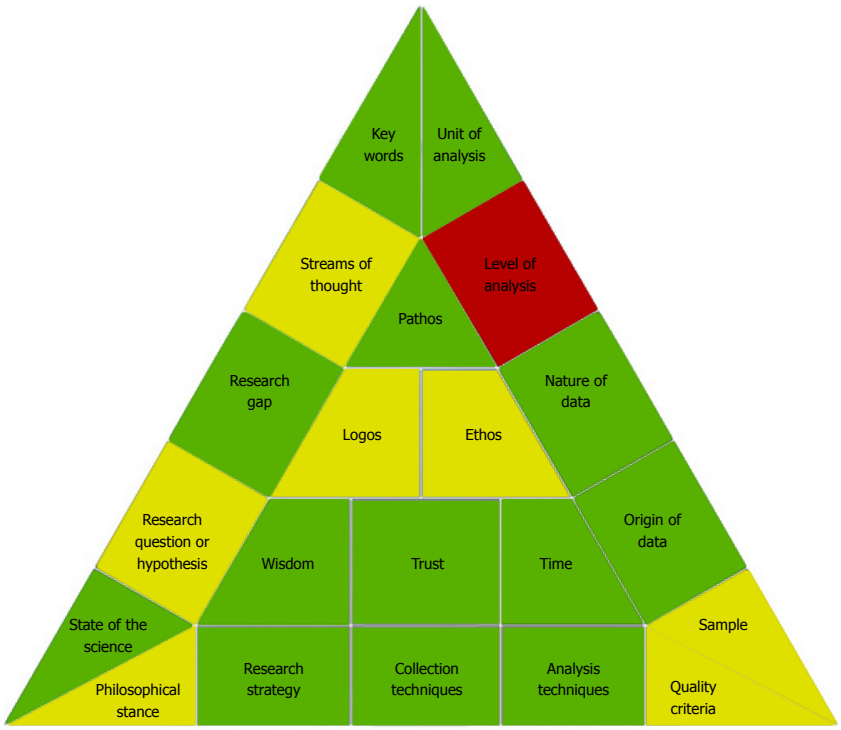
IDEAPUZZLE
DESIGN AND DEFEND YOUR PHD

Language Attitudes Towards Non-Native Speech: The Case of Employment Scenarios in Portugal

Author: Yolanda Xavier
Date: 2025-10-31 - 10:15:40 (WET)
Self-evaluation: 79%



Key words

1/21. Theoretical question: what are the two main keywords of your research?

The two main keywords of my research are "language attitudes" and "non-native speech", since my PhD research explores sociolinguistic attitudes of native European Portuguese speakers towards non-native speech in the context of employment scenarios.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Streams of thought

2/21. Theoretical question: what are the two main streams of thought of your literature review?

The first is an ideological perspective which defines language in terms of sociolinguistic aspects of language community (Blommaert, 2006). It further develops into the notion of ideological standard languages or standard accents, for example, Received Pronunciation in British English, which disfavors all the other non-standard varieties, either regional or foreign (Deutschmann & Steinvall, 2020; Milroy, 2007). Based on this notion, some non-native accents can be perceived as less prestigious and attributed negative characteristics to their speakers due to the perceived notion of social class (Deutschmann & Steinvall, 2020).

The second stream is related to the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), according to which accents can serve as a sign of an out-group member, which can bring negative consequences, such as prejudiced and discriminatory treatment (Cantone et al., 2019; Spence et al., 2022).

References:

Blommaert, J. (2006). Language ideology. In K. Brown (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics (Second Edition, Vol. 1, pp. 510-522). Elsevier Science.

Cantone, J. A., Martinez, L. N., Willis-Esqueda, C., & Miller, T. (2019). Sounding guilty: How accent bias affects juror judgments of culpability. Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice, 17(3), 228-253.

Deutschmann, M., & Steinvall, A. (2020). Combatting Linguistic Stereotyping and Prejudice by Evoking Stereotypes. Open Linguistics, 6(1), 651-671.

Milroy, J. (2007). The ideology of standard language. In C.Llamas, L.Mullany & P. Stockwell (Eds.), The Routledge companion to sociolinguistics (pp. 9-133). Routledge.

Spence, J. L., Hornsey, M. J., Stephenson, E. M., & Imuta, K. (2022). Is your accent right for the job? A Meta-Analysis on Accent Bias in Hiring Decisions. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 50(3), 371-386.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1985). The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In S.Worchel & W.G. Austin (Eds.), Psychology of Intergroup Relations (2nd ed., pp. 7-24). Nelson Hall.

