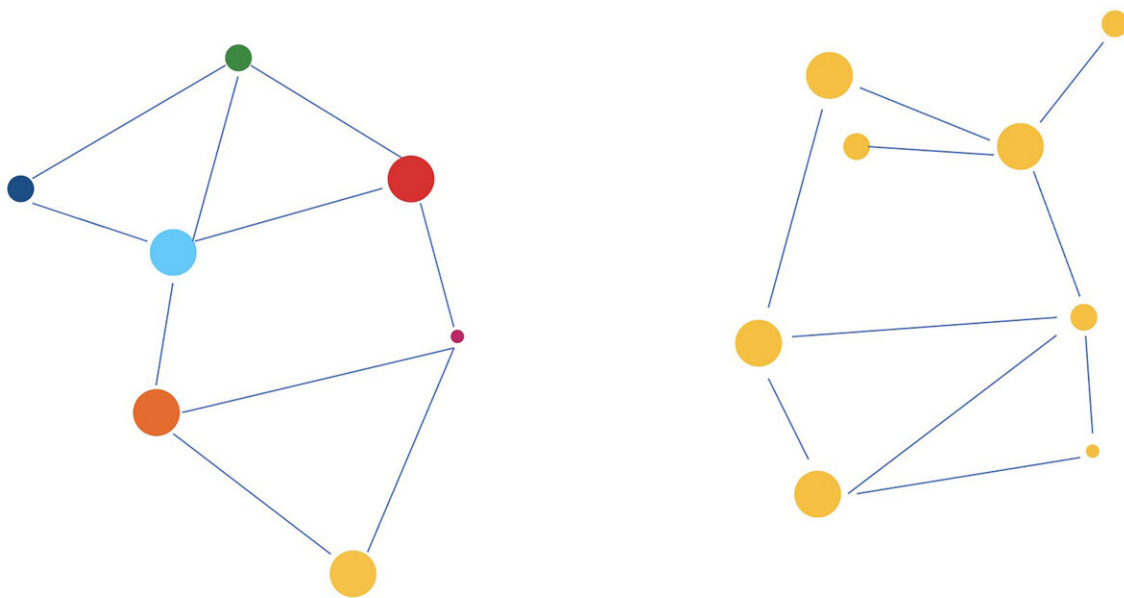


Exploring how diverse social networks reduce accent judgments

May 24 2022



Visual cues and the diversity of the listener's social network can impact their ability to understand and transcribe sentences after listening to the spoken word.
Credit: Ethan Kutlu, University of Iowa

Everyone has an accent. But the intelligibility of speech doesn't just depend on that accent; it also depends on the listener. Visual cues and the diversity of the listener's social network can impact their ability to understand and transcribe sentences after listening to the spoken word.

Ethan Kutlu, of the University of Iowa, will discuss this [social phenomenon](#) in his presentation, "Perception in context: How racialized identities impact [speech perception](#)," which will take place May 24 at 12:15 p.m. Eastern U.S. as part of the 182nd Meeting of the Acoustical Society of America at the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel.

Kutlu and his team paired American, British, and Indian varieties of English with images of white and South Asian faces. While the accents differed, they were all normalized to have the same base intelligibility. They played these voices for listeners from a low-diverse (Gainesville, Florida) and high-diverse environment (Montreal, Quebec).

"Racial and [linguistic diversity](#) in our social networks and in our surrounding environments impact how we engage in perceiving speech. Encountering new voices and accents that are different from our own improves our ability to attend to speech that varies from our own," said Kutlu. "We all have accents and embracing this is not hurting our own or others' speech perception. On the contrary, it helps all of us."

A participant's ability to transcribe sentences decreased and they rated voices as more accented whenever the speech was paired with a South Asian face—no matter the English variety of the spoken word. Indian English paired with white faces was judged as heavily accented when compared to British and American English.

However, these results varied greatly by the listener's social network and geographic context. Montreal participants, residents of a dual language city, were overall more accurate when transcribing speech. They did not change their judgments based on the faces they saw on the screen.

More information: Conference: acousticalsociety.org/asa-meetings/

Provided by Acoustical Society of America

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