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# EVALUATIVE REACTIONS TO ACCENTS

by HOWARD GILES

*University of Bristol Department of Psychology*

## ABSTRACT

Lambert's use of the "matched-guise" technique to study stereotyped impressions of personality characteristics from contrasting spoken dialects and languages has been extended to investigate three other evaluative dimensions in relation to British regional and foreign accents. 177 Ss were required to rate the "aesthetic", "communicative" and "status" contents of various accents presented both vocally and conceptually. Although a generalised pattern of ranking accents across these dimensions emerged, the factors of age, sex, social class and regional membership were found to be important determinants of evaluation. The social and educational significance of these findings were discussed.

## I. INTRODUCTION

LAMBERT (1967) presented a theoretical review of research conducted by himself and his associates concerned with evaluative reactions to spoken language using the "matched-guise" technique. This technique involves the presentation of tape-recorded voices of one speaker reading the same factually-neutral passage of prose in two or more dialects or languages. Their work has shown that stereotyped impressions of an individual's personality may be formulated by listeners when presented with a speaker's voice whose vocal contours are representative of phonological patterns peculiar to specific group membership. When modification of the individual's style of speech to another dialect or language has occurred, this may tend likewise to result in the listeners adopting a contrasting set of personality judgments. However, the situation assumes greater intricacy since such evaluative reactions to spoken language are concomitantly dependent on a complex matrix of sender-receiver attributes including age, sex and social class. Similar work in Britain has been limited to two studies: that of Strongman and Woosley (1967) who used Yorkshire and London listener-subjects and their corresponding accented-speech models, and that of Cheyne et al. (1968) who used Scottish and English accented-speech models and subjects.

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In the former study, it was found that the Yorkshire subjects displayed little tendency towards "accent loyalty", that is, the personalities of the Northern speakers were not judged as affectively more positive by Northern listeners than by London listeners. The Scottish listeners in the latter study, on the other hand, exhibited a significant tendency to perceive the Scottish voices as more favourable than the English voices.

It will be proposed that the evaluation of accents involves not only an assessment of the "personality" content from specific vocal cues as discussed above, but also three other dimensions which might to a certain extent be mutually exclusive. These three dimensions are "aesthetic", "communicative" and "status" contents. The first concerns the pleasantness-unpleasantness associated with listening to a particular accent; the second is a rating of the "comfort" that would be experienced by the listener in verbal interaction with an accented-speaker thereby incorporating the notion of intelligibility; while, finally, "status" content is concerned with the amount of prestige value inherent in an accent. It must be noted that there does not universally exist a one-to-one correspondence between accent, code and specific social class (although as Argyle (1967) states regional accent is one of the "main clues to class"), and so a speaker's accent prestige need bear little relationship to his relative position in terms of social prestige.

Wilkinson (1965) suggested that people generally consider accents by means of their relative positions within a tripartite hierarchical framework of accent prestige. Those accents possessing the highest prestige—"First Class" accents—were claimed to be R.P.,\* a form of Scots and Southern Irish and certain unnamed foreign accents. The second level would consist of British regional accents which may themselves constitute a sub-hierarchy. The lowest accent prestige tier—"Third Class" accents—was thought to be composed of town and industrial accents. It will be recalled that specific evaluative reactions to the "personality" content of accent perception depended on a complex interaction of sender-receiver variables and thus it will be suggested that the three-tier structuring of status content proposed by Wilkinson may be too general to be operationally valid, in the sense that it may camouflage important attitude determinants such as accent loyalty, age, sex, social class and specific subcultural membership.

\* R.P. constitutes an abbreviated form of "Received Pronunciation" or Standard English. For the purposes of the present study it may be regarded as synonymous with "B.B.C. English".

