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ABSTRACT

Research has demonstrated that many linguistic features correlate with social stratification of speakers and that these features often serve as social identifiers that trigger language stereotypes. An experiment was conducted to verify these findings with regard to Portuguese ethnic groups. Judges from four Portuguese-speaking ethnic groups listened to a series of tape recordings of eight speakers of Portuguese reading a standard passage. The speakers represented Continental, Brazilian, Capeverdean, and Azorean speakers; half were college educated and half had a fourth grade education. Personality characteristics of each speaker were evaluated from voice and speech clues. The data provided evidence that judges recognized ethnic educational, and social class differences. Noneducated speakers were generally rated lower than their educated counterparts. Capeverdean and Azorean speakers were given a low rating by judges from these ethnic groups. Pedagogical implications for the language development of speakers of a dialect are discussed in relation to language attitudes and the social reality of the language being taught. (AMH)

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Stereotyped Attitudes toward Various Portuguese Accents

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Linguists are delving increasingly deeper into the problem of language from a sociolinguistic perspective. Research studies, such as the one by Alison d'Anglejan and Richard Tucker in reference to the French spoken in Quebec, have been published in the last fifteen years or so. Other works include those of Labov, Preston, Tucker and Lambert, Shuy and Williams, and Fraser, among others.¹

William Labov has been a predominant force among sociolinguists in designing methodologies which invoke stereotyped attitudes towards linguistic variables characteristic of various speech styles. In one study he found that the substitution of the stop /t/ for the fricative /θ/ by New Yorkers had a direct relationship to the social class of the speakers. His findings indicated that speakers who substituted the stop /t/ for the fricative /θ/ in words such as *three* usually were from lower socioeconomic brackets. Labov also noted that the presence of the phoneme /t/ in the final position of a word or before a consonant was associated with more socially accepted speech in New York.²

With the development of the matched guise technique by Wallace Lambert and his colleagues in Canada, numerous studies have demonstrated that many linguistic features correlate with social stratification of speakers and that these features often serve as social identifiers which trigger language stereotypes.³ Tucker and Lambert's study "White and Negro Listeners' Reactions to Various American-English Dialects" seems to support the hypothesis that we have stereotyped attitudes towards speakers of particular social dialects. The following is a brief description of their study:


Samples of the taped speech of representatives of six American-English dialect groups (Network, Educated White Southern, Educated Negro Southern, Mississippi Peer, Howard University, New York Alumni) were played to three groups of college students (one northern white, one southern white, and one southern Negro) who were asked to listen to the recorded readings and evaluate certain characteristics of the speakers, using an adjective checklist developed for this purpose. It was found that

both northern white and southern Negro judges rated the Network speakers most favorably, but, in contrast, the Educated White Southern speakers next most favorably. On the other hand, both groups of white judges rated the Mississippi Peer speakers less favorably; while the Negro judges rated the Educated White Southern speakers less favorably.⁴

In another instance, during a recent fund raising campaign to finance a medical clinic, Dr. Bayley, a native of Appalachia, remarked: "When you talk like we do, most people think of the typical hillbilly, the uneducated person they show on TV. They had no guarantee that we would not run away with the money."⁵ It therefore seems undeniable that speech cues alone serve as social identifiers.

The purpose of this study was to verify the findings of Tucker and Lambert using speech samples from various Portuguese ethnic groups. The experiment demonstrated whether the language attitude phenomenon was found among Portuguese ethnic groups. In addition, the psychological and sociological implications of the overt and covert discrimination practiced against speakers of various Portuguese dialects should be fully understood. Educators, especially, must be knowledgeable of the ways language discrimination manifests itself in classroom interactions. It is most difficult to change the perceptions of both teachers and students if neither understands the reasons for their subjective judgment of each other's speech.

My theory is that there are definite stereotyped attitudes towards certain Portuguese dialects and that these stereotypes correlate with the socioeconomic status of the speakers of these dialects. For example, during the political campaign of PAIGC in Cape Verde, people often ridiculed the speech style of these political leaders. An upper-class Capeverdean native remarked, "During the campaign we used to listen to the radio and make fun of the 'Portuguese of Tchadinha' [Portuguese with unmistakable Capeverdean influence] spoken by the PAIGC leaders." In a recent meeting with Portuguese bilingual teachers in Massachusetts, an Azorean



teacher pointed out that "the Azorean parents don't come to the Parent Advisory Council meetings because they are ashamed of the Portuguese they speak." It is not at all surprising that prejudices concerning social dialects are prevalent among speakers of different Portuguese groups.

"Historically, language has played an important role in shaping and maintaining the hierarchy of cultures."

