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REGIONAL VARIATION AS AN INDIVIDUAL'S SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BRAND: NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE PERSPECTIVE³

The present paper investigates Serbian EFL learners' attitudes and stereotypes towards speakers whose speech is marked by features of different local varieties in Serbian, as a mother tongue, and English, as a foreign language. The study has a twofold aim: on the one hand, we aim to investigate whether the speaker's regional variety can affect their public image and the first impression they make on a listener, and on the other hand, we seek to provide an insight into the level of stereotyping which students educated in philology attribute to the perceived accents. In order to conduct an empirical analysis we asked students to listen to the pre-recorded speakers of their mother tongue (L1) and a foreign language (L2), who were typical representatives of regional varieties. The students had the task to provide descriptions of the speakers along three sociolinguistic dimensions: social status, level of competence and linguistic attractiveness, and for this particular purpose a semantic differential scale of attributes was implemented. The results showed that Serbian EFL learners employed a higher level of negative stereotyping when describing speakers from L1 than from L2, which, although expected, indicates that a higher level of negative stereotyping is present if students are dealing with languages and cultures that are more familiar, or in some way closer to them, be it psychologically or emotionally. However, they easily managed to ascribe certain characteristics to speakers merely based on the way the recorded people spoke, which serves as an indication that a local linguistic variety functions as a particular brand of an individual's identity.

Keywords: accentism, standard language ideology, brand, regional varieties, L1 Serbian, L2 English

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the days of modern forms of communications, especially those associated with the Internet and advances in telecommunications, many instances of social communication, such as job interviews or advertising, occur without actually meeting the interlocutor face to face. Accompanied by an enormous amount of available information and vast circulation of data, these situations lead participants in the communication process to frequently resort to cognitive mechanisms that enable them to rapidly and selectively choose relevant pieces of information. Hence, the impression that a listener makes when he or she listens to the other speaker is growingly starting to be based not only on what, but also on *how* something is said. Consequently, the focus of the message is shifted from the content itself to the linguistic form used to convey the message. In certain cases formal features prevail over semantic ones, and it is this aspect that constantly arouses interest of researchers in various fields of study, linguistic and non-linguistic alike, with the aim of establishing which formal components make a brand appealing.

Although most commonly used in the area of marketing, the concept of *brand*⁴, and by extension the idea of *linguistic branding* can also be applied to the domain of language studies, particularly in the area of sociolinguistic variation, due to the operational similarity in relation to the process of associative reasoning deployed in marketing and sociolinguistic contexts. This phenomenon has been observed in various domains of research. In the area of employment, for instance, the findings by the law firm *Peninsular* showed that as many as 80% of employers decide on the suitable employees based on their regional accent (Marshall 2013). It has also been noted that sole reliance on one's way of speaking in making judgments about a person's traits and background often result in negative stereotyping (Giles, Billings 2004: 202). The situation is made even more complex since individuals can typically control the content of their speech fairly well, but one's accent may communicatively prevail over their conscious efforts and control of linguistic transfer of information. Admittedly, a regional accent can gradually change depending on a person's psychology and age, level of education, vocation and adaptation to the new environment, as is the case of moving away from home (Esling 1998).⁵

It has been duly noted that every person possesses an accent and that it is an important marker of one's identity as it can trigger social categorization mechanisms signalling one's nationality, ethnicity, social status, and the like

4 American Marketing Association (AMA) defines the term brand as "a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers." Further, AMA adds that a brand ISO brand standards say that "[it] is an intangible asset" intended to create "distinctive images and associations in the minds of stakeholders, thereby generating economic benefit/values." Source: <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/>, retrieved on January 20th 2020.

5 The differentiation between accent and dialect is understandably relevant here, since in dialectology and sociolinguistics, among other linguistic subdisciplines, a distinction is made between the level of accent, which refers to pronunciation features only, and dialect, which refers to features of grammar and vocabulary as well (Behrens, Neeman 2004).

(Lippi-Green 1997). What is more, there are opinions that language is an even more dominant cue for the mentioned categorizations than one's personal appearance (Rakić et al. 2011). Prejudice and language attitudes result in perceptions of non-standard varieties as the ones denoting the lazy, uneducated and incompetent (Gluszek, Dovidio 2010). Such representations are termed "accentisms" or "linguicisms" in line with similar terms such as sexism or ageism, for instance. The more ethnocentric a person is, the more negatively will they tend to stereotype accented speech (Neuliep, Speten-Hansen 2013).

A bias towards standard language falls under to the so-called *standard language ideology*, a concept which involves the imposition of an institutionally standardized, yet idealized language variety typically spoken by the upper middle class (Milroy, Milroy 1991; Lippi-Green 1997: 64), which serves as a part of the theoretical framework of the present paper. Since standard language ideology results in non-standardized varieties being regarded as "incorrect", their speakers are consequently regarded as having a lower social status. Dialectologists have, however, predominantly advocated the idea of an equal status of dialects and standardized varieties of a language, although general population's linguistic attitudes may deviate strongly (Wolfram, Schilling-Estes 2006).

