

Annotated Bibliography

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Greene, Robert Lane. "The Last Acceptable Prejudice." *theeconomist.com*. *The Economist*, 29 January 2015. Web. 22 March 2016.

The Economist contributor Robert Lane Greene analyzes a great real-life example of overt accent prejudice towards Katie Edwards at an international academic conference. Edwards, a Brit, is a gender scholar within the Department of Biblical Studies at Sheffield University and was approached by a fellow academic who conjured a fake Yorkshire accent (Edwards's own dialect) when meeting her and then proceeded to speak to her [non-northern English] colleagues in a normal manner.

Greene gives this example and then continues with a discussion on how no one, let alone an academic, would approach someone by acting in a stereotypical manner in regards to race, religion, or sexuality. So why is the generalization of accents okay? Greene argues that accent discrimination is the last of "accepted prejudices," and he asserts that this is because many people see accents as something freely chosen as opposed to something that's biologically inherited (skin color) or chosen *in depth* (religion). His discussion on how many people think that dialect is a superficial characteristic is fascinating, and he goes into the point of how it's particularly ironic that this type of prejudice comes out in academic settings. He argues that most academics support the promotion of multiculturalism and the politically correct understanding of diversity, yet accents seem to be fair game.

Kavanaugh, Shane. "Snap Judgements- Accent, Discrimination, and Identity."

***talkingnewyork.edu*. *Talking New York*, 15 May 2010. Web. 22 March 2016.**

On this website that focuses specifically on New York accents (though the content can relate to many different dialects), the writer interviews Dr. Jillian Kavanaugh, a linguistic anthropology professor at Brooklyn college. Kavanaugh comes right out and says that with so many geographical regions in the U.S., and therefore so many regional dialects, Americans automatically use accents to "activate social difference." She describes how the Southern

accent, for example, is usually associated with a certain political party, a certain religion, a certain education level, and a certain economic position.

Cavanaugh says that she and her sister recently visited family in Georgia and that her sister kept saying “I can’t believe how stupid they sound.” She continues to say that they’re “really nice” but that they need to clean up their accents to sound smarter. Cavanaugh observes that her sister could not fundamentally separate her social perceptions of the family members with her linguistic perceptions of them. This is interesting and also heartbreaking to hear, especially as someone from the South, but I also recognize that pretty much everyone, either consciously or subconsciously, probably judges someone by voice and accent when they first meet them. It’s natural. Cavanaugh argues, however, that it isn’t a reason to play into harmful stereotypes. She continues to discuss how some people attempt to change their accent and that when they’re doing this they are changing their phonological pattern. This can lead to a potential identity crisis. Who does one become when losing something so intrinsic to the person you’ve been your whole life?

Lippi-Green, Rosina. “Accent, Standard Language Ideology, and Discriminatory Pretext in the Courts.” *Language in Society* 23.2 (1994): 163-198. Web. 22 March 2016.

The abstract to this article is very eye-opening. It states that under the U.S. Civil Rights Act, an employer cannot discriminate against people of color because of personal or customer preference. An employer also cannot discriminate on the linguistic traits of a specific national origin. However, unlike racial discrimination, there is “considerable latitude” in how an employer may judge linguistic traits because not only is there such a wide range of dialects, but employers can judge the degree to which an employee interprets and comprehends ‘correct grammatical English.’

Lippi-Green starts the article with a story about a 29-year-old Indian woman named Soluchana Mandhare who, after studying English for 20 years and held two Bachelors degrees, came to the United States to continue her graduate education. She started a part-time job at a local library that involved helping visitors and reading to children. After some

time, her contract was not renewed because of her “heavy accent, speech patterns, and grammar problems.”

The article continues with a discussion on the Type II accent (the foreign accent of a non-native English speaker) and the ramifications of the discrimination towards this characteristic. There is a discussion on the need to recognize other outside factors that could be cause for discrimination, but the main focus is what lawyers call Language-trait Focused (LTF) discrimination. Lippi-Green also attempts to analyze why we (in the American context) continue to use linguistic traits to justify harmful discrimination and prejudices.

Matsuda, Mari J. “Voices of America: Accent, Antidiscrimination Law, and a Jurisprudence for the Last Reconstruction.” *The Yale Law Journal* 100.5 (1991): 1329-1407. Web. 22 March 2016.