Self-evaluation: 50%

Research gap

3/21. Theoretical question: what is the main gap that your research addresses?

My research aims to address the empirical gap since, to date, no studies have investigated language attitudes toward non-native speech in European Portuguese within employment-related scenarios:

"More research that spans a greater variety of languages sampled from different countries would provide further information on the generalizability of accent bias in hiring decisions" (Spence et al., 2022).

Reference:

Spence, J. L., Hornsey, M. J., Stephenson, E. M., & Imuta, K. (2022). Is your accent right for the job? A Meta-Analysis on Accent Bias in Hiring Decisions. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 50(3), 371-386.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Research question or hypothesis

4/21. Theoretical question: what is the main question or hypothesis of your research?

I hypothesize that native speakers' language attitudes will influence how non-native speakers are evaluated. Specifically, non-native speakers are likely to receive lower employability ratings for higher-level positions, while native speakers will be viewed more favorably.

Self-evaluation: 50%

State of the science

5/21. Theoretical question: what is the current answer to your research question or hypothesis?

The production of certain phonetic features can impact the way native speakers perceive non-native speakers (Pflaeging et al., 2024). In turn, this can strongly influence native speakers' language attitudes, potentially hindering non-native speakers' access to certain professions (Ramjattan, 2024).

References:

Pflaeging, J., Mackay, B. & Schleef, E. (2024). Sociolinguistic monitoring and L2 speakers of English. Linguistics, 63(3), 607-638. https://doi.org/10.1515/ling-2023-0073.

Ramjattan, V. A. (2024). Accent modification and workplace accentism: the institutionalization of linguistic profiling and its career implications. Career Development International, 29(3), 311-322.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Philosophical stance

6/21. Methodological question: what is the philosophical stance of your research?

The philosophical stance of my research is quantitative objectivism (Sheppard, 2020).

References:

Sheppard, V. (2020). Research Methods, Data Collection and Ethics: An Introduction. Open Oregon Educational Resources. https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/researchmethodsandethics/ (accessed 12/07/2024)

Self-evaluation: 50%

Research strategy

7/21. Methodological question: what is the qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method of your research?

In my PhD thesis, I am following a quantitative method (Lim, 2024).

References:

Lim, W. M. (2024). What Is Quantitative Research? An Overview and Guidelines. Australasian Marketing Journal, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264622

Self-evaluation: 100%

Collection techniques

8/21. Methodological question: what are the data collection techniques of your research?

The data collection consists of audio-recordings (Oh et al., 2011; Saito et al., 2016), as well as ratings compiled in Gorilla Software (Anwyl-Irvine et al., 2020; Carlson & McHenry, 2006; Huensch & Nagle, 2021; Saito et al., 2016; Zellou, 2017).

References:

Anwyl-Irvine, A. L., Massonnié, J., Flitton, A., Kirkham, N., & Evershed, J. K. (2020). Gorilla in our midst: An online behavioral experiment builder. Behavior Research Methods, 52(1), 388-407.

Carlson, H. K., & McHenry, M. A. (2006). Effect of accent and dialect on employability. Journal of Employment Counseling, 43(2), 70-

83.

Huensch, A., & Nagle, C. (2021). The effect of speaker proficiency on intelligibility, comprehensibility, and accentedness in L2 Spanish: A Conceptual Replication and extension of Munro and Derwing (1995a). Language Learning, 71(3), 626-668.

Oh, G. E., Guion-Anderson, S., Aoyama, K., Flege, J. E., Akahane-Yamada, R., & Yamada, T. (2011). A one-year longitudinal study of English and Japanese vowel production by Japanese adults and children in an English-speaking setting. Journal of Phonetics, 39(2), 156-167.

Saito, K., Trofimovich, P., & Isaacs, T. (2016). Second language speech production: Investigating linguistic correlates of comprehensibility and accentedness for learners at different ability levels. Applied Psycholinguistics, 37(2), 217-240.

Zellou, G. (2017). Individual differences in the production of nasal coarticulation and perceptual compensation. Journal of Phonetics, 61, 13-29.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Analysis techniques

9/21. Methodological question: what are the data analysis techniques of your research?

I am using a quantitative data analysis with mixed-effects models (Bates et al., 2015) in RStudio (RStudio Team, 2024) and acoustic analysis in Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2015).

References:

Bates, D., Mächler, M., Bolker, B. M., & Walker, S. C. (2015). Fitting linear mixed-effects models using lme4. Journal of Statistical Software, 67(1), 1-51.

