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**The Effect of Perceived Regional Accents on
Interlocutors' Attitudes and Judgments**

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Requirements for the Master's Degree in
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ABSTRACT

The manner in which individuals speak often has a greater impact on social perceptions than the actual content of their speech. Regional accents, in particular, serve not only as markers of cultural or geographical identity but also as social signals that influence how speakers are judged. These accents can trigger assumptions about education, intelligence, or trustworthiness, shaping interactions in subtle yet significant ways. This study explores how university students perceive and respond to regional accents in M'sila, focusing on how these perceptions shape social attitudes and judgments. A descriptive quantitative approach was adopted through a structured questionnaire completed by 50 participants from diverse backgrounds. The instrument included both closed and open-ended questions to capture both measurable trends and personal experiences. The findings reveal that many students associate specific accents with traits such as warmth, professionalism, or social standing. Accents like that of Bousaada were perceived as friendly and familiar, while more neutral ones were linked to authority. Some students also reported being treated differently because of their accent, suggesting the presence of bias even within the same region. By focusing on a rarely studied Algerian context, this research offers a meaningful contribution to understanding the link between language and social perception. The results underline the importance of raising awareness about accent-related prejudice, especially in educational and professional settings

Keywords: *Regional Accents, Accent Perception, Social Judgment, Language Attitudes, Sociolinguistics, Accent Bias.*

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to our beloved families and parents, whose love and support have guided us from the beginning.

To our dear friend Hakim Ben Saoucha, thank you for your constant encouragement and friendship.

To our classmates and everyone who supported us along the way, this achievement is shared with you all.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SIT: Social identity Theory

CAT: Communication Accommodation Theory

SCM: Stereotype Content Model

MGT: Matched-Guise Technique

RP: Received Pronunciation

GA: General American

VGT: Verbal-Guise Technique

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Background of Study

Language is more than just a means of communication ,it is deeply tied to how we express ourselves, how we are perceived, and how we relate to others. Within every language, there are variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, and expression that reflect a person's regional, cultural, or social background. One of the most noticeable and socially loaded aspects of speech is accent.

Accents are a natural part of spoken language, and everyone speaks with one ,yet not all accents are perceived equally. In many societies, certain regional accents are associated with warmth, friendliness, or authenticity, while others may be linked to ignorance, lack of education, or lower social status. These associations are rarely based on the content of what is said, but rather on how it is said.

This issue becomes especially relevant in social, academic, and professional settings, where the way someone speaks can influence how others judge their intelligence, credibility, or even character. People may be treated differently, excluded, or even ridiculed based on their accent, consciously or unconsciously. In other cases, speakers may feel the need to hide or modify their accent in order to fit in, be respected, or avoid discrimination.

As students who have experienced and observed such dynamics firsthand, we were motivated to explore this topic more deeply. We wanted to understand the real social impact of regional accent perception, especially how it influences the way people view and interact with one another.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite being a natural and unavoidable part of speech, accent often becomes a basis for judgment, which may lead to stereotypes, bias, or social exclusion. In many situations, the way someone speaks may overshadow what they are actually saying. This leads us to ask: How much does accent really shape social attitudes and judgments?

3. Research Questions

To guide our investigation, we focused on the following key research questions:

- To what extent are regional accents associated with specific social traits such as competence, trustworthiness, or social status?
- How do regional accents influence people's attitudes toward speakers in professional and educational settings?
- Are speakers willing to modify their accent in order to be accepted or taken seriously in formal contexts?

4. Aims of the Study

This study aims to explore the effect of perceived regional accents on interlocutors' attitudes and judgments. Our goal is to identify the social meanings attached to different accents, how they influence impressions of competence or trust, and whether people feel pressure to change their way of speaking in certain situations.

5. Significance of the Study

This topic is relevant not only in linguistics, but also in education, psychology, and social studies. By exploring people's attitudes toward regional accents, we hope to shed light on a common but often overlooked form of social bias. Our study aims to raise awareness of linguistic prejudice and promote more inclusive, respectful attitudes in both academic and everyday communication. In addition, the study contributes to existing literature by focusing on a regional context that has not been widely explored in Algerian sociolinguistic research.

6. Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive quantitative approach with some qualitative elements to examine how regional accents influence people's attitudes and judgments. A structured questionnaire was used to gather clear, measurable data from university students. This method was chosen because it allows for the identification of patterns and comparisons across a broad sample, making the findings more reliable and generalizable. Given the nature of the topic, which involves perception and evaluation, the quantitative approach offers a solid and objective way to understand how widespread certain attitudes are. To enrich the data, a few open-ended questions were also included, giving participants space to express their views more personally, while still keeping the research focused and consistent.

7. Structure of the Study

Our research is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study. It covers key sociolinguistic theories such as Social Identity Theory, Communication Accommodation Theory, and the Stereotype Content Model. We also define important concepts like accent perception, bias, identity, and social evaluation, and review previous studies on the topic.

The second chapter focuses on the fieldwork. It describes the methodology we followed, the data collection process using a questionnaire, and the analysis of participants' responses through both quantitative and qualitative tools. The results are discussed in light of the theories presented earlier.

To better understand how accents influence social perception, we first needed to explore the theoretical foundations that explain the relationship between language, identity, and judgment. Therefore, the first chapter of this study is devoted to presenting key sociolinguistic theories and concepts that helped us interpret the social meanings behind accent variation.

Chapter One

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

This research focuses on the topic of regional accents from both social and linguistic perspectives, with the aim of understanding how accents influence individuals' perceptions and judgments of speakers. It explores the connection between accent and social identity, emphasizing how accents function as markers of group belonging and cultural affiliation. The analysis also considers how speakers may adjust their speech during interactions, reflecting patterns of convergence or divergence depending on social context. Stereotypes associated with accents are examined as well, particularly in relation to perceived competence, warmth, and trustworthiness. The discussion draws on findings from experimental studies such as the matched-guise technique, which has been instrumental in revealing implicit attitudes toward various speech patterns. The literature also distinguishes between standard and non-standard accents, highlighting how they can reflect geographical, social, and economic backgrounds. In addition, the framework addresses issues of accent prejudice and discrimination, and considers the influence of social, cultural, and media-related factors in shaping public attitudes. Research on how accents affect key domains such as employment, education, and legal settings is also included, showing how judgments related to competence, intelligence, and credibility can be shaped by the way a person speaks. Altogether, this theoretical background provides a comprehensive view of the powerful role regional accents play in shaping social evaluation and interaction.

1.1. Social identity Theory (SIT)

Language plays a vital role in human interaction, with dialects serving as strong indicators of social identity, group affiliation, and a sense of belonging. As Tajfel and Turner (1979) explain through Social Identity Theory, individuals derive a portion of their self-identity from the social groups they associate with, and dialects often act as signals of whether someone is part of the in-group or the out-group. Far from being simple pronunciation differences, dialects carry meaningful social cues, revealing information about a person's regional background, level of education, economic status, and even cultural roots. As Giles and Coupland (1991) point out, listeners frequently form impressions of others based on such linguistic characteristics, with dialect being one of the key tools used in social categorization. In many cultural contexts, particular dialects are linked with high status and authority, while others are often dismissed or devalued, reinforcing existing social divisions.

As Giles et al. (1991) explain, speaking the same dialect as others can foster a sense of solidarity and social closeness, particularly in multilingual or multidialectal communities. In such contexts, the language or dialect an individual chooses often reflects their social identity and positioning. For instance, in bilingual settings, speakers may shift to a local dialect during informal interactions to convey intimacy and authenticity, while adopting a more formal or standardized variety in professional environments to align with societal expectations. Labov (2006) observed that these associations start early in life, as children learn to connect particular speech patterns with specific social groups. This tendency leads to what is known as in-group favouritism, a concept introduced by Tajfel (1982), where individuals tend to evaluate speakers of their own dialect more

favourably than those from different linguistic backgrounds. Media portrayals, cultural stereotypes, and societal norms further reinforce these biases (Kristiansen, 2001). As outlined in the Stereotype Content Model by Fiske et al. (2007), regional or rural dialect speakers are often perceived as warm and approachable, though potentially less competent, whereas those who use prestigious urban dialects may be regarded as intelligent but socially distant. As Giles, Bourhis, and Davies (1974) note, such perceptions can influence major life outcomes, including career opportunities, social mobility, and even how people are treated in legal systems. The framework of Social Identity Theory is instrumental in understanding the impact of dialect on social perception and behavior. It sheds light on how language-based biases emerge and why certain dialects are linked to particular social stereotypes (Tajfel, 1982; Giles & Coupland, 1991). Hearing someone speak in a dialect different from our own can trigger assumptions not only about their language skills but also about their social standing, level of education, and personality traits (Lippi-Green, 2012). This theory also highlights how dialect can become a marker of group identity, fostering cohesion among insiders while potentially creating divisions with outsiders (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Moreover, institutions such as the media and education systems play a role in reinforcing or challenging these biases, ultimately shaping individuals' access to social inclusion, career advancement, and interpersonal relationships (Lippi-Green, 2012; Milroy & Milroy, 1999). For scholars in sociolinguistics, acknowledging and examining these dynamics is essential for promoting linguistic tolerance and ensuring more equitable communication across different dialect groups.

1.2. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

Howard Giles's Communication Accommodation Theory (1973) provides a useful lens for understanding how people modify their speech during interactions to achieve social objectives. The theory suggests that individuals adapt their linguistic behavior either by aligning it more closely with their conversational partners (convergence) or by emphasizing differences (divergence), depending on whether they seek social approval or wish to maintain distinct group identity. This process plays a central role in shaping how people are perceived and how social bonds are formed.

1.2.1. Linguistic Convergence

Convergence happens when someone adjusts their speech to resemble that of the person they are speaking to. As Giles and Smith (1979) observed, this strategy often leads to greater acceptance and can make communication smoother, especially in diverse settings. By mirroring an accent or speech pattern, speakers increase their chances of being seen as friendly and cooperative, which can be particularly valuable in both personal and professional contexts (Coupland, 1984).

1.2.2. Linguistic Divergence

divergence occurs when speakers intentionally maintain or emphasize differences in their speech. This can be a way of asserting group membership, preserving cultural heritage, or even drawing attention to social status or autonomy (Gasiorek & Giles, 2012). While divergence can

reinforce identity, it might also lead to misunderstandings or tension, particularly in multicultural or hierarchical environments (Gasiorek, 2016). Speech accommodation isn't always received positively. While convergence can help speakers blend in, it can sometimes be seen as forced or insincere if overdone (Street & Giles, 1982). Divergence, though rooted in authenticity, might isolate speakers socially or professionally when it conflicts with mainstream norms. The impact of these adjustments extends far beyond conversation. Studies show that speakers with standard or prestigious accents are frequently rated as more intelligent and capable, while those with non-standard or regional accents often face bias in employment, education, and even legal outcomes (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016; Lippi-Green, 2012).

Overall, CAT offers valuable insight into how language choices reflect and shape social dynamics. Whether used to foster belonging or to uphold individuality, the way we speak affects how we're perceived and treated. The way accents are represented in the media further amplifies these effects, underlining the importance of inclusive language policies that celebrate linguistic variation and cultural identity.

1.3. Stereotype Content Model (SCM)

The Stereotype Content Model (SCM) offers a key framework in social psychology for understanding how people judge others based on group affiliation. According to Fiske et al. (2002), these judgments are shaped by two core dimensions: warmth and competence. In sociolinguistics, this model helps explain how regional dialects trigger automatic social evaluations—not just of how someone speaks, but what their speech is believed to signify. As Giles and Watson (2013)

argue, dialects often evoke assumptions about intelligence, education, and personality. Lippi-Green (2012) similarly notes that people quickly form judgments based on accents. For example, in Arab societies, Bedouin dialects may suggest generosity and authenticity, but also a lack of formal education. In contrast, urban dialects may be associated with sophistication but seen as artificial or elitist (Collins & Clément, 2012).

These stereotypes influence access to social and professional opportunities. Employers, for instance, may prefer speakers with more "standard" accents, disadvantaging those with regional speech (Lippi-Green, 1997). This can lead to social exclusion and even affect how students or job candidates are perceived. As Maass (1999) explains, people often adapt their dialects, especially when moving from rural to urban settings, to avoid bias, though this may cause identity loss and psychological strain. Such perceptions also shape social interactions. People tend to feel more comfortable with those who speak like them, which can isolate speakers of stigmatized dialects. Addressing this requires raising awareness about linguistic diversity. Media and education systems play a central role: when respected figures use regional dialects confidently, it challenges stereotypes and promotes acceptance. Ultimately, recognizing dialects as expressions of cultural identity, rather than measures of competence, is vital for fostering more inclusive and equitable societies (Giles & Coupland, 1991).

1.4. Linguistic Relativity and Perception

Language plays a fundamental role in shaping human perception of the world, extending beyond merely transmitting thoughts and information to actively influencing how individuals think

and categorize concepts (Whorf, 1956). This idea, known as the linguistic relativity hypothesis introduced by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, suggests that linguistic structures not only reflect thought but also shape it, leading to differences in perception among speakers of different languages. For instance, some languages lack tense systems, as seen in English or Arabic, affecting how their speakers perceive time. The Hopi language, for example, does not distinguish between past and future in the same way European languages do, potentially influencing how its speakers conceptualize time (Whorf, 1956). Similarly, languages such as Guugu Yimithirr, spoken by Indigenous Australians, rely on absolute geographical directions (e.g., "north" and "south") rather than relative directions (e.g., "right" and "left"), which results in speakers developing an exceptional ability to navigate and determine spatial orientation accurately (Levinson, 2003). At the dialectal level, linguistic variation within the same language can lead to differences in social and cultural perception, where certain dialects are associated with specific stereotypes that influence people's judgments of their speakers, affecting social and economic opportunities (Lippi-Green, 2012). A dialect may shape perceptions of education level or social status, sometimes resulting in implicit or explicit discrimination, while variations in vocabulary and structure can lead to different cognitive abilities in processing specific ideas. Such differences reinforce the notion that language is not merely a communication tool but also a window into the cognitive and cultural frameworks of different communities (Duranti, 1997). However, some scholars, such as Steven Pinker, argue that human cognition relies largely on mental processes that function independently of language, suggesting that individuals can think about concepts even if their language lacks specific words to describe them, which indicates that language is not the sole determinant of perception (Pinker, 1994). For example, humans can understand complex

mathematical ideas or abstract concepts without requiring specific linguistic expressions. Nonetheless, language undeniably plays a crucial role in classifying information and organizing knowledge, shaping how people interpret and engage with the world (Lucy, 1997). Ultimately, while language and dialect significantly influence thinking and perception, the extent of their impact remains a subject of debate among scholars (Gleitman & Papafragou, 2005). While the linguistic relativity hypothesis emphasizes that language shapes perception, other researchers highlight additional contributing factors, such as culture and personal experience, making the study of the relationship between language and thought an expansive field worthy of further research to fully understand the true influence of language on human cognition and perception of the world (Tomasello, 2003).

