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# Does having a foreign accent affect men and women differently? Effect of foreign accent and gender on employment decisions and negotiations

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Does having a foreign accent affect men and women differently?

Effect of foreign accent and gender on employment decisions and negotiations

An

Interactive Qualifying Project Report

Submitted to the Faculty of

WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

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by

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Date:

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Approved:  
Professor Jeanine L. Skorinko, Project Advisor

## **Abstract**

The study examines the effect of international accents (British, East Asian, Hispanic, or South-Asian Indian) and gender on hiring and negotiation perceptions. Our results show an interaction between accent and gender: female candidates with international accents are less likely to be hired than female candidates with an American accent. But this difference does not occur for male candidates. We discuss implications and possible explanation of this finding, as well as future research directions to further explore this phenomenon.

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## **Does having a foreign accent affect men and women differently?**

### **Effect of foreign accent and gender on employment decisions and negotiations**

As a result of globalization, more and more companies and organizations are starting to employ foreign workers (Nishimura, 2012). This naturally results in employment of workers who do not speak the companies' native languages. In United States, 18% of the population speaks a language other than English at home (US Census Bureau, 2000). And 9% of the US population five years or older report that they speak English less than "very well" (US Census Bureau, 2008). From these data, one can easily picture a situation where a large number of individuals with international accents are and will be entering the workforce. The purpose of this experiment is to examine the effect of international accents, combined with gender, on perceptions of a candidate—especially during employment related negotiations.

Accent not only indicates the manner of pronunciation, but more importantly, conveys important social information (Edwards, 1999). In most of English-speaking countries including the United States, people who speak with a "standard accent" usually belong to the dominant group of the society (Callan, Gallois, & Forbes, 1983). Thus, individuals that speak with an accent may be more likely to be viewed as out-group members. Researches consistently show that out-group members are often subject to bias and negative evaluations (Lee & Ottati, 2002; Brewer, 1979). Therefore, individuals who speak with an accent are seen as out-group members, and then they may be more likely to experience bias and negative evaluations. Additionally, an accent acts as an immediate cue to a person's culture and background. Some accents, such as Asian and Hispanic ones, can also imply the speaker's ethnic background. Both cultural background and

ethnicity have been shown to trigger stereotypical perceptions and biases in workplace, and can cause inequality in areas such as hiring decisions, promotions, salaries, and job benefits (Riches & Foddy, 1989; Deitch et al, 2003). Furthermore, a non-native accent is a salient indicator of the fact that the speaker is from a foreign country, which can trigger stereotypes of immigrants as well. In sum, these findings suggest that an accent should be an important social cue that can, directly or indirectly, cue an individual's out-group, ethnic, or even immigrant status. This, in return, may cause biases towards people with non-standard accents. Thus accents, especially international ones, can serve as important social cues—similar to gender, ethnicity, and age.

These biases are demonstrated by previous studies. For instance, one study shows that workers with a Mexican accent are more likely to be discriminated against than workers without a Mexican accent (Wated & Sanchez, 2006). This bias is also shown to be a stressor among workers with Mexican accents (Wated & Sanchez, 2006). This same type of bias also exists in employment decision making, as candidates with a Hispanic accent are evaluated more negatively than candidates with the same qualifications but a North American accent (Segrest Purkiss, Perrewe, Gillespie, Mayes, & Ferris, 2003). Accent bias exists not only for Hispanic accents, but also for a lot of other accents around the world. For instance, given the same speech, a candidate with French accent is viewed less favorably than one with Mid-Western US accent (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010), and a candidate with a Japanese accent is less likely to be hired than a candidate with a Standard American accent (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2009). These studies all suggest that speaking with a non-native accent has negative effects on perceptions of an individual.

Not only can foreign accents lead to bias in general, but the origin of the accent also makes a difference. Different accents can be associated with different stereotypes. For example, in United States, French accents tend to be associated with sophistication, while Asian accents tend to be associated with high level of education (Cargile, 2000; Lippi-Green, 1997). These different stereotypes can cause accents to be viewed differently. For example, in employment decisions, candidates with a French accent are evaluate more favorably than candidates with a Japanese accent--especially for jobs of high communication demands (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2009). More generally, in United States, accents of other native English-speaking countries (such as United Kingdom and Australia), and Western European countries (such as France and Germany), tend to be associated with more positive stereotypes (Lippi-Green, 1994), while accents of rest of the world (such as Asian and South American countries) tend to be associated with more negative stereotypes (Lindemann, 2005). Therefore, it is important to not only compare American accent with international accents in general, but also compare across international accents associated with different regions.

Apart from accents, another important factor that leads to biases in workplace is gender. Court cases and audit studies provide a significant amount of evidence of gender discrimination in the workplace, including hiring decisions, work training, salary policies, promotion, tenure, as well as many other job benefits (Darity & Mason, 1998). Gender bias in employment is also confirmed by social science studies (Reskin & Padavic 1988). Employers are found to be more likely to hire a male candidate than a female one, even given the same qualifications; and this bias exists for both experienced and inexperienced employers (Marlowe, Schneider, & Nelson, 1996). Similarly, when men and women are equally qualified, men still have a better chance to

be hired than women in a restaurant, and the more expensive the restaurant, the more the gender bias there is (Neumark, Bank & Van Nort, 1996).