Boersma, P., & Weenink, D. (2015). Praat: Doing phonetics by computer [Computer program]. Version 6.1.54. http://www.praat.org.

RStudio Team (2024). RStudio: Integrated Development for R. RStudio, PBC, Boston, MA URL http://www.rstudio.com/.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Quality criteria

10/21. Methodological question: what are the tactics of your research to ensure scientific quality criteria?

My research relies on external validity (the participants are recruited under the same conditions per group and are administered the same tasks to ensure smooth statistical generalization), internal validity (replication of the already existing studies), construct validity (pilot testing), and convergent validity (similar scales for ratings; Spangler et al., 2012) (Yin, 2009).

References:

Spangler, W. D., Gupta, A., Kim, D. H., & Nazarian, S. (2012). Developing and validating historiometric measures of leader individual differences by computerized content analysis of documents. The Leadership Quarterly, 23(6), 1152-1172.

Yin, R. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods (4th Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Self-evaluation: 50%

Unit of analysis

11/21. Empirical question: what is the unit of analysis of your research?

The unit of analysis that I compare in order to understand the attitudes of native speakers towards non-native speakers are voice recordings.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Level of analysis

12/21. Empirical question: what is the level of analysis of your research?

The level of analysis of my research is individual.

Self-evaluation: 0%

Nature of data

13/21. Empirical question: what is the nature of the data of your research?

My research includes quantitative data (e.g., 100-point slider scales) (Borgstede & Scholz, 2021).

References:

Borgstede, M., & Scholz, M. (2021). Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Generalization and Replication-A Representationalist view. Frontiers in Psychology, 12, 1-9.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Origin of data

14/21. Empirical question: what is the origin of the data of your research?

My research includes primary data (e.g., collected voice recordings and surveys).

Self-evaluation: 100%

Sample

15/21. Empirical question: what is the sample of your research?

The sample size for the current study is a minimum of 52 native European Portuguese participants who will rate the non-native voice recordings of six speakers from different languages.

Self-evaluation: 50%

Pathos

16/21. Rhetorical question: what are the positive and negative emotions of your research?

Positive emotions:

My research brings attention to linguistic stereotyping, a topic rarely studied in Linguistics in Portugal over the past few decades. It also aims to raise awareness in Portuguese society and help stakeholders create laws and policies that support the integration of non-native speakers in areas such as the workplace.

Negative emotions:

My research does not pose any physical or psychological risks to participants. However, it covers people's views on immigrant groups in Portugal, which is a sensitive topic that may not be well-received by everyone.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Logos

17/21. Rhetorical question: what is the scientific logic of your research?

The scientific logic of my research is hypothetico-deductive model (Nola & Sankey, 2007).

References:

Nola, R., & Sankey, H. (2007). Theories of scientific method. Acumen Publishing.

Self-evaluation: 50%

Ethos

18/21. Rhetorical question: what are the limitations of your research?

The theoretical limitation of my research is the absence of previous similar studies on language attitudes in European Portuguese.

The methodological limitation of my study is the unequal gender distribution in my sample.

The empirical limitation of my study concerns the reliability of the data, due to participants' response bias (Wetzel et al., 2016).

References:

Wetzel, E., Böhnke, J. R., & Brown, A. (2016). Response biases. In The ITC International Handbook of Testing and Assessment (pp. 349-363). Oxford University Press.

Self-evaluation: 50%

Wisdom

19/21. Authorial question: what is your education and experience related to your research?

I have a BA in English Studies from the University of Lisbon and an MA in English Didactics, a joint program with Aberta University and NOVA University Lisbon. Since 2021, I have been working on my PhD in Linguistics (Psycholinguistics) at NOVA University Lisbon's Linguistics Research Center. Previously, I worked as a private tutor, teacher, and translator. Additionally, I am a heritage Portuguese speaker, and I grew up in Ukraine.

Self-evaluation: 100%

Trust

20/21. Authorial question: who are the partners of your research?

My research partners are my scientific supervisor, colleagues from different universities, research participants, the Linguistics Research Center at NOVA University Lisbon, and the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT).

Self-evaluation: 100%

Time

21/21. Authorial question: what is your availability of time and resources for your research?

I have full-time availability to conduct my research as in 2022 I was awarded a PhD Scholarship from the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT grant reference: 2022.13977.BD).

Besides this, I am currently an integrated non-PhD member of the Linguistics Research Center of NOVA University Lisbon (CLUNL NOVA FCSH). My Center allows me to use the available software and books, as well as their facilities.

Self-evaluation: 100%