

## **What's in a name?**

### **Categorizing and evaluating speakers and speech in multilingual settings**

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#### **Research question and theoretical background**

Cognitive linguists are increasingly interested in understanding the conceptual and discursive framing of language ideologies, attitudes, and representations (see the papers in Geeraerts et al. 2010). In this paper, questions such as who is the prototypical and thus 'legitimate' speaker of a variety, of stereotypical models and reference points of language proficiency, and of stereotypical characteristics of different speech communities in multilingual settings are investigated drawing on experimental data.

#### **Data and methods**

Evidence from two studies is reported in which evaluative responses to spoken language are investigated. The first analysis is based on data collected by Schoch-Angel (2012) on the island of Providence (Columbia). The native language of the majority of inhabitants of this island is an English based Creole, whereas the only language of instruction on the island is Spanish. In a study varying the speech guises (Spanish vs. Creole) and the names of the (fictitious) speakers (a Spanish name vs. a typical name of a Creole inhabitant of the island), the attitudinal response patterns are analyzed in a 2x2 design.

In a second study (a reanalysis of data discussed in Berthele 2012), future Swiss primary school teachers are exposed to speech samples of fictitious learners of French as a foreign language. Again, the names of the speakers are varied, this time a typical Swiss name in one condition and a typical Balkan (i.e. immigrant) name in the other. In addition, the speech samples are manipulated to include code-switches into German or not. Again attitudinal measures regarding the proficiency and academic potential of the speaker are analyzed, and the interactions of the presence of switches with the name labels are analyzed.

#### **Results and relevance**

Both studies shed light on the way the evaluating participants use stereotypical reference points in order to assess the speech presented to them. Some of the effects follow exactly the predicted pattern, i.e. socially stigmatized markers lead to more negative assessment of the speech samples, but others go against the expectations. E. g., the condition involving the unmixed speech labeled with a Balkan name is assessed more positively than the other conditions.

In addition to the detailed discussion of the obtained response patterns, the findings are discussed in the light of work stemming from neighboring disciplines such as educational sciences (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1992) and sociology (Booth et al. 2009) and the importance of a cognitively enriched analysis of social and educational processes is stressed.

#### **References**

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