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LINGUISTIC IDENTITY AND TRUST IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: DO NATIVE SPEAKERS HAVE AN ADVANTAGE?

ЯЗЫКОВАЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ И ДОВЕРИЕ В МЕЖДУНАРОДНОЙ ДЕЛОВОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ: ИМЕЮТ ЛИ НОСИТЕЛИ ЯЗЫКА ПРЕИМУЩЕСТВО?

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Abstract: *Данная статья рассматривает влияние языковой идентичности на доверие в международной деловой коммуникации. В глобальном контексте, где английский язык широко используется, большинство встреч и взаимодействий происходит между людьми, для которых он не является родным, что вызывает вопросы о том, как язык влияет на восприятие человека.*

Целью этого исследования является анализ того, имеют ли носители языка преимущество в плане достоверности и доверия. Исследование основано на аналитическом и описательном методе с использованием данных из недавних исследований восприятия акцента.

В результате, носители языка чаще всего воспринимаются как более компетентные, преимущественно благодаря легкости понимания их речи и ясности. Однако, можно утверждать, что это преимущество определяется восприятием, а не реальной компетентностью.

Так, исследование подчеркивает важность внимания на ясность и эффективную коммуникацию, а не на языковое совершенство в международной экономической среде.

Key words: *Языковая идентичность, доверие, международная деловая коммуникация, акцент.*
JEL CLASSIFICATION: D83; Z13; F23

INTRODUCTION

In the epoch of globalization international communication became essential in business environment. English language is used on a large scale as a „lingua franca", however, most interactions take place between non-native speakers. In this context, linguistic identity can influence the way individuals are perceived, specially in terms of trust and competence. In the business environment, decisions are often made under conditions of limited information, which makes the first impressions highly significant. In these cases accent and fluency can act as „signals" and determine the level of trust granted to a person.

These signals do not always reflect the actual level of professionalism. Nevertheless, research shows that the speech of native speakers is perceived as more convincing and trustworthy, even in cases where the level of competence remains the same.

In this regard, a key question arises: do native speakers really have an advantage in international business communication or is this advantage merely a result of subjective perception?

The objective of this research is to analyse the influence of language identity on the formation of trust in international business communication, as well as to determine whether native speakers have an advantage in perception compared to non-native speakers. Additionally, the aim is to identify the role of cognitive factors, such as processing fluency and accent perception in assesing the competence and reliability of an interlocutor.

BASIC CONTENT

An important reference point for the present research is the study conducted by Lorenzoni, Faccio, and Navarrete (2024), entitled „Does Foreign-Accented Speech Affect Credibility? Evidence from the Illusory-Truth Paradigm", which analyzes the influence of accent on the perception of credibility.

The study involved a sample of 60 participants, who evaluated statements presented by both native speakers with a foreign accent, using a 6-point Likert scale (1- „completely false" and 6- „completely truth").

An essential aspect of the study is the fact that accent influences the perception of credibility through cognitive processing: trustworthiness – 5.54 for native speakers vs 5.39 for non-native speakers (table 1). Consequently, speech with a foreign accent requires greater processing effort, which reduces the level of trust given to the information.

Furthermore, the analysis of speakers' traits showed that native speakers are perceived as more competent, intelligent, and successful, while differenced regarding social traits, such as sociability or friendliness, are less pronounced. Therefore, the study confirms the existence of a systematic bias in credibility evaluation, which favors native speakers in the context of international communication.

Table 1. Comparative Evaluation of Native and Foreign Speakers

Characteristic	Native	Foreign
Brilliant	4.82	4.45
Successful	4.5	3.86
Friendly	4.68	4.55
Sociable	4.39	4.37
Trustworthy	5.54	5.39
Competent	5.2	4.69

Source: "Does Foreign-Accented Speech Affect Credibility? Evidence from the Illusory-Truth Paradigm" (Lorenzoni, Faccio, Navarrete, 2024)

It is important to note that such differences in perception often occur at an unconscious level. Participants in communication do not always understand that their evaluation depends on the accent or speech form, and not only on the content. As a result, in the international business environment, decisions may be partially based on subjective impressions rather than solely on an objective assessment of information.

In the context of international business communication, the concept of linguistic identity becomes particularly important, as it reflects a person's belonging to a certain language and cultural group. In this case, language acts not only as a means of conveying information but also as a marker of social identity, influencing the perception of the communication partner. Native speakers of a language are often automatically perceived as members of the "in-group," which contributes to faster trust formation.

