ACCENTS AND ACCEPTANCE: ATTITUDINAL REACTIONS TOWARD VARYING DEGREES OF SPANISH ACCENTED SPEECH

Alberto Rey
Howard University

Introduction. Variability studies dealing with language variation and social stratification have generally concentrated on two main aspects: (1) the linguistic aspect--a concentration on the variability of language and the tools to account for these linguistic variables and (2) the social aspect--studies concentrating on the effect that linguistic variables have on society. Investigations such as those by Labov (1966, 1969, and 1973) and Shuy (1969, 1970) may be said to be representative of these two main aspects Labov's main interests seem to be in the nature of variable rules and the limits of grammatical competence, while Shuy seems to be mainly interested in the effect of language variation on society.

Over the past fifteen to twenty years there has been an increasing amount of research dealing with this social aspect of language--with language behavior or variation and its effect on society There have been investigations involving teachers, employers, and "plain everyday people" as judges These judges or listeners have also been further divided as to race, ethnic and/or language groups The linguistic variables studied can be divided into three major types of variations: variations of languages (Anisfeld and Lambert 1964), native variations of a single language (Williams and Associates 1972) and foreign accented variations of a single language (Anisfeld, Bogo, and Lambert 1962) If there are language features that are known to be correlated with the social status of speakers, it follows that these features or variables may serve as cues in the listener's evaluative reactions of that speaker's social status Listeners have been found to make judgments about a speaker's education, intelligence, occupation, personality, and even physical appearance based on some very short samples of speech

Very few of these studies, however, have focused their attention on both inter- and intra-minority language attitudes There have also been few, if any, studies dealing with individuals' reactions toward and perception of varying degrees of accented speech The present investigation deals with all of these variables in trying to determine what major factors influence the general attitudinal behavior of White American (WA), Black American (BA), and Cuban Nationals (CN) toward varying degrees of Spanish-accented English

Purpose. The present study is part of a larger investigation that this researcher undertook (Rey 1974a). The other parts of the broader investigation dealt with teachers (Rey 1975) and employers (Rey 1974b) of the South Florida area and their attitudinal reactions toward accented speech on basically occupational and educational suitability scales or questions The present study deals with the remaining judge group, the non-teachers and non-employers--the Normals as they were labeled in the larger investigation The main concerns of this part of the investigation were threefold: (1) to determine the effect of varying degrees of Spanish accent on social stereotyping by BA, WA, and CN judges, (2) to determine what major factor or factors influence the general attitudinal behavior of these individuals, and (3) to determine if the accent groups would be functionally perceived in the same manner by these judge groups as they were by a group of linguists

Methodology Speech sample The informants who produced the taped sample were from the three major adult middle class ethnic groups that reside in the South Florida area where the field research was going to take place--Whites, Blacks, and Cubans The ages in these three adult groups ranged from eighteen to fifty, with an average age of 32 6 The middle class determination was made by both the evaluative participation method (E.P.) and the Index of Status Characteristics (I.S.C.) method (Warner 1960). Some of the speakers in the Cuban group took offense at the original labeling of these groupings since it implied their being a separate race To avoid this the groups

were re-labeled White American, Black American, and Cuban Nationals. The choice of the term Cuban Nationals was made since all of the members of this group were Cuban-born individuals now residing in this country who were not American citizens

The WA, BA, and CN speakers were all asked to speak on the topic of pets for one minute Using connected free speech, rather than isolated utterances or word stimuli, seemed to be the most practical approach since it is safe to assume that practically all of the levels of linguistic expression would be used--ease of expression, lexical selection, phonological variations, morphosyntactic variations, speed of delivery, and so on--and it would more closely simulate a real contact situation The topic of pets was selected since it was felt that with this topic one is less likely to evoke emotional, or at least non-linguistic, reactions from different listeners or judges