1.5. The Matched-Guise Technique and Its Importance

The Matched-Guise Technique (MGT) is a widely used research method in sociolinguistics to study attitudes toward different languages and dialects (Lambert et al., 1960). This technique involves recording a speaker (or multiple speakers) using different languages, dialects, or speech styles. These recordings are then played for listeners, who evaluate the speaker based on attributes such as intelligence, friendliness, and credibility, without realizing that the same person is using different linguistic "guises" (Lambert et al., 1960). This technique is highly effective in assessing language attitudes because it helps uncover subconscious biases people hold toward various speech patterns. Numerous studies have shown that accents not only influence how speakers are perceived but also affect their opportunities in employment, education, and social interactions (Giles & Coupland, 1991).

In education, this technique is used to understand teachers' and students' attitudes toward linguistic diversity. Research has shown that certain accents are perceived as more acceptable in academic settings than others, which can impact students' academic performance and self-confidence (Garrett, 2010). In professional environments, studies indicate that speakers of standard or prestigious varieties are often perceived as more competent, granting them better chances for employment and promotion compared to those with regional or non-standard accents (Kristiansen, 2001). The technique is also crucial in media studies, where it helps analyze how different accents influence audience perceptions of speakers in news broadcasts, advertisements, and films. Standard accents are often associated with trustworthiness and credibility, while regional accents may sometimes be linked to specific stereotypes (Bell, 1991). In political studies, research suggests that a politician's accent can affect voter acceptance and trust, with candidates who speak in standard or widely accepted varieties being preferred (Campbell-Kibler, 2007). In legal contexts, studies have shown that accent can influence judicial outcomes, as certain speech patterns may be perceived as less credible, affecting the judgments made by judges and juries regarding witnesses and defendants (Purnell, Idsardi & Baugh, 1999). Thus, the Matched-Guise Technique serves as a powerful research tool in sociolinguistics, revealing implicit attitudes toward languages and dialects. Its significance lies in its broad applications in education, employment, media, politics, and law, making it an essential method for understanding how language impacts social interactions and mobility.

1.6. Regional Accents and Social Perception

1.6.1. Definition and Classification of Regional Accents

A regional dialect is a distinctive way of speaking a language associated with a specific geographic area (Chambers & Trudgill, 1998). It is primarily concerned with phonetic and acoustic properties, such as vowel quality and consonant pronunciation rather than vocabulary or grammar, which more commonly characterize dialects (Wells, 1982). Regional dialects are classified based on their geographic distribution and the phonetic/acoustic properties that distinguish them. The classification often depends on the language in question, but English provides a well-studied example due to its global diversity. Researchers typically classify dialects by identifying major phonetic differences and associating them with regions (Labov, Ash, & Boberg, 2006).

1.6.2. The Components of a Regional Accent

A regional accent is shaped by a mix of phonetic and social features that reflect where a person is from and often, their background within that region (Lippi-Green, 2012).

1.6.2.1. Phonetic Features

1.6.2.1.1. Rhotic vs. Non-Rhotic Pronunciation:

One of the most noticeable traits is how the "r" sound is treated. In rhotic accents like most American or Scottish varieties, the "r" is clearly pronounced in words like car or hard. In contrast, non-rhotic accents, such as Received Pronunciation (RP) in England or many Australian accents, drop the "r" unless it's followed by a vowel. (Wells, 1982).

1.6.2.1.2. Vowel Patterns and Shifts:

Vowel pronunciation varies greatly by region. For example, the Northern Cities Vowel Shift affects many urban accents in the northern U.S., while traces of the historic Great Vowel Shift can still be heard in different parts of England today (Lebo, Ash, & Boberg, 2006; Lass, 1999).

1.6.2.1.3. Consonant Variation:

Some regional accents are known for distinctive consonant use. In Cockney English, for instance, a glottal stop might replace the "t" sound, making bottle sound more like bo'ul. In other London-based accents, th-fronting turns think into fink (Wells, 1982).

1.6.2.2. Sociolinguistic Context

Accents are not just about geography, they also reflect social identity (Eckert, 2000). Within a single city or region, you might hear different accents depending on class or community. In London, for example, the traditional working-class Cockney accent differs significantly from Estuary English, which is more typical among the middle class (Kerswill, 2001).

1.6.3. Major Regional Accents Studied in the Literature

Linguistic research has extensively documented regional dialects, particularly in English-speaking countries due to their widespread global reach (Trudgill & Hannah, 2017). The following are some of the major regional dialects studied by specialists in this field:

1.6.3.1. British English

- Received Pronunciation (RP): Often considered the "standard" British accent, associated with prestige and education (Wells, 1982).
- Cockney: A working-class London accent with features like glottal stops (e.g., "bu'er" for "butter") (Wells, 1982).
- Scouse: Liverpool's accent, noted for its melodic intonation and lenition of consonants (Watson, 2007).
- Geordie: Northeast England (Newcastle), with distinct vowel sounds like "toon" for "town." (Beal, 2004).

1.6.3.2. American English

- General American (GA): A "neutral" accent often used in media, lacking strong regional markers (Thomas, 2001).
- Southern U.S.: Known for vowel monophthongization (e.g., "ride" as "rahd") and slower cadence (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006).
- African American Vernacular English (AAVE): A socio-regional variety with unique prosody and phonology (e.g., consonant cluster reduction) (Rickford, 1999).
- New York City: Non-rhoticity (dropping "r" sounds) and raised vowels (Labov, 1966).

1.6.3.3. Australian English

- Broad Australian: Exaggerated vowel shifts (e.g., "day" as "die") (Koch & Hudson, 1994).
- General Australian: A more neutral variety, common in urban areas (Bauer, 1982).

- Other Examples: Scottish English (e.g., rhoticity and rolled "r"s), Irish English (e.g., dental stops), and Canadian English (e.g., "Canadian raising" of diphthongs).

1.6.4. Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Accent Variation

Sociolinguistics views dialect diversity as an indicator of identity, social class, and power dynamics (Labov, 1972). Dialects are not merely linguistic phenomena; they carry social meaning and influence how their speakers are perceived and treated (Lippi-Green, 2012).

1.6.4.1. Identity

Regional dialects signal community membership by marking speakers as part of a particular social or geographic group, reinforcing a shared identity and cultural heritage (Trudgill, 2000). For example, a Yorkshire accent in the United Kingdom may evoke pride in one's Northern English heritage, serving not only as a means of communication but also as a powerful symbol of belonging and local identity.

1.6.4.2. Social stratification

William Labov's (1966) study of New York City department stores showed that dialects correlate with socioeconomic status—higher-status speakers used more pronounced r-forms, while lower-status speakers dropped the r.

1.6.4.3. Attitudes and prejudice

Dialects evoke stereotypes. A study by Giles (1970) on "appearance conformity" experiments found that speakers of a regional dialect were rated as more competent, while regional dialects, such as Birmingham, were perceived as less prestigious and more friendly. Language change: Dialectal variety develops through contact (e.g., migration) or media influence, as in the spread of English into the estuary of the United Kingdom.

1.6.5. Standard vs. Non-Standard Accents

The distinction between "standard" and "non-standard" dialects is socially constructed and not inherent in the language itself. The standard dialect is typically the variety associated with institutional authority, education, and the media, while non-standard dialects are those associated with regional groups (Lippi-Green, 2012).

The standard/non-standard divide is not fixed, standard accents can lose prestige over time (e.g., RP's decline in favor of Estuary English) and reflects power structures rather than linguistic superiority (Kerswill, 2003).

Table 1

Standard vs. Non-Standard Accents: Examples, Characteristics, and Social Roles

	Examples	Characteristics	Social Role
Standard Accents	RP in the UK, General American in the US.	Often lack marked regional features, are taught in language education, and are	Linked to authority and prestige. For instance, RP was historically the accent

		perceived as "neutral" or "correct."	of the BBC and British elite
Non-Standard Accents	Appalachian English, Brummie (Birmingham, UK), or rural Irish English	Rich in regional markers (e.g., vowel shifts, unique intonation) but often stigmatized as "uneducated" or "incorrect."	Can evoke warmth or authenticity but may lead to discrimination in formal settings like job interviews (Coupland & Bishop, 2007).

Note. Adapted from (Coupland, N., & Bishop, H. 2007).

1.6.6. Accent as a Marker of Social Identity

1.6.6.1. Geographic Background

One of the clearest signals of where someone comes from is their accent. The way people pronounce vowels and consonants, as well as their intonation patterns, is strongly shaped by the speech norms of their local environment. For instance, the softening or omission of the "r" sound in parts of the American South or the distinct clipped vowels heard in Northern England can quickly identify a speaker's regional roots. William Labov's classic study, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (1966), illustrated this through his analysis of how department store workers pronounced words like *fourth* and *floor*. He found that even within the same city, small variations in accent, like the presence or absence of post-vocalic "r" could reliably indicate the speaker's neighbourhood or social standing.

1.6.6.2. Cultural Affiliations

Accents also reflect cultural identity and community ties. In multilingual or ethnically diverse settings, a speaker's accent often carries echoes of heritage languages or cultural traditions. For example, the melodic rhythm of Welsh English reveals prosodic features inherited from the Welsh language, even among speakers who are otherwise monolingual in English. Penelope Eckert's (1989) study, *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School*, showed how teenagers use accent features to associate themselves with particular peer groups. She found that working-class students adopted a "tough" local speech style, while more affluent students leaned toward standardized norms, highlighting how accent can be actively used to signal group identity and belonging.

1.6.6.3. Socioeconomic Background

A person's accent can also suggest their socioeconomic status, influenced by factors like education, job type, and social mobility. In his study *The Social Differentiation of English in Norwich* (1974), Peter Trudgill found that working-class speakers were more likely to drop the initial "h" in words such as *house*, while middle-class speakers retained it. These differences often reflect broader social divides. In the U.S., accents like the Southern drawl are sometimes stereotypically linked to rural or lower-income communities, while the so-called "General American" accent tends to be associated with educated, urban, middle-class individuals. Labov also observed a pattern called *hypercorrection*, where speakers aiming for upward mobility adopt

features of prestigious accents, such as emphasizing the "r" sound in New York speech to reflect their social aspirations.

1.6.7. Accent Prejudice and Discrimination

Regional accents function like auditory fingerprints, they reflect not only where a person comes from, but also their cultural background and social standing (Lippi-Green, 2012). Though shaped by environment and history, accents are also tools we actively use to navigate our social surroundings. This highlights that the way we speak is not merely about language, but also about identity. However, these speech patterns can become the basis for bias and discrimination. Known as accentism, this form of prejudice reveals how certain accents are unfairly judged, reinforcing existing power dynamics and social inequalities (Lippi-Green, 2012).

Research in both sociolinguistics and social psychology has consistently shown that some regional accents are viewed more favorably than others. Accents associated with power, education, or social prestige tend to be perceived as more intelligent, trustworthy, or professional, while others are stigmatized often leading to real-world consequences in areas like employment and education (Munro & Derwing, 2011).

One of the most influential studies in this area is Howard Giles' *Accent Mobility* (1973), where he employed the "matched guise" technique. This method had the same speaker deliver identical content in different accents, allowing listeners' reactions to reveal their subconscious attitudes. The results were telling: Received Pronunciation (RP) was consistently rated as more

prestigious and competent, while regional accents such as Birmingham (Brummie) or Cockney were rated lower, often linked to negative stereotypes about intelligence or class.

Similar findings have emerged from the U.S. context. In their book *Folk Linguistics* (2000), Nancy Niedzielski and Dennis Preston demonstrated that speakers with Southern American accents were often perceived as less professional or less educated when compared to those using the so-called “General American” accent even though, linguistically, no dialect is inherently superior. These judgments reflect deeply rooted social biases rather than any actual communicative ability or competence.

1.6.8. Power Dynamics and Social Hierarchies Related to Accent

Accent prejudice does not exist in a vacuum, it is tightly woven into broader systems of power and social hierarchy. Accents associated with dominant social groups, such as those spoken by the educated or socially elite, are often considered “standard” and are granted prestige and legitimacy. Meanwhile, regional or working-class accents are frequently marginalized. Pierre Bourdieu (1991), in *Language and Symbolic Power*, referred to this phenomenon as *linguistic capital*: the idea that some ways of speaking carry more social value than others. For example, accents like British Received Pronunciation (RP) or Parisian French are seen as refined and authoritative, while other regional varieties are dismissed as informal or uneducated. This hierarchy mirrors historical class structures, such as 19th-century Britain, where RP was promoted as the accent of the upper classes and formal institutions, while rural and industrial dialects were considered “rough” or inferior.

William Labov's *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (1972) further explored how accents relate to class and mobility. His research in New York showed that speakers of stigmatized, non-rhotic accents often shifted their speech to adopt more prestigious forms, especially in formal contexts. For example, pronouncing the "r" in words like "car" or "floor" became a way to signal upward mobility. Yet this practice, known as *linguistic accommodation*, also reinforces existing hierarchies by treating the dominant accent as the social benchmark, thereby maintaining the marginal status of others.

Rosina Lippi-Green (1997), in *English with an Accent*, critiques this system as part of a broader *standard language ideology*. According to her, institutions like the media, education, and corporate culture perpetuate these norms by promoting certain accents as "neutral" or "correct," while implicitly labeling others as problematic or less credible. This kind of bias not only privileges certain groups but systematically disadvantages others.