Even if a female is hired, her advancement in career can be influenced by the glass ceiling. Glass ceiling is the difference caused by factors irrelevant of the job qualifications, such as education, experience, skills, and motivation (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia & Vanneman, 2001). It was found that women, compared with men of same qualifications, are less likely to be promoted to more advanced positions, such as manager, company officer, and CEO; and the higher the position, the more the difference (Cotter, et al. 2001).

Biernat and Vescio (2002) investigate the cause of gender bias, and find that it can be the result of shifting standards. They studied the scenario of a coed softball team, where female players have the same athletic abilities as male players. People had more enthusiastic reactions towards a woman's successful play than a man's because it was less expected; however, when people selected players to go on the field to compete, women were more likely to be benched. This study suggests that the criteria for rating males and females are different. When rating a female candidate, people tend to compare her with other female candidates; however, when they compare a female candidate with a male candidate, their standard will shift, and judgments tend to be made based on stereotypes and their beliefs about the two genders (Biernat & Vescio, 2002).

These studies confirm that both accent bias and gender bias exist in the workplace. The next question then is whether accent bias works differently for men and women. Very few studies

have directly looked into whether gender has an effect on accent bias. However, results from Valian's research (1999) indicate that accent bias might work differently for men and women. Statistical results in international business show that salary of men with abroad experience and the ability to speak a foreign language is \$5,300 higher than those who do not have these experience or ability. However, salary of women with these experience and ability is \$4,200 lower than those women who do not have them (Valian, 1999). This result indicates that abroad experience and foreign language ability can affect men positively, but affect women negatively.

Due to the fact that an international accent serves as a salient indicator that the speaker is coming from a foreign country and should have the ability to speak a foreign language, we wondered whether accents would be perceived differently if the speaker was male or female, especially in the workplace. Thus, we set out to examine the effects that accent and gender have on hiring and negotiations in the workplace. In this study, we are interested in the combined effect of accent spoken and gender, on the perceptions of a candidate in an employment-related situation, especially a negotiation situation. To study this, we created the following scenario: a job candidate is offered a project manager position with an average salary-benefit package, and the candidate makes a speech to negotiate for better salary and benefit based on his/her qualifications and needs. We record and compare 5 different accents for this negotiation: American, British, East Asian, Hispanic, and South-Asian Indian, each for both male and female conditions.

## **Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1.** Previous studies have shown that speaking with an international accent negatively affects perceptions of candidates (Purkiss et al., 2003, Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010).

Therefore, we predict that candidates with a non-American accent (e.g., British, East Asian, Hispanic, and South-Asian Indian) will be viewed less favorably than candidates with a standard American accent.

**Hypothesis 2.** As existence of bias against women in workplace is widely demonstrated in both interview and promotion decisions (Marlowe, et al., 1996; Newmark et al., 1995; Biernat & Vescio, 2002), we hypothesize that males candidates will be rated more positively than female candidates, regardless of accent.

**Hypothesis 3.** Valian's research (1999) suggests that foreign language ability may have negative influence on women. And speaking with an international accent is directly related to foreign language ability. Therefore, we predict that the effect of accent bias will have a greater impact on female than male candidates. More specifically, we predict that female candidates with foreign (i.e, East Asian, Hispanic, and South-Asian Indian) accents will be viewed least favorably, and male candidates with American accent will be viewed most favorably.

**Hypothesis 4.** Considering accents of other native English-speaking and Western European countries tend to be linked with more positive stereotypes, compared to accent associated with the rest of the world (Lippi-Green, 1994; Lindemann, 2005), we, therefore, hypothesize that candidates with British accent will be viewed more positively than ones with East Asian, Hispanic, or South-Asian Indian accents.

## Method

### Participants

A total of 209 individuals across United States participate in this study. One participant is removed from our data because the participant claims to personally know the speaker. Two hundred and eight individuals (104 male, 102 female, 2 unspecified) are considered for our data. One hundred and fifteen of them are college students participating for part of their class credit, 50 participate through SocialSci website, and 43 through Mechanical Turk. Age of the participants range from 17 to 59 years ( $M = 24.51$  years,  $SD = 8.18$  years). Eighty-seven percent of the participants are native English speakers, 12% are not, and 1% is unspecified. The ethnic composition of the participants is: 76% Caucasian, 23% Minorities (i.e., Asian, Hispanics, Blacks, etc.), and 2% do not report their ethnicity.

### Design and Materials

This experiment utilizes a 2 (Candidate Gender: male vs. female) x 5 (Accent Spoken: American, British, East Asian, Hispanic, or South-Asian Indian) between-participants design to examine the combined effect of international accents and gender on perceptions of negotiation skills.