The final speech sample consisted of a total of nineteen adult speakers As can be seen from Table 1, the overall composition of the speaker groups consisted of four WA, four BA, and eleven CN speakers The eleven CN speakers were divided as to minimal, medial, and heavy accent on the basis of a linguistic "pre-test" of thirty-eight CN speakers There were therefore five speech types: WA, BA, CN1, CN2, and CN3 (see Table 1) The "pre-test" consisted of having a panel of Howard University and Georgetown University linguists listen to the larger sample and rate each speaker's accentedness on a seven point scale (from heavy to minimal accent) Those speakers with an average rating of two or less and six or more were assigned to the accent extremes (minimal/heavy). Those speakers with an average of 3 9 to 4 5 were categorized as having a medial accent; this categorization was not a completely arbitrary one since a sharp break did appear. The final taped sample of the nineteen speakers was edited to eliminate any possible explicit or implicit contextual indicators of social status Each of the speech samples was also reduced to twenty-five to forty seconds duration so that the

listening time of the entire tape would not be too long, which could possibly tire the judges; great care was also taken not to purposely increase or shorten the speed of delivery or cut off any of the speakers

TABLE 1: Overall composition of the three speaker groups

Social Class	White Americans	Black Americans	CN1	CN2	CN3
Upper Middle				1 Male	
Middle	1 Male 1 Female	1 Male 1 Female	1 Male 1 Female	1 Male 1 Female	1 Male 1 Female
Lower Middle	1 Male 1 Female	1 Male 1 Female	2 Male	1 Male	1 Male

Key: CN1 = Minimal Accent
CN2 = Medial Accent
CN3 = Heavy Accent

Total number of speakers: 19

Judge sample The judges in this study had originally been labeled "man on the street" for lack of a better name Some negative reactions to this label were expressed by a number of the female judges Although these objections were sometimes made jokingly, it was decided to change the label to normals The term "normals" was chosen because this group consisted of a wide variety of occupations (some very"normal," everyday people) and also would elicit less negative reactions from the judges The normal judge-type was equally represented in the final totals of the three ethnic groups: twenty WAs, twenty BAs, and twenty CNs. There had originally been a total of sixty-six judges

in this judge type, but after the application of both the I.S.C. and E.P. procedures for social class assignment six individuals had to be excluded from the final analysis.

Attitude instrument The attitude instrument consisted of modifications of and additions to the Shuy and Williams (1973) study and Warner's I.S.C. questions. For seven of the first nine questions the judges were to place a number from one to seven (a higher to lower scale) on an answer sheet. The choices for each question were specific examples of the following status-type questions: speaker's (1) social class, (2) house type, (4) occupation, (5) source of income, (6) neighborhood, (7) present education, and (8) highest possible education. Questions (3) and (9) dealt with the speaker's ethnic identification and sex, respectively The remaining questions (see Table 2) were also to be answered on a seven point scale, with the words to the left having a value of one and the words to the right having a value of seven. All of the

TABLE 2: Normals' questionnaire

	complex	10	simple
	weak	11	strong
	rough	12	smooth
	smart	13	dumb
	graceful	14	awkward
	difficult	15	easy
This	sloppy	16	careful
speaker	positive	17	negative
sounds	informal	18	formal
	tense	19	relaxed
	old	20.	young
	sharp	21	dull
	bad	22	good
	valuable	23	worthless
	correct	24	incorrect
	slow	25	fast

questions, as well as the speaker order, were randomized so as to avoid order effects

Analyses and results To determine how the questions grouped together with relation to the responses given, as well as how the judges grouped together in terms of their response behavior, the Q- and R-techniques were applied to the data These techniques and the crosstabulations of the responses were performed by using Nie, Brent, and Hull's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (1970) The computer facilities used in these analyses were those of Howard University and Georgetown University. The loadings of each of the factors or groupings on both the Q- and R-techniques may vary from -1 0000 to 1 0000. If for any variables within one factor one finds a 1.0000 loading then this implies that these variables vary in perfect unison; if, however, for any number of variables one has a -1.0000 then this implies that they would vary in perfect opposition Also, the lower the factor loadings are, i.e less than .50000, the lower the predictive value of that factor, but it would still exhibit the "general" tendencies or relative closeness of relationship (Smith 1962: 97-98) In the discussions of means or averages of the means, the lower or closer the value is to 1.00 the more positive the reaction tends to be, while the closer it is to 7.00 the more negative the reaction

Questionnaire analyses The judges were given, as previously stated, a total of twenty-five questions to answer about each of the speakers Table 3 represents the factors or clusterings of these questions, along with their loadings It should be pointed out that it was necessary to re-assign poles for questions nine through twenty-five in these analyses since the positive to negative (1 to 7) poles had been randomized in the questionnaires. The words, in the questionnaire order, that were assigned a pole value of 1 00 were as follows: male, sharp, careful, correct, young, smooth, easy, complex, graceful, smart, good, strong, valuable, formal, positive, relaxed, and fast.