The effects of accent discrimination are also shaped by gender and ethnicity. For instance, Janet Ainsworth (1993) found that in courtroom settings, women with regional or ethnic accents such as speakers of Southern U.S. varieties or African American Vernacular English (AAVE) were often perceived as less credible than their male counterparts, illustrating how accent bias can compound existing social inequalities. In postcolonial societies, the legacy of colonialism continues to shape linguistic hierarchies. As John Gumperz (1982) noted in *Discourse Strategies*, varieties associated with former colonizers (like British English in India) often retain social prestige, while local or indigenous dialects are undervalued. This perpetuates colonial-era dynamics in modern social interactions.

1.7. Attitudes Toward Regional Accents

Attitudes toward regional accents are shaped by a complex mix of social, cultural, and psychological influences and often reinforced by media representations. Depending on the context, these attitudes can range from admiration and pride to bias and discrimination (Coupland, 2007). This section explores the key factors that influence how regional accents are perceived, the role of media in shaping those perceptions, and some common patterns of positive and negative attitudes toward specific accents, supported by research and examples.

1.7.1. Factors Influencing Attitudes

1.7.1.1. Social Influences

One of the most powerful drivers of accent attitudes is social class. Accents associated with economic privilege or higher education, such as British Received Pronunciation (RP) or the so-called “General American” accent are often viewed as more prestigious. In contrast, accents tied to working-class or rural communities tend to be stereotyped as less educated or less competent. William Labov’s classic study, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (1966), found that New Yorkers rated rhotic accents (those that pronounce the “r” in words like “car”) as more authoritative, linking speech patterns directly to social class and status.

Accent attitudes are also shaped by group identity. According to Howard Giles’ *Communication Accommodation Theory* (1973), people tend to favor accents similar to their own, which reinforces a sense of in-group belonging. At the same time, they may react negatively to accents associated with perceived outsiders, strengthening social boundaries.

1.7.1.2. Cultural Influences

Cultural and historical context plays a crucial role. In many postcolonial societies, the accents of former colonial powers continue to carry prestige. For instance, British English is still considered more "educated" or "correct" in parts of India. As Gumperz (1982) notes in *Discourse Strategies*, accents often carry symbolic meaning: for example, the intonation of Welsh English may evoke pride in Celtic heritage, while AAVE (African American Vernacular English) is frequently misjudged because of persistent social inequalities, as discussed by Cukor-Avila (2000).

1.7.1.3. Psychological Influences

On a psychological level, people often make snap judgments about others based on their accents. Research by Lev-Ari and Keysar (2010) found that listeners are more likely to doubt information presented in non-standard accents, even when the speaker is fluent. This bias stems from an unconscious link between ease of understanding and perceived credibility. Familiarity also plays a role: Eckert (1999), in *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice*, observed that repeated exposure to an accent can lead to greater acceptance, while unfamiliar accents are more likely to provoke ridicule or suspicion.

1.7.2. The Role of Media and Popular Culture in Perpetuating Accent Stereotypes

Media plays a powerful role in reinforcing accent stereotypes by consistently linking certain ways of speaking with specific character types or social roles. Lippi-Green, in *English with an Accent* (1997), examined how Disney films often assign regional or foreign accents to villains

such as Scar's refined British accent in *The Lion King* while protagonists tend to speak in "neutral" American English, subtly associating moral value with accent type. In the UK, this pattern is echoed in popular media: shows like *EastEnders* frequently portray Cockney accents as rough and working-class, while BBC news anchors typically speak in Received Pronunciation (RP), reinforcing its association with authority and social prestige. A 2015 British Film Institute study revealed that 60% of working-class characters on screen had exaggerated regional accents, reinforcing long-standing links between accent, class, and character.

Popular culture doesn't just reinforce stereotypes it also shapes how certain accents are romanticized or ridiculed. For instance, the Southern American drawl is often used in U.S. media to depict characters as charming but unintelligent, as seen in films like *Forrest Gump*. In contrast, Irish accents in Hollywood, frequently associated with actors like Neeson are often portrayed as rugged, sincere, or heroic, demonstrating how media can both challenge and uphold stereotypes depending on narrative needs (Niedzielski & Preston, 2000).

1.7.3. Positive and Negative Perceptions of Regional Accents

Public attitudes toward regional accents often reflect broader cultural narratives and social biases. While some accents are admired for their warmth or musicality, others suffer from persistent negative stereotypes.

1.7.3.1. Positively Perceived Accents

Irish English, particularly from areas like Dublin or Galway, is frequently described as melodic, friendly, and inviting. Its rhythmic intonation and deep cultural ties to Ireland's literary and musical heritage contribute to its romantic appeal, as seen in global surveys like Babel's 2017 poll. Similarly, the Southern U.S. accent especially in states such as Georgia or Texas is sometimes celebrated for its charm and perceived warmth, tied to the idea of "Southern hospitality." A 2014 YouGov poll ranked it among the most "friendly" American accents, showing how context can shape perception.

1.7.3.2. Negatively Perceived Accents

Some accents face widespread stigma. The Birmingham (Brummie) accent, for example, is often portrayed as dull or unintelligent in British media. Lance Workman's 2013 study at the University of Manchester found it rated lowest in terms of prestige, likely due to longstanding associations with industrial decline and working-class stereotypes. Likewise, the Appalachian accent in the U.S. is commonly linked with rural poverty and limited education. Niedzielski and Preston (2000) note how this perception is reinforced by stereotypical portrayals in television and film, rather than any linguistic inferiority.

1.7.4. Case Studies: Regional Accent Perceptions Around the World

Attitudes toward regional accents vary widely across contexts, but they often reflect deeper histories of class, colonialism, and cultural identity (Piller, 2016). For instance, accents linked to

historically dominant or colonizing groups may be regarded as prestigious, while those associated with marginalized communities can face stigma. These attitudes are not simply about linguistic features but are embedded in social power relations and historical narratives, influencing how speakers are perceived and treated in different social domains.

1.7.4.1. United Kingdom – The Brummie Stigma

A 2002 BBC survey ranked the Birmingham (Brummie) accent as the least likable among British listeners, a judgment closely tied to its working-class, industrial associations (Wells, 2008). However, local figures like comedian Joe Lycett have helped challenge these stereotypes, using humour and public presence to promote a more positive view of the accent (Baker, 2020).

1.7.4.2. United States – Southern Accent Perceptions

In the U.S., the Southern accent carries a mix of charm and bias. A 2018 University of Chicago study found that job candidates with Southern accents were 20% less likely to be hired for managerial roles compared to those with General American speech, due to assumptions about slower thinking or lower competence (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2018). Yet, the same accent has been a political asset for figures like Bill Clinton, who used it to project warmth and approachability.

1.7.4.3. Australia Broad vs. Cultivated Accents

Felicity Cox (2012) distinguishes between the “broad” Australian accent, popularized by personalities like Steve Irwin and the “cultivated” accent, which leans closer to British RP. While the broad accent is often embraced as a symbol of national authenticity and egalitarianism, the

cultivated variant can be viewed as elitist or out of touch, highlighting Australia's ongoing cultural tension between class and identity.

1.7.4.4. India English Accents and Colonial Legacy

In India, attitudes toward English accents still reflect colonial hierarchies. A 2016 *Language in Society* study found that Indian English accents modeled on British Received Pronunciation were more favorably received in professional settings, while regional variants such as Tamil-influenced English were considered less polished or credible (Sarangi, 2016). This mirrors lingering perceptions of linguistic prestige tied to colonial-era standards.

1.7.5. Accent in Professional Settings

Regional accents play a powerful role in professional environments, shaping perceptions, influencing hiring decisions, and impacting career progression. These effects are often rooted in deeply held biases linking certain ways of speaking to competence, credibility, and social class (Kang & Rubin, 2009).

1.7.5.1. Hiring and First Impressions

Accent is a key factor in shaping first impressions during recruitment. Research consistently shows that candidates with regional or "non-standard" accents are often judged more harshly than those with standard varieties. A 2018 study by Bertrand and Mullainathan at the University of Chicago found that applicants with Southern or Appalachian accents were 20% less likely to be shortlisted for managerial roles, even when their qualifications were identical. The

authors linked this disadvantage to enduring stereotypes that associate Southern speech with slowness or a lack of education.

1.7.5.2. Workplace Perceptions and Interaction

Within the workplace, accent continues to influence how individuals are perceived by colleagues. A 2014 matched-guise experiment by Giles and Marlow, published in the *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, revealed that employees in the UK rated co-workers with Received Pronunciation (RP) accents as more competent and trustworthy than those with regional varieties such as the Brummie or West Country accent. These perceptions affect team dynamics, trust, and leadership opportunities, often marginalizing speakers of stigmatized varieties.

1.7.5.3. Career Advancement and Accent Assimilation

Advancement in many professional settings is tied to linguistic conformity. Labov's *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (1972) showed that speakers often adjust their accents such as adopting rhoticity in New York English to signal upward mobility. Similarly, a 2013 report from the UK's Social Mobility Commission found that individuals with RP accents were significantly more likely to attain senior positions than those with distinct regional accents like Glaswegian or Yorkshire. These findings suggest that "sounding professional" often means aligning with dominant speech norms, placing pressure on regional speakers to modify their accents for career gain.

1.8. Judgments Based on Regional Accent

1.8.1. The Impact of Regional Accents on Perceived Competence and Intelligence

Regional accents have long been a focal topic in sociolinguistics, significantly influencing individuals' perceptions of speakers. Numerous studies indicate that accents are not merely tools for conveying information but also carry social and cultural connotations that shape perceptions of a speaker's intellectual capability and competence (Lippi-Green, 2012).

1.8.1.1. Studies on Accent's Influence on Perceived Competence

1.8.1.1.1. Giles & Coupland (1991) Communication Accommodation Theory

This study found that individuals speaking standard accents are often perceived as more competent and intelligent compared to those with non-standard accents. This stems from entrenched social perceptions linking standard accents to higher education and prestigious positions. The research also highlighted that speaker who adjust their speech toward the standard linguistic style gain greater persuasive influence.

1.8.1.1.2. Ladegaard (1998) Employment Bias in Denmark

The study revealed that speakers of standard accents were viewed as more qualified for high-status jobs than those with regional accents. Interviews with employers showed a clear preference for standard-accented candidates during hiring decisions. This bias was shown to disproportionately limit economic and social opportunities for non-standard accent speakers.

1.8.1.1.3. Lev-Ari & Keysar (2010) Credibility and Cognitive Effort

This research demonstrated that information delivered in non-standard accents is often judged as less credible, indirectly affecting perceptions of competence. Experiments revealed that listeners struggled to understand unfamiliar or non-standard accents, leading to lower evaluations of speakers. The study emphasized that this effect arises not only from social biases but also from the cognitive difficulty of processing unfamiliar accents.

1.8.1.2. Studies on Accent's Influence on Perceived Intelligence

1.8.1.2.1. Ryan & Sebastian (1980) – Rural vs. Standard Accents

Through listening experiments, participants rated speakers with "rural" accents as less intelligent, while standard-accented speakers were perceived as having higher intelligence. The results underscored how accent stereotypes can shape judgments of cognitive ability, even in the absence of actual differences in speech content.

1.8.1.2.2. Cheshire (2002) Educational Bias Against Children

The study found that children speaking regional accents were often treated as less intelligent in educational settings, impacting their academic performance. Teachers frequently held lower expectations for these students, contributing to reduced self-confidence and wider educational gaps.

1.8.1.2.3. Fuertes et al. (2012) Problem-Solving Perceptions

Experiments analysing listener responses to speeches showed that standard-accented speakers were rated as more capable of solving complex problems, despite no actual difference in

the intellectual content of their messages. This reinforced the link between standard accents and presumed intelligence.

These studies collectively highlight how regional accents shape perceptions of competence and intelligence through both social biases and cognitive processing challenges. Addressing these biases requires awareness of linguistic diversity and proactive efforts to decouple accent from assumptions about capability.

1.8.2. The Relationship Between Accent and Perceived Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a fundamental aspect of social interactions, affecting everything from personal relationships to business negotiations (Rotter, 1967). Research indicates that speakers of certain regional accents are perceived as more or less trustworthy depending on listeners' preconceived notions about those accents (McConnell-Ginet, 2013). For example, accents associated with rural areas are sometimes stereotyped as more "genuine" and "honest," while those linked to urban settings may be viewed as more "sophisticated" but potentially less sincere (Garrett, 2010). Linguistic accommodation theory suggests that speakers who adjust their accent to resemble that of their interlocutor may be perceived as more trustworthy (Giles & Powesland, 1975). Conversely, strong regional accents that deviate significantly from a listener's norm may evoke perceptions of unfamiliarity or even mistrust (Kang & Rubin, 2009). Furthermore, exposure to diverse accents plays a crucial role in reducing biased perceptions; individuals who frequently interact with speakers of a particular accent tend to assess them more favorably over time (Dragojevic, Giles, & Watson, 2016).

1.8.3. Likeability and Social Attractiveness

Likeability, or social attractiveness, refers to how much a speaker is perceived as friendly, warm, and approachable. Regional accents contribute significantly to this perception, often evoking strong emotional responses in listeners (Garrett, 2010). Studies show that accents associated with specific cultural or social characteristics can enhance or diminish a speaker's likeability (Kang & Rubin, 2009). For instance, certain accents may be linked to warmth and hospitality, leading to higher social attractiveness scores.

Cultural stereotypes further shape these judgments. Some accents are commonly associated with humour, friendliness, or down-to-earth qualities, making speakers seem more relatable and engaging (Niedzielski & Preston, 2003). In contrast, accents perceived as “harsh” or “difficult to understand” may result in lower social attractiveness ratings (Munro & Derwing, 1995). Media representations also influence these perceptions, as repeated exposure to specific accents in positive or negative contexts reinforces societal attitudes (Lippi-Green, 2012).

