The Influence of Listener Ideology on Perception of Non-Native Speech Volume

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Background

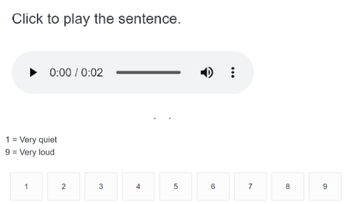
- Listeners make stereotyped social judgements about speakers based on language and accent.
- Listeners' perceptions of a speaker's social identity (race, nationality, etc) influence non-native speech perception.
- Ideological beliefs influence pronunciations related to non-native speech.

Research Question

Does a listener's ideological alignment influence their perception of the volume of non-native speech?

Methods

Participants: Native English speakers from the U.S.



Volume task: Participants heard a series of sentences in native Mandarin, Turkish, and Spanish; and English spoken with native and non-native accents.

Intensity (volume) of each sentence was either 52dB, 61dB, or 70db.

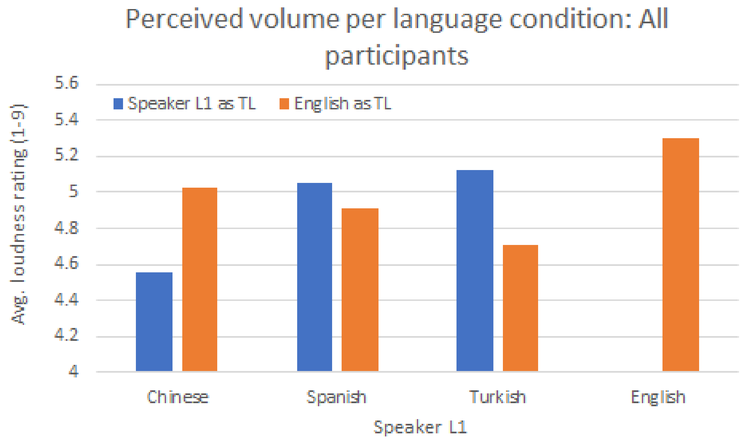
Participants rated the volume of each sentence they heard on a scale from 1-9.

Ideology questionnaire: Participants rated a series of Likert-scale statements that aligned with either nationalist or globalist beliefs.

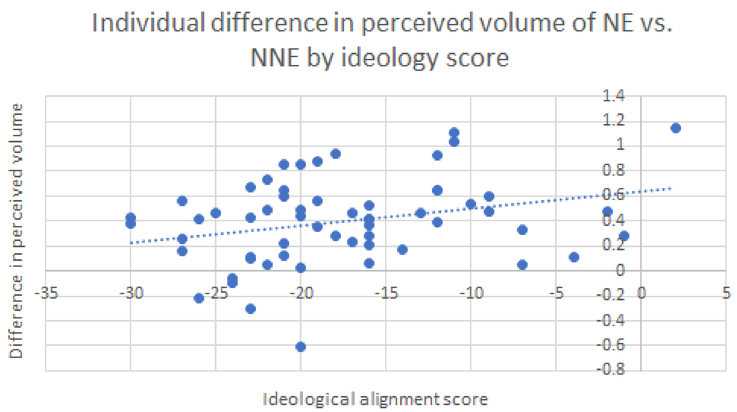
Key Findings

- Participants rated native English as louder than both other languages and non-native (accented) English.
- Most participants aligned with globalist ideology.
- Participants' ideological alignment may determine the English-as-louder effect.

Results



Listeners rated native English speech (orange, far right column) as louder than both other languages (blue) and non-native English (orange, left three columns). (*TL = Target language*)



Participants with a higher (less globalist) ideology score perceived a greater difference in the volume of native English vs. non-native English. *(-32 = Most globalist alignment score; 32 = Most nationalist score)*

Conclusions

- Participants perceived non-native speech as quieter than native English speech.
- Comprehensibility may play a role in volume ratings: Native English may have been perceived as loudest because it was most understandable to the participants.
- Subconscious social rejection of non-native speakers may also contribute to perception that non-native speech is quieter.
- Influence of ideology remains unclear.

Implications: Perception that non-native speakers are "quiet" may have social consequences in real-world interactions.

Future directions: Ideologically diverse participant pools and the inclusion of measures for language attitudes and comprehension.

References

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