The opening to this article is very poignant and telling. Matsuda writes that *everyone* has an accent, and these accents reflect what a person has been surrounded by for a significant part of their life. She says “Your self is inseparable from your accent. Someone who tells you they don’t like the way you speak is quite likely telling you that they don’t like you.” This is a very fascinating take on how your accent can be an intrinsic part of you, a characteristic that many people cannot change.

Matsuda discusses the role of accents in judicial decisions and how difficult it is for those in the legal system to rule on an accent case, as there are so many variables and different perceptions of this particular characteristic. She also seeks to analyze the cultural context of accent discrimination and how speech is valued in American society. It seems only natural that there would be numerous perceptions of different American accents because there are so many regional dialects (hundreds and hundreds). However, do different perceptions of a certain speech pattern automatically cause most Americans to accept a stereotype of a region?

Matsuda takes a look at accents native to American English and accents relating to speakers of English as a second language. She gives multiple legal examples of cases where accent prejudice has played a main role, and she seeks to analyze how most of these seem to turn

out. I also find her discussion on how an accent can reflect a deep cultural history and diversity of a region fascinating. How can the courts attempt to hold up the value of diversity on a characteristic that many deem as 'changeable?'

Preston, Dennis R. "Language Myth #17: They Speak Really Bad English Down South and in New York City." *pbs.org*. PBS 'Do You Speak American?' series, n.d. Web. 22 March 2016.

I really love this article by Dennis R. Preston, a professor of linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He introduces the article by saying that regional residents can actually believe that something is wrong with their dialect when much of the media and society play into negative stereotyping about a specific place. He goes on to give a very relevant example, and this is something I've seen many times. Imagine you go into a doctor's office for a headache and they refer you to a brain surgeon. You finally meet this surgeon, who it turns out has an extremely thick [unnamed] accent. He says things like "Rotten break, huh?" and "You got a pain in da noggin'?" and "I'm gonna fix you right up." You leave thinking that the doctor was 1) not professional and 2) a highly incompetent doctor compared to your main doctor who doesn't speak this way.

Preston discusses how linguists know that dialect does not correlate with intelligence, but many people don't. This is why many would walk out of that office and never return. Preston then goes on to discuss how he has interviewed different parts of the U.S. and has asked those residents about how they view the accents of other regions. One Michigan interviewee put on a fake Southern accent and said, "I can't talk like them Northerners because they're too fast. When I talk like this people think I'm the dumbest around." Many people not from the Northeast think that New York and Boston accents sound extremely forward and almost violent.

Preston presents actual linguistic examples of the variations of English in the U.S. and he includes maps that show where certain things are spoken. He closes the article with the discussion of how negative stereotypes (a moonshining, barefoot, racist Southerner or a

brash, criminal, violent New Yorker) can actually cause a certain sense of solidarity among these groups. And accents become a symbol of this solidarity.

Trawick-Smith, Ben. "Accent Prejudice Isn't 'Prejudice Lite'." *dialectblog.com*. Dialect Blog, 28 October 2014. Web. 22 March 2016.

This blog that is solely focused on the presentation and understanding of regional dialects (both American and international) is a really nice source for learning about speech patterns and cultural connections to different accents. This particular article focuses on accent prejudice and how discrimination against different dialects is still highly relevant, even if people don't realize it's a phenomenon.

Trawick-Smith opens the article with a criticism against an "Ugliest Accent" poll, as it seeks to perpetuate what he calls "accent-hating" and low self-esteem for people who have those specific speech patterns. He continues on that *all* prejudices- about race, sexuality, classism, xenophobia, and linguistic- never fit into "neat little boxes." Prejudice is a very complex system of societal perceptions. He says it's perfectly human to make assumptions about a certain political leaning or education level when we hear an accent, but that doesn't mean they don't cause real damage. It's fine to joke about generalizations and interesting/funny things within certain accent groups, but it's when you actually start to believe the stereotypes that it gets dangerous. In his words, "Language is less of a choice than we assume."

United States Government. "Section 13: National Origin Discrimination." *eeoc.gov*. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2 December 2002. Web. 22 March 2016.

The direct source of the EEOC Compliance Manual on national origin discrimination and the legal implications of certain violations. Within the circle of national origin discrimination includes the inability to discriminate against a certain speech pattern that reflects a national origin. Employees cannot make a decision to discriminate on the basis of their personal preferences or those of a customer. Discrimination on the basis of linguistic traits is

prohibited unless it interferes with actual work (and this judgement is the problem that the courts have). Most of this manual refers to the linguistic traits of foreign nationals, but it may also be applied to linguistic traits of native English speakers.