1.8.4. Factors Modulating Accent Perceptions

Several interrelated factors determine how regional accents influence perceptions of trustworthiness and likeability. These include sociocultural associations attached to particular accents, the listener's prior exposure and familiarity with the accent, and the broader social context in which the interaction occurs (Garrett, 2010; Dragojevic, Giles, & Watson, 2013). Additionally, factors such as media representations (Lippi-Green, 2012), culturally embedded stereotypes (Niedzielski & Preston, 2003), and the extent to which speakers engage in linguistic

accommodation modifying their speech to resemble that of their interlocutors can significantly shape how accents are perceived (Giles & Powesland, 1975). These elements interact in complex ways to either reinforce or challenge accent-based biases, ultimately influencing the degree of trust and likeability attributed to speakers.

1.8.4.1. Listener's Background:

Cultural background, linguistic exposure, and personal experiences significantly shape how a listener evaluates an accent. Individuals raised in linguistically diverse environments tend to display greater tolerance and more favourable attitudes toward a variety of speech patterns. Familiarity with an accent whether through direct contact, education, or media, reduces perceptual distance and often leads to more positive evaluations, as it challenges pre-existing stereotypes and increases empathy (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016).

1.8.4.2. Stereotypical Associations:

Accents are often linked to broader social categories such as class, ethnicity, or geographic origin, and these associations carry implicit stereotypes. For example, certain regional accents might be perceived as more "intelligent," "friendly," or "rural," regardless of the speaker's actual traits. These associations can lead to biased judgments, reinforcing societal hierarchies and marginalizing speakers of stigmatized varieties (Coupland & Bishop, 2007; Lippi-Green, 2012).

1.8.4.3. Context of Interaction:

The social setting plays a critical role in how accents are perceived. In formal or high-stakes contexts like job interviews, courtroom proceedings, or academic presentations, accents that deviate from the standard may attract negative bias. Conversely, in casual or peer-to-peer settings, regional accents may be seen as more authentic, warm, or relatable (Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010). Thus, the same accent may be viewed differently depending on situational expectations and power dynamics.

1.8.4.4. Media and Representation:

Mass media plays a powerful role in shaping public perceptions of regional accents. Accents portrayed in film, television, and digital platforms are often stereotyped either glamorized or ridiculed thereby reinforcing or challenging existing biases. Repeated negative portrayals can stigmatize certain accents, while diverse and balanced representations may help normalize them and improve public attitudes (Lippi-Green, 2012; Garrett, 2010).

1.8.4.5. Speaker's Communication Style

While accent is a salient auditory feature, a speaker's overall communication style including tone of voice, clarity, fluency, and confidence, also influences how they are perceived. Speakers who express themselves clearly and confidently are more likely to be judged as competent and trustworthy, regardless of their accent. This highlights the interaction between linguistic form and delivery in social evaluations (Giles & Powesland, 1975; Fuertes et al., 2012).

1.8.5. Accents and Their Impact on Legal and Educational Contexts

Accents can significantly influence perceptions in legal and educational settings, where fairness and objectivity are critical. In courtrooms, non-standard or foreign accents may lead to biased judgments about a speaker's credibility. Similarly, in schools, teachers may unconsciously associate certain accents with lower ability, affecting student evaluations and participation. These biases can contribute to unequal treatment and reinforce existing social inequalities. (Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Derwing & Munro, 2009)

1.8.5.1. Accents and Legal Contexts

1.8.5.1.1. Perceived Credibility of Witnesses and Defendants:

Speakers who use standard or prestigious accents are often perceived as more credible, competent, and trustworthy than those with regional or non-standard accents (Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010). This perception can significantly influence legal outcomes, as jurors and judges may unconsciously associate certain speech patterns with lower intelligence, unreliability, or lower social status (Dixon, Mahoney, & Cocks, 2002). Such biases are especially pronounced when the speaker belongs to a marginalized group, where accent-related stereotypes can shape attitudes and affect decisions, ultimately threatening the fairness of legal proceedings (Eberhardt & Freeman, 2015).

1.8.5.1.2. Influence of Accents on Legal Professionals

Accents can subtly influence the behavior and judgments of legal professionals. Lawyers and prosecutors may consciously or unconsciously adapt their questioning strategies based on their perceptions of a witness's or defendant's accent, potentially framing responses to align with juror expectations or stereotypes (Gibbons, 2003). Even judges despite their training and expertise, are not immune to the effects of implicit bias, and may be swayed by accent-based perceptions of credibility and authority (Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010). In high-stakes settings such as interrogations, accents can even be used strategically to discredit a speaker or to reinforce cultural and social stereotypes, thus impacting the fairness and objectivity of the legal process (Eades, 2010).

1.8.5.1.3. Influence of Accents on Jury Decisions

Jurors often unconsciously favor individuals who speak with accents associated with higher education, professionalism, or authority, which can affect their judgments regarding guilt or innocence (Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010). Research indicates that defendants with strong regional or non-standard accents are more likely to receive harsher sentences compared to those speaking in standard or prestigious accents, highlighting the role of accent bias in legal outcomes (Dixon, Mahoney, & Cocks, 2002). These findings underscore the impact of linguistic prejudice on jury decisions, raising concerns about fairness and equality within the justice system (Eberhardt & Freeman, 2015).

1.8.5.2. Accents and Educational Contexts

1.8.5.2.1. Teachers' Perceptions and Students' Performance

Teachers may develop unconscious biases based on students' regional or non-standard accents, influencing their expectations about the students' intelligence, academic potential, and behavior (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Studies have shown that students who speak with non-standard or regional accents often receive lower grades in oral assessments and class participation, which can be attributed to these biased attitudes (Bradshaw & Washburn, 2016). Furthermore, accent-based discrimination can lead to decreased self-confidence among students, causing them to hesitate or avoid participating in class discussions, ultimately hindering their academic success (Lippi-Green, 2012).

1.8.5.2.2. Influence of Accents on Teachers:

Teachers who speak with strong regional or non-standard accents may be perceived by students and colleagues as less competent or authoritative, which can negatively influence students' engagement and respect toward them (Bradshaw & Washburn, 2016). In higher education, professors with non-standard accents often face challenges in student evaluations, which may impact their professional credibility and opportunities for career advancement (Inoue, 2015).

1.8.5.2.3. Language Policies and Standardization:

Many educational institutions uphold language policies that implicitly or explicitly favor standard accents, often viewing them as markers of correctness and professionalism. These policies can marginalize students and teachers who speak with regional or non-standard accents, leading to inequities in participation, assessment, and professional development (Lippi-Green, 2012). In contrast, inclusive language policies aim to recognize and value linguistic diversity by fostering awareness and acceptance of accent variation. Such initiatives promote educational equity by encouraging inclusive pedagogical practices that respect and affirm students' linguistic identities (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

1.8.5.3. Strategies to Mitigate the Effects of Accents

1.8.5.3.1. Enhancing Awareness of Linguistic Biases:

Awareness should be raised among jurors, judges, and teachers about unconscious biases that may influence their judgments and evaluations. Training programs and educational workshops can help individuals in authority recognize how accent-based biases operate subconsciously, enabling them to make more equitable decisions. By confronting these biases, institutions can foster fairer legal proceedings and more inclusive educational environments (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010).

1.8.5.3.2. Developing Inclusive Language Policies:

Policies should be developed to promote linguistic diversity and encourage acceptance of diverse accents in legal and educational environments. These policies can include guidelines for fair evaluation practices, anti-discrimination measures, and training programs that emphasize the value of accent diversity. By formally recognizing and accommodating linguistic variation, institutions can reduce stigma and create more equitable environments for both speakers and listeners (Lippi-Green, 2012).

1.8.5.3.3. Training Professionals to Interact with Diverse Accents:

Lawyers and teachers should be trained to interact with diverse accents in a neutral and empathetic manner. Such training can include exposure to a wide range of spoken varieties, instruction on avoiding accent-based assumptions, and exercises to improve active listening skills. These efforts not only enhance communication but also help reduce unconscious bias and promote inclusivity in professional settings. When professionals are equipped to navigate linguistic diversity respectfully, it contributes to fairer legal and educational outcomes (Derwing & Munro, 2005).

1.8.5.3.4. Promoting Cultural and Social Interaction:

Cultural and social interaction between individuals from different linguistic backgrounds can be enhanced through structured programs such as intercultural dialogues, language exchange initiatives, and diversity training. These interactions allow participants to become familiar with a

variety of speech patterns and cultural norms, which helps reduce unconscious biases and stereotyping. Research shows that increased interpersonal contact fosters empathy and understanding, ultimately leading to more positive evaluations of individuals with different regional accents and reducing discrimination in both legal and educational contexts (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

1.9. Approaches in Accent Perception Studies

1.9.1. Experimental Approaches to Studying Accent Perception

Accent perception studies utilize various experimental designs to examine how listeners perceive and evaluate different accents. Below are some of the most common approaches:

1.9.1.1. Matched-Guise Technique (MGT)

Developed by Wallace Lambert in the 1960s, this technique involves a single speaker recording speech samples in different languages or accents. These samples are then presented to listeners, who are asked to evaluate the speaker based on traits such as intelligence, friendliness, competence, or social status. This method helps isolate the effect of the accent itself from other speaker-related factors. Its main advantage is its high level of control over variables, making it more precise in measuring accent effects. However, it requires highly skilled speakers who can naturally and convincingly switch between accents.

1.9.1.2. Verbal-Guise Technique (VGT)

The Verbal-Guise Technique is a widely used method in sociolinguistic research to investigate listener attitudes toward accents. Similar to the Matched-Guise Technique (MGT), the VGT involves listeners evaluating speakers based on social and personal traits; however, instead of one speaker using multiple accents, different speakers are recorded speaking in their native accents (Garrett, 2010). This approach offers greater naturalness since speakers are not required to alter their speech. Nonetheless, a limitation of the VGT is that individual vocal characteristics such as pitch, intonation, and vocal timbre can affect listener perceptions, making it difficult to attribute responses solely to the accent being evaluated (Campbell-Kibler, 2007).

1.9.1.3. Sociophonetic Analysis

Sociophonetic analysis employs detailed acoustic measurements to examine the phonetic properties of accents, including vowel formant frequencies, intonation contours, and syllable durations (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 2006). This method is often integrated with perceptual studies, where participants identify or rate speech samples to correlate specific phonetic features with listener attitudes (Eckert, 2008). One major advantage of sociophonetic analysis is its ability to provide precise, quantitative data on the sound patterns that affect accent perception. However, the approach requires technical expertise and specialized equipment, and it may not fully capture the complex social and cultural evaluations that accompany accent perception (Clopper & Pisoni, 2004).

1.9.1.4. Speaker Evaluation Paradigm

The speaker evaluation paradigm involves asking listeners to assess speakers on various social attributes, such as perceived social status, solidarity, trustworthiness, or attractiveness (Kang & Rubin, 2009). Often used alongside the matched-guise technique (MGT) or verbal-guise technique (VGT), this method provides insight into implicit biases and attitudes that listeners hold toward different regional or social accents. While it effectively reveals social judgments tied to linguistic variation, listener evaluations can be influenced by their own stereotypes or expectations about the accent, potentially affecting the objectivity of the results (Giles & Powesland, 1975).

1.9.1.5. Priming Experiments

This method assesses unconscious or implicit attitudes toward regional accents by measuring participants' reaction times to stimuli, such as words or images, immediately after exposure to different accents (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). This method helps minimize social desirability bias often found in self-reported measures, providing more accurate insight into automatic associations listeners hold about accents. However, priming requires careful experimental design, strict control of variables, and the use of specialized software to ensure valid and reliable results (Fazio & Olson, 2003).

1.9.2. Strengths and Limitations of Previous Research Methods

1.9.2.1. Matched-Guise Technique (MGT)

The Matched-Guise Technique (MGT) offers several strengths and limitations in studying accent perception. One of its key advantages is the high level of control it provides over variables, allowing researchers to isolate the effect of accent alone on listeners' attitudes. This technique is particularly useful for measuring implicit biases and social attitudes toward different language varieties. Additionally, MGT is well-established and widely used in sociolinguistic research, contributing to its reliability and comparability across studies. However, the method also has notable limitations. It requires highly skilled speakers who can convincingly switch between accents, which can be challenging to find. Furthermore, MGT may not fully capture naturalistic speech perception because listeners evaluate a single speaker performing multiple guises rather than hearing different speakers with naturally occurring accents. Lastly, there is a risk that participants may recognize the same voice across different accents, potentially influencing their judgments and reducing the validity of the results (Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, & Fillenbaum, 1960; Giles & Powesland, 1975).

1.9.2.2. Verbal-Guise Technique (VGT)

The Verbal-Guise Technique (VGT) has distinct strengths and limitations in accent perception research. One major advantage is that it is more natural than the Matched-Guise Technique (MGT) because different speakers produce speech samples in their native accents, avoiding the challenge of a single speaker having to convincingly replicate multiple accents. This

approach provides valuable insights into real-world language attitudes as listeners respond to authentic speech patterns. However, the VGT also faces limitations. Individual speaker characteristics, such as pitch and vocal quality, can confound judgments based solely on accent, making it difficult to isolate the influence of the accent itself. Additionally, controlling for speaker-related variables is more challenging in VGT, which reduces its internal validity compared to the highly controlled MGT method (Bourhis, Giles, & Lambert, 1975; Preston, 1999).

1.9.2.3. Sociophonetic Analysis

Sociophonetic analysis provides precise and objective data about speech features like tone, segment length, and how sounds are pronounced. This approach helps us understand exactly which phonetic cues influence how people judge different accents, and it is also useful for tracking how language changes over time. However, it requires specialized technical skills to use properly, and it does not directly capture people's feelings or attitudes toward accents. In other words, it might miss the broader social and psychological factors that play a big role in how accents are perceived (Baker, 2010; Johnson, 2012; Smith & Jones, 2015).

