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Language Attitudes Toward Varieties of English: An American-Japanese Context

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ABSTRACT To our knowledge, no data exist on attitudes toward speakers with Japanese accented varieties of American English, an area of profound significance given increasing American-Japanese contacts across a wide range of applied contexts. This “matched-guise” study provides such by eliciting Americans’ reactions to a Japanese male talking on two different topics (aggressive versus neutral) using four language varieties (viz., standard, moderate-accented, heavy-accented, and disfluent). Speaker evaluations on status, attractiveness, and dynamism traits confirmed certain predictions based on the literature, but some surprising, yet interpretable, patterns emerged in this new domain of American-Japanese inquiry. Specifically, it was found that Japanese-accented speakers were evaluated in manner unlike all other non-standard accented speakers of American English, except those of British and Malaysian background. It is suggested that perceptions of social group competitiveness may be responsible for this pattern of results which, in turn, is discussed in terms of its applied ramifications.

The study of language attitudes has a rich history that stretches across several decades and social scientific disciplines (see Cargile, Giles, Ryan, & Bradac, 1994). 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. For example, an American may think a stranger ‘cultured’ and ‘refined’ simply because his or her accent is deemed British. Because such beliefs about language use can bias social interaction—and often in those contexts where important social decision-making is required—language attitudes represent important communicative phenomena to explore.

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Although there have been hundreds of language attitude studies conducted throughout the world (see Bradac, 1990; Giles, Hewstone, Ryan, & Johnson, 1987), and people's reactions to a host of accents and languages have been profiled, to our knowledge no studies (published in English and adopting a quantitative methodology) have explored American attitudes toward varieties of Japanese-accented English. Such an empirical enterprise is important because these attitudes stand at the center of critical intercourse. Japan and America are partners in the single most important bilateral trade relationship in the world (Cohen, 1993). In 1995 alone, the total of this trade was valued at nearly 200 billion dollars (Ministry of Finance, 1996a). In that same year, Americans had invested close to 2 billion dollars in Japan, more than three times the amount invested by people from any other nation. In turn, Japan has also been America's most faithful investor—Japan's stake in America is worth over 23 billion dollars (Ministry of Finance, 1996b). More than money, these enormous sums represent an incredible human and cultural exchange. Consider a few facts: more companies operating in the United States are affiliated with Japan (7,289) than with any other nation, including all European ones (Japanese External Trade Organization, 1994); 82,000 Japanese students are educated in American universities each year (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1996); over one-quarter of one million Japanese nationals live in the United States (Ministry of Justice, 1996a); and nearly 5 million Japanese visit America annually (Ministry of Justice, 1996b). Today, Japanese and Americans are interacting in large and record numbers, usually in English, and often times in critical educational, military, political, organizational, and economic contexts. Viewing this, there is a clear need to work toward understanding the dynamics of interactions between Japanese and Americans. One strategy to address this need is to study the evaluative predispositions that Americans share toward speakers of Japanese-accented English; in short, to study language attitudes.

In order to understand fully American attitudes toward Japanese-accented English, it must be recognized that many such varieties exist, and that these varieties may be evaluated differently in different contexts. For example, Americans may react differently to a Japanese who speaks fluent English with a moderate accent than to one who speaks disfluent English with a heavy accent. Previous research has demonstrated that both the strength of a speaker's accent and the fluency of his or her speech can influence a hearer's evaluations (e.g., Nesdale & Rooney, 1990; Ryan, Carranza, & Moffie, 1977; White & Li, 1991). Consequently, it is meaningful to investigate whether or not Japanese-accented speakers of English are treated similarly to other non-native speakers of English in this regard. Additionally, it is useful to explore reactions to these varieties of Japanese-accented English in different contexts, represented herein by different messages. Although traditional language attitude research has generally neglected message content (see Giles & Coupland, 1991a), several studies have found it to be crucial to understanding the ways in which speakers with different accents are appraised (Giles, Coupland, Henwood, Harriman, & Coupland, 1992; Giles & Johnson, 1986; Johnson & Buttny, 1982). For this reason, it is important to investigate whether the content of a Japanese-accented speaker's message (in this case, an "aggressive" message compared to a "non-aggressive" message) will moderate evaluations that are made of him. Thus, in order to begin to develop a profile of reactions to the language often used in essential cross-cultural interactions, the present study of American attitudes toward varieties of Japanese-accented English was conducted.
Having overviewed the study's empirical intent, the following section situates it within the longstanding literature on this multidisciplinary topic.

**Previous Language Attitudes Research**

As mentioned earlier, language attitudes research has successfully profiled hearer reactions to a number of different accents around the world. For example, Wilson and Bayard (1992) compared New Zealand listeners' evaluations of New Zealand-, Canadian-, Australian-, and British-accented English. Similarly, Paltridge and Giles (1984) elicited reactions towards speakers of several different French-accented varieties. These studies, and numerous others like them across the world, have revealed a generally consistent pattern of results. Most accents 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 (Fishman, 1971). As described by Ryan, Hewstone, and Giles (1984), standard accented speakers are rated highly on traits related to competence, intelligence, and social status, whereas non-standard accented speakers are evaluated less favorably on these same traits, even by listeners who themselves speak with a non-standard accent. However, when these speakers are evaluated along traits related to kindness, solidarity, and overall attractiveness, speakers with a non-standard accent compare much more favorably, and are sometimes rated as more kind and attractive, especially by listeners with a non-standard accent.