According to Lippi-Green (1997: 166-170), standard language ideology is emphasized through the news, entertainment industry and education system, the latter being the base of our research. On the whole, we argue that despite high penetration of values involving diversity in modern societies, even today the situation in Serbia is similar to that elaborated in the consulted literature. This is especially noticeable in the news on national TV programmes, while the situation in public schools may sometimes depend on the personal preference or regional variety of the teachers themselves. Our research also accords with the position that the issue of standard language preference is closely related to the sociolinguistic notions of prestige in language, where certain varieties or particular language features have overt prestige, as is the case with standard language, while some varieties have covert prestige, such as regional or social dialects (Trudgill 1972).

2. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND SOCIAL CATEGORIZATION OF SPEAKERS

In order to put the present investigation into closer perspective with the previous research on the topic and issues discussed here, a brief overview of former findings is in order. Language attitude⁶ investigations began in the second half of the 20th century with a study that employed a matched guise technique to elicit the attitudes of French and English-speaking Canadians to one and the same person speaking both languages (Lambert et al. 1960). Numerous later studies confirmed the findings that linguistically untrained

6 A definition of attitude is provided by Eagly and Chaiken (1993: 1), who describe it as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor".

individuals can indeed differentiate between language varieties and do form stereotypes based on language (see for example McKenzie 2010).

As a rule, L1 English speakers tend to rate accents that are closer to the standard as more positive in terms of status or prestige, while non-standard accents are said to be more positively rated in terms of social attractiveness or solidarity (Coupland, Bishop 2007). Listeners seem to see standard accents as evoking intelligence, confidence, higher status in terms of job positions, while speakers of non-standard accents appear to be perceived as more honest, more reliable, friendlier and funnier. To show this, Hiraga (2005) presented results showing that RP speakers were perceived as the wealthiest, having the highest social status and intelligence, while speakers of Brummie⁷ were considered exactly the opposite. Also, Cockney was once regarded as unpleasant to the ear (Giles 1970). The unfavourable perception based solely on the manner of speaking goes so far that speakers of non-standard accents are sometimes thought more likely to commit a crime than speakers of the standard (Dixon, Mahoney 2004). Dennis Preston (1998: 148) found that speakers possessing the accents of the American South are perceived as rural and uneducated, and that New York accent is stereotyped as “boorish, criminal and violent”, whereas speakers often find the accents that resemble their own the most pleasant to listen to. Strikingly enough, even teachers, who are expected to promote equality and social tolerance, resort to negative stereotyping and discrimination, as a study on Australian teachers showed that poor children’s accent deviating from the standard was regarded as “inferior” or “deficient” (Haig, Oliver 2003).

When it comes to stereotyping in a non-native context, non-native speakers of a language are typically perceived to be of lower socioeconomic status, whereas the ones with native accents are perceived as more successful, holding higher status job positions (Munro 2003). Dalton-Puffer et al. (1997) reported that Austrian EFL learners saw RP as the authentic variety of English, and Mompeán González (2003: 247) confirmed similar results among Spanish EFL learners who strove to learn British accent since it was deemed authentic, pure and underived. In another study, however, Danish speakers reported on being fascinated with American culture (Ladegaard, Sachdev 2006).

As illustrated by examples above, the research about opinions concerning English sociolinguistic strata has been prolific in the English speaking world, yet this subject matter has not gained much traction in the Serbian environment. One of the rare studies of language attitudes to regional varieties of English in the Serbian academic context was conducted by Tatjana Paunović (2009), in which she investigated Serbian EFL students’ attitudes to 8 regional native English varieties and 2 non-native varieties. Using a semantic differential scale, the author investigated 15 traits along the three sociolinguistic dimensions: prestige, solidarity and linguistic attractiveness (Paunović 2009: 530). The results demonstrated preference for British English and American English standard varieties and general unfamiliarity with other regional

7 Brummie dialect is linguistic variety spoken by many people living in Birmingham, England, while Cockney represents a variety traditionally spoken by the members of working-class living in London.

varieties of English, marked occasionally by negative stereotyping which emerged especially during the identification of a Southern American accent. In another study about the perception of non-native speakers of English in relation to the regional background of people using various English varieties, Jerotijević-Tišma (2016) found that Serbian EFL learners thought Australian, Irish, Scottish and Canadian English were the easiest to recognize, alongside (as expected) British and American English, while African and Asian varieties represented the greatest challenge in terms of identification.

3. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

Taking into consideration the notion that accent bias is ingrained in a person's mind (Wolfram, Christian 1989), and building upon previous research, especially Paunović (2009), the present paper aims at investigating the extent of linguistic stereotyping of the students of philology, namely Serbian students of English at the tertiary level of education, realized in two dimensions: the interlingual and intralingual one. More precisely, the goal of the research is to investigate how Serbian EFL students characterize speakers with different regional accents, both those of their mother tongue, and those belonging to L2 English. In this way we wanted to see whether stereotyping in one's native language can be mapped onto a foreign language, as well as whether similar principles of social categorization operate in both languages, rendering a "linguistic branding" of sorts. English being *de facto* the global *lingua franca*, with an ever increasing number of speakers of international varieties of English, it is becoming aware of the negative stereotyping and its consequences that seems particularly relevant for English major students, and our investigation is directed at establishing the actual state of affairs among students of English with the aim of potential reconsideration of their standpoints and expansion of the views regarding the existing linguistic diversity.