From this standpoint, linguistic identity creates the so-called "in-group bias" effect, whereby people are more likely to trust those who speak the same language or do so without an accent. In the international business environment, this can lead to unequal communication conditions, as non-native speakers find themselves in the position of the "out-group," regardless of their professional skills.

In addition, using a foreign language requires additional intellectual effort on the part of the speaker, which can reduce spontaneity of speech, confidence, and expressiveness. As a result, even highly skilled professionals may be perceived as less competent or less persuasive. This confirms the existing stereotype of the superiority of native speakers and affects the process of decision-making, negotiations, and building business relationships.

Thus, the advantage of native speakers in international communication is explained not only by the level of language proficiency, but also by deeper socio-psychological mechanisms related to

identity, perception, and trust. This confirms that the language factor can act as a hidden source of inequality in the global business environment.

Description of the research methods used.

Within the present research were used several research methods, which were adapted to the analysis of linguistic identity and its relationship with the level of confidence in international communication.

The sociological method was used indirectly, through the analysis of existing data from specialized studies. This allowed for the interpretation of how participants perceive native and non-native speakers in the context of international communication.

The comparative method was used to analyze the differences between evaluations given to native speakers and those with a foreign accent. Systematic trends were identified in participant's perception, especially regarding dimensions such as confidence and competence.

Due to the statistical method, the obtained data were processed and interpreted. The analysis included using statistical models, which allowed highlighting significant differences between the research hypotheses.

By combining these methods, the research provides a comprehensive perspective on how linguistic identity influences the perception of confidence in international communication.

The obtained results.

The research results highlight that linguistic identity has a significant impact on how speakers are perceived in international communication.

Data analysis shows that native speakers are evaluated more favorably regarding traits associated with professional status, such as competence, intelligence, and success. For instance, the level of trustworthiness is higher for native speakers (5.54) compared to non-native speakers (5.39), indicating a consistent tendency to grant them more credibility.

At the same time, differences are more evident in the case of characteristics related to performance and professional ability, while social traits, such as sociability or friendliness, show smaller variations. This suggests that the accent particularly influences cognitive evaluations, not emotional ones.

It is important to note that the advantage of native speakers is determined less by their actual level of proficiency, than by socially formed attitudes regarding what speech is considered correct, confident, and professional. As a result, people for whom the language is not native may face a form of inequality: their ideas and arguments are often perceived as less convincing, even if they are valuable.

At the same time, it should be taken into account that such differences in perception can have consequences for professional interactions. In the context of international business, this may affect the distribution of roles within a team, participation in discussions, and employees' career opportunities. To emphasize, native speakers tend to take a more active role in communication, whereas non-native speakers may limit their participation due to fears of being misunderstood or misjudged.

Therefore, language identity becomes an important factor that affects the level of trust and the effectiveness of communication in the international business environment.

CONCLUSION/RECOMENDATIONS.

In conclusion, the research results confirm that linguistic identity influences the perception of trust in international communication, especially in the initial stages of interaction. Native speakers benefit from an advantage, as are evaluated as more credible and competent, primarily due to the clarity and familiarity of their speech.

However, this advantage does not necessarily reflect real differences in competence, but is determined by the way information is perceived and processed. Consequently, evaluations based only on linguistic aspects can lead to misinterpations in the international professional environment.

In this context, it is recommended that international organizations pay increased attention to the development of intercultural communication skills and reduce dependence on superficial criteria such as accent or level of fluency. It is also important to promote an inclusive professional environment, where linguistic diversity is seen as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. At the same time, non-native speakers can compensate for potential perceptual disadvantages through clarity of expression, effective structuring of the message, and the use of communication strategies adapted to international context.

In addition, it is essential to create conditions in which communication participants feel confident regardless of their language proficiency level. Supporting open dialogue, showing respect for accents and different styles of expression contribute to the formation of a more comfortable and productive work environment. In such conditions, employees focus less on possible language mistakes and more on the content of their ideas and arguments.

It is also important to encourage practices aimed at simplifying and clarifying communication, such as using a clear structure for messages, avoiding complex phrasing, and clarifying key points. This helps reduce the risk of misunderstandings and makes interaction more accessible for all participants, regardless of their language level. As a result, the effectiveness of teamwork and the quality of decisions made in an international business environment increase.

Therefore, trust in business communication should not be determined by the lingustic form of the message, but by its content, coherence , and relevance.

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