**Accent Recordings.** To create accent conditions, we first create a script of a negotiation. In the script, a candidate is offered a national average salary-benefit package for a project manager position, and the candidate is negotiating for higher salary and increased benefits. We then recorded both male and female readings of the script in 5 accents: American, British, East Asian Hispanic, and South-Asian Indian. Furthermore, to reduce influence of individual differences in readings, we used recordings from 2 different individuals for each condition, which results in 20

recordings in total. For all conditions except British females, recordings are provided by volunteers originated from the associated regions. Due to a lack of British Female volunteers, British Female condition is created by volunteers imitating the accent. Lengths of recordings are on average 3'17", and range from 2'46" to 4'08". British accented recordings are mostly longer than average, while American and Hispanic ones are all shorter than average.

### **Measurements**

Through a questionnaire, we measure participants' perceptions of the candidate: including negotiation effectiveness, hirability, verbal ability, and personal characteristics. To measure negotiation effectiveness, participants rated how much salary, vacation time, sick leave, relocation bonus, and health insurance they would give to the candidate (On a scale from originally offered to requested by candidate). A measurement is created by the average offer of these job benefits. Hirability is measured by participants' ratings (7-point Likert-Type scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree) on employment related questions, such as if they would hire the candidate, whether the candidate would be suitable for the job, etc.

Verbal ability is assessed by participants' rating (7-point Likert-Type scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree) on questions regarding if the negotiation is understandable and persuasive. Personal characteristics is assessed by the ratings (7-point Likert-Type scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree) on questions regarding if the candidate is friendly, assertive, intelligent, etc.

## **Procedure**

The study was conducted online. From the informed consent form, participants learned that the purpose of the study is to examine the influence of different strategies in the negotiation process. Participants then reviewed a general description of the candidate's qualifications and the salary-benefits package offered (see Appendix A). Participants were then randomly assigned to listen to a scripted negotiation (no faces or names are shown). An equal number of participants listen to the candidate speaking with either an American, East Asian, British, Hispanic, or South-Asian Indian accent. In each accent condition, about half of the participants listen to a male candidate, and the other half listen to a female one. Participants are able to play the negotiation speech more than once, but are not able to replay it after they move on to next page.

After listening to the negotiation, all participants answer a questionnaire that assesses the candidate's negotiation effectiveness, hirability, verbal ability, and personal characteristics. (See Appendix B). Additionally, participants were asked to identify the accent the candidate spoke with, the region they associated the accent with, and to what extent they thought the candidate spoke with an ethnic accent. Finally, participants completed some demographic information, including gender, race, length of work experience, if they were native English speakers, and if they spoke with any accent, if applicable. After completing the questionnaire, participants were debriefed and thanked.

## Results

### Manipulation Checks

There are two main considerations for manipulation checks: whether the candidate's accent is identified and whether the candidate's gender is identified. To check if candidate's accent is identified, we conducted an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with the between-participants factor as the candidate's accent (American vs. Foreign) on the participant's rating of how much the candidate speaks with an ethnic accent. The result show a significant difference between the two accent groups,  $F(1, 207) = 221.40$ ,  $p < .00$ , such that those who heard an foreign accent ( $M = 5.78$ ,  $SD = 1.35$ ) reported hearing ethnic accent more than those who heard the American accent ( $M = 2.25$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ). Additionally, there is a strong positive correlation between the type of accent (American vs. Foreign) and the strength of the accent (weak to strong),  $r = 0.77$ ,  $p < .001$ . Hence we conclude that the manipulation for candidate's accent is effective.

As for gender manipulation, we compare participants' answers for candidates' gender with candidate's actual gender. Ninety four percent of the participants indicate the correct gender ( $N = 196$  out of 208), 1% mistake a male candidate for a female one, 4% mistake a female candidate for a male one, and 1% do not answer. So we conclude that manipulation for candidate's gender is also effective.

### Testing Hypotheses

In order to test Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, we first group the five accent conditions into two conditions: foreign accent (British, East Asian, Hispanic, and South-Asian Indian), and

American accent, then conduct a between-participant ANOVA with both accent and gender as our between-participant factors, on ratings of hirability, negotiation effectiveness, verbal ability, and personal characteristics.

In Hypothesis 1, we predict that candidates with foreign accents would be viewed more negatively than candidates with an American accent. Our results provide partial support for this hypothesis. The between participant ANOVA shows a main effect of accent on perception of speaker's verbal ability,  $F(1, 202) = 3.96, p = .05$ , such that individuals with a foreign accent ( $M_{foreign} = 5.17, SD_{foreign} = 1.23$ ) are viewed as having poorer verbal ability than individuals with a standard American accent ( $M_{American} = 5.57, SD_{American} = .97$ ). However, this negative perception does not parlay into other domains as there is no significant main effects of accent on the perception of negotiation effectiveness, hirability, or personal characteristics,  $ps > .48$ .