The present study was designed to take into consideration these factors in an attempt to determine the nature and components of a hierarchical structure (if one indeed exists) of accent status. The study was also concerned with the structure of evaluative reactions to accent perception in the other two dimensions, those of "aesthetic" and "communicative" contents; yet while it will be hypothesised that these dimensions may also be hierarchically arranged nevertheless, it will be suggested that all three dimensions are to a certain extent mutually exclusive. For instance, although Strongman and Woosley (*loc. cit.*) demonstrated negligible accent loyalty in their Yorkshire subjects, this need not suggest that accent loyalty may not manifest itself in any or all of the other dimensions of accent evaluation by the same sample. Similarly, even though the London Ss in this experiment had rated the Yorkshire accent fairly neutrally in "personality" content, it should not be assumed that these subjects would rate the Yorkshire accent neutrally on other dimensions.

An important distinction needs to be made here between the perception of accent as opposed to dialect. The term "dialect", at least for the purposes of psychological inquiries, basically implies variations from the standard code at most levels of linguistic analysis, whereas "accent" merely implies a manner of pronunciation with grammatical, syntactical, morphological and lexical levels being regarded as more or less commensurate with the standard. This study is concerned with evaluative reactions to accent only.

Correlations based on ratings of matched-guises have previously shown low or insignificant relationships with standard measures of attitudes, even when the same rating form has been used. However, Lambert et al. (1965) claimed that the latter technique's purpose is often "transparent" and is thus conducive to socially-appropriate responses, whereas the true nature of the former technique is unlikely to be detected and in this way undistorted attitudes may be evoked. Therefore, Lambert tentatively suggested that the matched-guise technique was a more efficient instrument "for evoking 'private' or 'uncensored' attitudes" towards a particular social group than the traditional attitude rating scale techniques. The present design incorporates both the matched-guise and attitude rating scale techniques thus providing vocal and conceptual stimuli to be evaluated in order to determine whether British accent stimuli afford a more positive relationship between the two instruments than has eventuated using the personality dimension.

## 2. NATURE OF THE INQUIRY

177 Ss were selected according to a  $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$  matrix of age, sex, social class and geographical region, thereby constituting a 16-group subject sample (mean  $n$  of 11). The two age groups in the study afforded means of 12 yrs. 3 mths. and 17 yrs. 4 mths. The Registrar-General's "Classification of Occupations" (1966) was adopted as the index of social stratification thus deriving a middle-class sample of Ss whose fathers' occupational status was Class I or II, whilst the working-class sample was composed of Ss whose fathers' occupational status was clearly Class III, IV or V. A difference in regional environment was achieved by selecting pupils from both a S.W. England and a S. Welsh comprehensive school. All Ss thus obtained were described by their teaching staff as representative members of the specific accent community concerned, possessing average or above intelligence with a minimum variability in academic performance.

The material for the two tasks in the experiment consisted of:

- (a) Tape-recorded voices of one male speaker reading the same passage with 13 different foreign and regional accents (vocal stimuli). The reader was able to maintain realistic guises over the 35 seconds required to read a standard 73-word passage which was of a factual, archaeological nature. The speaker attempted to assume the same speech rate, vocal intensity, pitch and personality throughout the recordings. A questionnaire was prepared to enable Ss to record their evaluative reactions to these voices across 3 dimensions on 7-point scales.
- (b) Three lists in different random orders of the same 16 accents were prepared on separate sheets and included in the questionnaire mentioned above (conceptual stimuli). Underneath each accent item of the 3 lists appeared a single, 7-point scale, while the 3 distinct lists enabled Ss to evaluate these conceptual stimuli one dimension at a time. The particular accents used for the two stimulus techniques of presentation appear in Fig. 1 opposite. The reason that all accents were not common to both rating procedures was due purely to limitations in the speaker's repertoire of realistic guises.

