



Effects of accent perception on the perception of professionalism

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Introduction

- The ways listeners perceive accents and the ways they perceive the people who use them are intertwined
- Accent perception plays a role in job interview success (Deprez-Sims et al., 2010), upward mobility in the workplace (Akomolafe, 2013)
- Native English-speakers in the U.S. tend to rate non-native English speakers' voices as less credible/believable than those of native English-speakers (Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010)

Research Question

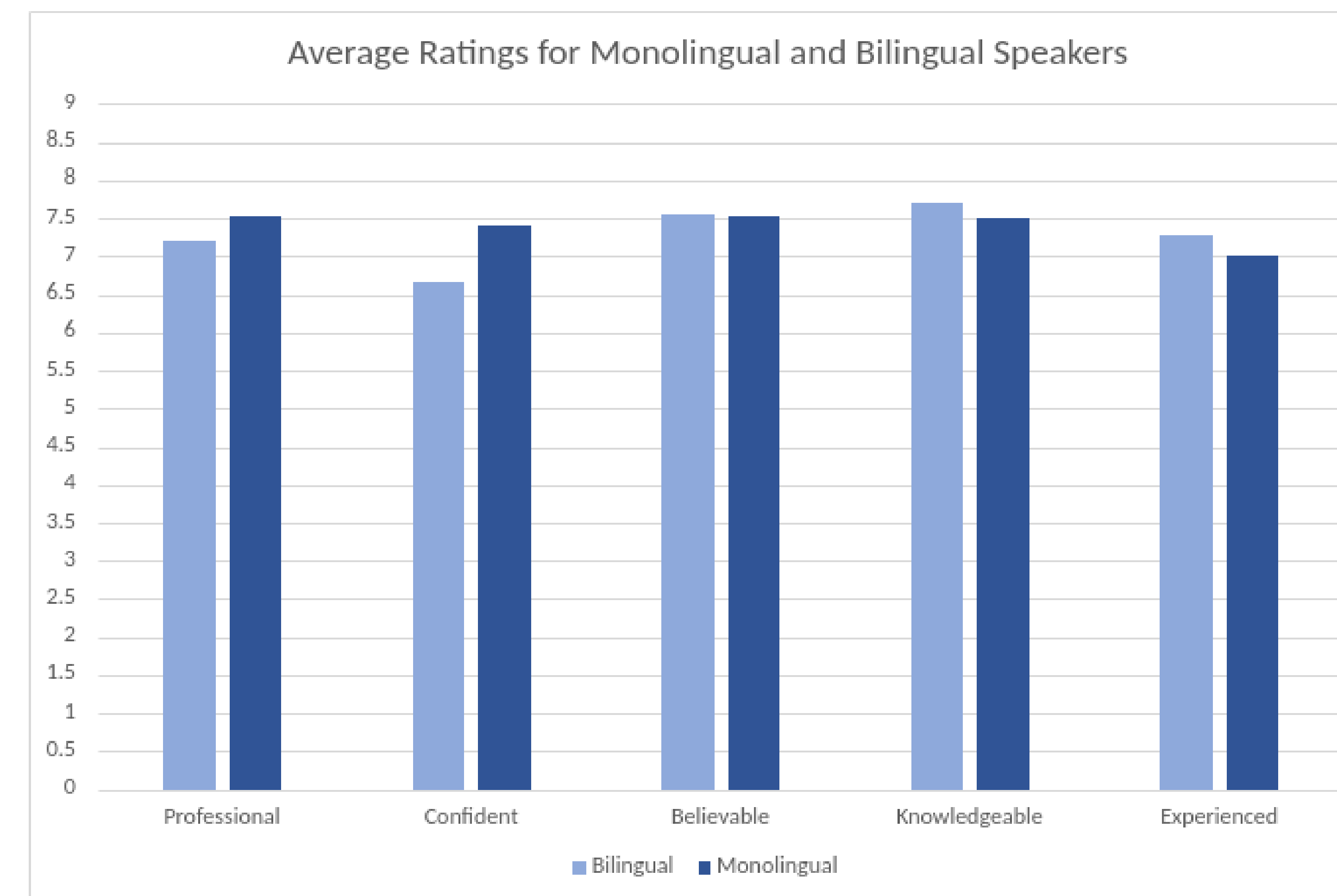
How are perceptions of a speaker's accent related to perceptions of the speaker's **professionalism, confidence, believability, knowledgeability and level of experience**?