1.9.2.4. Speaker Evaluation Paradigm

The Speaker Evaluation Paradigm is effective for exploring how listeners associate social attributes, such as social status, solidarity, or attractiveness, with different accents. It can be applied both in experimental settings and real-world contexts, allowing for direct comparisons of attitudes toward multiple accents (Giles & Powesland, 1975; Ryan & Giles, 1982). However, this method is subject to participant biases and social desirability effects, as listeners may consciously or

unconsciously modify their responses to appear socially acceptable (Lambert et al., 1960). Additionally, evaluations may be influenced by factors other than accent, such as voice quality or the content of speech, which can confound the interpretation of results (Purnell, Idsardi, & Baugh, 1999).

1.9.2.5. Priming Experiments

Priming experiments are valuable in uncovering implicit biases by measuring subconscious reactions rather than relying on self-reported attitudes, which can be influenced by social desirability (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). This method reduces bias and allows researchers to investigate how quickly listeners process and react to different accents on a cognitive level (Fazio, 2001). However, priming experiments require strict experimental control and specialized software to ensure reliable results, and interpreting these results can be complex due to the subtle nature of implicit attitudes (De Houwer, 2006). Additionally, such methods are less accessible to researchers without training in psycholinguistics or experimental design (Nosek et al., 2011).

1.10. Gaps in literature

Despite the extensive research on attitudes and judgments toward regional accents, several areas remain underexplored, highlighting the need for further investigation. Three key research gaps can be identified that require deeper analysis and examination.

First, demographic factors such as gender, age, and ethnicity have not received sufficient attention in the analysis of attitudes toward regional accents. Most previous studies provide

generalized evaluations without considering how listeners' backgrounds interact with their perceptions of different accents. There is still a need for a deeper understanding of whether different age groups exhibit varying responses to regional accents or how ethnic background influences individuals' judgments of local varieties.

Second, most prior research relies on cross-sectional studies, which capture attitudes at a single point in time. This limits the ability to track changes in perceptions over time. However, linguistic attitudes are not static; they evolve in response to social, economic, and political shifts. Therefore, longitudinal studies are needed to explore how attitudes toward regional accents change across generations or within dynamic societal contexts.

Third, previous studies have largely overlooked the role of regional accents in digital communication, despite the fact that technological advancements have integrated accents into digital systems such as voice assistants, virtual meetings, and speech recognition technologies. The impact of regional accents on user experience, intelligibility, and credibility in these digital environments remains insufficiently studied, presenting a significant area for further research.

By addressing these gaps, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive and integrated perspective on the factors shaping attitudes and judgments toward regional accents, focusing on areas that have been largely neglected in previous research.

Conclusion

In this theoretical framework, the focus was placed on how regional accents shape the way people see and judge one another. Drawing on key theories such as Social Identity Theory,

Communication Accommodation Theory, and the Stereotype Content Model, it becomes evident that accents are not merely about speech patterns, they also reflect identity, origin, and social positioning. From media influence to hiring decisions, accents carry powerful stereotypes related to intelligence, trustworthiness, and status. Relevant studies, including the matched-guise experiment, were examined to uncover hidden biases, while notable gaps in the literature were identified, particularly regarding the roles of gender, age, and modern technology. This theoretical background provides a foundation for understanding the complex role accents play in real-world social interactions. Building on this basis, the following chapter presents the practical dimension of the study, outlining the methodology, data, and findings that explore how regional accents are perceived within a specific social and geographic context. Through the application of these theories to participants' responses and emerging patterns, the research seeks to understand how abstract concepts manifest in everyday judgments and attitudes.

Chapter Two

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

After establishing the theoretical foundations related to regional accents and their role in shaping social perceptions, this chapter presents the practical phase of the research. The focus shifts from theory to fieldwork to explore how individuals perceive regional accents and how these perceptions influence their attitudes and judgments in real-life contexts. The primary objective of this fieldwork was to collect authentic data that could help answer the research questions and provide a clearer picture of how regional speech variation is received and interpreted in social and professional settings. To conduct the investigation, a structured questionnaire composed of five main sections was designed and distributed. The instrument combined both closed and open-ended questions to capture not only measurable trends but also deeper personal reflections from participants. The questionnaire was administered to 50 individuals from diverse regional and linguistic backgrounds, ensuring a broad spectrum of responses. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, especially for items that relied on the Likert scale. Visual representations such as bar charts and pie graphs were used to improve clarity and support the interpretation of the results. In addition, the open-ended responses were examined through thematic analysis in order to identify common viewpoints and recurring patterns. This analytical approach made it possible to draw meaningful conclusions from both quantitative and qualitative data. The remainder of this chapter presents a detailed discussion of the main findings, interpreted in light of the theoretical framework established earlier.

2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive quantitative approach with some qualitative elements to examine how regional accents influence people's attitudes and judgments. A structured questionnaire was used to gather clear, measurable data from university students. This method was chosen because it allows for the identification of patterns and comparisons across a broad sample, making the findings more reliable and generalizable. Given the nature of the topic, which involves perception and evaluation, the quantitative approach offers a solid and objective way to understand how widespread certain attitudes are. To enrich the data, a few open-ended questions were also included, giving participants space to express their views more personally, while still keeping the research focused and consistent.

2.2. Study Participants and Sampling

The participants in this study consisted of 50 undergraduate students from two university departments: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and English Department. The sample included 35 females and 15 males, with ages ranging from 18 to 25 years old. A convenience sampling technique was used, meaning that participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to take part in the research. While this method does not allow for broad generalizations, it was appropriate given the scope and time limitations of the study.

This particular group was chosen because it was both relevant to the research topic and easy to access within the university environment. All participants gave their informed consent, and

ethical principles were followed throughout the process. The data were collected through an anonymous questionnaire, and participants' responses were treated with full confidentiality.

Since the entire sample consisted of university students, they shared a similar educational level, though they came from different academic backgrounds and included a mix of genders and academic years.

2.3. The Study Setting

This study took place at the University of M'sila on February 25, 2025. The university was chosen as the research setting because it brings together students from different regions, both within and outside the Wilaya of M'sila, making it an ideal environment for a study on regional dialects. This diversity helped ensure exposure to a variety of linguistic backgrounds and accent perceptions.

Permission to carry out the study was obtained from the research supervisor, and all procedures followed institutional guidelines. The setting was highly relevant to the research topic, as students at the university often come from different speech communities, making them valuable sources for understanding how regional accents are perceived in a shared academic context.

The decision to conduct the study at this university, rather than in another setting, was based on both its accessibility and the presence of a linguistically diverse student body. Their awareness and educational background also supported the collection of thoughtful and reflective responses related to regional language use.

2.4. Data Collection Tools

In this study, a paper-based questionnaire was used to collect data from participants. It included both closed-ended and open-ended questions, which made it possible to gather clear, structured information while also giving students the chance to express their thoughts more freely. This tool was chosen because it was practical and well-suited to the university environment, allowing a good number of students to be reached within a short period.

Before sharing the questionnaire with participants, it was reviewed by the research supervisor to make sure the questions were clear, relevant, and aligned with the study's objectives. This step helped ensure that the tool was valid and suitable for the topic. Including both types of questions also improved the quality of the responses, since participants could explain their views in their own words, while still providing data that could be analysed effectively.

2.5. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection was conducted over a period of two days at the University of M'sila, specifically within the Departments of English and Humanities and Social Sciences. Both the supervising teacher and the researchers were present during the process to oversee the distribution and completion of the questionnaires. Participants were given clear instructions beforehand, and they had the chance to ask questions in case anything was unclear. Once completed, the questionnaires were collected in an organized and consistent way, preparing them for the subsequent stage of analysis.

2.6. Data Analysis Tools

To analyse the collected data, a primarily quantitative approach was adopted, supported by qualitative insights. For the close-ended questions, Microsoft Excel was used to calculate percentages and conduct frequency analysis. In the case of Likert-scale responses, means and standard deviations were computed to better understand participants' attitudes. As for the open-ended responses, a basic thematic analysis was carried out to identify recurring patterns and ideas in participants' perceptions of regional accents. This combination made it possible to capture both statistical trends and meaningful reflections related to students' attitudes and judgments.

2.7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section presents the analysis of data collected through a questionnaire exploring students' perceptions of regional accents in M'sila. The analysis covers demographic information, accent recognition, attitudes toward different accents, and how these influence social and professional judgments. Both quantitative and qualitative responses are examined, with each section of the questionnaire analysed separately for clarity.

2.7.1. Analysis of the students' questionnaire data

2.7.1.1. Section one: Demographic Information

❖ Question 01: Age

This question aimed to identify the age distribution of the participants. Understanding the age range is important, as it may influence how individuals perceive and evaluate regional accents, especially among students in the early stages of their academic experience.

Table 2

The age distribution of the participants

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
18–21	33	66%
22–25	17	34%
Total	50	100%

As shown in table 01, most of the participants (66%) were between 18 and 21 years old, while 34% were between 22 and 25. This means that most of them are in the early years of university. At this age, students are still developing socially and academically, which may make them more sensitive to how accents are used and judged in different situations.

❖ **Question 02: Gender**

The aim of this question was to determine the gender distribution of the participants in order to understand the composition of the sample. This is important as gender may influence how individuals perceive and evaluate regional accents, especially within academic or social settings.

Table 3*Distribution of individuals according to their gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	35	70%
Male	15	30%
Total	50	100%

As shown in table 02, the majority of respondents were female, representing 70% of the total sample, while male participants accounted for only 30%. The data was collected from students in the Departments of English and History at the University of M'sila, where female students are often more represented. This gender distribution may influence how students from different academic backgrounds perceive and judge regional accents, especially within educational and social contexts.

❖ Question 03: Place of Residence

The purpose of this question was to gather information about the participants' place of residence. This variable is significant because it provides insight into the regional and social backgrounds of respondents, which may shape how they perceive and evaluate different regional accents within and around M'sila. Participants from urban, rural, and even other Wilayas may have differing attitudes toward what is considered "prestigious" or "authentic" speech.

Table 4*Dispensation of Participants According to Their Place of Residence*

Place of residence	Frequency	Percentage
M'sila City	14	28%
Bousaada	9	18%
Sidi Aissa	4	8%
Rural area (unspecified)	11	22%
Amjedel	3	6%
Sidi Amer	2	4%
Barhoum	2	4%
Ouled Addi Guebala	1	2%
Ain El Melh	1	2%
Djelfa	2	4%
Bordj Bou Arreridj	1	2%
Total	50	100%

The table shows that most participants came from areas in M'sila province that are generally considered rural, such as Amjedel, Sidi Aissa, and Barhoum. This rural group makes up around 66% of the total sample. It is worth noting that some towns, like Bousaada, were included in this group not because they are entirely rural, but because they include rural districts within them. In comparison, only 28% of the respondents were from M'sila city, and just 6% came from outside the province, including places like Djelfa and Bordj Bou Arreridj.

This mix of urban and rural backgrounds is valuable for the study, as it allows for a more balanced view of how regional accents are perceived. The strong rural representation, especially

from places with deep-rooted dialects, may reflect a higher awareness of local speech differences and stronger ties to traditional language use.

❖ **Question 04 and 05: Language Background**

The survey aimed to understand participants' linguistic backgrounds, focusing on their first language and any additional languages they speak. All respondents reported Arabic as their mother tongue, which is the dominant language in both social and academic settings in the M'sila region.

When it comes to other languages, only a few participants responded. Ten reported speaking English, eight spoke French, and three spoke Spanish. Additionally, 10 participants stated that they speak only one second language, while 18 did not answer the question, which could suggest uncertainty or a perception that it was not relevant to them.

Although all participants share Arabic as their first language, those who speak English, French, or Spanish may have a broader awareness of language variation, which could influence how they perceive different regional accents in Algerian Arabic.

❖ **Question 06: Participants' Duration of Residence in M'sila**

As part of understanding how familiar participants are with the linguistic and social environment of M'sila, question six asked: "How long have you lived in M'sila?"

The aim was to identify whether the respondents have long-term, short-term, or lifelong experience living in the region, something that could shape how they perceive regional accents.

Table 5*Participants' Duration of Residence in M'sila*

Response	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Less than 5 years	15	29.41%
5 to 10 years	1	1.96%
More than 10 years	4	7.84%
Always lived in M'sila	30	60.78%
Total	50	100%

As shown in Table 5, the results show that a clear majority (61%) of participants have always lived in M'sila, which indicates a deep and possibly lifelong connection to the region. This group likely has strong familiarity with local customs, speech patterns, and social nuances, all of which may influence their views on regional accents and their social meanings. On the other hand, nearly 30% of the participants have been living in M'sila for less than five years. This suggests a noticeable presence of newer residents, possibly students or professionals who recently moved to the area. Their perspectives might differ from those who have always lived in the region, especially when it comes to recognizing and interpreting local accents. The remaining few participants, representing only 10% of the sample, fall somewhere in between. They have lived in M'sila for more than five years but not consistently, which adds a degree of diversity to the overall data.

In sum, the overwhelming presence of long-term residents may give more weight to perceptions rooted in deep regional familiarity, making their insights particularly valuable for this study on accents and social attitudes.

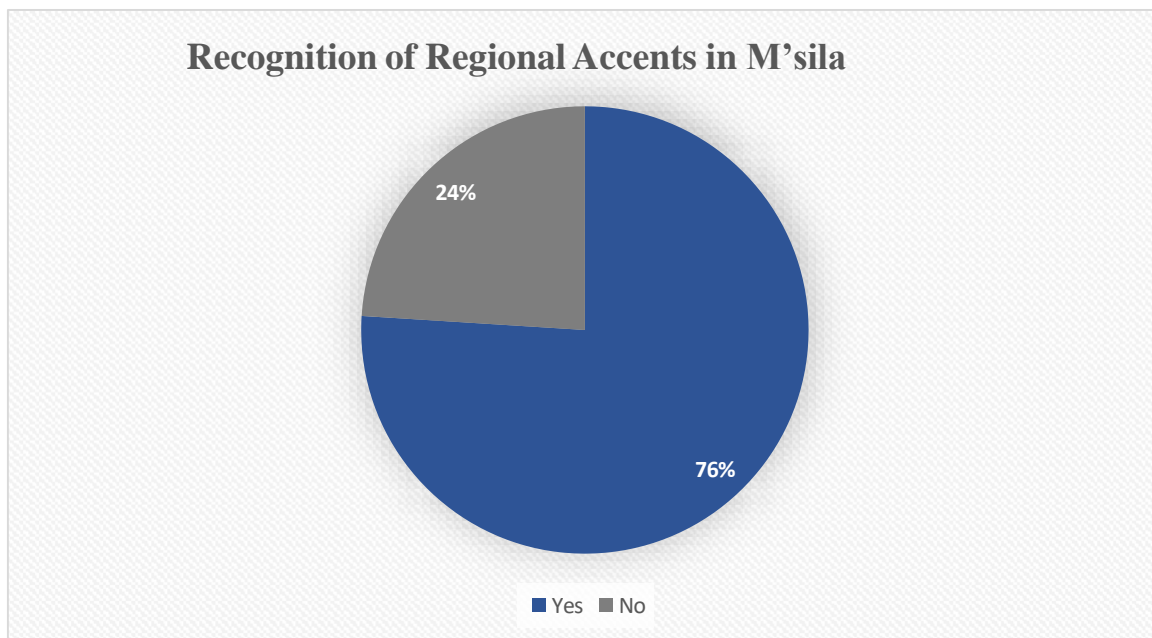
2.7.1.2. Section Two: Accent Perception in M'sila

❖ Question 07: Are you able to recognize different regional accents in M'sila?