As for the effect of gender, in Hypothesis 2, we hypothesize that female candidates would be perceived more negatively than male candidates. This hypothesis is not supported by our result. The between-participant ANOVA finds no main effect of gender on perception of all four measurements: hirability, negotiation effectiveness, verbal ability, and personal characteristics,  $p > .14$ .

Hypothesis 3 predicts that foreign accents would have a more negative effect on women than on men. This hypothesis is partly supported by our results. Through the between-participant ANOVA, we find a significant interaction between accent and gender on perception of hirability,  $F(1, 204) = 4.54, p = .034$ , as shown in Figure 1. Simple effect analyses show that female

candidates with foreign accent ( $M_{foreign} = 5.69, SD_{foreign} = .10$ ) are less likely to be hired than female candidates with American accent ( $M_{American} = 6.17, SD_{American} = .22$ ),  $F(1, 204) = 3.29, p = .05$ . However, there are no significant effects of accent among male candidates,  $p > .28$ . Simple effect analyses also show that among candidates with American accent, female candidates are more likely to be hired than male candidates,  $F(1,204) = 4.14, p = .04$  ( $M_{male} = 5.57, SD_{male} = .19; M_{female} = 5.70, SD_{foreign} = .10$ ). However, among candidates with foreign accent, there is no significant effect of gender on perception of hirability,  $p > .48$ . As for perception of negotiation effectiveness, verbal ability, and personal characteristics, our between-participant ANOVA found no interaction between accent and gender,  $ps > .2$ .

In Hypothesis 4, we predicted that the British accent would be viewed more positively than other foreign accents (East Asian, Hispanic, or South-Asian Indian accent). Our result provides partial support to this hypothesis. To test this hypothesis, we performed a between-participant ANOVAs with 4 accent conditions (British, East Asian, Hispanic, and South-Asian Indian) and gender as between-participant factors on ratings of hirability, negotiation effectiveness, verbal ability, and personal characteristics. No main effect of accent is found on perception of hirability,  $ps > .2$ , but the post-hoc test shows that candidates with British accent are more likely to be hired than candidates with East Asian accent,  $F(3,156) = 1.43, p = .04$ , ( $M_{British} = 5.91, SD_{British} = .16; M_{Asian} = 5.49, SD_{Asian} = .15$ ). There is no significant difference between candidates with British accent and ones with Hispanic or Indian accent for perceived hirability,  $p > .1$ . The ANOVA also shows a main effect of accent on perception of verbal ability,  $p = .03$ . Post hoc test shows that candidates with British accent are rated as having better verbal ability than candidates with East Asian accent,  $F(3, 154) = 2.97, p = .003$

( $M_{British} = 5.39, SD_{British} = .19; M_{Asian} = 4.70, SD_{Asian} = .19$ ). No effect of accent on verbal ability is found when comparing any other two accents,  $p > .1$ . We find no significant difference between candidates with British accent and candidates with any other accent on perception of negotiation effectiveness or personal characteristics,  $p > .5$ .

### **Candidate gender and participant gender**

In addition to our hypotheses, we also conduct some exploratory analyses to examine whether the participant's gender influenced candidate perceptions. In particular, we are interested in whether participants view candidates differently based on their gender. We conducted a between-participant ANOVA, with candidate gender and participant gender as our between-participant factors on ratings of hirability, negotiation effectiveness, verbal ability, and personal characteristics.

We found no significant main effects for candidate gender or participant gender on hirability  $p > .22$ . However, there was an interaction between candidate's gender and participant's gender on perception of candidate's hirability,  $F(1, 202) = 3.79, p = .05$ , as shown in Figure 2. Simple effects analyses show that male candidates are more likely to be hired by female participants than male participants,  $F(1, 202) = 5.46, p = .02$  ( $M_{male pp.} = 5.55, SD_{male pp.} = .13; M_{female pp.} = 5.98, SD_{female pp.} = .14$ ). But such differences did not occur for female candidates,  $p > .6$ . Also, simple effect analyses show no significant effect of candidate's gender for male or female participants' ratings,  $p > .15$ .

When looking at verbal ability, we find no main effects for candidate or participant gender,  $ps > .1$ . However, like hirability, we find an interaction between candidate and participant gender on perceptions of verbal ability,  $(1, 200) = 4.58$ ,  $p = .034$ , as shown in Figure 3. Simple effect analyses show that female participants tend to view male candidates as having better verbal ability than male participants,  $F(1, 200) = 8.26$ ,  $p = .004$  ( $M_{female\ pp.} = 5.66$ ,  $SD_{female\ pp.} = .17$ ;  $M_{male\ pp.} = 5.00$ ,  $SD_{male\ pp.} = .16$ ). This difference does not occur for female candidates,  $p > .8$ . In addition, female participants perceive male candidates as having better verbal ability than female candidates,  $F(1, 200) = 4.65$ ,  $p = .032$  ( $M_{male} = 5.66$ ,  $SD_{male.} = .17$ ;  $M_{female} = 5.15$ ,  $SD_{female.} = .16$ ). This difference does not occur for male participants,  $p > .5$ .