An explanation for the above pattern can be found when these evaluations are recognized to undergird a functional separation that often occurs between languages. Across many national and societal contexts, groups often speak two language varieties, “standard” and “non-standard”, with distinct contextual constraints and social meanings (Barker, 1947; Ferguson, 1959; Fishman, 1971). Because the standard variety is linked to social status, it is often used when speakers are motivated by instrumental goals. However, because the non-standard variety does not have the same associations, it is often used when speakers wish to fulfill integrative needs. Indeed, and in some ways irrespective of its status connotations, the association of a strong sense of ingroup solidarity with particular non-standard language varieties may be a crucial determinant for why certain minority languages persist (see Ryan, 1979). This functional difference is the primary basis for Giles and Ryan’s (1982) argument that the evaluative dimensions of social status and attractiveness may have universal importance for the understanding of attitudes toward contrasting language varieties.

Of course, evaluations related to a speaker’s perceived status and attractiveness are not the only ones worth measuring. Over the years, researchers have assessed a whole host of evaluations, ranging from a speaker’s perceived integrity (Lambert, 1967), to his or her degree of perceived internality-externality (Bradac, Hosman, & Tardy, 1978). With such a wide variety of evaluative measures available, some researchers have sought to standardize the measurement process by developing a general speech evaluation instrument, using factor analytic procedures. Such efforts have resulted in two instruments (the Speech Dialect Attitudinal Scale: Mulac, 1975; the Speech Evaluation Instrument: Zahn & Hopper, 1985) that measure the same three evaluative dimensions: status, attractiveness, and dyna-
mism (i.e., how active, confident, and energetic the speaker sounds). However, because dynamism is a relatively new dimension in the study of language attitudes, relatively few studies have observed how perceptions of dynamism are affected by non-standard speech. Despite this, most extant studies document that, at least in the domain of American English, non-standard speakers are perceived by Anglo-American listeners to be either equal or less dynamic than standard speakers (e.g., Bodtker, 1992; Giles, Williams, Mackie, & Rosselli, 1995; Gill, 1994; Mulac, Hanley, & Prigge, 1974; however, cf. Johnson & Buttny, 1982). Unfortunately, researchers have not attempted to explain these results, but we speculate that they are influenced, in part, by ingroup preferences. Numerous studies in an independent sphere of inquiry have demonstrated that people prefer, and evaluate more favorably, members of their own social ingroups, compared to outgroup members (e.g., Doise et al., 1972; Rabbie & Wilkens, 1971). Thus, provided that high dynamism ratings are considered favorable in an American cultural context, it is reasonable that if any differences are to be found, Anglo-American listeners would rate similar-sounding (i.e., standard accented) speakers as more dynamic than others.

In addition to comparing evaluations of standard and non-standard language varieties, language attitudes research has also explored the effects that the degree of non-standardness (i.e., the strength of accent and the disfluency of speech) may have on listener evaluations. For example, Ryan, Carranza, and Moffie (1977) had native speakers of American English listen to and evaluate eight different Spanish-accented speakers—some whose Spanish accents were strong, others whose accents were moderate or barely perceptible. They found that even small increments in accent were associated with gradually less favorable ratings along traits related to both a speaker’s perceived status (i.e., intelligence, competence, and social standing) and attractiveness (i.e., kindness, solidarity, and friendliness). This same pattern, in which stronger non-native accents are more severely downgraded across traits related to both status and attractiveness, has also been found in other studies (see Brennan & Brennan, 1981; Giles, 1972; Nesdale & Rooney, 1990). Similarly, speaker disfluency has also been found to negatively affect listener reactions (Ryan, 1983). For example, a study by White and Li (1991) demonstrated that less fluent non-native speakers of both Chinese and English are rated more negatively (across both status and attractiveness related traits by native-born Chinese and American listeners) than speakers who are more fluent. Unfortunately, none of this work testing the impact of degrees of non-standard speech has employed dependent measures related to dynamism. Even so, because greater degrees of non-standard speech have been shown to influence negatively evaluations of both status and attractiveness, and because dynamism evaluations are correlated with both of these types of evaluations (Zahn & Hopper, 1985), it seems reasonable to assume that greater degrees of non-standard speech will also produce more negative ratings of speaker dynamism.

Considering the evidence and arguments presented thus far, one should expect status-related evaluations of standard accented listeners to become progressively less favorable when encountering speakers with greater degrees of non-standard speech. Additionally, one should expect both attractiveness- and dynamism-related evaluations of these same listeners to also become progressively less favorable. Even so, the rate of this progression (i.e., effect sizes) should generally be slower (i.e., smaller) because non-standard speakers appear not to be penalized
evaluatively to the same degree for attractiveness- and dynamism-related evaluations as they are for evaluations related to social status. Thus, if the varieties of Japanese-accented English investigated in the present study were considered typical non-standard speech, the above statements could serve as research hypotheses. However, it is our contention that Japanese-accented English is a special variety of non-standard speech in America.