The general instructional set provided for all Ss was that they were participating in an experiment designed to investigate their attitudes towards various regional and foreign accents. Ss were in-

<i>Presented both vocally and conceptually</i>	<i>Presented conceptually only</i>	<i>Presented vocally only</i>
R.P.	Scottish	Affected R.P.
N. American	W. Indian	
French	Liverpool	
S. Welsh	"an accent identical to your own"	
Irish		
Yorkshire		
Somerset		
Indian		
Birmingham		
Cockney		
Italian		
German		

FIG. 1. Stimulus accents

formed that their reactions would be treated entirely confidentially since the study had no relation whatsoever to their academic progress but was being conducted purely for scientific research. It was stressed that there would be no value in copying other Ss' responses as E expected a wide variety of differing evaluations, thus it was their *own* individual reactions which were required. E's supervision of the Ss ensured that little, if any conferring amongst Ss took place. The Ss were told that they would be required to rate a series of accents across 3 dimensions. These dimensions were concerned with Ss' evaluations as to (a) how pleasant-unpleasant they thought a particular accent sounded, (b) how comfortable-uncomfortable they would feel if interacting with the accented-speaker concerned, and (c) how much prestige or status was associated with speaking this accent. Ss were also provided with semantically-labelled rating scales for these dimensions in order to be certain that each gradation of the scales had a meaningful content for them, for example

1	2	3	4
extremely pleasant	moderately pleasant	pleasant	neutral
5	6	7	
moderately unpleasant	unpleasant	extremely unpleasant	

Ss were administered the two tasks by means of 8 groups (the criterion for group inclusion being the convenience of the teaching staff) which were matched for stimulus order of presentation, as in Fig. 2 (p. 216).

The presentation order of the 13 vocal stimuli was constant for all Ss throughout the experiment; however, each of the above 8 groups

<i>Somerset Ss</i>	<i>S. Welsh Ss</i>	<i>Task 1</i>	<i>Task 2</i>
Grp. i: 12 yrs.	Grp. i: 12 yrs.	CONCEPTUAL STIMULI VOCAL STIMULI	VOCAL
Grp. i: 17 yrs.	Grp. i: 17 yrs.		STIMULI
Grp. ii: 12 yrs.	Grp. ii: 12 yrs.		CONCEPTUAL
Grp. ii: 17 yrs.	Grp. ii: 17 yrs.		STIMULI

FIG. 2. Order of stimulus presentation

was further divided into two subgroups with regard to the order of rating the dimensions of the conceptual stimuli. These 2 dimension orders were:

<i>Subgroup 1</i>	<i>Subgroup 2</i>
1. aesthetic content	1. status content
2. communicative content	2. communicative content
3. status content	3. aesthetic content

Ss were not informed of the fact that they would be required to undertake task 2 after task 1—this was to avoid a determined effort on the part of the Ss to specifically memorise their reactions to task 1.

The instructional set specific to the task concerned with the rating of the vocal stimuli was that Ss were to listen attentively to a series of 13 different speakers who would read the same factual passage with their own particular regional or foreign accent. To increase plausibility, it was mentioned in passing that E had experienced great difficulty in obtaining the services of these speakers. The passage was quickly read by E twice before the tape-recorded voice of speaker 1 was presented to the Ss in order that they might become familiarised with the passage. After the voice of speaker 1 had subsequently been played to the Ss, they were requested to name the accent presented, and then rate it across the 3 dimensions, which were in the same rating order as that supplied with the semantically-labelled 7-point scales, on the questionnaire sheet provided. This process of playing each stimulus voice separately and then rating it three times was repeated for the remaining 12 voices. It would have been preferable, of course, to have presented the series of vocal stimuli 3 times so that Ss could rate one series one dimension at a time (as with the conceptual stimuli); however, the factors of task length, monotony and fatigue necessitated the present design. The Ss had verbal instructions repeated to them after each vocal stimulus in order to ensure rating across the correct scale. It was emphasised at length that Ss were to treat each dimension as concerned with conceptually distinct evaluations.