Portuguese colonialists campaigned to "inculcate the oppressed with myths and beliefs that later become anchored in their psyches and character structure."⁶ Hence, a negative attitude towards their native language is predominant among Capeverdeans. There are many cases in which Capeverdean parents have forbidden their children to speak the Capeverdean language in the hope that they will grow up speaking "good Portuguese," thereby assuring easier upward mobility. Parents may carry on a conversation with friends and relatives in the Capeverdean language but switch to Portuguese when addressing their children.

In many instances, to avoid prejudicial attitudes, dominated peoples have to strive to assimilate the "standard language." In fact, even after political independence, a significant part of the population will continue to be mentally colonized for many years with respect to attitudes toward their language. This is the case of French speakers in Quebec as indicated by d'Anglejan and Tucker: "French Canadians may feel sensitive and somewhat insecure with respect to their 'nonstandard' dialect."⁷ Miner remarked that "the rural French Canadian is usually apologetic about his speech."⁸

Historically, language has played an important role in shaping and maintaining the hierarchical order of world cultures, and

its political function is an important factor which is determined not only by the social context of a society but by political institutions and interest as well. Both socially restricted language and politically manipulated language can function as agents promoting the stability... of a political order.⁹

* Research findings have indicated that a group of speakers may have a very prejudiced attitude toward the language variety spoken by another group. This negative language attitude may have serious psychological and sociological implications, as evidenced in the Williams' study.

In a situation (1) Speech types serve as social identifiers. (2) These elicit stereotypes held by ourselves and others (including ones of ourselves). (3) We tend to behave in accord with these stereotypes, and thus (4) translate our attitudes into social reality.¹⁰

Because these stereotypes are translated into day-to-day reality, a language community of speakers may be denied access to occupational echelons dominated by the so-called "majority" or "standard" language group(s). In some instances, speakers of the "nonstandard" language, in order to guarantee their full acceptance into the orbit of the dominant language group, will try to disassociate themselves entirely from their native language, a reaction which perpetuates discrimination and which may endanger the survival of their language. According to Barker, this attitude

is manifested among Mexican American bilinguals who have a feeling of inferiority with respect to the "Mexican accent" in their spoken English. The association of inferior social status with this accent was so strong that some parents spoke only English to their children in hope that they would grow up without an accent and thus have broader opportunities.¹¹

Negative attitudes of linguistic minority groups toward their mother tongues stem generally from the low status to which the languages of these groups have been relegated in the past. The result of continued linguistic oppression is the destruction of the minority languages. The overt and covert discrimination against the minority languages of the world has no inherent linguistic basis.

THE EXPERIMENT

This study was based on the premise that recorded speech samples of a language community alone may serve as identifiers of how these speakers are perceived by listeners of another group. A sample of judges was asked to listen to a series of tape recordings of different speakers reading a standard passage and to evaluate the personality characteristics of each speaker using only voice and speech styles as clues. According to Tucker and Lambert,

This technique appears to expose the listener's more private feelings and stereotyped attitudes towards a contrasting group or groups whose language, accent, or dialect is distinctive, and it appears to be reliable in that the same profile of reactions emerges on repeated samplings from a particular group.¹²

This technique has also been successfully used in the studies of Bruce Fraser and Ellen B. Ryan.¹³

In view of this assumption, the experimenter hoped to investigate whether, in fact, a meaningful pattern emerged with respect to speech characteristics of various Portuguese speakers. Given the phonological distinctiveness which may serve as social identifiers among Portuguese ethnic groups, the experimenter formulated the hypothesis that "speakers from Continental Portugal would be rated higher along the personality characteristic continua when compared with speakers from the Azores, Cape Verde, and Brazil.

Operational Definitions

Language community: A group of speakers sharing the same linguistic characteristics.

Continental Portuguese speaker: A native of Portugal whose official language is Portuguese.

Capeverdean speaker: A native of the Cape Verde Islands whose official language is Portuguese.

Azorean speaker: A native of the Azores whose official language is Portuguese.

Brazilian speaker: A native of Brazil whose official language is Portuguese.

Portuguese ethnic groups: A group of people whose official language is Portuguese but whose cultural and ancestral characteristics are varied and make them unique.