Methods

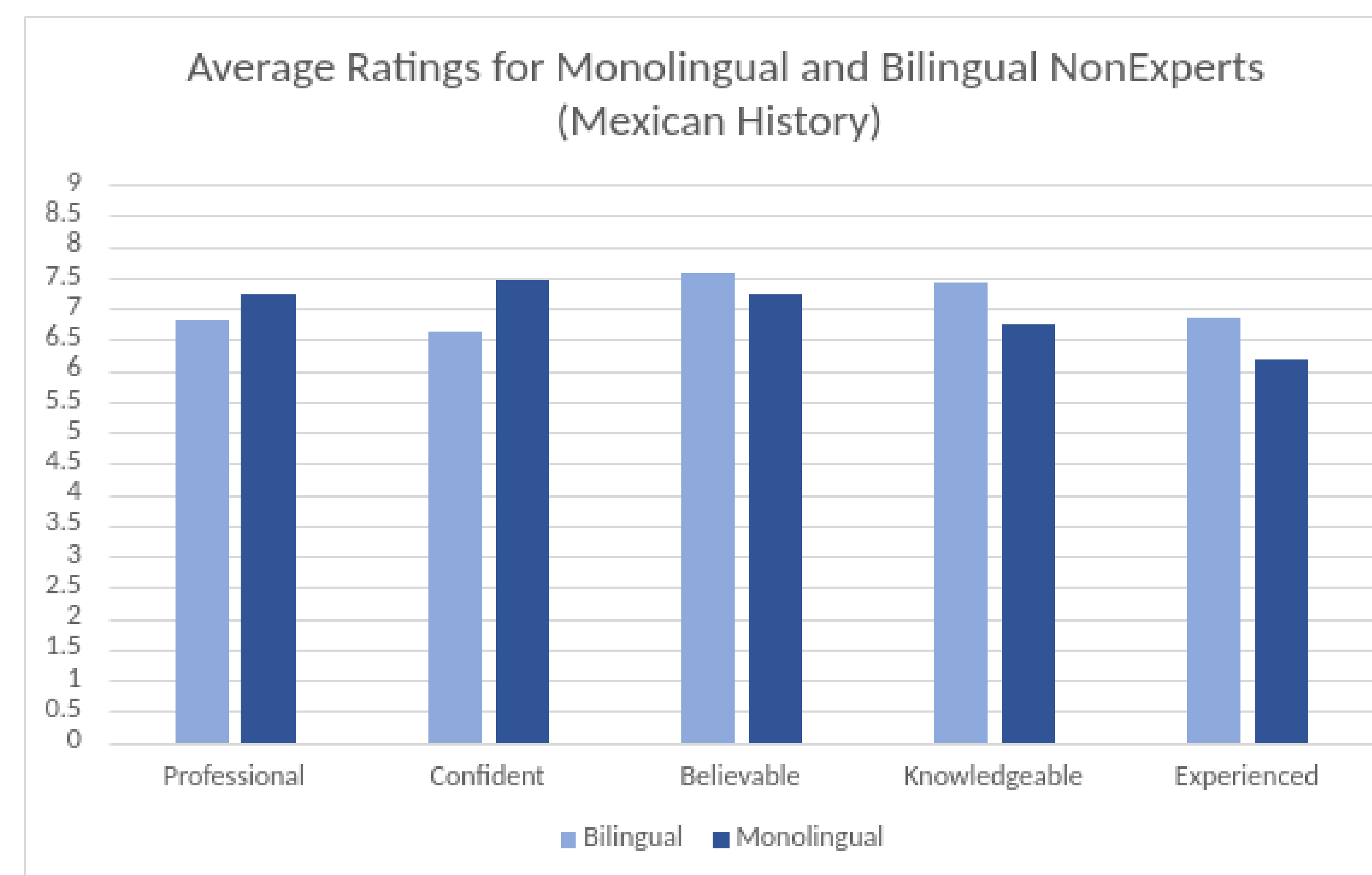
- **Participants:** 256 native English-speakers in the U.S.
- **Speaker 1:** accent common for a bilingual speaker who is a native Spanish-speaker and speaks English
- **Speaker 2:** accent common for a native monolingual English-speaker
 - Each participant listened to both speakers
 - Each speaker was either described as an expert or non-expert and discussed either Mexican history or marine biology
- Participants rated how they perceived the speakers' **professionalism, confidence, believability, knowledgeability and level of experience** on a Likert scale
- Participants answered questions about the **content** discussed by their speakers

Results

- Participants rated the monolingual speaker higher than the bilingual speaker in professionalism and confidence:



- But participants tended to rate the bilingual speaker higher than the monolingual speaker in believability, knowledgeability and experience when the talker was presented as a nonexpert discussing Mexican history:



- Participants answered more of the content questions correctly when content was spoken by the monolingual speaker than by the bilingual speaker, regardless of the speakers' expertise or topic

Conclusions

- Listeners may find a speaker more believable, knowledgeable and experienced when the speaker is discussing something that the listener associates with the speaker's accent
- Professionalism and confidence are not quite correlated with believability, knowledgeability and experience
- How much a listener retains from what a speaker is saying is not directly related to how they perceive the speaker's professionalism, confidence, believability, knowledgeability and experience

References

- Akomolafe, Soji. (2013). The invisible minority: revisiting the debate on foreign-accented speakers and upward mobility in the workplace. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 20(1), 7–14.
- Deprez-Sims, Anne-Sophie, & Morris, Scott B. (2010). Accents in the workplace: Their effects during a job interview. *International Journal of Psychology*, 45(6), 417–426. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207594.2010.499950>
- Lev-Ari, Shiri, & Keysar, Boaz. (2010). Why don't we believe non-native speakers? The influence of accent on credibility. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 46(6), 1093–1096. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2010.05.025>

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