The instructional set specific to the attitude rating scale task was



such that Ss would find three lists of the same 16 accents but in different random orders together with a single 7-point scale per item on the last three sheets of the questionnaire. Ss were to rate each list in the order prescribed; each list providing a different dimension to be evaluated. Ss were told to imagine what the accent stimuli would sound like merely from its name label, yet envisaging not *too* broad a pronunciation; however, if Ss could not adequately conceive of a particular accent presented they should omit this item. Ss were informed that half their group were rating the lists in one order while the other half were rating the dimensions in the reverse order. Ss had explanatory notes at the head of the lists describing exactly what was required of them in rating the particular dimension concerned. Ss were instructed to evaluate each list one by one and not refer back to a dimension they had just rated; as in the previous task, it was stressed that the dimensions were to be treated as conceptually distinct.

After Ss had completed their first task they were informed of the nature of task 2 and told that although a certain proportion of accents were common to both tasks, there was not by any means a one-to-one correspondence. Ss were also instructed not to consult with their prior reactions in task 1 when rating task 2—supervision of these Ss by E ensured that this was indeed the case.

### 3. RESULTS

From the data collected concerning the Ss' ability to recognise the vocal stimuli presented, it would seem that Ss were successfully able to identify the accents presented. Nevertheless, age differences in recognition error scores were evident at the 1% level of significance in that 17-year-olds were better able to attain the strict criteria which were used for recognition.

The mean group rating scores per accent stimulus in the two experimental tasks, and for each dimension were computed, thus contributing a 96-cell matrix of accent ratings for further analysis. From this data, a generalised rating structure emerged across the 3 dimensions from accents vocally and conceptually presented, simply by calculating the overall mean sample accent ratings. The patterning of the mean accent scores thus obtained appears in Tables I and II. The structure of these dimensions was termed "generalised" since:

- (i) The mean ratings for the S. Welsh stimulus accents were derived purely from the Somerset subject sample in order that an evaluation might be rendered without contamination

from tendencies towards accent loyalty. Similarly, the ratings for the Somerset accents were compiled from the S. Welsh sample only.

- (ii) Where age differences in evaluation are in existence (those accents in Tables I and II with asterisks), the mean 17-year-old reactions only are presented in an attempt to reflect an adult-oriented framework of attitudes.
- (iii) The nature of this overall evaluation tends to camouflage socio-situational factors which may have been featured within

TABLE I  
GENERALISED STRUCTURE OF THREE DIMENSIONS OF ACCENT EVALUATION IN RANK ORDERS FROM VOCAL STIMULI

The figures in brackets indicate mean rating scores.

<i>Aesthetic content</i>	<i>Communicative content</i>	<i>Status content</i>
1. R.P. (2.9)	1. R.P. (3.1)	1. R.P. (2.1)*
2. French (3.4)*	2. N. American (3.6)	2. Affected R.P. (2.9)*
3. Irish (3.8)	3. French (3.8)*	3. N. American & French* (3.6)
4. S. Welsh (4.0)	4. Irish (4.0)	5. German (4.2)*
5. N. England (4.2)	5. S. Welsh (4.2)	6. S. Welsh (4.3)
6. Indian, Italian & Somerset (4.3)	6. N. England & Somerset (4.3)	7. Irish (4.6)
9. N. American (4.5)*	8. Cockney & Italian (4.6)	8. Italian (4.7)
10. Cockney (4.6)	10. Indian (4.8)	9. N. England (4.8)
11. Affected R.P. & German (4.8)	11. Affected R.P. & Birmingham (5.0)	10. Somerset (5.1)
13. Birmingham (5.1)	13. German (5.1)	11. Indian & Cockney (5.2)
		13. Birmingham (5.3)

\* indicates age differences in rating, the 17/18 yr. attitude is presented.

