 3

## ➤ Accent preferences by consumer

- Audience preferred to buy from a salesperson with standard English accent (to Greek accent). Tsalikis, Deshields, et al (1991)

## ➤ Comparative analysis of accent preferences of businessperson

- English language accent preference of businesspersons around the world (including native and non-native) rated in the order of :
  - ◆ 1 & 2) General American English and RP English,
  - 3) Australian English, 4) Estuary English, 5) Indian English,
  - 6) Japanese English.**

Scott, et al. (2007)

# Research Question

“ Does accented English affect listener attitudes toward a speaker's credibility? ”

# Methodology 1

- A modified version of “verbal guise technique” was used.  
(Berk-Seligson, 1984)
- A hypothetical sales presentation (water right sales) was read and recorded by 7 male Japanese.  
→ see Appendix A.
- Lightest, median, and the heaviest accent were chosen to represent Light, Middle, and Heavy accentedness.
- Two judges: an experienced English teacher majoring phonetics & native English teacher.

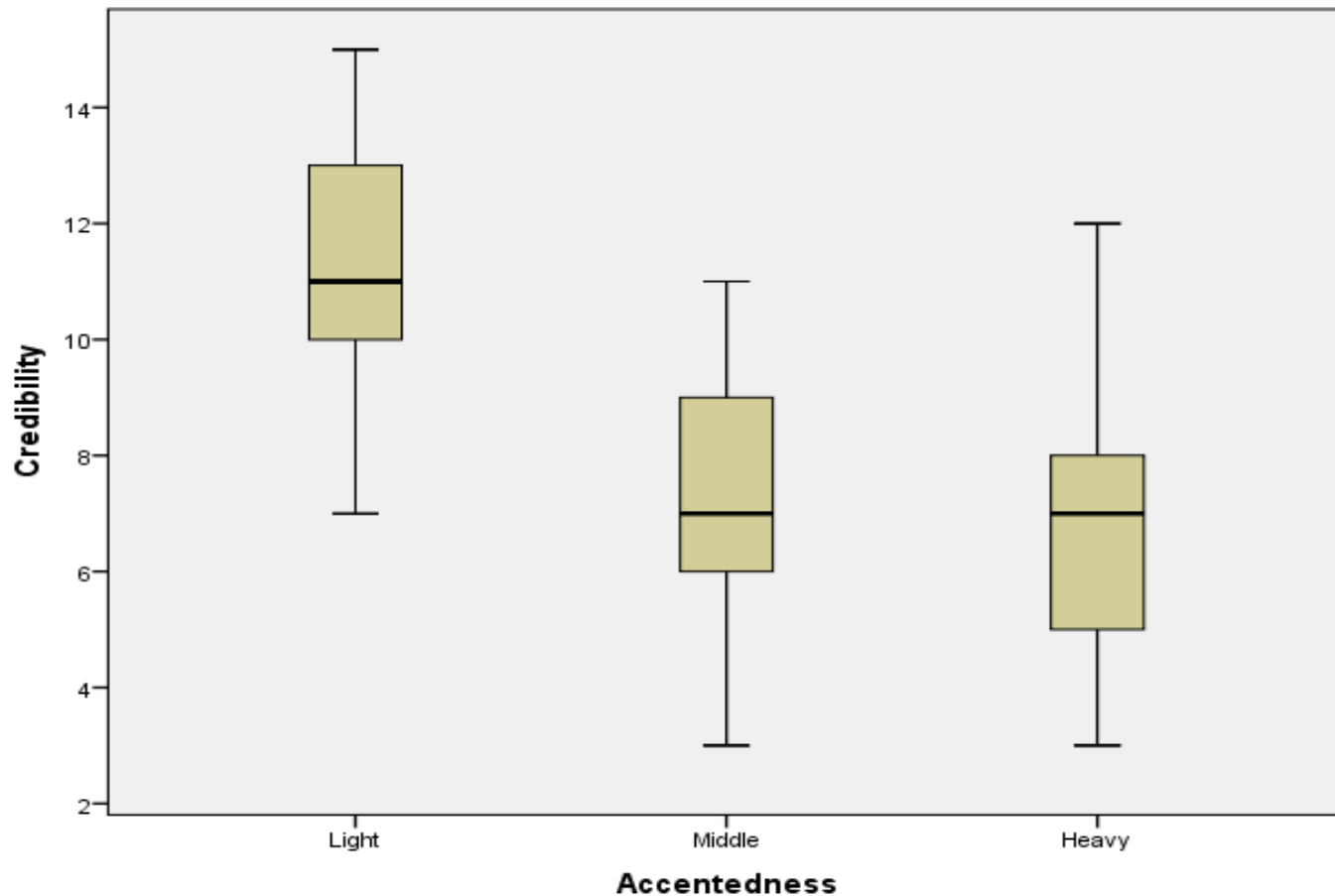


# Methodology 2

- 30 participants listened to sales presentations in three different degrees of Japanese-accented English; **Light, Middle and Heavy.**
- Participants rate the speaker based on their impressions on 5-likert scales in addition to one open question and their background check.
- Questionnaire → see Appendix B.

# Results 1

The distribution of credibility scores according to speakers' level of accentedness



# Results 2

## Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable Credibility Tukey HSD

Accentedness		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	<i>p</i> *	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Light	Middle	3.500*	.543	.000	2.21	4.79
	Heavy	4.567*	.543	.000	3.27	5.86
Middle	Light	-3.500*	.543	.000	-4.79	-2.21
	Heavy	1.067	.543	.127	-.23	2.36
Heavy	Light	-4.567*	.543	.000	-5.86	-3.27
	Middle	-1.067	.543	.127	-2.36	.23

no significant difference b/w Middle & Heavy accent in credibility scores

\*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

# Discussion

- Why no significant difference b/w middle & heavy accent?
- Not much pronunciation difference in recorded presentations.
- Heaviness of accent might have caused listeners to get a preconceived idea that listening to the speech would be difficult.
  - led them to give generous scores to the one with heavy accent because of their sympathy towards the speaker.
  - might have pushed the scores closer to that of middle accent.
- Credibility could be obtained through “light-accented” pronunciation.

# Conclusion

- Heavy accent is likely to reduce credibility of the speaker.
- Results may suggest that only the light accent can raise credibility of the speaker.
- This implies that in order to raise one's credibility (only) by pronunciation, the speaker has to improve their English pronunciation extensively.
  - SLA teacher is recommended to offer pronunciation instruction.

# Limitations

- Small sample (participants) size.
- Small number & male only recording samples.
- No gender considered.
- Recorded presentations (source of the credibility judge) might have been too short.
- Participants' familiarity with Japanese-accented English vary.

# Reference 1

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Thank you very much for listening.