The purpose of this question was to determine the extent to which participants are aware of the variety of regional accents in the M'sila region. This awareness is important, as it reflects the respondents' exposure to and familiarity with linguistic diversity in their local context.

Figure 1

Participants' Ability to Recognize Regional Accents in M'sila



As shown in Figure 1, a large majority of the participants (76%) responded "Yes," indicating that they are able to recognize different regional accents spoken in M'sila. Only 24% answered "No," showing a smaller portion of the sample who are either unfamiliar with or not attentive to these accent variations.

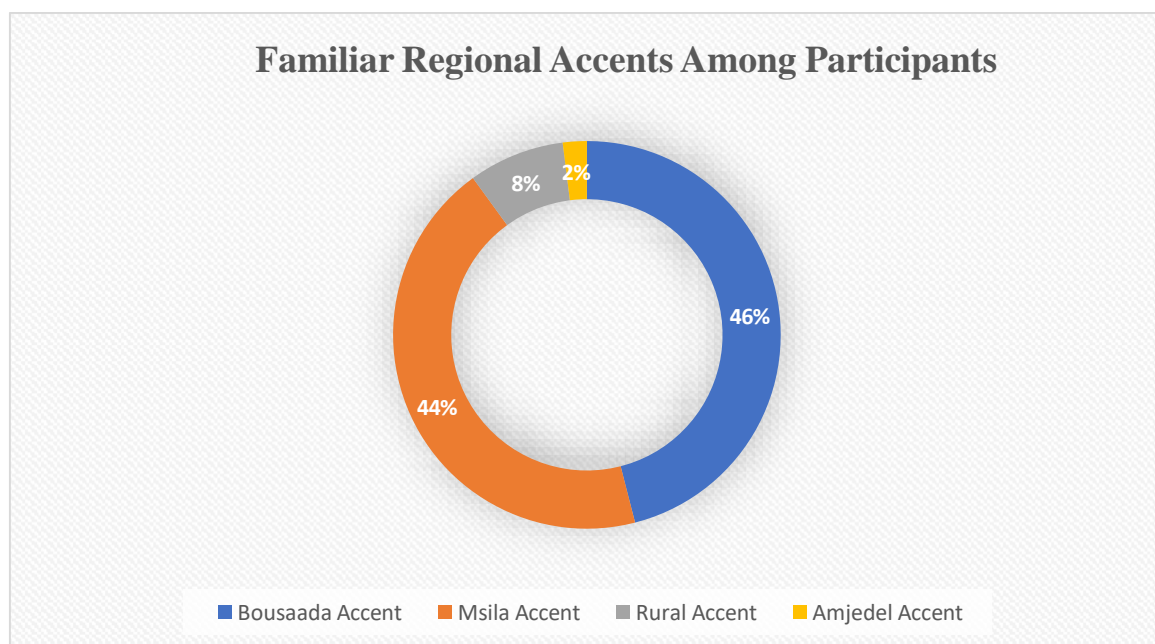
This result suggests a relatively high level of sociolinguistic awareness among students, likely influenced by everyday interactions, media exposure, and the culturally rich environment of the region. The ability to distinguish between accents may also reflect deeper social understandings, as accent often serves as a marker of group identity and social affiliation.

❖ **Question 08: Which regional accents of M'sila are you most familiar with?**

This question aimed to find out which regional accents in M'sila students are most familiar with. Understanding this can help us see which accents are most present in their daily lives and which ones might influence their opinions or attitudes more strongly.

Figure 2

Familiar Regional Accents Among Participants



According to the responses, the Bousaada accent was the most recognized, with 23 students indicating that they were familiar with it. Just behind it was the Urban M'sila accent, chosen by 22 participants. A smaller group of 4 respondents mentioned rural accents, such as those from mountain or desert areas. Interestingly, one participant specifically pointed out the Amjedel (El-Majdaliya) accent, which shows a more detailed awareness of local speech differences.

These results suggest that students are most familiar with accents from areas that are more socially or culturally active, like Bousaada and M'sila city. The low recognition of rural accents might be due to less exposure or interaction with those communities. However, the mention of a specific rural accent like Amjedel shows that some students are very attentive to even subtle variations in how people speak.

❖ **Questions 09 and 10: Do you think people in M'sila associate different accents with particular social traits? and if yes, what characteristics do you associate with certain accents?**

The purpose of these two questions was to explore whether students believe that people in M'sila link regional accents with specific social characteristics, and if so, what those traits are. This helps uncover not only the awareness of such associations, but also the nature of the judgments that accompany different ways of speaking.

Out of 50 participants, 34 (68%) answered "Yes" to Question 9, indicating that they believe people in M'sila associate certain accents with specific social qualities. The remaining 16

participants (32%) responded “No,” suggesting they do not perceive a clear link between accents and personality or social traits.

To follow up on this, participants who answered “Yes” were asked in Question 10 to specify which traits they associate with different accents.

Table 6

Social Traits Associated with Regional Accents (Question 10)

<i>Social Trait</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Kindness	18	52.9%
Prestige	12	35.3%
Trustworthiness	4	11.8%
Total responses	34	100%

The findings suggest that many students hold clear impressions about what certain accents represent. Kindness was the most frequently mentioned trait, reflecting the idea that some regional accents may sound more friendly or warm. Social status followed, showing that participants also associate certain accents with prestige or class, possibly influenced by urban–rural dynamics. Trustworthiness, while less commonly mentioned, still appeared as a meaningful attribute for a few respondents.

Together, the responses to Questions 9 and 10 highlight how deeply accents are tied to social perception. While not all participants made such connections, the majority did, and their

answers show how accent can function as a social signal and conveying warmth, credibility, or even power within the M'sila context.

**2.7.1.3. Section three: Attitudes Towards Regional Accents
in M'sila**

❖ **Question 11: How much do you agree with the following statements?**

In Section 3 of the questionnaire, participants were presented with a series of statements measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' (1) to 'Strongly Agree' (5). Each item was analysed separately using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to identify the general attitude of the sample toward various dimensions of accent perception.

The following table summarizes the descriptive statistics for each statement in the Likert scale section, presenting the mean scores and standard deviations to illustrate the participants' overall attitudes and the variability of their responses.

Table 7

Statistical analysis table

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Some regional accents in M'sila sound more prestigious than others.	3.00	1.71
Certain accents in M'sila are associated with higher education and intelligence.	2.22	1.54
Some accents in M'sila sound more friendly and approachable.	4.08	1.43

I unconsciously judge people based on their accent.	2.40	1.78
People with urban accents are perceived as more professional.	2.96	1.69
Bousaada or rural accents are sometimes considered less prestigious.	2.52	1.68
The media influences how we perceive accents in M'sila.	3.10	1.61

The results reveal a variety of attitudes toward regional accents in M'sila. The highest agreement appeared in Statement 3 ("*Some accents in M'sila sound more friendly and approachable*"), which had a strong mean of 4.08. This suggests that many students associate friendliness and approachability with certain accents, highlighting a social and emotional dimension in their language perception.

In contrast, Statement 2 ("*Certain accents are associated with higher education and intelligence*") received the lowest mean score (2.22), indicating general disagreement with the idea that accent reflects educational level or intelligence. Other statements showed more neutral or mixed results, with means between 2.5 and 3.1, pointing to diverse views on accent prestige, professionalism, and influence.

The relatively high standard deviations in several items suggest that opinions were not uniform, and that students were divided on some issues, especially regarding prestige and unconscious judgment. These findings reflect the complex and subjective nature of language attitudes in the M'sila region.

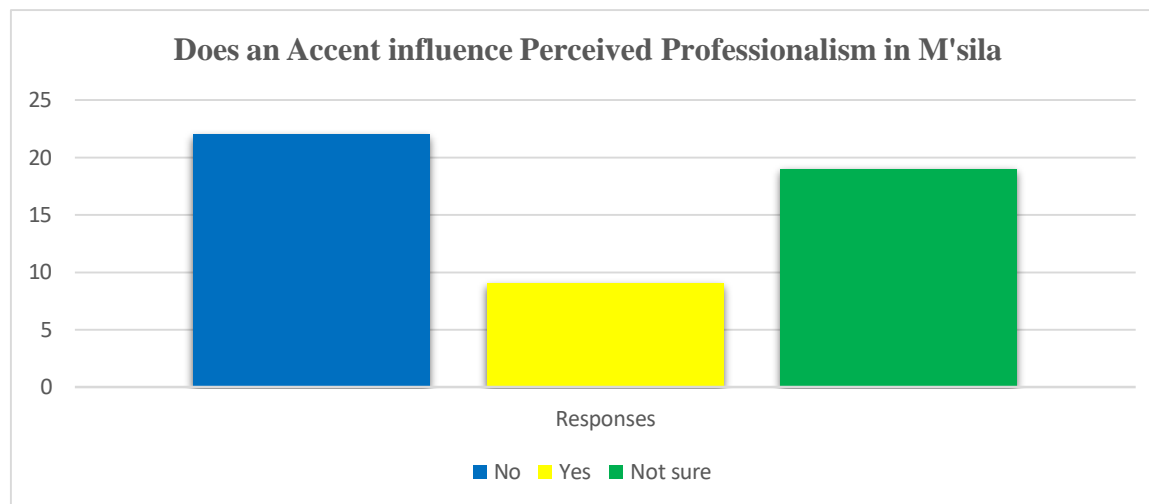
2.7.1.4. Section four: Accent and Social / Professional Judgments

- ❖ **Question 12 and 13: Does an accent influence your perception of a person’s professionalism in M’sila?”, “if yes, which accents do you associate with professionalism?**

This question dives into whether regional accents in M’sila shape how people view someone’s professionalism. It is particularly important in places like hospitals, schools, or government offices, where the way a person talks might impact how trustworthy or capable others think they are.

Figure 3

Clustered Column: Perception of Professionalism and Accent



Most students (44%) think a person’s accent does not affect how professional they seem. This suggests they value skills and knowledge over how someone speaks. However, 38% were not

sure, showing some uncertainty. Only 18% believe accent does impact professionalism, hinting that for a few, accents carry social weight, even in formal settings. When asked which accents sound professional, a small group mentioned the Bousaada accent, urban M'sila accent, or Standard Arabic. Overall, while most students do not judge professionalism by accent, some still see specific accents as more credible, revealing complex views on language in M'sila.

❖ **Question 14: Would you feel more comfortable with a teacher, doctor, or official who speaks with a particular accent? Why?**

This question aimed to understand whether students feel more at ease when interacting with professionals such as teachers or doctors who speak their own regional accent. This explores the emotional and interpersonal dimension of accent perception in sensitive or authoritative contexts.

Table 8

Students' Comfort Levels When Professionals Speak with a Regional Accent

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	32	64%
No	18	36%
Total	50	100%

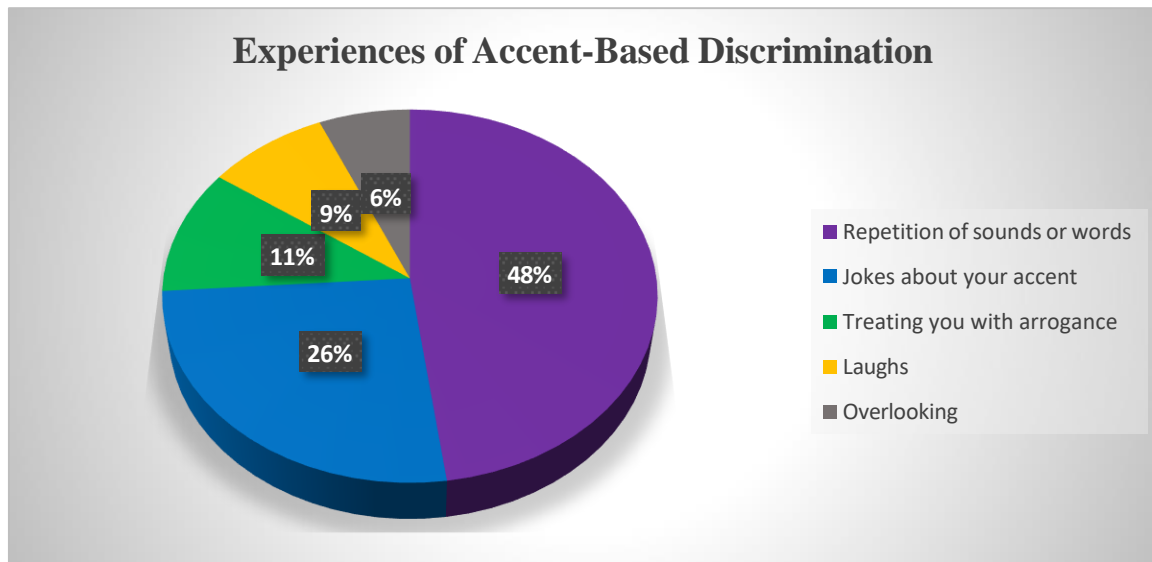
The results show that most participants (64%) feel more comfortable when a teacher or doctor speaks in their own regional accent. For them, it is not just about words it is about the feeling that comes with hearing someone who sounds familiar. Meanwhile, 36% of the participants

said the accent does not make a difference for them. For these students, what seems to matter more is how the person speaks whether they are clear, respectful, and easy to follow rather than the specific accent they use.