TABLE II  
GENERALISED STRUCTURE OF THREE DIMENSIONS OF ACCENT EVALUATION IN RANK ORDERS FROM CONCEPTUAL STIMULI

<i>Aesthetic content</i>	<i>Communicative content</i>	<i>Status content</i>
1. R.P. (2.5)*	1. "accent identical to your own" (1.5)	1. R.P. (1.9)*
2. "accent identical to your own" (2.9)*	2. R.P. (2.3)	2. French* & "accent identical to your own"* (3.3)
3. French (3.0)*	3. French (3.5)	4. N. American & Scottish (3.8)
4. Scottish (3.4)	4. Irish, S. Welsh & N. American (3.8)	6. German (3.9)*
5. Irish (3.7)	7. N. England & Scottish (3.9)	7. Irish (4.2)
6. N. England & Somerset (4.0)	9. Somerset (4.0)	8. S. Welsh, N. England & Somerset (4.3)
8. Italian & German (4.1)	10. Liverpool, German & Italian (4.4)	11. Italian (4.7)
10. S. Welsh (4.2)	13. W. Indies (4.5)	12. W. Indies & Liverpool (5.0)
11. W. Indies (4.3)	14. Cockney, Indian & Birmingham (4.7)	14. Indian & Cockney (5.1)
12. N. America (4.5)		16. Birmingham (5.2)
13. Indian (4.6)		
14. Birmingham & Liverpool (4.7)		
16. Cockney (4.8)		

\* indicates age differences in rating; 17/18 yr. attitude presented.

the realm of individual group structures formulated in the primary stage of data production.

The rank correlations of mean accent ratings derived from vocal and conceptual stimuli were  $+0.79$  for aesthetic content,  $+0.87$  for communicative content and  $+0.88$  for status content. Nevertheless, a comparative inspection of Tables I and II shows a distinct trend for accents to be regarded slightly more favourably when presented by the latter stimulus method; the mean rating differentials for the 12 accents common to both tasks were respectively across dimensions,  $0.17$ ,  $0.28$  and  $0.22$  greater when the stimulus was vocal.

The inter-dimension correlations for the 12 accents common to both stimulus tasks are presented in Tables III. The high correlations thus given would seem to indicate that the scales are certainly not mutually exclusive to any great extent, and may possibly be best considered as three variants of one evaluative dimension.

Many studies have claimed (e.g. Center, 1950; Estvan and Estvan, 1959) that, for most children, the perception of status differences develops rapidly during the childhood years attaining a good approximation to an adult level by early adolescence. However, the results in Tables IV and V cast serious doubt on this assumption. For instance, Table IV shows that the 17-year-old subject perceives significantly more prestige value in speaking R.P. than the younger child. The 12-year-olds also rate the accent prestige of Affected R.P. and German accented-speech lower than their 17-year-old counterparts. An explanation of these particular differences could be that children of this lower age group are more susceptible to influence from dimensions other than its socially more relevant status content, since these two accents fare rather unfavourably with regard to aesthetic and communicative contents with both age groups. This lack of social conformity is again reflected in the 12-year-olds' rating of "an accent identical to your own" which is evaluated with a totally unrealistic and exaggerated positive bias. Similar age differences in the rating of accent prestige with respect to the local accents in Table V are apparent. It can be appreciated that by the age of 17, the older adolescent (although still displaying strong tendencies of accent loyalty) is moving more in the direction of the conventional social evaluation. An alternative view of these age differences could be put forward in that they might reflect *social change*. Thus with reference to R.P., the 17-year-old is more "old-fashioned" and respects R.P. to a greater extent than the 12-year-old who remains less respectful of R.P. independently of age. Unfortunately, only a longitudinal

TABLE III  
THE INTER-DIMENSION CORRELATIONS FOR VOCAL AND CONCEPTUAL STIMULI

Dimensions	Vocal stimuli		Status	Conceptual stimuli	
	Aesthetic	Communicative		Aesthetic	Communicative
Aesthetic	+0.74	+0.74	+0.56	+0.79	+0.76
Communicative	+0.56	+0.71	+0.71	+0.88	+0.88
Status					