TABLE 3: R-technique (question factors and loadings)

	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	Factor IV
Question (numbers) and loadings	(1) .3259 (2) 3884 (4) .3907 (5) .3528 (6) .3394 (7) .3494 (8) .3155	(14)-.3821 (15)- 2653 (16) .5445 (21) .3822 (24)-.4013	(19)-.3158 (22) .4093	(10) .3461 (11) .2810 (12) .4867 (17) .3613 (18) .2338
	Factor V	**Factor VI**	**Factor VII**	**Factor VIII**
	(3) .8016	(9) .7829	(20)-.3324 (23) .2958	(13) .2712

Once these factors and polarities were established it was possible to determine how the five speech types were differentiated relative to the dimensions of judgments. Questions three, nine, and thirteen were excluded from the mean averagings to follow since they could not be considered true positive-negative polarities Factor I is to be labeled the status dimension. It is of interest to note that the "relaxed," "easy," and "smooth" scales are inversely related to both the "complex" and "valuable" scales; factor II is to be labeled the complex-value dimension. Another inverse relationship found is that of factor III where the "good" scale has an inverse relationship to the "formal" scale; this factor is to be labeled the formality dimension Factor IV exhibits no inverse relationships among the scales in that factor; this factor is to be labeled the correctness dimension since the "correctness" scale has by far the highest loading Factors V and VI consist of only one question each, the ethnic I.D. and the sex I.D. respectively. In factor VII we

find an inverse relationship between the two scales of which it is comprised--the "positive" and "strong" scales; this factor is to be labeled the positive-strong dimension The last clustering of questions found is factor VIII, the fast dimension, in which the "young" and "fast" scales cluster together Table 4 represents the average ratings of the three ethnic groups of judges to the five speech types on the six judgmental dimensions

TABLE 4: Average ratings of speech types on the six judgmental dimensions of normal judges

Speech Types	Judgmental Dimensions					
	Status	Complex-value	Formal-ity	Correct-ness	Positive-strong	Fast
BA	4.168	3.796	4.231	3 620	3 723	3 827
WA	3.067	3 432	3.544	2 955	3 106	3 775
CN1	3.938	3 799	4 237	3 716	3 598	3 858
CN2	4 191	3 981	4 354	3 735	3 623	3 725
CN3	4 562	4 240	4 384	3 989	3 834	4 424

The trend in Table 4 appears to be in the direction of WA speech being the most favorably rated of the speech types on all of the judgmental dimensions, except that on the fast dimension WA speech does not appear to be rated differently from BA, CN1, and CN2 speech types. CN3 appears to be rated the most negatively of the other four speech types, not only on the fast dimension, but also on all of the other judgmental

dimensions; it should be pointed out that on the formality dimension the differences of the average ratings are not large between BA, CN1, CN2, and CN3 There also seems to be a trend to rate BA, CN1, and CN2 quite similarly on all of the judgmental dimensions. It appears that what one has here is a three level hierarchy of overall importance for the five speech types: WA is best; BA, CN1 and CN2 are next best; CN3 is the worst. It can therefore be said that the five speech types are functionally perceived as three groups, when considering overall ratings

The T-test technique was then applied to mean ratings given to each speech type by each judge group on the socio-economic status question (number one in the questionnaire) to determine which speech types were rated of significantly higher or lower status than other speech types A value of 1 is for an upper class status while a 7 is for a lower-lower social class status.

It is of interest to note from the analysis described in Table 5 that for the SES responses there appears to be a different hierarchichal structuring than that found for the judgmental dimensions: WA is first; CN1 is second; CN2 is third; CN3 and BA are last in the SES hierarchy On the specific SES question, BA judges do significantly differentiate CN1 speakers from both CN2 and BA speakers; this was not the case with the other judge groups or when looking at the overall picture exhibited in Table 4 Also, from this and other analyses it was possible to determine that an overall trend appeared with BA judges being more negative toward BA speakers, on the SES question, than were either the WA or CN judges; CN judges were not, however, more negative toward CN speakers than the other two judge groups.