As for perception of personal characteristics, although there was no significant main effect of participant's gender,  $p > .06$ , there was an interaction between candidate gender and participant gender on the perception of personal characteristics  $F(1, 202) = 4.47$ ,  $p = .036$ , as shown in Figure 4. Simple effect analyses indicate that male candidates are seen to have more positive personal characteristics by female participants than by male participants,  $F(1, 202) = 4.66$ ,  $p = .032$  ( $M_{female\ pp.} = 5.28$ ,  $SD_{female\ pp.} = .12$ ;  $M_{male\ pp.} = 4.94$ ,  $SD_{male\ pp.} = .11$ ). No significant effect of participant gender is found when perceiving female candidates,  $p > .3$ ; and no significant effect of candidate gender is found for both male and female participants,  $ps > .06$ . No significant interaction of candidate's gender and participant's gender on negotiation effectiveness is found,  $p > .3$ .

Given that participant's gender has interaction with candidate's gender, we use a three-way between-participant ANOVA with accent (foreign vs. American), candidate gender, and

participant gender as between-participant factors, on perception of hirability, negotiation effectiveness, verbal ability, and personal characteristics, to test if there is a three-way interaction. The result shows no three-way interaction or interaction between accent and participant's gender on perception of hirability, negotiation effectiveness, verbal ability, and personal characteristics,  $ps > .2$ .

## **Discussion**

### **Findings and Implications**

Our results partially support Hypothesis 1, that candidates with foreign accents are viewed less positively than candidates with an American accent. Candidates with foreign accents are seen to have poorer verbal ability than candidates with American accents. But this bias is not shown in perception of negotiation effectiveness, hirability, or personal characteristics.

Our hypothesis about gender bias is not supported by our results, as females were not rated more negatively than men regardless of accent. Thus, our results are more similar to other studies that have not found gender bias in employment decisions (Lyness & Judiesch, 1999; Powell & Butterfield, 1994; Gerhart & Milkovich, 1989), than those studies that found such biases (Newmark et al., 1995; Cotter, et al. 2002). We also find that within the American accent conditions, female candidates are more likely to be hired than male candidates. This unexpected finding may be the effect of the job position (i.e., project manager) being seen to be more feminine than masculine in our participant pool. Further study is needed to examine if this phenomenon reoccurs or if the job position was viewed in this manner.

We show partial support for our prediction that accent bias acts differently for men and women (Hypothesis 3). Our results show that female candidates with a foreign accent are less likely to be hired than female candidates with American accents. However, male candidates with or without a foreign accent are equally likely to be hired. Our result for female candidates is in agreement with previous studies that have found accent bias, for instance, candidates with Asian or Hispanic accent are viewed less positively than ones with American accent in job interview situations (Purkiss et. al., 2003; Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2009).

Our findings also partially support Hypothesis 4, that candidates with British accent are viewed more positively. We find that candidates with British accent are more likely to be hired and are rated to have better verbal ability than candidates with East Asian accent. However, this difference does not occur when comparing British accent with Hispanic or South-Asian Indian accent. This finding is partially in agreement with previous studies that accents associated with English-speaking and Western European countries are viewed more positively than accents associated with the rest of the world (Lippi-Green, 1994; Lindemann, 2005).

Apart from testing our hypotheses, we also find several unexpected results. First, the results show an interaction between candidate gender and participant gender on perception of the candidate's hirability, verbal ability, and personal characteristics. More specifically, two effects are found. First, female participants tend to perceive male candidates more positively than male participants do on hirability, verbal ability, and personal characteristics. This finding supports the female positivity effect, that is, females tend to view others more favorably than males do

(Winqvist, Mohr & Kenny, 1998). In our results, this positivity effect only shows in perception of men, but not in women. One possible explanation to this difference is shifting standards: male and female candidates are evaluated on different standards (Biernat & Vescio, 2002).

Additionally, we find that female participants tend to see female candidates as having poorer verbal ability than male candidates. This finding is in agreement with research that suggests that women tend to be prejudiced against other women (Goldberg, 1968). For instance, in one study, women participants are given the same article to read and evaluate. Female participants rate the article more negatively when they learn that the article is written by a woman, compared to written by a man (Goldberg, 1968).

Given that the major finding of our study is that accent bias works differently for men and women. However, the reason for this difference remains unclear. It lacks explanation why foreign accent has positive association for men and negative association for women. To try to understand this difference, we relate our current findings to Valian's research which displays a similar trend: statistical results shows that in international business, men who have experience in foreign countries and have foreign language abilities have higher salaries than men who do not; while women with these experience and abilities have lower salaries than women without these qualifications. According to Valian, going abroad is seen as career preparation for men, but as not caring about career for women (Valian, 1999). Applying similar analysis to our results, one possible explanation for the current findings may be that foreign accent has a different association for men and women. Future research should further examine how accent, or more generally, foreign language ability, is associated with each gender and whether this plays an underlying role for the current findings.