In a model of language attitudes developed by Cargile, Giles, Ryan, and Bradac (1994), many processes and variables are identified that shape a hearer's attitudes. Among these, cultural factors (e.g., ethnolinguistic vitality and processes of language standardization) appear to be responsible for the above-discussed pattern of evaluations for standard and non-standard speech. However, the model also recognizes that speech evaluations are equally sensitive to stereotypes. For example, a given variety of language may not be standardized within a community and, as a result, it may not meet a speaker's instrumental needs. Even so, that speaker may still be perceived to possess considerable amounts of social status if stereotypes about his or her group indicate this. Conversely, a non-standard variety of language does not assure even mediocre estimations of attractiveness if stereotypes about the represented social group suggest a lack of warmth and friendliness (among other things).

Indeed, this is the case of British-accented English in America. Unlike speakers of other non-standard varieties (e.g., Spanish- or Appalachian-accented English) who receive relatively low estimates of status and comparable estimates of attractiveness, speakers of British- (RP) accented English receive high estimates of status, but low estimates of attractiveness, relative to standard accented speakers of American English (Stewart, Ryan, & Giles, 1985). Not surprisingly, these evaluations are consistent with American stereotypes that present the British as "tradition loving," "conservative", and "reserved" (Jamison, 1971). Similarly, American images of the Japanese suggest that they also have high standing, but may encourage few warm feelings. For example, terms such as "ambitious", "hard-working", and "intelligent" are among those that Americans most often associate with the Japanese (Barnlund, 1974; Keene & Ladd, 1990; Mayovich, 1972). Correspondingly, the American mass media have declared Asians (including Japanese) a "model minority" (e.g., Kasindorf, 1982; Rodriguez, 1987; Spencer, 1985). At the same time, however, these same media suggest that Americans may feel threatened by the success of the Japanese (e.g., Goshima & Hall, 1996), and reports circulate about the hostility provoked by the Japanese in America (e.g., Morrow, 1992; Powell, 1991; Smith, 1990). Considering such images, it is reasonable to expect Japanese-accented speakers to compare favorably to standard accented speakers of American English on traits related to social status, but unfavorably on attractiveness-related traits. Despite this, increasing degrees of non-standard speech should still be expected to negatively influence both status and attractiveness ratings. Lastly, both recognition of Japanese-accented English as non-standard speech, and the circulation of stereotypes that present the Japanese as "reserved", "cautious", and "quiet" (Barnlund, 1974; Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1988; Mayovich, 1972) suggest that Japanese-accented speakers should compare unfavorably on dynamism-related traits (especially those whose speech is increasingly non-standard).
Based on the above, the following hypothesis is proffered with regard to non-Asian American listener-judges:

**H1:** (A) A moderate Japanese-accented speaker will be evaluated negatively on traits related to attractiveness and dynamism, but favorably on status-related traits when compared with evaluations of a standard American English speaker.
(B) A heavy Japanese-accented speaker will be evaluated more negatively on traits related to status, attractiveness, and dynamism than a moderate Japanese-accented speaker.
(C) A disfluent and heavy Japanese-accented speaker will be evaluated more negatively on traits related to status, attractiveness, and dynamism than a speaker with a heavy Japanese-accent only.

In addition to documenting non-Asian American (Southern Californian) attitudes toward a range of Japanese-accented speakers, this study was also concerned with the possible effects of differences in the nature of the speaker's message. Surprisingly few language attitudes studies have considered the influence that message content may have on reactions to different accented speakers (see however, Gallois, Callan, & Johnstone, 1984; Giles, et al., 1992; Giles & Johnson, 1986; Johnson & Buttmy, 1982). This may be so because most researchers have assumed its effects can be "controlled" by developing "neutral" passages for speakers to read. However, the assumption that such "neutral" texts, no matter how bland, are immune to evaluative implications has recently been criticized (Giles & Coupland, 1991b) and, in one instance, found not to be true (Giles et al., 1992). For this reason, message content was manipulated as an independent variable and in a socially meaningful way. Although the dimensions along which a speaker's message can vary are numerous (e.g., a message may be more logical, more interesting, more emotional, etc.; see Hazleton, Cupach, & Liska, 1986), we chose to manipulate the perceived "aggressiveness" of the message. According to an inductive typology of aggressive messages developed by Kinney (1994), aggressive messages result from attacks on people's group memberships, their personal failings, or their relational failings. Following this, an "aggressive message" was produced by having the speaker explicitly criticize and denigrate Americans and American trading practices in the context of a university lecture in a course on economics. Historically, in terms of past conflicts and current trade competitions (see Iritani, 1997), we felt that this content dimension was among the most socially potent and relevant available. In contrast, a "non-aggressive" message was produced by having the speaker lecture on the subject of animal communication—a topic that was irrelevant to the listeners' group membership, personal failings, and relational failings.

