

In Collaboration with R. C. Hodgson,
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Spoken language is an identifying feature of members of a national or cultural group and any listener's attitude toward members of a particular group should generalize to the language they use. From this viewpoint, evaluational reactions to a spoken language should be similar to those prompted by interaction with individuals who are perceived as members of the group that uses it, but because the use of the language is one aspect of behavior common to a variety of individuals, hearing the language is likely to arouse mainly generalized or stereotyped characteristics of the group. Thus, when one hears a radio broadcast of an international meeting and encounters passages of a foreign language, one's evaluational reactions to the communication are attributable, in part, to the language used and likely reflect generalized attitudinal reactions to the group that uses it.

The purpose of the present investigation was to determine the significance spoken language has for listeners by analyzing their evaluational reactions to English and French. Since we were interested in reactions that are attributable primarily to the language itself, we attempted to minimize the effects of both the voice of the speaker and his message by employing bilingual speakers reading the same message in two languages. In view of previous studies (see Licklider and Miller, 1951, p. 1070f) which have shown that evaluations of personality based solely upon voice have little or no reliability, it was predicted that the differences in the favorableness of any S's evaluations of the French and English guises of speakers would reflect his attitude toward members of his own and members of the other language group. The study was carried out with Ss living in Montreal, a community whose history centers largely in a French-English schism

which is perhaps as socially significant for residents of the Province of Quebec as that between the North and the South is for Southerners in the United States.

METHOD

Procedure

A 2 1/2 min. passage of French prose of a philosophical nature was translated into fluent English and tape recordings were made of the voices of four male bilinguals each of whom read both French and English versions of the passage. Recordings were also made of the voices of two other men, one reading the passage in English, the other in French. There were, then, 10 taped voices, four of which were "matched," each speaker using both languages, and two used as "filler" voices and for practice. The 10 voices were presented to Ss in alternating French-English order starting with the two filler voices and allowing the maximum possible interval between successive presentations of the English and French guises of any speaker. Evaluational reactions to the matched voices only were examined.

The study was introduced as an experimental investigation of the extent to which peoples' judgments about a speaker are determined by his voice and Ss were reminded of the common phenomenon of having a voice on the radio or telephone summon up a picture in the listener's mind of the person speaking. Ss were not told that they were going to hear some of the voices twice, but rather that they would hear 10 recorded male voices, all reading the same passage, five in French and five in English. The two languages, it was said, were being used to give greater scope to the experiment. In this regard, Ss were given copies of the French and English versions of the text they were to hear so that they could be acquainted with the message and the languages and be better prepared to pay attention only to the voices of the speakers. There was no indication that any S became aware of the fact that bilingual speakers were used.

The Ss were also given a response sheet for each voice which directed them to rate each of 14 traits on 6 point scales