Stimulus Voice

The experiment consisted of eight different speech samples, tape recordings of a standard Portuguese passage (approximately fifty seconds long) read by eight different Portuguese speakers belonging to four ethnic groups under the umbrella of the Portuguese-speaking world. The speakers were:

1. A Capeverdean speaker: college educated (literature major)
2. A Continental Portuguese speaker: fourth grade education (waiter)
3. An Azorean speaker: college educated (bilingual teacher)
4. A Brazilian speaker: college educated (economist)
5. A Capeverdean speaker: fourth grade education (laborer)
6. A Continental Portuguese speaker: college educated (bilingual teacher)
7. An Azorean speaker: fourth grade education (factory worker)
8. A Brazilian speaker: fourth grade education (waiter)

The order of speakers followed the above pattern. The theory was that the judges from all four ethnic groups would correctly differentiate speech variations among Portuguese speakers and that judgment of a speaker's ethnicity would correlate with overall evaluation of the speaker, thus providing control for the halo effect. Each judge was asked to indicate on the scoring sheet the region from which each speaker came.

Rating Scale

A rating scale of one to eight was used for each trait. Each speaker was rated on this scale for each trait, eight being the highest evaluation and one being the lowest. That is, if a speaker was given an eight for the trait intelligence, the judge

considered the speaker to be very intelligent. But if the speaker was given a rating of two, for instance, s/he was perceived as being of low intelligence.

Judges

Since Portuguese-speaking individuals can be found in many parts of the globe, the pool of Portuguese speakers identified as the target population was divided equally into four groups according to ethnic and geographic backgrounds which correspond to those of the speakers (i.e., Azorean, Capeverdean, Continental Portuguese, Brazilian). In order to guarantee a representative sample, each pool of Portuguese speakers belonging to a particular group was further stratified on the basis of sex, occupation, age, and education. In addition to the stratification of judges, random sampling procedures were employed. Based on a table of random numbers, a workable sample of 30 individuals in each geographical group was chosen for a total of 120 judges.

Experiment Procedure

The experiment took place in a normal classroom or a similar setting in most cases. In some instances, due to the difficulty of gathering large numbers of judges, the experiment took place in the judges' houses, in which cases living rooms were used. All necessary measures were taken to control extraneous variables such as abrupt interruptions, distractions, or other factors which may have affected the results. The judges were asked to evaluate each speaker using the rating sheet provided, within thirty seconds of hearing the passage read. Before the experiment took place, the tape recordings were played in a trial session to familiarize the judges with the procedures.

**"How do judges rate speakers
of their own ethnic group?"**

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the data collected in this research study, the experimenter used the multifactor analysis of variance. The purpose of this method was to interpret the data and answer these three fundamental questions:

1. How do judges rate in general? This variable was considered to account for those raters who might tend to rate too low or too high, and as a result, affect the mean score.
2. Do judges rate the Continental Portuguese more favorably than all other speakers?
3. How do judges rate speakers of their own ethnic group?

From the analysis of the data, a meaningful pattern emerged for variable 1. This pattern indicated that the judges rated reliably both across groups and within groups. No significant inconsistency in the subjective evaluation of the speech samples of speakers was observed. The following results

deeply rooted in the social context of the Portuguese society and the political institutions that promote and maintain the social order.

Onésimo T Almeida in his paper, "A Profile of the Azorean," succinctly discussed the social, political, and economic forces that shaped the Azorean culture. He cites that

a recent brief but interesting document has attempted to explain the island's present stage of development. Under the subheading "Key to an understanding of Azorean backwardness," the document points to the policies of the Lisbon government and the behavior of the local dominant classes in the Azores stressing the leitmotifs of stultification and abandonment. The document holds that the political powers in Lisbon directly promoted and sustained the archipelago's socioeconomic isolation and lack of growth, and that those powers acted largely through the remnants of the Old Azorean aristocracy and their associates.¹⁶

It is not surprising that Azorean speech would be evaluated in accordance with the social status to which the Azorean culture belongs within the Portuguese colonial framework. It is, however, most important to be able to identify and understand those sociopolitical forces that create and maintain dangerous myths in regard to the Azorean speech form. Educators must understand the roots of stereotyped attitudes towards speech. They must be particularly aware that speech form difference "creates a major problem of educability only where the school produces discontinuity between its symbolic orders and those of the child."¹⁷ To require the Azorean child to function solely through the medium of the standard Portuguese linguistic code "which presupposes different role relationships and systems of meaning without a sensitive understanding of the required context may create for the child a bewildering and potentially damaging experience."¹⁸

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In spite of vast research stressing the importance of the relationship between language attitudes and language learning, language programs generally develop independently of the attitudinal variable. In general, these programs do not concern themselves with the social reality of the language they teach. In some instances, they even perpetuate linguistic discrimination which may exist in the community at large. This is sometimes done subconsciously since teachers, in their own training, have been inculcated with values that reflect the dominant culture. In turn, they legitimize the speech of prominent people, thus creating a dichotomy between the prestigious dialect (which is often adopted as the standard) and the nonstandard dialects. According to Langacker, "A dialect that is accorded special prestige frequently comes to be regarded as a correct, more adequate, or purer than less prestigious dialects."¹⁹ However, he points out that "there is

no reason to think that any dialect of a language has intrinsic merit over the others."²⁰