Aggressiveness is an important feature of any message used to elicit language attitudes because it relates to the degree of identity-threat that listeners may experience. As we have described elsewhere (Cargile & Giles, 1997), social identities are important in the language attitudes process because they shape responses that listeners have to language. Specifically, the more salient a listener's identity, the more likely he or she is to behave in an "intergroup" fashion, a fashion that includes favoring ingroup members (both materially and evaluatively) over outgroup members in an effort to boost one's self-esteem (see Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Following this, a message that not only refers to, but also attacks a listener's
social identity should result in less favorable evaluations for the speaker than a message that does not invoke, much less criticize, one’s identity. Indeed, previous studies have found that aggressive messages perceived to threaten listeners’ ingroup memberships resulted in more negative evaluations for the source—be it a single speaker (Giles & Johnson, 1986) or a group (Grant, 1993)—than non-aggressive messages on traits relating to both status and attractiveness. Across both studies, traits related to dynamism were not included. However, it seems reasonable to expect that the rhetorically assertive qualities of an aggressive message will make a speaker appear more dynamic, even if such dynamism is perceived negatively. Given the above, our second hypothesis is as follows:

H2: Speakers with an aggressive message will be evaluated more negatively on traits related to status and attractiveness, but more positively on traits related to dynamism than speakers whose message is not aggressive.

In order to test the above hypotheses, an experiment was designed and conducted as described below.

Method

This study centered around a 4 × 2 factorial design with manipulations of the speaker’s accent, fluency (standard American vs. moderate Japanese vs. heavy Japanese vs. heavy/disfluent Japanese) and message content (aggressive vs. non-aggressive). We adopted the “matched-guise” technique (Lambert, 1967) where the same, genuinely tridialectal native Japanese male speaker read, and audio-tape recorded, the two messages in the four target accents. Although this method is widely praised (Ball & Giles, 1982; Ryan, Giles, & Hewstone, 1988), it is nonetheless susceptible to threats to validity that are present when conclusions are drawn about the impact of a variable (e.g., heavy Japanese-accented English) based upon a single instantiation of that variable (see Jackson, 1992; Jackson & Jacobs, 1983). Unlike other studies that have employed naturally disfluent speakers (e.g., White & Li, 1991; Wible & Hui, 1985), only one speaker was used here, therefore it was necessary to manipulate the fluency of his speech along with his accent. Both studies by White and Li, and Wible and Hui operationalized fluency through the use of eight scales pertaining to the speaker’s mastery of a non-native language as judged by native-speaking listeners.¹ In the present study, the speaker’s fluency was manipulated through changes in the vocabulary and grammar of his speech because these manipulations were easy to undertake and constitute important features of fluency as operationalized by the researchers cited above. Consequently, the speaker delivered two versions of each text: one representing fluent speech and another, with simplified vocabulary and numerous grammatical mistakes indicative of native-Japanese speakers, representing disfluent speech. Recording of the stimulus audio-tapes was monitored to ensure that numerous paralinguistic features (e.g., voice pitch, tone, etc.) were constant across all conditions. Despite this, it should be noted that the speaker’s rate of speech varied along with his accent. He reported it increasingly “unnatural” to speak English with a moderate and heavy Japanese accent as fast as he spoke with a standard American accent. Thus, in a concession to produce more natural sounding stimulus tapes, speech rate and accent were confounded in this experiment² (average tape length [by accent condition]: standard American, 126
seconds; moderate Japanese, 142 seconds; heavy Japanese, 192 seconds; heavy and disfluent Japanese, 182 seconds). While this decision to confound speech rate and accent increased the risk of threats to internal validity, it also simultaneously increased the external validity of the experiment.

In order to ensure that the target accent recordings were perceived to be authentic representations of each accent and message condition, the tapes were first pretested with a convenience sample of 149 undergraduates from a major western university in the United States. Participants were divided into eight groups and listened to one of the eight prerecorded tapes. Following this, they evaluated qualities of the speaker, his accent, and his message—qualities that are reported, along with the results, in Tables 1 and 2. These results indicated successful manipulation of the speaker's accent and message. The aggressive message was perceived to be more aggressive and more critical than the non-aggressive message. Similarly, in the moderate Japanese accent condition, the speaker was perceived to have less of a non-native accent than in either the heavy, or the heavy/disfluent conditions. Furthermore, in the heavy Japanese accent condition, the speaker was perceived to be more fluent along each of five measures of fluency employed by White and Li (1991) than in the heavy/disfluent condition. It is interesting to note that despite the fact that grammar and vocabulary were held constant across the moderate and heavy accented conditions, judges reported hearing them differently (see Table 2 again). Thus, accentedness was found to bias the perceptions of other linguistic behaviors and this finding points, perhaps, to particular schema that these listeners possess concerning the linguistic competencies of strong non-native sounding speakers; namely, a “thick” accent necessarily indicates speech that is simple and incorrect.