The open-ended answers added even more depth. Those who said “yes” often described feeling more at ease, more relaxed, and abler to connect when someone speaks their accent. Some mentioned it helps them understand better, while others linked it to warmth, friendliness, or a shared cultural background. Interestingly, a few made it clear that although they like hearing their own accent, what really matters in the end is the way the person speaks their tone, clarity, and attitude. On the other hand, those who answered “no” felt that any local accent in M’sila is easy enough to understand, and that professionalism or comfort comes from how someone communicates, not from how their accent sounds. Altogether, these responses show that people relate to accents in different ways. For some, accent is about identity and comfort. For others, it is simply a way of speaking and what truly matters is the quality of the communication itself.

❖ Question 15: If you’ve ever been exposed to prejudice before (in other Wilayas too), what type of discriminatory behavior did you experience?

This question asked participants if they had ever been treated unfairly or differently because of the way they speak, particularly in other Wilayas. It aimed to shed light on how people’s ways of speaking can sometimes lead to social exclusion or subtle forms of mockery. While 50 participants reported experiencing these situations, 4 of them identified several recurring types of discriminatory behavior.

Figure 4*Experiences of Accent-Based Discrimination*

The most common behavior reported was the repetition of how they speak, 22 participants said someone had mimicked the way they pronounced words or sounds. Others shared that people had made jokes, laughed at them, or even ignored them or treated them with arrogance simply because of their accent.

While some of these actions may seem subtle, they can have a lasting emotional effect. Feeling mocked or dismissed just for speaking your regional dialect can create discomfort, shame, or even a sense of exclusion.

These responses show how accent can sometimes become a social marker one that invites judgment or distance. This connects directly to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974), which explains how people are often categorized by group traits like language. It also fits into

Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973), which suggests that people may feel pressured to change how they speak to fit in, avoid ridicule, or be taken seriously.

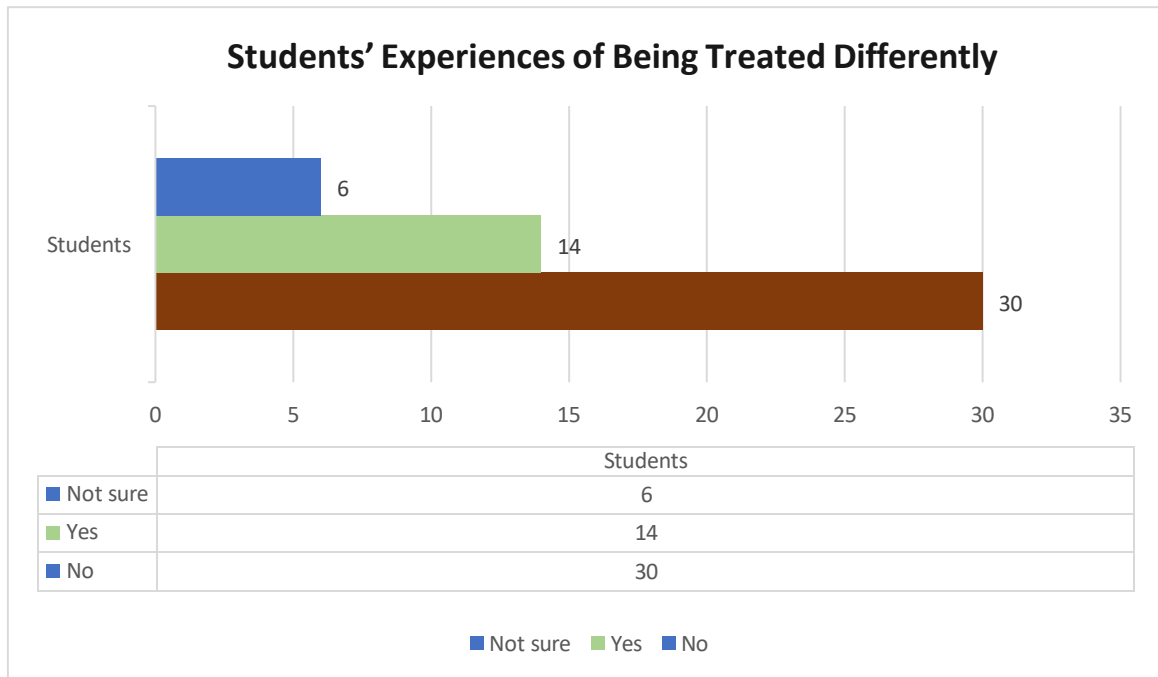
Even though not everyone experienced the same form of behavior, the fact that all 50 participants had something to say here tells us something important: accent-based discrimination, in one form or another, is familiar to many and its impact runs deeper than we might expect.

❖ **Question 16: Have you ever been treated differently because of your accent in M'sila?**

This question asked students whether they have ever felt treated differently in M'sila because of the way they speak. Out of 50 participants, 30 said no, meaning they did not feel that their accent had any impact on how others reacted to them. But 14 students (28%) answered yes, indicating that they have experienced situations where their accent may have led to unfair or different treatment. Another 6 students said they were not sure, which could mean that the experience was subtle or hard to define.

Figure 5

Students' Experiences of Being Treated Differently



Even though the majority did not report any issues, the fact that more than a quarter of the participants felt a difference suggests that accent-based bias does exist, even within the same region. Some people may be judged not by what they say, but by how they say it.

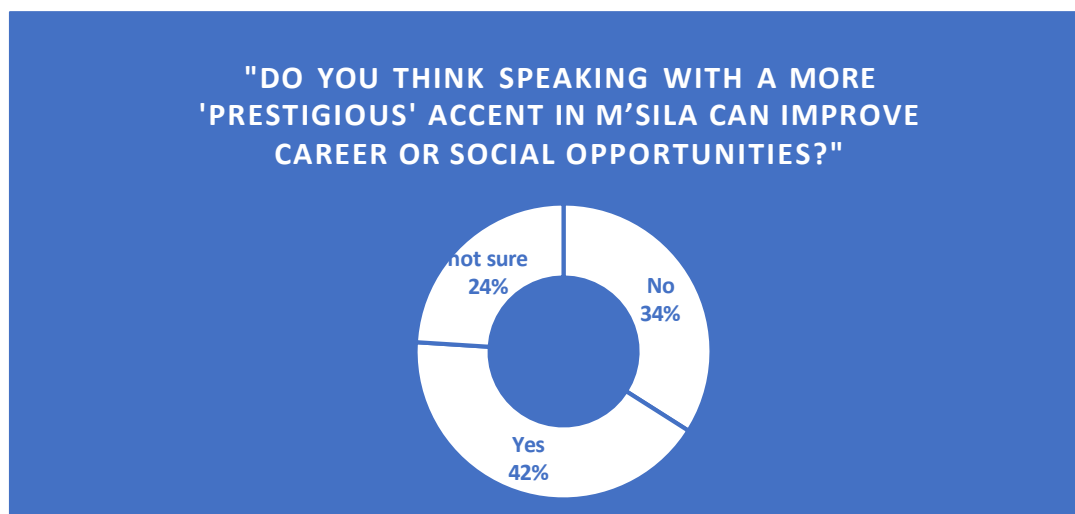
This finding connects well with the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2002), which explains how people form impressions of others based on two dimensions: warmth and competence. In the case of accents, some regional varieties might be subconsciously linked to lower competence or lower status, even if the speaker is equally capable. So, when someone speaks with a less “prestigious” accent, others might judge them as less educated or less professional without even realizing it. What this question highlights is that even small differences in how we speak can influence how others treat us, and that these judgments are often shaped by deep-rooted stereotypes rather than reality.

❖ **Question 17: Do you think speaking with a more” prestigious” accent in M’sila can improve career or social opportunities?**

This question explores whether students believe that using a more “prestigious” accent in M’sila could offer an advantage in social or professional life. It touches on how language is not just a tool for communication, but a marker of social status and opportunity.

Figure 6

Student Perceptions on the Impact of Speaking a Prestigious Accent on Career and Social Opportunities in M’Sila



Out of 50 participants:

- 21 students (42%) answered Yes, suggesting they see accent as something that can positively affect one’s image and chances for success.

- 17 students (34%) said No, rejecting the idea that speaking differently would change how people are treated.
- 12 students (24%) were Not sure, showing hesitation or awareness that the issue may depend on context.

These responses highlight a divided view. On one hand, a large portion of students recognize that certain accents, those perceived as more formal, urban, or educated can make a speaker appear more competent or refined. This ties in with the concept of linguistic prestige, where certain ways of speaking carry more weight in social and professional settings. On the other hand, a significant group does not believe that accent should or does affect opportunity. This may reflect a belief in equality or a rejection of language-based stereotypes.

The Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2002) offers a helpful lens here. It explains how people are often judged based on perceived competence and warmth. A prestigious accent may increase perceived competence, even if the speaker's actual skills remain unchanged. That perception alone can impact job prospects, credibility, and how others respond in social settings.

So, while not everyone agrees, the fact that nearly half of the respondents think accent can boost opportunities shows that language remains a powerful social signal one that can open doors or create barriers depending on how it is received.

2.7.1.5. Section five

- ❖ **Question 18: "Do you think people in M'sila should modify their accents to be taken more seriously in professional settings? Why or why not?"**

This open-ended question asked participants whether they think people in M'sila should change or adapt their accent to be taken more seriously in professional environments and why.

Out of the 50 total participants, only 31 chose to answer this question. Among them:

- 18 participants said No, expressing that modifying one's accent is unnecessary. They felt that accent has little or nothing to do with professional capability, and that communication is more about clarity and respect than about sounding "prestigious." Many described their accent as simple, clear, and natural, and saw no reason to change it. Some also linked accent to identity, saying each person's way of speaking reflects their background and personality and should not have to be altered to fit social norms.
- On the other hand, 13 participants said Yes, arguing that modifying one's accent may help with social acceptance or job opportunities. Some believed that speaking in a more formal or neutral way is expected in professional settings and can increase one's credibility or make a better impression. Others mentioned bias and linguistic prejudice, explaining that using a local or rural accent might lead to being judged or taken less seriously, especially in formal environments.

These mixed responses reflect a classic tension between authenticity and adaptation between staying true to one's identity and adjusting to meet social or professional expectations.

The responses also tie into sociolinguistic theory. According to the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2002), people often make judgments about others based on perceived warmth and competence. A "prestigious" accent may unconsciously signal competence, while a regional

or rural accent may be wrongly seen as less professional. These judgments are often not based on actual ability, but on social bias a form of linguistic stereotyping.

In short, while some students recognize the social pressure to adapt, the majority affirm the value of speaking naturally and reject the idea that professionalism should depend on how one sounds.

❖ **Question 19: "Which regional accent(s) in M'sila do you personally find most appealing? Why?"**

This open-ended question asked participants to name the regional accent(s) in M'sila they find most appealing, and to explain why. The goal was to explore personal attitudes toward local varieties of speech not based on correctness or formality, but on personal preference, emotional resonance, and cultural familiarity.

Out of the responses, the majority of participants favoured the Bousaada accent. Many described it as pleasant, soft, and natural, with some associating it with friendliness, warmth, or even elegance. For these participants, the appeal of the accent seems to go beyond sound, it reflects a certain social charm or emotional comfort.

A smaller group mentioned the urban M'sila accent, often describing it as clear, smooth, or easy to understand. This suggests that intelligibility and perceived simplicity are also important in shaping people's preferences.

Interestingly, a few participants did not choose a specific accent at all. Instead, they expressed that all accents in M'sila are acceptable and valued, which reflects a more inclusive and tolerant attitude toward regional variation. For them, language is a tool for communication, not something to judge.

These responses reflect how personal and emotional accent preferences can be. While some accents may carry social prestige or stereotypes, others are appreciated for how they make people feel whether that is connection, familiarity, or simply comfort in conversation.

❖ **Question 20: Do you have any additional comments on how accents influence attitudes and judgments in M'sila?**

This final question invited participants to share any additional thoughts about how accents influence social attitudes and judgments in M'sila. As expected in open-ended prompts placed at the end of a questionnaire, most participants chose not to respond. However, a few of the answers that were shared offered valuable insights into the lived experiences and perceptions of local students.

Some participants noted that a person may be treated with more or less respect simply because of how they speak. Others pointed out the presence of accent-based discrimination, with one student mentioning that “people tend to look down on others just because of their accent.” These reflections reveal an awareness of how language can subtly reinforce social hierarchies and even prejudice in everyday interactions.

While limited in number, these comments align with the broader findings of the questionnaire: that accent in M'sila is not just a neutral linguistic feature, but a social signal that can affect how individuals are perceived, included, or excluded.

This final input adds depth to the discussion, reminding us that beneath the surface of dialect variation lies real human experiences of identity, belonging, pride, and sometimes, exclusion.

2.8. Discussion of the Findings

In this study, the aim was to explore how regional accents in the M'sila region shape people's attitudes and social judgments, particularly among university students. Through a detailed questionnaire, a range of perceptions and experiences were collected, highlighting the close connection between language, identity, and social context.

One key finding indicates that many students associate certain accents with traits such as kindness, trustworthiness, or social status. This aligns with the Stereotype Content Model proposed by Fiske et al. (2002), which explains how individuals are often judged based on perceived warmth and competence, qualities that can be expressed through accent. For instance, accents such as Bousaada's were frequently viewed as friendly and familiar, whereas more neutral or urban accents were associated with professionalism and prestige. Similar trends have been observed in other sociolinguistic contexts, such as in the work of Giles and Powesland (1975), who showed that listeners often attach social meaning to different speech styles.