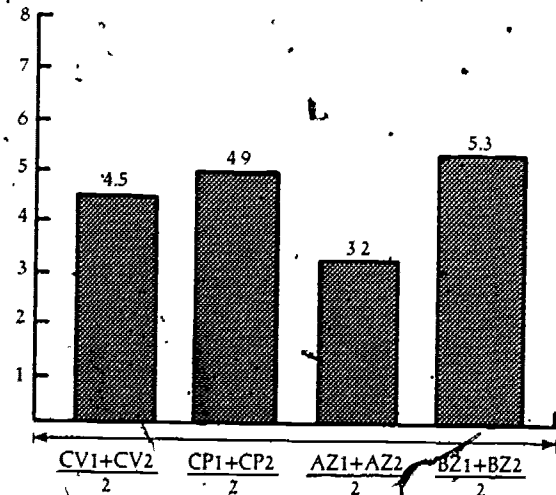
Reading experts frequently discuss the relationship between reading success and social class. They found that "between 50 percent and 60 percent of all students in a typical inner-city middle school or secondary school are disabled in reading. . . . On the other hand, about 25 percent of the students in a suburban middle school or secondary school are disabled in reading."²¹ These findings prompted educators to more closely inspect the students' backgrounds and, specifically, the language variety they bring to the classroom. In general, students from the low socioeconomic bracket bring to school a dialect variation that is not in harmony with the language of the curriculum. Unless definitive measures are taken to help the nonstandard dialect speakers acquire the language of the curriculum, these students will continue to find themselves at a serious disadvantage linguistically.

Since oral language development and self-expression are often cited as prerequisites to success in reading, teachers must provide ample opportunities for the development of these areas in a psychologically beneficial manner. Students should not be expected to develop self-expression in a language they don't speak:

Ideas which have been formulated in one language are [so] difficult to express through the modes of another. . . that a person habitually faced with this task can readily lose his facility to express himself. A child, faced with this task at an age when his powers of self-expression even in his mother tongue, are but incompletely developed, may possibly never achieve adequate self-expression.

. . . To expect him to deal with the new information or ideas presented to him in an unfamiliar language is to impose on him a double burden, and he will make slower progress.²²

Figure 2
Overall ratings for eight speakers judged by Azoreans (n=30); Brazilians (n=30); Continental Portuguese (n=30); and Capeverdeans (n=30).



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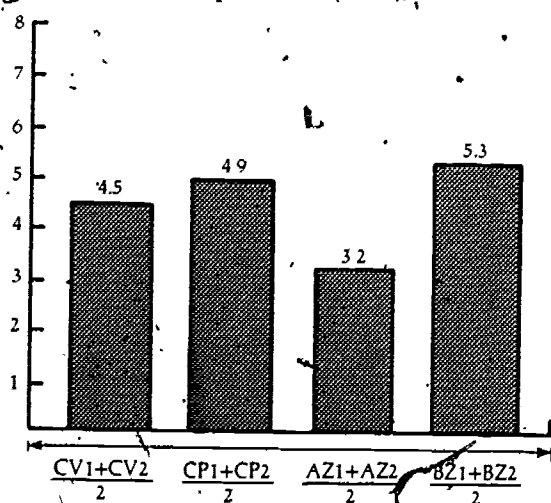
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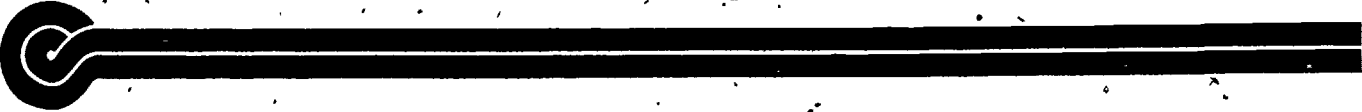
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Overall ratings for eight speakers judged by Azoreans (n=30); Brazilians (n=30); Continental Portuguese (n=30); and Capeverdeans (n=30).





Oral language development should always be encouraged in the student's dialect, since research indicates that students learn better when presented with material familiar to them. In terms of reading, children can only engage in a meaningful reading program when they read about experiences which are part of their reality.²³ Since these experiences are usually conveyed by means of their own dialect, it is also recommended that this dialect become the vehicle of instruction in reading and oral language development.