Contrary to our predictions, the result of this study suggests that neither accent nor gender has a significant effect on result of the negotiation (salary, vacation time, and job benefit given).

Although opinions on the hirability of the candidate are affected by candidate's accent and gender, it seems that the outcome of negotiation is free from bias. We think it is an interesting phenomenon and deserves further investigation: as the effect of accent and gender seem to only occur in the opinions about others, but does not seem to affect salary-benefit packages offered to the candidate.

### **Limitations**

There were a few limitations in the current study. First, there are some individual differences in the recordings, such as tone, pitch, intonation, and these differences might affect perception of the speaker (William, Lynn & Robert, 1979). This factor was considered at the design of the experiment, and subsequently, we used two recordings by two different individuals for each condition. In addition, the recordings were chosen such that the two recordings were rated as the most similar in terms of tone, pitch, and intonation. In addition, we tested each recording to investigate whether any specific recording showed significant deviations from the other recordings. An ANOVA test shows no significant difference between any two recordings in each condition on perception of hirability, negotiation effectiveness, verbal ability, or personal characteristics. While our results indicate that our recordings are similar, we cannot completely remove the individual differences that naturally result. Future research may wish to investigate mechanisms to standardize accents for these qualities.

Also, our population consists of both non-students and college students. In fact, 55% of our sample consists of college students. Some argue that decision of college student cannot represent organizational decisions made in the real workplace (Gordon et al., 1986; Stone et al., 1992). On the other hand, some claim that college students make almost identical decisions with interviewers from corporations (Bernstein et al., 1975). To better understand whether our population influenced our findings, we performed an ANOVA test with the source of participants as between-participant factor, on ratings for hirability, negotiation effectiveness, verbal ability, and personal characteristics. No significant difference between the groups is found,  $p > .2$ . Thus, we can conclude that the population of our participants did not alter the findings. Future research may wish to focus on a particular industry, or look at jobs that are stereotype-consistent or inconsistent with a particular gender or ethnic group.

## **Conclusion**

Our findings show that speaking with a foreign accent can negative affect perceptions of one's verbal ability. Also, accent bias acts differently for males and females. Females with foreign accent are less likely to be hired than females with American accent. But having a foreign accent does not affect males on hiring decisions. Candidates with British accent are more likely to be hired and are seen to have better verbal ability than candidates with East Asian accent. Also, we have found female positivity effect on perception of male participant's hirability, verbal ability, and personal characteristics; and gender bias of women participants against women candidates on verbal ability. Thus, our results demonstrate that people can be vulnerable to biases of accent combined with gender in workplace negotiations, especially towards women with foreign accents. Given that more and more companies are hiring workers from foreign countries, and

18% of the US population does not speak English at home (US Census Bureau, 2000), thus may speak with an accent, it is important for future research to examine origin of the biases of accent, by looking into what association foreign accent has with each gender; and then, based on these, build up effective means to reduce this bias.

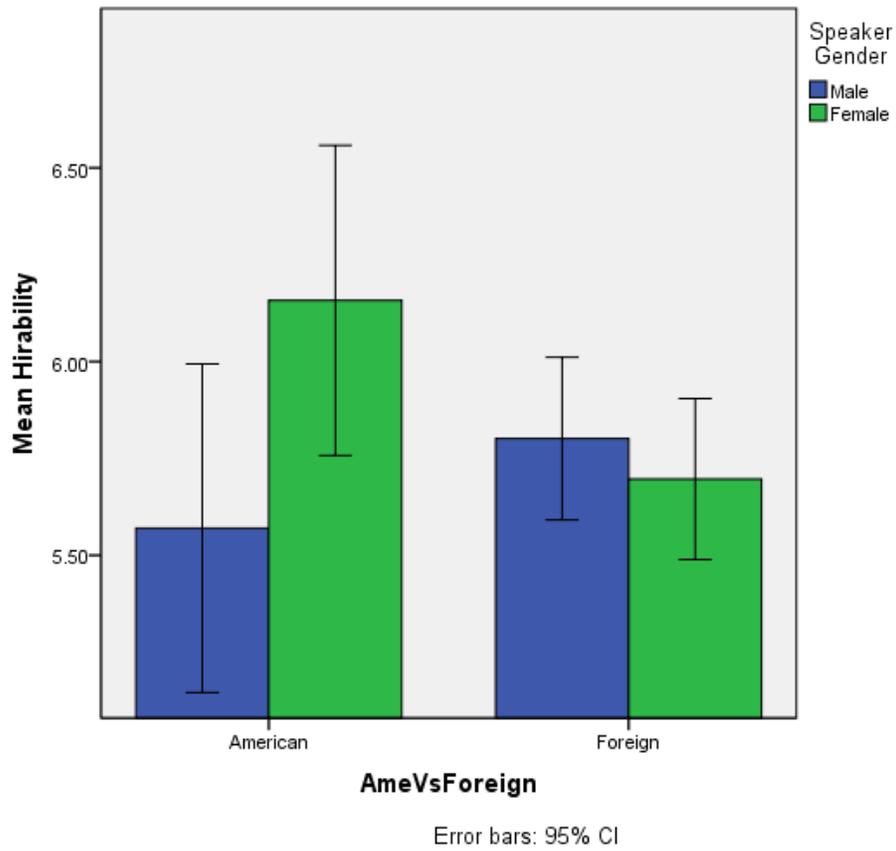
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## Figures and Captions