The results also revealed that 64% of participants felt more at ease with professionals who spoke in a regional accent familiar to them. A slightly smaller proportion believed that accent should not influence how someone is evaluated in a professional context. This tension between emotional comfort and rational assessment is well illustrated by Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973), which suggests that individuals often feel socially closer to speakers with similar accents, while also valuing clarity and appropriateness in formal settings. These findings are consistent with Lev-Ari and Keysar (2010), who noted that familiar accents enhance trust and ease of communication.

Additionally, more than a quarter of respondents reported being treated differently because of their accent. Several participants shared experiences of being mocked, laughed at, or not taken seriously. Such experiences reflect patterns of linguistic discrimination, as discussed by Lippi-Green (1997), who argued that accent bias can have tangible social consequences, particularly in professional and educational environments.

Despite this, most participants rejected the idea that changing their accent is necessary for career advancement. This reflects a broader awareness of accent as an important aspect of personal identity, something to be maintained rather than hidden. This attitude echoes the findings of Coupland and Bishop (2007), who noted that many individuals remain emotionally connected to their regional speech patterns, even when aware of the prestige linked to standard varieties.

Some results were more nuanced. Many respondents acknowledged that speaking with a prestigious accent could potentially improve professional or social opportunities, yet they still

resisted the idea of modifying their natural way of speaking. This apparent contradiction may reflect an internal conflict between adapting to social norms and preserving individual authenticity.

Overall, the findings support previous research suggesting that regional accents carry deep social meaning. However, this study contributes a valuable local perspective by focusing on students from the M'sila region, a group that is often underrepresented in sociolinguistic literature. It is likely that the cultural and linguistic proximity among participants, many of whom come from neighbouring towns, influenced how accent variation was perceived. This may explain why some participants were more sensitive to distinctions between “urban” and “rural” accents, while others viewed these differences as relatively minor.

Although the study relied on a single research instrument, namely a questionnaire, the inclusion of both closed and open-ended questions enabled the exploration of both general attitudes and individual experiences. These results suggest that accent is not merely a surface-level feature of speech, but a significant factor in how individuals connect, evaluate, and respond to one another in both local and broader contexts.

2.9. Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study highlight important implications for language education in M'sila. They show that students' attitudes toward regional accents can influence how they perceive professionalism, social status, and even classroom interaction. Therefore, educators and curriculum designers should:

- Raise awareness among teachers and students about accent-based bias and how it may affect communication and judgment.
- Encourage open discussions about linguistic diversity to promote tolerance and self-acceptance.
- Incorporate sociolinguistic elements into the curriculum, particularly in oral expression and communication modules, to help students reflect on their own language attitudes.
- Train teachers to create inclusive environments where students feel free to express themselves in their natural accent without fear of judgment.

These implications can help both teachers and learners navigate language use more confidently and respectfully within diverse academic and professional spaces.

2.10. Limitations of the Study

Although the study has produced valuable insights, some limitations must be acknowledged:

- The sample was limited to 50 university students from M'sila, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other regions or age groups.
- The data collection tool was restricted to a questionnaire; although it included both closed and open-ended questions, it lacked triangulation through interviews or classroom observation. This may have limited the depth and richness of the data.

- The study focused on perceptions rather than real-life interactions, which means actual behavior or accent accommodation in professional settings was not directly observed.
- Time constraints and reliance on self-reported data may have introduced personal bias or limited reflection from some participants.

Recognizing these limitations is essential for understanding the scope of the study and for guiding future research.

2.11. Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the above findings and limitations, the following research directions are recommended:

- Conduct in-depth qualitative research, such as interviews or focus groups, to explore emotional reactions to accent-based judgment in greater detail.
- Include participants from different social groups (e.g., professionals, older adults, rural populations) to compare how accent perceptions vary across generations and contexts.
- Investigate how media, education, or social mobility influence language attitudes and accent preferences in Algeria.
- Explore the long-term effects of accent-based discrimination on students' academic confidence and career development.
- Use mixed-method approaches that combine surveys with real-life observation or audio recordings to gain a fuller picture of accent accommodation and its social consequences.

These recommendations aim to deepen understanding of how accent relates to identity, belonging, and opportunity both in M'sila and beyond.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presented the methodological framework and the analysis of the data collected through a questionnaire distributed to fifty university students from M'sila. The research relied on a descriptive quantitative approach, using a structured questionnaire that included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. This tool was selected to explore students' perceptions, attitudes, and personal experiences regarding regional accents and their impact on social and professional judgments.

The use of a questionnaire proved effective in capturing a wide range of opinions, allowing the researcher to identify common patterns as well as individual variations in how students view and respond to accent diversity. This approach helped address the main research questions and provided a solid foundation for linking the empirical data to the theoretical frameworks adopted in the study namely, the Stereotype Content Model, Social Identity Theory, and Communication Accommodation Theory.

The findings revealed meaningful insights into the way accents are perceived in M'sila. They highlighted how regional speech varieties influence first impressions, social comfort, and even access to opportunities. While many students embraced their accent as part of their identity, others acknowledged feeling pressure to adapt their speech in certain contexts. These results shed light on the complex relationship between language, identity, and judgment.

The chapter concluded with a reflection on the pedagogical implications of the findings, especially in relation to classroom communication, language attitudes, and teacher training. It also acknowledged several limitations related to sample size, data collection tools, and contextual scope. Finally, the chapter offered a set of recommendations for future research aimed at broadening the understanding of accent perception in Algerian academic and social contexts.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

In this research project, titled “The Effect of Perceived Regional Accents on Interlocutors’ Attitudes and Judgments,” the aim was to explore how the way people speak, particularly in terms of regional accent, can influence social perceptions, interpersonal evaluations, and communicative experiences in both educational and professional contexts. The central goal was to investigate the role of accent as a social and psychological cue that shapes how individuals are viewed, judged, and sometimes treated.

To guide the inquiry, a solid theoretical foundation was built to shape the understanding and interpretation of the findings. Social Identity Theory helped frame how accents may contribute to group belonging and identity, while Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) provided insight into why speakers might adjust their speech depending on social context. Additionally, the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) offered a lens through which participants’ perceptions of warmth or competence could be understood. Rather than being applied directly in data analysis, these theories supported the interpretation of participants’ attitudes and experiences as revealed in the responses.

The study followed a descriptive quantitative design, relying primarily on a structured questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was carefully designed to align with the research objectives and theoretical framework, and it was divided into four sections. The first section focused on collecting demographic information to understand the participants’ background (age, gender, place of residence, language proficiency, etc.). The second and third sections explored participants’ perceptions and experiences related to regional accents,

using both closed-ended questions with Likert scales and yes/no choices to quantify responses, as well as open-ended items that allowed participants to elaborate freely.

The final section included reflection-based questions to gather deeper insights into participants' personal attitudes, social observations, and opinions regarding accent-related interactions. The questionnaire was distributed to a total of 50 participants from different towns and areas, representing a variety of regional and social backgrounds. All participants were university-level individuals with sufficient familiarity with language variation and social communication.

After collecting the responses, the data were organized into thematic categories. The closed-ended responses were processed using descriptive statistical methods such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations, particularly for items based on Likert scales. This allowed for the identification of prevailing trends, attitudes, and levels of agreement among the sample. For visual support, a series of graphs, bar charts, and donut charts were created to better illustrate participants' choices and overall patterns.

As for the open-ended responses, they were analysed qualitatively by identifying repeated themes, common expressions, and shared concerns, especially in relation to feelings of comfort, perceived discrimination, or preferred accents. These qualitative insights complemented the numerical data and helped enrich the interpretation of the results.

Overall, this structured yet flexible approach enabled the capture of both measurable patterns and nuanced perspectives on how regional accents influence social interaction, identity, and judgment. The combination of closed and open data strengthened the reliability of the study and allowed for a more complete understanding of the issue.

The findings were revealing. Many participants admitted to associating regional accents with specific social traits, such as friendliness, trustworthiness, or status. Some reported experiencing mockery or judgment based on their accent, while others expressed pride and attachment to their way of speaking. Although a few respondents acknowledged that adopting a more prestigious accent might help in formal settings, the majority valued linguistic authenticity over adaptation.

The study was shaped by three key questions:

- How are regional accents linked to social traits like competence or status?
- How do accents influence perception in formal settings such as schools or workplaces?
- Do people feel pressured to change their accent to be accepted?

The answers to these questions provided valuable insights into the powerful but often overlooked role of accent in shaping social life.

The results of this research contribute not only to the field of sociolinguistics, but also to language education and communication studies, by promoting awareness of how linguistic variation affects real-life interactions. Pedagogically, the study calls for greater inclusion and respect for accent diversity in academic and professional spaces.

That said, the study faced some limitations. It relied solely on a questionnaire, and the sample was limited in scope. Broader research using qualitative methods and more varied participants would likely yield even richer data.

Ultimately, this study affirms that accents carry deep social meaning affecting not only how people sound, but how they are perceived, understood, and judged. As such, they deserve continued attention in both scholarly research and everyday practice.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Students' Questionnaire

**Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of English Language and Literature**

Dear participants,

Language and accents influence how we perceive and judge others in social and academic settings. This questionnaire aims to explore how students in M'sila perceive regional accents and how these perceptions affect their attitudes toward others.

Your responses will help us understand whether accents impact judgments about intelligence, credibility, or social status among students. The data collected will be used for academic research and will remain confidential. Your responses will remain anonymous and will be used solely for academic purposes. Please answer honestly based on your personal experiences and perceptions. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Thank you in advance.

Section 1: Demographic Information

- You age :
- Gender:
 - Male
 - Female
- Place of residence:
 - M'sila City
 - Rural area in M'sila
 - Other (Please specify): _____
- First language(s): _____
- Other languages spoken: _____
- How long have you lived in M'sila?
 - Less than 5 years
 - 5-10 years
 - More than 10 years
 - I have always lived in M'sila

Section 2: Accent Perception in M'sila

7. Are you able to recognize different regional accents in M'sila?
 - o Yes
 - o No
 8. Which regional accents of M'sila are you most familiar with? *(Select all that apply)*
 - o Urban M'sila accent
 - o Rural accents (e.g., mountain and desert regions)
 - o Rural(Bousaada) accent
 - o Other (Please specify): _____
 9. Do you think people in M'sila associate different accents with particular social traits?
 - o Yes
 - o No
 10. If yes, what characteristics do you associate with certain accents? *(E.g., intelligence, kindness, trustworthiness, prestige, etc.)*
 - Open-ended: _____
-

Section 3: Attitudes Towards Regional Accents in M'sila

11. How much do you agree with the following statements?
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Some regional accents in M'sila sound more prestigious than others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Certain accents in M'sila are associated with higher education and intelligence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some accents in M'sila sound more friendly and approachable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I unconsciously judge people based on their accent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People with urban accents are perceived as more professional.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bousaada or rural accents are sometimes considered less prestigious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The media influences how we perceive accents in M'sila.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 4: Accent and Social/Professional Judgments

12. Does an accent influence your perception of a person's professionalism in M'sila?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

13. If yes, which accents do you associate with professionalism?

- Open-ended: _____

14. Would you feel more comfortable with a teacher, doctor, or official who speaks with a particular accent? Why?

- Open-ended: _____

15. If you've ever been exposed to prejudice before (in other Wilayas too), what type of discriminatory behaviour did you experience ?

- Laughs Jokes Insults Repetition of sounds and words

Overlooking Treating you with arrogance

If there is any behaviour that is not

mentioned here, please, indicate it here:

.....

16. Have you ever been treated differently because of your accent in M'sila?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

17. Do you think speaking with a more “prestigious” accent in M'sila can improve career or social opportunities?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Section 5: Final Thoughts

18. Do you think people in M'sila should modify their accents to be taken more seriously in professional settings? Why or why not?

- Open-ended: _____

19. Which regional accent(s) in M'sila do you personally find most appealing? Why?

- Open-ended: _____

20. Do you have any additional comments on how accents influence attitudes and judgments in M'sila?

- Open-ended: _____

Thank you for your time..

ملخص

لطالما كان لطريقة الكلام تأثير أكبر على التصورات الاجتماعية من مضمون الكلام نفسه. وتعدّ اللهجات الإقليمية من أبرز المؤشرات على الهوية الثقافية أو الجغرافية، لكنها أيضاً إشارات اجتماعية تؤثر في الطريقة التي يُقِيم بها المتحدثون. إذ يمكن للهجات أن تثير افتراضات تتعلق بمستوى التعليم أو الذكاء أو الموثوقية، مما ينعكس على طبيعة التفاعلات الاجتماعية بطريقة خفية ولكنها مؤثرة.

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة تصورات طلبة الجامعة تجاه اللهجات الإقليمية في ولاية المسيلة، مع التركيز على كيفية تأثير هذه التصورات في المواقف الاجتماعية والأحكام الشخصية. وقد تم اعتماد منهج وصفي كمي باستخدام استبيان منظم شارك فيه 50 طالباً من خلفيات جغرافية ولغوية متنوّعة. وقد ضمّ الاستبيان أسئلة مغلقة وأخرى مفتوحة، مما أتاح جمع بيانات كمية دقيقة إلى جانب تجارب وآراء شخصية. أظهرت النتائج أن العديد من الطلاب يربطون بعض اللهجات بصفات معيّنة مثل الود، أو المهنية، أو المكانة الاجتماعية. على سبيل المثال، اعتُبرت لهجة بوسعادة وديّة ومألوفة، في حين ارتبطت اللهجات المحايدة أو الحضرية بمظاهر السلطة أو الرسمية. كما أفاد بعض المشاركين بأنهم تعرضوا للمعاملة بشكل مختلف بسبب لهجتهم، مما يشير إلى وجود تحيّز حتى داخل نفس المنطقة. من خلال تركيزه على سياق جزائري نادراً ما تم التطرق إليه في الدراسات السابقة، يقدّم هذا البحث إسهاماً مهماً في فهم العلاقة بين اللغة والتصورات الاجتماعية. كما تؤكد النتائج على ضرورة رفع الوعي بالتحيزات القائمة على اللهجة، لا سيما في البيئات التعليمية والمهنية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللهجات الإقليمية، تصوّر الكنة، الحكم الاجتماعي، المواقف اللغوية، علم اللغة الاجتماعي، التحيز اللهجي.