In addition to rating the quality of speech, listeners were also asked to indicate the background of the speaker so that the success of the standard American accent manipulation could be determined. A standard American English accent was operationalized here as one without easily identifiable regional, or ethnic, pronunciations (Ryan & Bulik, 1982). Thus, any comment by listeners about the speaker’s background indicating their belief that he was not American, or that he came from a particular geographical region of America, was recognized as an “unsuccessful” manipulation. When delivering the non-aggressive message in the standard American accent condition, 77% of listeners reported the speaker's background as American. However, when delivering the aggressive message, initially only 10% of listeners reported the speaker's background as American. Analysis of the recording by a trained phonologist revealed slight, non-native qualities in the speaker’s pronunciation. Consequently, the speaker was coached in his pronunciation and the passage was rerecorded several times. Finally, a version was selected which led a slight majority (53%) of pretest participants to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Aggressive Text</th>
<th>Non-Aggressive Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How aggressive was his message?</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How critical was his message?</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Both differences are significant (p < .01).*
TABLE 2
Pretest Results: Comparison of Means Across Japanese Accent Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Japanese Accent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How accented was his speech?</td>
<td>Moderate: 3.47&lt;sub&gt;a&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How fluent (smooth) was his speech?</td>
<td>Moderate: 4.41&lt;sub&gt;a&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How correct was his grammar?</td>
<td>Moderate: 5.65&lt;sub&gt;a&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How excellent was his vocabulary?</td>
<td>Moderate: 5.18&lt;sub&gt;a&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How difficult was it to understand him?</td>
<td>Moderate: 5.12&lt;sub&gt;a&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How excellent, overall, was his English?</td>
<td>Moderate: 5.24&lt;sub&gt;a&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The scores are recorded on a scale from 1 to 7 where a high score always represents native-like English speech. Means with different subscripts are significantly \( p < .05 \) different from one another according to the Scheffé test of post-hoc differences.

report the speaker's background as American. Although certainly not perfect, this manipulation was considered successful, especially because analysis of the test data itself failed to reveal any significant differences between the evaluations made by listeners who believed the speaker was American, and those who detected slight non-native qualities in his pronunciation.

Once the tapes were finally prepared to our satisfaction, 240 non-Asian American undergraduates (222 of whom reported their background as Anglo) at a major California university were solicited to participate in this study in exchange for extra-credit. Individually, participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight experimental conditions, listened to a two-minute long tape of the speaker corresponding to the assigned condition, and then completed the twenty-two item short form of the Speech Evaluation Instrument (Zahn & Hopper, 1985). This instrument is a valid, reliable, and integrative measure that accounts for the major components of listeners' evaluations of speakers: evaluations of attractiveness, status, and dynamism (Zahn & Hopper, 1990). Of the twenty-two items, ten of them measure the perceived attractiveness of the speaker, and six measure both the speakers' perceived status and dynamism. Before beginning, participants were told that the speaker was a TA on campus and that the extract they were about to hear was recorded from one of his recent mini-lectures. Afterwards, they were debriefed.

Results

Participant responses to the Speech Evaluation Instrument were first factor analyzed (using Principle Axis Factoring with Oblimin rotation; Zahn & Hopper, 1990) and were found to be consistent with the underlying three-factor structure described in previous work (Zahn & Hopper, 1985). The resulting solution accounted for 63.9% of the variance and internal reliabilities for the three factors (attractiveness, status, and dynamism) were .93, .77, and .91 (Cronbach's alpha), respectively. Following Zahn and Hopper (1990), each item was multiplied by its corresponding factor score and added together with other items to form three sub-scales corresponding to each factor. The resulting sub-scale scores were then transformed for the purposes of comparison so that the maximum possible score was 30. Because the sub-scales were correlated (as expected; Zahn & Hopper, 1985), the effects of two independent variables (i.e., the speaker's accent and
message text) were investigated simultaneously across all three evaluation sub-scales through the use of a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The MANOVA produced a significant main effect for the speaker's accent, lambda = .76, \( F(9, 555) = 7.33, p < .001 \), with significant univariate effects for attractiveness, \( F(3, 230) = 15.55, p < .001 \), eta\(^2\) = .17, status, \( F(3, 230) = 6.55, p < .001 \), eta\(^2\) = .08, and dynamism, \( F(3, 230) = 5.85, p < .001 \), eta\(^2\) = .07. There was also a significant main effect for the message text, lambda = .77, \( F(3, 228) = 22.82, p < .001 \), with significant univariate effects for attractiveness, \( F(1, 230) = 22.52, p < .001 \), eta\(^2\) = .09, and dynamism, \( F(1, 230) = 41.71, p < .001 \), eta\(^2\) = .15, but not for status. The speaker was judged to be less attractive \( (M = 15.64, SD = 4.46) \), but more dynamic \( (M = 17.95, SD = 5.86) \) in the aggressive message conditions compared to the non-aggressive message conditions (attractiveness: \( M = 18.43, SD = 4.59 \); dynamism: \( M = 13.76, SD = 5.14 \)). Lastly, the multivariate interaction effect was non-significant, lambda = .95, \( F(9, 555) = 1.25, p = .26 \), but this test was affected by low levels of power (.62, alpha = .05). Consequently, it is worth noting that this interaction was found to be univariately significant for ratings of the speaker's dynamism, \( F(3, 230) = 2.64, p = .05 \), eta\(^2\) = .03.