TABLE IV

t VALUES FOR MEAN AGE DIFFERENCES IN ACCENT PRESTIGE RATINGS OF FOUR ACCENTS

Accent	Vocal stimuli		t values	Conceptual stimuli		t values
	12 yrs.	17 yrs.		12 yrs.	17 yrs.	
R.P.	3.50	2.10	6.79**	2.68	1.86	4.29**
Affected R.P.	4.83	2.90	5.43**			
German	5.20	4.20	2.87**	4.59	3.94	1.76
				2.16	3.26	5.01**

"Accent identical to your own"

\*\* p < 0.001    \*\* p < 0.02  
\*\*\* p < 0.001

TABLE V

t VALUES FOR MEAN AGE DIFFERENCES IN ACCENT PRESTIGE OF THE TWO LOCAL ACCENTS

Accent & S Groups	Vocal stimuli		t values	Conceptual stimuli		t values
	12 yrs.	17 yrs.		12 yrs.	17 yrs.	
Welsh accent—rated by S. Welsh Ss.	3.88	4.15	0.89	2.40	3.50	4.00***
Somerset accent—rated by Somerset Ss.	3.35	4.10	2.70*	3.65	4.80	4.04***

\*\*\* p < 0.001    \* p < 0.05

study could test the hypothesis that these age differences are *stable*.

Table VI provides data which show the effect of regional differences in rating a local accent, indeed, significant trends of accent loyalty can be exhibited in all three dimensions. However, Table VII presents results which tend to suggest that people consider their own individual accent as distinct from that of the local vernacular by evaluating the former more favourably than the accent peculiar to their own region. Although it would not be claimed that the Ss in the sample population were ardent local dialect speakers—since no relevant data is available from these Ss—the results do support the notion that people may tend to “repress” recognition of the broadness of their particular accent code. Wilkinson (loc. cit.) has also reported this phenomenon with respect to Birmingham secondary school pupils, and stated that “very many English people who have not heard their voices on tape imagine that they have R.P. whilst their neighbours have an ‘accent’. Even when they have heard themselves the prestige of R.P. is so high that they are often unwilling to admit to themselves that they deviate much from it.” In this project, Wilkinson found that girls tended to be less realistic than boys in this matter, but this sex difference was not substantiated in the present study.

Consistent sex differences were, however, found with regard to French accented-speech, in that male Ss rate this accent less favourably across all 3 dimensions than females. It must be borne in mind that the vocal stimulus was a male voice and so the soft timbre of French phonetic contours may have evoked a feeling of effemininity for the male listeners. It would be interesting to determine if this effect would have disappeared if the vocal stimulus was female, even though this tendency emerged in the results when the stimulus was conceptual. Age differences were also apparent with evaluation of this accent, 12-year-old Ss rating it less favourably than the older Ss. Another interesting difference was found with the American accent which was rated by 17-year-olds as less pleasant, when vocally presented, at the 1% significance level than 12-year-olds; and also a strong, though not significant tendency for males to rate it less pleasant than females. It could be speculated that the N. American accent is associated with famous cinema stars, power, technological and space-age achievements which may influence younger adolescents more so than the older ones, and perhaps females more so than males. Another possibility exists in that older children tend to be politically-conscious to a greater extent than younger children, and thus the former might be influenced by the much-publicised “American



aggression in Vietnam" and so perceive many aspects of American life and culture with a negative bias.

