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The influence of media exposure on children's evaluations of non-local accents

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Abstract

This study investigated whether positive or negative media exposure to non-local accents influences children's language attitudes of those accents. Following exposure to heroic or villainous cartoon characters with either a regional (British; Experiment 1, N=89) or non-native (Experiment 2, N=84) accents, children were tested on a friend preference task, during which they selected—given a choice between a locally-accented child and a British-accented (Experiment 1) or Korean-accented (Experiment 2) child—which one they wanted to be friends with. Consistent with previous literature, children selected native-accented speakers at above chance rates, both when paired with British- ($M=55\%$, $\beta=0.25$, $p=0.03$) and Korean-accented children ($M=86\%$, $\beta=2.63$, $p<.001$). There was no evidence that exposure to heroic vs. villainous characters influenced children's preferences for native-accented children in either experiment. Follow-up work is investigating whether protracted exposure to evil/heroic characters with non-local accents influences children's evaluations to non-local varieties across a wider range of tasks.