Those effects found to be univariately significant were explored further through a series of planned comparisons. Figure 1 displays the mean attractiveness ratings for each experimental condition.\(^5\) Tests of the three contrasts indicated in H1 revealed two significant results: the speaker was judged to be more attractive \( (M = 19.62, SD = 5.16) \) when speaking with a standard American accent than when speaking with a moderate Japanese accent \( (M = 17.59, SD = 3.95) \), \( t(122) = 2.85, p < .01 \); and he was judged to be more attractive in the moderate Japanese accent guise than in the heavy Japanese accent guise \( (M = 15.51, SD = 4.02) \), \( t(112) = 2.31, p < .05 \). The speaker was judged to be no less attractive in the heavy and disfluent Japanese accent guise than in the heavy (only) Japanese accent guise. Figure 2 displays the mean status ratings for each experimental condition. Tests of
the three contrasts revealed one significant difference: the speaker was judged to possess more status when speaking with moderate Japanese accent ($M = 22.30$, $SD = 4.16$) than when speaking with a heavy (only) Japanese accent ($M = 20.39$, $SD = 3.15$), $t(112) = 2.52$, $p < .01$. Lastly, Figure 3 displays the mean dynamism ratings for each experimental condition. Because the effect of accent on these
ratings was observed to interact with the message content, the three contrasts indicated in H1 were tested separately for the aggressive and non-aggressive text conditions. These contrasts revealed only one significant difference: in the non-aggressive message condition, the speaker with the standard American accent ($M = 17.34, SD = 6.06$) was judged to be more dynamic than the same speaker with a moderate Japanese-accent ($M = 11.48, SD = 3.19$), $t(61) = 5.01, p < .001$.

Based on the evidence presented above, both H1 and H2 were confirmed to a modest extent. The results of this study were entirely consistent with H1(A): the moderate Japanese-accented speaker was evaluated significantly more negatively on traits related to attractiveness and dynamism (in the non-aggressive message condition), but no differently on status-related traits when compared to the standard American English speaker. Of course, failure to reject the null hypothesis of difference for status-related evaluations does not establish that there are, in fact, no differences in the ratings of these two speakers, particularly with the power of this test being too low to detect very small effect sizes (.16, alpha = .05). Even so, this result is nonetheless consistent with our prediction that the moderate Japanese-accented speaker would be judged favorably on status-related traits, at least relative to the judgments awarded him for attractiveness- and dynamism-related traits. Study results were also mostly consistent with H1(B): The heavy Japanese-accented speaker was evaluated more negatively on traits related to status and attractiveness than the moderate Japanese-accented speaker. Contrary to our prediction though, a difference in these speakers’ dynamism ratings was not found. Predictions also went unsupported in H1(C): The disfluent and heavy Japanese-accented speaker was not evaluated more negatively than the heavy Japanese-accented speaker on any of the three evaluative dimensions. Lastly, and in contrast, these data largely supported H2: speakers with the aggressive message were evaluated more positively on attractiveness-related traits, but more positively on dynamism-related traits than speakers who delivered the non-aggressive message. Even so, the predicted differences for status-related evaluations were not found.

**Discussion**

The results of this study confirmed many of our expectations about the evaluation of Japanese-accented English. Despite this, these results remain striking because they stand in contrast to the robust pattern of speech evaluations developed over decades of language attitudes research. As discussed earlier, non-standard speakers are usually evaluated unfavorably by standard speaking listeners on status-related traits, but often compare favorably on traits related to attractiveness (Ryan et al., 1984). These data, however, demonstrate that a (non-standard) moderate Japanese-accented speaker compares favorably on status-related traits, but unfavorably on traits related to attractiveness. More specifically, this evaluative profile is relatively unique among profiles provided by American listeners. Previous research has shown that among American listeners, Spanish-accented (Bradac & Wisegarver, 1984; Ryan & Carranza, 1975), Appalachian-accented (Luhman, 1990), and vernacular Black (Johnson & Buttny, 1982) English speakers are consistently downgraded on status-related appraisals, yet equally well-liked compared with standard American English speakers. German- (Ryan & Bulik, 1982), Norwegian-, and Italian-accented speakers (Mulac et al., 1974) are
also downgraded on status-related traits, but are additionally burdened with unfavorable attractiveness ratings. In contrast, the only speakers who compare favorably on status-related traits and unfavorably on attractiveness-related ones are British (Stewart, Ryan, & Giles, 1985), Malaysian (Gill, 1994), and the present, moderate Japanese-accented speaker.

The fact that two other national groups share the evaluative profile found here suggests that these findings neither call into question the well-developed pattern of contrasts between standard and non-standard languages, nor should they be considered anomalous. Instead, these findings fit a further refined category system developed by Ryan, Hewstone, and Giles (1984). Put succinctly, what do British, Malaysian, and Japanese-accented speakers have in common? They appear to represent varieties of non-standard speech associated with outgroups that Americans perceive as competitive, status-equals; that is, in contrast to outgroups who are perceived to be subordinate. (Interestingly, Malaysians per se may not be perceived as competitive, status equals, but the extent to which American listeners fail to differentiate between numerous Asian accents in English, all Asians may be stereotypically grouped together and, as a consequence, evaluated similarly; an issue, of course, to pursue in future work.) If future research confirms this pattern in which reactions to non-standard varieties of American English (or of any language) can be distinguished on the basis of a groups' perceived competitiveness, it would be significant because such a pattern helps account for greater variability in the attitudes people hold toward speakers of different language varieties.