Social class differences are also an important variable inherent in predicting evaluative reactions to accented-speech, since it was found that the working-class, 12-year-old males of both regions rated a significant number of accents lower than their middle-class peers in the dimensions of aesthetic and communicative contents. Indeed, when this difference appeared (46 times out of 52), the mean difference between classes in their ratings was 0.8. It may have been the case that these working-class subjects were responding to middle-class speech (grammar, syntax and lexicon) plus accent when evaluating the vocal stimuli which would seem to adequately explain their lower rating particularly with regard to communicative content. However, there was a strong tendency for the working-class sample as a whole to be more prone towards accent loyalty than their middle-class peers. This finding is consonant with Fishman's (1964) work on language maintenance and shift in which he reports that working-class immigrants to the United States displayed greater language loyalty than culturally-identical, middle-class immigrants.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The tripartite hierarchical structure of accent prestige suggested by Wilkinson has thus been investigated, and although Tables I and II do not appear to reflect a hierarchical framework, it can be claimed that the basic structure therein strongly resembles the pattern proposed by Wilkinson. His claim that the lowest prestige accents would comprise of the town and industrial accents was corroborated, but contrary to his expectations, no accent was found which was commensurate with R.P. in status content. Nevertheless, the foreign accents of French and N. American did occupy positions of relatively high prestige and consequently were afforded higher status than any British regional accent. It would seem most appropriate to consider the actual mean rating scores of accents (and thus the structure of accent evaluation) as representing relative positions on multidimensional accent continua, ranging from highly positive to highly negative valences, e.g. high status—low status. If these points on the continua are interpreted in terms of the 7-point scales used by Ss in the experiment, then it will be seen from Tables I and II that British regional accents usually occupy neutral-unfavourable positions (a rating of 4.0 was labelled "neutral"). With regard to status content, it is interesting to note that the W. Indian and Indian accents were

Soc > p < 0.05  
 \* p < 0.01  
 \*\*\* p < 0.001  
 \*\* p < 0.01  
 \* p < 0.05

rated slightly higher than the Birmingham accent, and also that Affected R.P. was rated lower than R.P. itself. However, as hypothesised in the Introduction, the situation is decidedly more complex than is exemplified in any generalised accent continuum, since the variables of age, sex, social class and regional membership have all been shown to be effective in eliciting group differences in accent evaluation.

Reference to Table VII shows that Ss did not rate the communicative content of their local accent (from vocal stimuli) as highly as would have been expected. This may have been due to the fact that the S. Welsh and Somerset accents were produced fairly broadly, and so had the stimuli been somewhat milder—a form of regionalised standard—the ratings may have been lower.

Table III has shown that the inter-dimension correlations for vocal and conceptual stimuli are very high, and this gives rise to the notion that the scales are best considered as three distinct variants of a single evaluative dimension. It was conceived that the procedure adopted for the rating of vocal stimuli, that is successively across the 3 dimensions after each accent was presented, would tend to induce Ss to underestimate the difference between the scales. However, a comparison of the vocal stimuli inter-dimension correlations with those derived from conceptual stimuli, seems to indicate that if anything, Ss tended to overestimate the difference between scales.

The correlations between accents rated both by the attitude rating scale and matched-guise techniques were extremely high, and certainly more encouraging than in previous studies. However, a fundamental distinction needs to be made, since an evaluation of the personality content of an accent involves an assessment of characteristics of the speaker, not his speech, while evaluations across the other 3 dimensions involve, on the other hand, assessments of the speech, not the speaker. Therefore measuring the aesthetic, communicative and status contents of accents by the matched-guise technique cannot involve a camouflage of the true purpose of the experiment (as it does in personality content), and so the only difference between the two evaluative instruments is in terms of the form of stimulation, i.e. vocal or conceptual. So when techniques are actually measuring the same basic parameters, and socially-appropriate responses are not conducive to only one of these tasks, agreement is extremely high. Thus, this may in fact, provide indirect evidence for Lambert's assumption that the matched-guise technique does measure, when the situation demands it, the more "private and uncensored atti-



tudes". Despite the high correlations between the two methods of stimulus presentation, it must be stressed that the results indicate that Ss conceive of accents slightly more favourably than when they are actually confronted with them.