The list of activities below was developed by Bethune Elementary School in Miami²⁴ to promote language development. These exercises were designed for English speakers but can easily be adapted to various dialects of Portuguese or other languages and include the following suggestions:

1. Conduct a "style show" in which pupils describe what others in class are wearing.
2. Play a piano selection or a recording, and have pupils describe how the music makes them feel.
3. Let pupils feel, then describe, the texture of such materials as sandpaper, cotton batting, sponge, silk, and sand.
4. Let pupils, while blindfolded, remove an unknown object from a grab bag and describe its texture, shape, size, and weight.
5. Read a story or poem aloud and ask pupils to pick out the words, such as *squeal*, *buzz*, and *growl*, that "make a noise."
6. List on the board such phrases as "As quiet as..." "As loud as..." or "As bright as..." and let pupils think of as many ways as possible of completing them.
7. Let pupils complete sentences with provocative beginnings such as "If I were a giant I would..."
8. Let pupils describe the appearance and personality of a character in a story they have heard read.
9. Bring to class vials of vanilla and lemon extract, peppermint oil, and other kitchen flavorings; let pupils smell them, then describe the odors.
10. Stand a full-length mirror against a wall; let pupils stand before it and describe themselves aloud.
11. Teach a "special" word each day, and at roll call let each child respond with that word rather than with his name.
12. Teach pupils the name of every object in the room and try to get pupils to call objects by name instead of *it* or *that*.
13. Display a child's drawing depicting two or more persons, and let pupils try to imagine what one person might be saying to the other.
14. Use the daily news as a springboard for teaching new words. *Hurricane*, *blizzard*, *drought*, *disaster*, *economy*, *employment*, or *conflict*, for example, can be gleaned from almost any front page, depending on the season.

Another excellent practice to promote language development is game playing. In addition to language games, language development can be accomplished through dramatization in the dialect.²⁵ This exercise not only enhances the

development of self-expression, it also contributes greatly to the student's rendering of a positive self-concept.

Although these classroom activities are suggested in the dialect the student brings to school, they also provide a sound pedagogical basis for instruction in the language of the curriculum. It must be clearly understood that emphasis on teaching in the dialect is not made at the sacrifice of the standard. The standard, which is the language of the curriculum, will ultimately be acquired. This task, however, should not be achieved at the expense of native language development, subject-matter learning, cognitive development, or social-emotional development.²⁶

"Emphasis on teaching in the dialect is not made at the sacrifice of the standard."

The teacher's legitimization of the student's dialect often results in the student's desire to identify with the teacher, which in turn contributes to the student's integrative motivation to speak the standard dialect, thereby emulating the teacher. The acquisition of such integrative motivation is essential for successful language learning.

The traditional practices to eradicate the nonstandard dialect in order to learn the standard were based on social attitudes that "will not stand up to objective critical scrutiny."²⁷ There is no empirical evidence supporting the claim that knowledge of the first language hinders the acquisition of a second language. On the contrary, there is substantial evidence that a greater competence in the first language facilitates a more comprehensive acquisition of a second language. (This, however, doesn't include suprasegmental features of the second language.)

Teachers should avoid overcorrection of grammatical structures if it blocks communication. This is an especially sensitive matter with adolescents and adult learners since "self-conscious adolescents tend to avoid placing themselves in language acquisition situations for fear of making an error. This fear could result in an inability to acquire through a failure to interact with primary linguistic data."²⁸ Corrections can and should be made in a manner that calls the student's attention to errors without psychological harm.

In conclusion, teachers should understand the nature of dialect variations and accept them as de facto linguistic systems:

Until the general public can be educated to accept linguistic diversity, a person may well be handicapped socially and professionally by speech traits considered incorrect by people he has to deal with. Schools should help to foster the acceptance of linguistic diversity and avoid artificial corrections. A child who drills and drills to add to

his linguistic system a who/whom distinction that was not there in the first place is likely, unless he is otherwise informed, to come to the erroneous conclusion that one version of a language is intrinsically more correct than any other, including his own."

NOTES

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- 29 See note 19.

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- When do you need the information? Advise us of any deadlines that you might have.
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- Requests for information may be made on the NCBE hotline from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. Your request will be answered by one of our information specialists. Callers in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area may dial (703) 522-0710.
- Please send mail requests to NCBE, 1300 Wilson Boulevard, Suite B2-11, Rosslyn, Virginia 22209.



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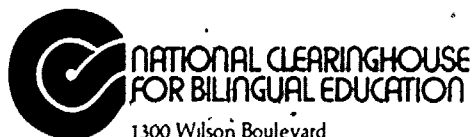
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