*Figure 1.* Accent  $\times$  Gender interaction on perceived hirability.

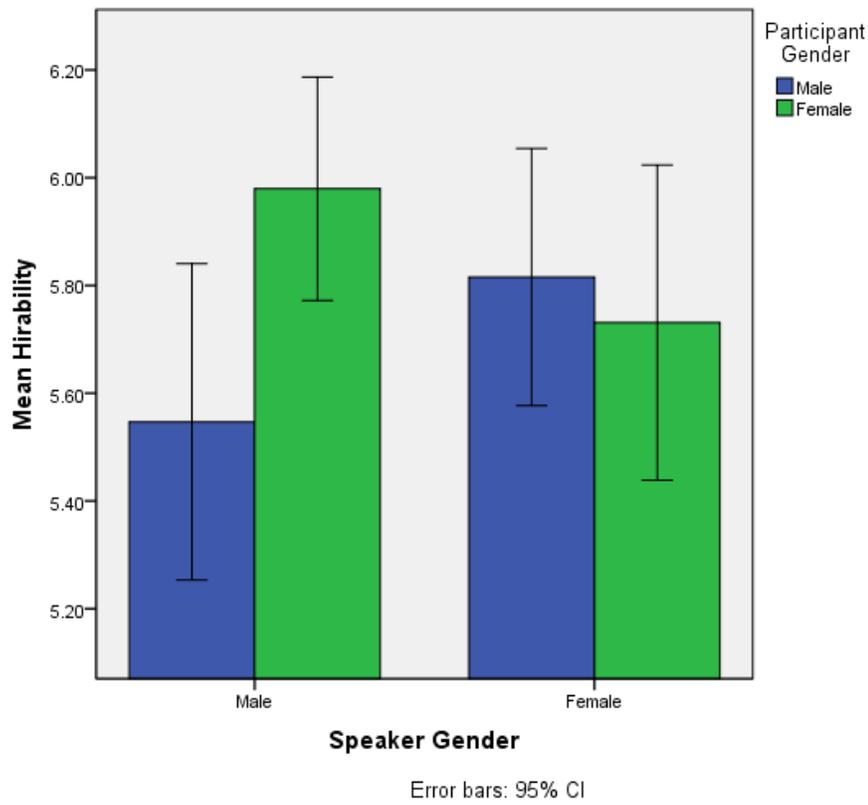
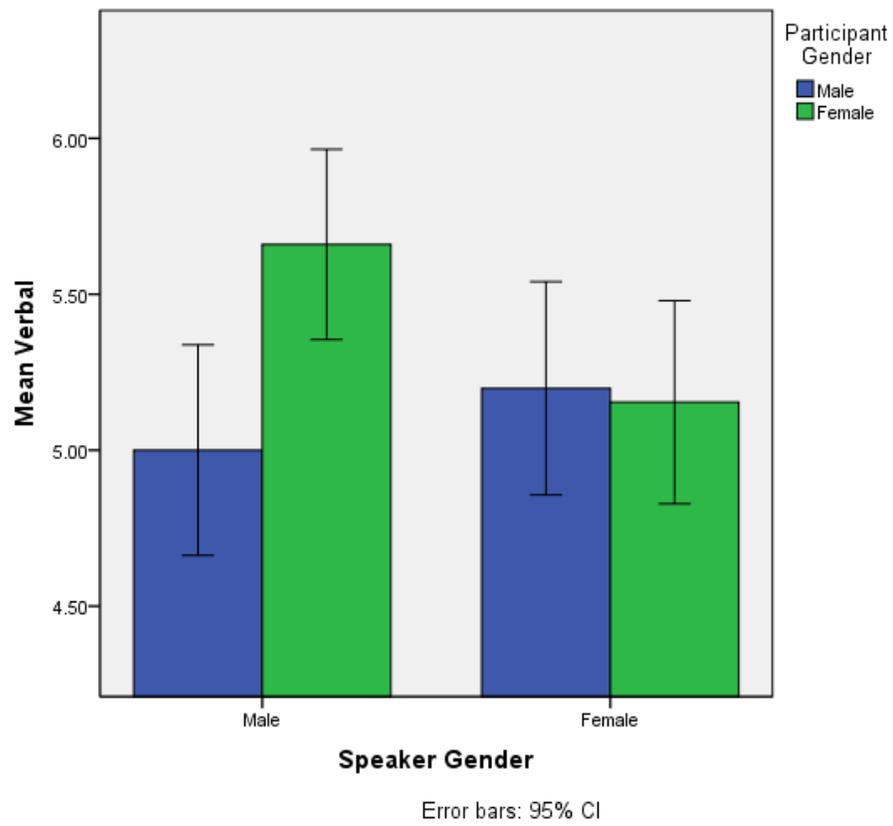


