

**Attitudes towards salient accents of Mandarin:
An empirical study of social and linguistic stereotyping in Mainland China**

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While studies on linguistic and social stereotyping (e.g. Kristiansen 2003, 2010) and perceptual dialectology (e.g. Long and Preston 2002; Preston and Niedzielski 2010) have been conducted in many different parts of the world, the situation in China remains understudied. In this talk we present the results of the first experiments to elicit attitudes towards salient accents of Mandarin in mainland China. Our hypothesis was that structured patterns of linguistic variation in the production of spoken Mandarin allow for stereotypical perceptions that affect attitudinal behavior.

In order to elicit the relative perceptual salience of accents of Mandarin a preliminary study was conducted during the second half of 2011 and early 2012. On the basis of this initial survey, involving about 200 Chinese students, we defined not only the most five salient varieties (North East, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Sichuan) but also the social dimensions utilized in the final experimental design. It is this data-driven and empirical approach that allows us to outline the main stereotyped perceptions of L1 and L2 accents of Mandarin in present-day China. Over 1200 subjects in five regions of China were involved in the identification and attitudinal tasks. The fragments evaluated comprise 10 tokens of 5 L1 accents and 4 tokens of L2 accents. The results of the experiment collaborate our hypothesis.

References

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