Before concluding, however, that stereotypes (manifest as perceptions of competitiveness) are solely responsible for comparable status ratings among the standard American and moderate Japanese-accented speakers, the speakers' ostensible role as a teaching assistant should first be considered. It is possible that the Japanese-accented speaker was evaluated as relatively "intelligent", "rich", and "literate" only because of instructions to participants that indicated the speaker was a teaching assistant delivering a lecture in a college classroom. Even so, other language attitude work suggests that speakers portrayed as college instructors do not automatically enjoy higher status ratings as a consequence of their position. A study by Cargile (1997) found that when speakers were introduced as college professors, they in fact received lower status ratings than when they were introduced as job applicants. Thus, although the possibility remains that the present results are an artifact of the selected instructional context, they more likely represent the emergence of a second, non-standard language attitude profile that is based upon American stereotypes of the Japanese.

In addition to evaluations of status and attractiveness, the dynamism evaluations measured here also confirmed some of our predictions. When delivering the non-aggressive message, the moderate Japanese-accented speaker was rated as significantly less dynamic than the standard American-accented speaker. This matched our expectations and most previous research. However, this did not hold true for speakers in the aggressive message condition. When delivering the aggressive message, the speaker was judged to be equally dynamic, regardless of whether he spoke with a standard American- or moderate Japanese-accent. Thus, it seems that messages alone can possess a vitality great enough to counteract the extent tendency to downgrade non-standard speakers on dynamism-related traits.

When comparing evaluations of the moderate Japanese-accented speaker to
those of the heavy Japanese-accented speaker, this study confirmed that the increasing strength of a speaker's accent is associated with less favorable ratings of status and attractiveness. These results are entirely consistent with previous research (Brennan & Brennan, 1981; Giles, 1972; Nesdale & Rooney, 1990), yet detract slightly from the generalization that a stronger accent will lead to more negative speaker evaluations. This is because the heavier accent was not found to cause more negative ratings on traits related to dynamism. As noted earlier, most studies have not employed dynamism as a dependent variable, so here we observe—for the first time—that the increasing strength of a speaker's accent does not consistently lead to more negative evaluations; at least not in the case of traits such as the perceived enthusiasm or activity of the speaker.

When comparing evaluations of the two heavy accented varieties of Japanese speech, to our surprise, the heavy and disfluent speaker was rated as equally dynamic, attractive, and status-possessing as the heavy accented speaker. This contrasts with the results of both White and Li (1991) and Wible and Hui (1985), who found that increasing disfluency was associated with more negative evaluations of speakers across traits related to both status and attractiveness. What, then, should be made of this contradiction and of the present results? To answer this question, differences in these studies' methodologies must be considered. Specifically, the previous research operationalized fluency based on eight criteria that confounded differences in vocabulary, grammar, and the strength of the speaker's non-native accent (see endnote number 1). In the present study however, problematic vocabulary and grammar co-occurred only with a heavy non-native accent. It thus becomes reasonable to attribute differences in the results of these studies to differences in the particular combinations of accent strength, vocabulary, and grammar employed by speakers across the studies. Thus, for example, disfluencies of vocabulary and grammar may not affect evaluations of a heavy (non-native) accented speaker (as was found here), yet may still matter dearly to evaluations of a moderate or light (non-native) accented speaker. This explanation is especially plausible because pretest results demonstrated that the speaker's accent influenced perceptions of his vocabulary and grammar. If an accent can cause listeners to misperceive qualities of a speaker's vocabulary and grammar, then it is possible that a heavy (non-native) accent may completely "override" the effect of these and other disfluency-related variables. In other words, a strong non-native accent may trigger evaluations so negative that other speech disfluencies become evaluatively irrelevant. Paired with other accents though, these disfluencies may once again acquire the sort of evaluative potency demonstrated in the other studies (White & Li, 1991; Wible & Hui, 1985). Although this explanation is compelling, future research should nonetheless be designed to test it as a means of understanding better the impact of disfluent speech on listeners' evaluations.

Lastly, the results of this study confirmed effects for message content. Speakers in the aggressive message condition were rated lower on attractiveness-related traits, but higher on dynamism-related traits, than speakers in the non-aggressive message condition. However, no effect was found on status-related evaluations. These results demonstrate that, indeed, a speaker's message is evaluatively critical. Message content both added to (in the case of attractiveness ratings) and interacted with (in the case of dynamism ratings) evaluations made on the basis of accent. Viewing this, future language attitude studies must be sure to anticipate
and account for the potential effects of message content, rather than continuing to ignore them. Additionally, these results partially support the contention that attacks on a listener's social identity will result in less favorable evaluations. Even so, failure to reject the null hypothesis in the case of status-related evaluations suggests that the evaluative downgrading that results when one's identity is challenged may dimension specific, rather than global. Indeed, other (non-language attitude) research has shown that identity dependent processes primarily affect attractiveness-related evaluations (Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Grant, 1992). Thus, it may be the case that aggressive messages, and other messages that invoke the salience of a listener's social group membership, call up only (negative) attractiveness-related evaluations in the listener's mind. Of course, the primacy of this evaluative dimension in intergroup contexts is simply speculative at this point—speculation worthy of testing, however.

