What it means when you say my name (right): Subjective evaluations of the linguistic reproduction of names

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Background

- Speaking more or less like someone else can carry social meaning, such as attitude toward or shared identity with that person or associated group(s). (e.g., Bell 1984, Giles et al. 1991, Eckert 2004, Babel 2010)
- This is particularly apparent with more semi-arbitrary linguistic variables, like loanwords and names:
  - More source-like pronunciation of loanwords correlates with more positive attitudes toward the source and other factors like political identity, multilingualism, globalization, and socioeconomic status. (Giles et al. 1984, LeVine et al. 2011, Silva et al. 2011, Belanger 2016)
- The use of Anglicized mispronunciations of persons’ names is analyzed as ‘othering’ and ‘indexical bleaching’: members of minority groups frequently hear their names, linguistic forms which they personally identify with, adapted to pronunciations they don’t as strongly identify with. (Kohli and Solórzano 2012, Burgholt 2016)

Study Aims

- Test if listeners perceive name (mis)pronunciations along similar factors in variation and qualitative analysis.
- Analyze how evaluations are mediated by 13 a name variant’s indexation as canonically “Anglo”- vs. “non-Anglo”-sounding, and/or 21 whether a listener identifies as a person of color.

Methods

- online pseudo-matched-guise experiment (via Qualtrics)
  - snowball social network recruiting (N = 134)
- listen to short audio clips of conversation between Speakers A & B
- rate Speaker A along social trait spectra (7-point Likert)

Stimuli

- 3 dialogues: casual small talk, self-introductions (~1min)
- Speaker A = Repeater; Speaker B = NameHolder
- name of interest pre-variable (e.g., [nəˈvæl̃]a]→ [nəˈvæl̃]a]
  2. Match, “non-Anglo”: ‘Andreia’ [anˈdʒeː] → [anˈdʒeː]
  3. Mismatch, a)“Anglo” → “non-Anglo”: ‘Isabela’ [izəˈbɛlə] → [izəˈbɛlə]
  b)“non-Anglo” → “Anglo”: [izəˈbɛlə] → [izəˈbɛlə]

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Match vs. Mismatch vs Participant Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialiteness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
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Conclusions and Discussion

- Name reproduction, in many ways, activates social evaluations that mirror how it is observed to pattern.
- Main effects of match-vs.-mismatch on factors like agreeableness, politeness, and cooperativeness suggest that name matching can serve as a platform for...
  - ‘facework’: accurately reproducing as face-maintaining vs. face-threatening (Goffman 1955)
  - ‘speech accommodation’: aligning with or diverging from the other (Giles et al. 1991)

Different indexations by ethnic identity groups suggest different personal or shared experiences.
- White listeners consider Anglicization more sociable than POC listeners. And befriendliness shows a reversal: White listeners are more willing to befriended someone who Anglicizes; POC listeners, less willing.
- POC listeners more strongly associate Anglicization with political conservatism and social capital (occupation).
- White listeners associate Anglicization with more intelligence; POC listeners, with less intelligence. This suggests an asymmetry in linguistic security. (Intelligence often serves as a proxy for ‘correctness’ in subjective evaluations of language: Preston 1999)