Alleviating negative attitudes toward foreign accent

- Foreign accents mark “other” in college classrooms.
- Interventions include accent reduction and accent awareness.

Chinese students in the U.S.

- 30% of international students nationwide in 2015-16.
- 60% of international students and 6% of student body at Pitt in Fall 2016.

Developing an intervention in Chinese-accented English

- Target language-specific speech traits.
- Include both native and non-native speakers.

Questions for an intervention in Chinese-accented English

- How does a speaker’s accent and intelligibility affect their approachability and identity to Chinese and English NS?
- How do Chinese and English NS perceive specific linguistic traits of Chinese-accented English?

Linguistic traits

- Segments mark Chinese accent to English NS.
- Non-native speakers rate phonological accuracy differently than native speakers.
- Segmental features: [i] versus [i], [p] versus [b].
- Influence of lexical tone on English stress processing.
- Suprasegmental features: compounds, deaccentuation.

Methods Overview

Speech sample selection

12 speaker groups (2 L1 x 2 genders x 3 accent levels)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 speakers per group</td>
<td>4 speakers total (L1 x gender)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 speakers representing 7 groups</td>
<td>L1 Chinese: high accentness L1 English: low accentness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedure

1. Attitudes: Sample 1 → Ratings for Sample 1

2. Perceptions:
   - Explain the difference
   - Which version was used?

(Play trait 1 words)

Do you hear a difference?

(Play trait 1 sentence 1)

Rate accentness and intelligibility

3. Experiences interview

Response scoring

Attitudes

- Approachability: 0.2 (low) – 1.0 (high)
- Identity: 0.2 (Chinese) – 1.0 (American)

Perceptions

- Trait explanations: 0 (incorrect) – 3 (completely correct)

Discussion

Implications for future interventions

- Increase approachability by increasing intelligibility.
- Retain markers of Chinese accent to retain identity.
- Leave traits that are not barriers to intelligibility.

Future directions

- Linguistic traits of intelligibility
- Teach English as a lingua franca.
- Train English NS for familiarity with Chinese accent.
- Include more American English dialects.
- Interventions for many language pairs and communities.

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