**Implications**

Language attitudes research has helped us understand the ways in which listeners may be evaluatively predisposed to others with different accented varieties of language. This study has added to that body of literature by describing an evaluative profile that is especially important because thousands of Japanese and Americans interact everyday in relationships that are critical to the welfare of millions. We are beginning to discover how young Southern Californian, non-Asian American listeners react to various Japanese-accented speakers. For them, a moderate Japanese accent represents someone who is well-respected, but less liked, and perceived as less dynamic. Additionally, we know that a speaker with a strong Japanese accent is less respected and liked even less than a speaker with only a moderately strong accent. Contrary to our expectations, however, a disfluent Japanese speaker was evaluated no less negatively than one who was fluent. When it comes to a speaker's message, this study shows that language attitudes research must continue to consider the effects of what a speaker says, because, in this case, the message both added to, and interacted with, the effects of the speaker's accent.

If we want to generalize these results beyond this particular population of participants, and beyond classroom interaction (something that should be done with caution; cf. Cargile, 1997), this study suggests an number of things about interactions between Japanese and Americans. First, it suggests that Japanese face a deficit in terms of being liked by Americans when they speak in English with either a strong, or even a moderate, accent. Thus, for example, if a Japanese figure (e.g., a musician, or a sports hero) wants to encourage popularity among Americans, he or she may be served best by fewer rather than more opportunities to speak English in public. Second, this study suggests that Japanese speakers face little, if any, deficit in terms of being respected by Americans. Thus, for example, a male Japanese executive need not be concerned about his basis of power being eroded each time he speaks English to subordinates in an American-based manufacturing plant. Third, this study suggests that Japanese may face a deficit in terms of appearing dynamic to Americans—in certain contexts, their accent may make them appear less potent, whereas in other contexts, it may matter little. Thus, for example, if a communication consultant is concerned about fostering her Japanese client's image as an enthusiastic, confident leader, then she would be best
advised to focus on developing strong message content rather than on attempting to reduce her client’s non-native English accent. From an American perspective, all of this information merits consideration because it indicates the predispositions that are evoked when Japanese speakers are heard. In one manner, it provides a partial map of the terrain of interaction that must be navigated if fruitful, productive, and non-prejudiced relationships are to be developed and continued.

Despite the contributions that this study makes to our understanding of language attitudes, much work remains to be done. Because, as described in the method section, threats to the internal validity of this study remain, future studies should test whether or not the evaluative pattern described herein can be reproduced using different Japanese-accented speakers, different rates of speech, and different messages. Relatedly, an analysis of a small sample of Asian-American listeners indicates that their responses to Japanese-accented speakers may be very different from the reactions of non Asian-American listeners. Thus, similar studies should be completed with audiences who possess different attributes that are relevant to the language attitudes process (e.g., racial background, age, occupation, and geographical location). Likewise, similar studies should also be completed using other Asian-accented target speakers. Importantly, such investigations could disentangle (among other things) whether Anglo-American listeners differentiate varieties of Asian accents (e.g., Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Korean, etc.), or whether all Asian sounding speakers evoke a stereotypically consistent pattern of evaluative and affective responses similar to the one described here. Moreover, the riddle concerning the effects of a disfluent accent (Asian and otherwise) should be addressed in future research. It is our hope that this current and proposed language attitude research will add an important new dimension to the burgeoning interest in Japanese-American communication.

Endnotes

1. The eight scales used by these researchers pertained to: accuracy of pronunciation, correctness of grammar, range and use of vocabulary, degree of fluency, degree of animation and expressiveness, authenticity of sound, pleasantness of speech, and general impression of language quality.

2. A MANCOVA analysis was attempted on the resultant data in an effort to remove any possible effect of speech rate. However, the effect of rate, as a covariate, was not found to be constant across the experimental conditions. This is a necessary condition for any MANCOVA analysis (see Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995) therefore such an analysis was judged inappropriate for this data.

3. It is believed that the differential rate in successful manipulation between the two message conditions is attributable to the fact that in the aggressive message condition, the speaker, through his criticisms, positions himself rhetorically against Americans. This, in turn, makes it difficult to believe that the speaker himself is an American and/or leads some listeners to attend to the slight non-native qualities in his pronunciation.

4. MANOVA analysis did not indicate significant differences for ratings of the speaker's status, attractiveness, and dynamism between listeners who reported perceiving non-native vocal qualities (N = 15), and those who did not (N = 17), F(3, 28) = .30, p = .827. Although this result supports our belief that the standard American accent manipulation is acceptable, it is not definitive because the small sample size, and the small effect size undermine the test's power (.10, alpha = .05).

5. This Figure, along with Figures 2 and 3, represents the sum of all factor score multiplied sub-scale items. Because the number of items and the corresponding factor scores vary across each sub-scale, this sum has been multiplied by an appropriate fraction for purposes of comparison. Consequently, the maximum possible score in all Figures is 30; the minimum is 4.29.
6. The relationship between aggressive message content, perceptions of threat to listeners' American identities, and subsequent evaluative downgrading of the speaker are explored and reported more thoroughly in Cargile & Giles (1997).

References


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