It has thus been shown that each accent may be placed at some point along the continuum of status content thereby possessing a specific prestige value, and so when other perceptual cues in social interaction are absent (perhaps due to temporal pressures), stereotyped impressions are formulated if not from an accent's personality content then from its status content. Therefore as Sansom (1953) has commented, "dialects not only confine their speakers geographically, they confine them socially. Almost every dialect in England is a class dialect—a shibboleth that limits and perhaps frustrates its user." From the data presented concerning evaluative reactions to accents, the situation is no different with regard to accents; all regional accents have significantly less prestige value than R.P. In this context Wilkinson (*loc. cit.*) has claimed, "that accents should carry such social (and hence psychological) disadvantages in this way, is not a desirable state of affairs". Indeed, Wilkinson in a preliminary project has shown a relationship between perception of regional accent and occupational stereotype by presenting secondary school-children with a series of tape-recorded voices requiring these Ss to assign occupational roles to them, and found that only the R.P. speakers had been assigned professional occupations. Another parameter in which accent usage is being proven disadvantageous is in relation to memory recall. Wenner (1967) found that Ss who used a standard, middle-class American accent found significantly more difficulty recalling a controlled list of words spoken in an alien, working-class, Negro accent than a list presented in their own accent. However rather surprisingly, the Negro Ss recalled far more words from the list spoken in the standard accent than their own. It would seem that the evidence suggests that regional accent is a social stigma, and therefore two courses of action may be put forward to remedy this situation: (i) an attempt to change people's attitudes away from one of social prejudice for non-standard accented-speech, or (ii) an attempt to teach children competence in the standard accent to such a degree that at least they are able to produce this form in socially-appropriate situations. This latter objective would seem the more efficient method of dispelling the particular social prejudice involved for any significant length of time, and in this way therapy is related to the cause of the problem rather than its symptoms. Labov (1964)

has shown with New York Ss that the act of reading elicits one of the best approximations to the most formal accent, and therefore, it would seem that by this technique primarily R.P. may be reinforced by teachers as a mode of communication. The author is conducting a survey at the present time to determine attitudes of primary school teachers towards the teaching of standard pronunciation for certain verbal situations, for it is thought that such teachers are not sufficiently aware of the social hazards in accepting accented-speech from their pupils at all times and are thus not motivated to remedy the situation. However, needless to say, the value of a specific programme of attitude change in this direction should not be underestimated and shelved without empirically determining its effects over a wide variety of time intervals.

It is also to be proposed that such a therapeutic accent reading programme is more critical for most working-class children of primary school age than for middle-class children. Lawton (1968) in a critical review of the work of Bernstein and his associates on social class differences in language usage, has reported experiments which show that the "restricted code-user" is not able, as is the "elaborate code-user", to adapt his speech at the grammatical and syntactical levels to meet the needs of a specific verbal situation. Moreover, the theory also implies that the "elaborate code-user" is able to switch codes to the relevant social situation, although unfortunately this assumption has not received experimental attention. The present author is conducting a series of inquiries with a view to extending this theoretical framework, such that not only is the "elaborate code-user" able to code-switch at the grammatical levels depending on the social setting, but also at the phonological levels. These phonological levels affected include speech rate, pitch, voice quality and intensity but more importantly in the present context, accent usage. Thus, when the "elaborate code-user" finds himself in a dyadic verbal interaction, possessing an integrative motivational orientation towards the other member, there will arise within certain limits, conformity pressures within the individual to adapt to the accent code of his interactor—"accent convergency" (the direction of which, upward or downward, will depend on the sender's relative evaluations of his own and the other's accent prestige in his "continuum of status content"). Conversely, if the individual acquires a dissociative motivational orientation within the confines of the social interaction, there will be tendencies towards "accent divergency", which again could be measured by means of the sender's continuum

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of accent prestige. It can be argued that this process of "accent mobility" begins to develop at about the time of puberty, but due to the working-class verbal environment being one of inflexibility, this process is never given the opportunity for adequate momentum. It is clearly important, if the above assumptions are validated, to at least provide the working-class child with a standard accent in his formative years, since it is unlikely that he will command sufficient adaptability in phonological code-switching to compensate for his low prestige idiolect.

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