Factor analysis of the judges. In the interest of determining what, if any, judge differences there may be in the actual ratings, factor analytic techniques were applied to the data in an attempt to group the judges on the basis of their response behavior The factor analysis was accomplished by the use of inverted

factor matrix analysis, the Q-technique. This technique yields factors or clusterings of judges, depending on the responses they had given on the questionaires.

TABLE 5: Socio-Economic Status (SES) question; significantly different ratings; speech types x judges

This speech type	was	rated significantly higher on SES than these speech types	by	this judge group
WA		BA, CN1, CN2, CN3		WA
WA		BA, CN2, CN3		BA
WA		BA, CN1, CN2, CN3		CN
CN1		CN3		CN
CN1		BA, CN2, CN3		BA
CN2		CN3		WA
CN3		none		none
BA		none		none

The sixty judges were analyzed in this section to determine which, if any, of their individual characteristics would serve to influence their responses The judges had answered questions on their own ethnic background, sex, age, education, number of years in the

area, and number of foreign languages spoken and/or understood

TABLE 6: Q-technique--judge clusters

Factor I	Factor II	Factor III
BA .5113	WA .4202	CN .5892
BA .6014	WA 4245	CN 4434
BA 5612	WA 5983	CN 4302
BA .6168	WA .6260	CN .5843
BA .5751	WA 4860	CN .4630
BA 5062	WA .5362	CN 5816
BA .5010	WA .6570	CN 5420
BA .5403	WA 5084	CN 6797
BA .6510	WA 5492	CN 5346
BA .4872		CN 5587
BA .3362		CN 4593
BA 4642		CN 6190
BA .5252		CN 5501
BA .4655		

Factor IV	Factor V	Factor VI
CN 4007	BA .4171	WA 3513
CN 6199	WA .6357	WA 6306
CN .4129	CN 6212	CN 4548
CN .3500		

It may be determined from an analysis of Table 6 that the judge's ethnic identification did not serve to differentiate the judges very clearly Factors I, II, III, and IV are, nevertheless, mutually exclusive of other ethnic groups; we do, however, find ethnic "mixing" in factors V and VI Nine other factors were not listed since none of these consisted of more than

two judges each and there were no clearly identifiable characteristics that indicated why they differed from the other factors. Factors V and VI were listed because they exhibit the ethnic mixing and they also share some characteristics. Factor V's common characteristics are sex (female) and the number of foreign languages spoken and understood (1 and 1). Factor VI's common characteristic is the number of foreign languages spoken and understood (1 and 1) by the judges, but not their sex. The only problem in making any sweeping statement concerning these characteristics is the fact that these characteristics were shared by judges in the other factors, but it is nevertheless worth noting these characteristics for possible future reference.

It is evident from this analysis that the normal judges can be grouped on the basis of their rating behavior. Their responses were neither totally idiosyncratic, nor totally global. Another interesting point to note in this analysis is the fact that none of the significant factor loadings for each judge type were of a negative polarity, as was the case with the teacher loadings (Rey 1975).

Discussion of results. There appeared to be a sharp contrast between the results of the R-technique (questionnaire clusters) in this study and the findings discussed in Shuy and Williams (1973) Shuy and Williams found four judgmental dimensions for their scales, while six were found in the present study This difference in the number of judgmental dimensions is quite possibly due to the addition, in the present investigation, of status, sex, and ethnicity questions. Besides this difference, there were also differences as to which scales made up each factor; only one of the factors, activity, is the same in both studies--the fast-slow scale These differences in both the number of judgmental dimensions and the scales making up each factor may be due not only to the number of scales used, but also the quite different speaker and judge populations There cannot be said to be any striking similarities between the two studies except that the judgmental dimensions were somewhat similar

There is, however, some degree of replicability of findings between the results of the present investigation and those discussed in Williams and Associates (1972). This comparison may be made in the discussion of the trend found in the mean ratings of the dimensions for the different speech In both studies WA speech was, as might have been expected, rated the most favorably of all of the speech types. WA speech is almost always the most favorably rated of all speech types.