Figure 2. Participant gender  $\times$  speaker gender interaction on perceived hirability



*Figure 3.* Participant gender  $\times$  speaker gender interaction on verbal ability

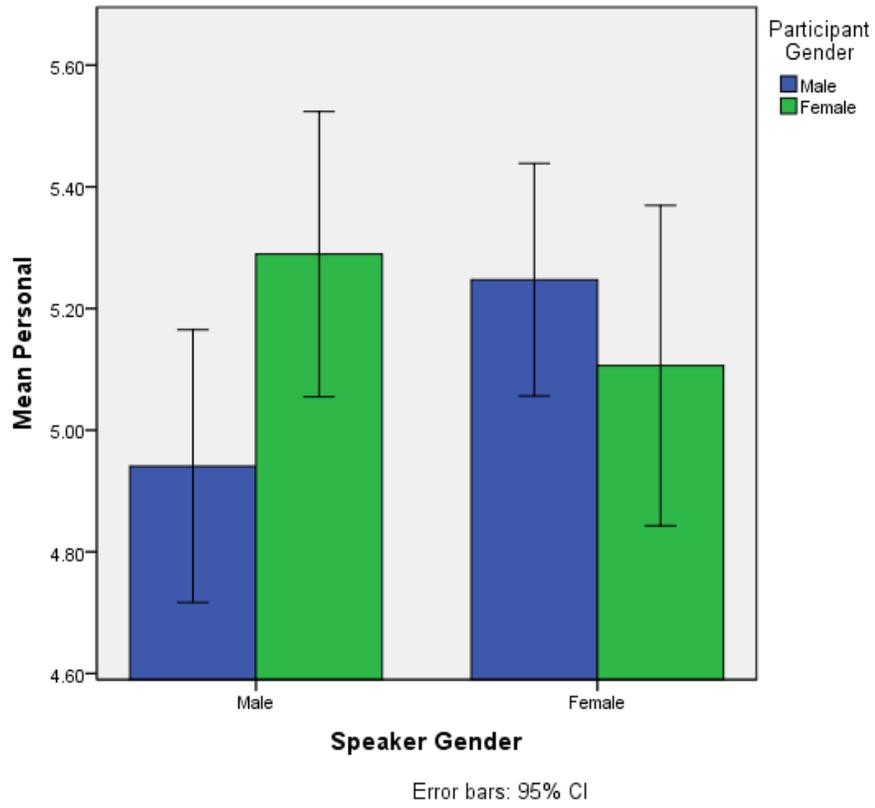


Figure 4. Participant gender  $\times$  speaker gender interaction on personal characteristics

## Appendix A

### Description of the candidate's qualifications and salary-benefits package offered

#### 2. Scenario

Thank you for your participation in this experiment. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of certain negotiation skills and strategies in the context of employment. The person you are about to listen to has recently applied for a position as a project manager at a prominent Fortune 500 company and is now in the process of negotiating compensation. The applicant has completed training in resource allocation, risk management and management technology. He/She also has previous experience as a project manager in diverse industries and strong recommendations from former employers. He/She has initially been offered the standard package for entering project managers nationwide, which includes:

- Base salary of \$55,000
- Two weeks paid vacation
- Employer-sponsored health insurance covering only employees' premiums, effective after a six months waiting period

In the following audio segment, you will listen to a brief speech in which the applicant presents a counteroffer to the original offer, negotiating for additional salary and benefits.

Please ensure that your speakers are functioning properly before proceeding. After you have listened carefully to the applicant's entire counteroffer (approximately three minutes), continue to the next page.

## Appendix B

Questionnaire for measuring candidate's negotiation effectiveness,  
 hirability, verbal ability, and personal characteristics

### 4. Negotiation Ability

Please indicate what you would award this person, keeping in mind that the amount to the far left labeled "original" is the employer's original offer and the amount to the far right labeled "desired" is the applicant's counteroffer:

**1. I would give this person a salary of (thousands of dollars):**

55 Original     57     59     61     63     65     67 Desired

**2. I would give this person vacation time of (weeks):**

2 Original     2.5     3     3.5     4 Desired

**3. I would give this person sick leave for (days):**

0 Original     1     2     3     4     5 Desired

**4. I would put this persons health insurance into effect after (months):**

6 Original     5     4     3     2     1     0 Desired

**5. I would give this person a relocation bonus of (dollars):**

0 Original     1,000     2,000     3,000     4,000     5,000     6,000  
 Desired