A somewhat unexpected result was the equating of the CN1 and even the CN2 speech types with the BA speech type on many of the judgmental dimensions. The only possible explanation for this rating trend may lie in an explanation of the more negative ratings given to the CN3 speech type. The CN3 speakers were probably equated with those individuals who came in the early 60s. These refugees quickly settled in the South Florida area and began to find places for themselves in jobs, schools, and neighborhoods. Many WAs and BAs are just now accepting the less accented speakers but have not quite yet equated the heavily accented speaker with anything much higher than the typical lower-middle or upper lower class immigrant It is also safe to say that CN1 and especially CN2 speakers will probably have to wait at least another fifteen years or loose most of their Spanish accent before they receive attitudinal ratings close or equal to those given to WA speakers

If there is to be any hope for the partial, if not complete, assimilation of both BA and CN speakers into the mainstream of society in South Florida, some positive steps must be taken. These positive steps should not only be taken by the WA majority but also by the BA and CN minorities More minority group presentations of their cultural heritage and achievements should be instituted in the schools and the media if this assimilation is to be achieved. This investigator has seen, read, or heard of very few inter-minority discussions of social problems in this area. There are discussions between one minority and a majority group, relating their own particular problems, but very seldom is there an attempt to relate these problems to inter-

minority solutions What this investigator is attempting to say is that not one concentrated and combined effort has been presented by BA, CN, and WA individuals as one group, to try to solve the problems of social acceptance and mobility The general public should be made aware that the capabilities inherent in an individual are not necessarily restricted by his or her speech behavior

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anisfeld, M. and W.E. Lambert 1964. Evaluational reactions of bilingual and monolingual children to spoken languages. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology.69.89-97

Anisfeld, M., N. Bogo and W.E Lambert 1962 Evaluational reactions to accented English speech. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 65 223-31.

Nie, N.H., D.H. Brent and C.H. Hull 1970 Statistical package for the social sciences New York: McGraw Hill, Inc.

Labov, William 1966 The social stratification of English in New York City Washington, D.C., Center for Applied Linguistics

_____. 1969. Contraction, deletion, and inherent variability of the English copula Lg 45 715-62.

_____ 1973 Where do grammars stop? Georgetown University Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics, ed. by Roger W Shuy, No 25 43-88, Washington, D.C., Georgetown University Press.

Rey, Alberto. 1974a. A study of the attitudinal effect of a Spanish accent on Blacks and Whites in South Florida Georgetown University Unpublished dissertation

Rey, Alberto. 1974b Accent and employability South Florida employers' attitudinal reactions toward a Spanish accent Paper presented at 3rd Annual NWAVE Conference Oct 24-26, 1974 Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

_____ 1975. Accent and education: Black American, White American, and Cuban teachers' attitudes towards adult Spanish accented English Accepted by ACTA SYMBOLICA 1975

Shuy, Roger W 1969. Subjective judgments in sociolinguistic analysis. Georgetown University Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics, ed by J.E. Alatis, No 22 175-88 Washington, D C., Georgetown University Press

_____ February 13-14, 1970 Employee selection, training, promotion: p tfalls of good intentions. A prepublication version of a paper presented at the C.A.L.-N.C.T.E. conference, Education and Training in the National Interest: The Role of Language Variety

_____, and Frederick Williams 1973 Stereotyped attitudes of selected English dialect communities Language attitudes: current trends and projects, ed by Roger W Shuy and Ralph W Fasold, 85-96. Washington, D C., Georgetown University Press.

_____, Joan C Baratz and Walt A Wolfram 1969. Sociolinguistic factors in speech identification. National Institute of Mental Health Research Project No MH-15048-01 Washington, D.C , Center for Applied Linguistics

Smith, G Milton 1962 A simplified guide to statistics for psychology and education. New York, Holt.

Warner, Lloyd H. 1960 Social class in America New York, Harper and Row

Williams, F., and Associates 1972 Explorations of the linguistic attitudes of teachers The University of Texas at Austin. Unpublished manuscript.