1.1. Research questions

The present paper is based upon the following two research questions:

- What are Serbian EFL students' attitudes towards speakers of different varieties in their mother tongue (Serbian) and in a foreign language (English), along the dimensions of social status, competence and linguistic attractiveness? (following Bayard et al. 2001 and Ladegaard, Sachdev 2006)
- Is standard language ideology prevalent in the attitudes of Serbian EFL learners and does it apply equally in L1 and L2? (as defined in Lippi-Green 1997)

Based on our teaching experience so far, which includes primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education both private and public, the outcomes of the research are expected to show discrepant results regarding the amount of negative stereotyping among students coming from different geographical

regions in Serbia, with students speaking standardized dialects showing a greater degree of negative stereotyping, hence confirming the assumptions from previous studies regarding the prevalence of standard language ideology. However, we also expect the results of the survey to be more informative regarding the explored social dimensions.

3.1. Participants

A total of 42 fourth-year students from the academic year of 2013/2014 at the English Department of the Faculty of Philology and Arts, University of Kragujevac, participated in the study. A more detailed account of the chosen sample is given in Table 1:

Table 1: Biographical stratification of the participants

Gender (%)	Mean Age	Mean Age of Onset	Stated Variety in L1 (%)	Stated Variety in L2 (%)
Male 28.57%	22.19	6.67	Šumadija-Vojvodina 42.85%	Southern British Standard 21.43% General American 78.57%
Female 71.43%			Kosovo-Resavian 28.57%	
			East Herzegovian 19.05%	
			Prizren-Timok 9.52%	

As we can see in Table 1, the majority of participants are female, speaking a standardized variety of L1.⁸ Moreover, the greatest proportion of the participants stated that they preferred General American variety, but the proclaimed preference was not assessed by any formal test and thus not confirmed as the variety they actually used.

At the time of the research, the students were attending *English as an International Language* course, learning about international varieties of English, having previously completed *Language in Society* course during which they learnt about fundamental terms and notions of contemporary sociolinguistics. The particular population was selected because the participants in the research were all students of philology at the final year of undergraduate studies, when they are expected to put linguistic stereotypes aside due to the increased awareness of the variability in language.

3.2. Instruments

The primary instrument for gathering biographical information about the participants was an open-ended questionnaire, while a closed-ended questionnaire was used for expressing attitudes towards the speakers of L1 and L2 regional varieties. The questions were based on a seven-point semantic

8 East Herzegovian and Šumadija-Vojvodina dialects represent Neo-Štokavian varieties which constitute the foundation of the standardized Serbian literary language.

differential scale including features along the dimensions of social status, competence and linguistic attractiveness and the chosen attributes were combined and adapted for our purposes from different sources (Bayaard et al. 2001; Ladegaard, Sachdev 2006). The following attributes were selected as descriptors for each dimension:

1. *education, social class and authority* for the social status dimension;
2. *industrious, determined, intelligent* for the competence dimension;
3. *honest, pleasant to listen to and friendly* for the linguistic attractiveness dimension.

The participants had the task to listen to the provided recording and decide on the attributes of the respective speakers on the scale from 1 (the lowest value) to 7 (the highest value).

The recorded listening samples represent the second instrument. Namely, the L1 batch of recordings consisted of five speakers belonging to five different regional varieties of Serbian, speaking in five different accents, and the recordings were taken from Jerotijević-Tišma's personal archive. The L2 group of recordings incorporated five speakers of different regional/social varieties of British English, taken from the IDEA (International Dialects of English Archive) website.⁹ The sample recordings focused on describing an event from personal life, representing spontaneous speech. A detailed account of the recorded speakers is given in Table 2:

Table 2: Stratificational structure of the recorded speakers

Speaker	Variety	Gender	Age	Hometown
L1 speakers (Serbian)				
S1	East-Herzegovian (S1 ¹⁰)	female	46	Loznica
S2	Šumadija-Vojvodina (S)	female	32	Novi Sad
S3	Kosovo-Resavian (NS)	male	42	Jagodina
S4	Prizren-Timok (NS)	male	27	Leskovac
S5	Zeta-South Sandžak (NS)	female	25	Raška
L2 speakers (English)				
S6	Cockney (NS)	female	21	Hounslow
S7	Brummie (NS)	male	22	Birmingham
S8	Scouse ¹¹ (NS)	female	31	Liverpool
S9	Geordie (NS)	female	39	Newcastle
S10	RP (S)	male	86	Suffolk

⁹ Available at <https://www.dialectsarchive.com/dialects-accents>.

¹⁰ The abbreviations used in Table 2 and tables henceforth represent standardized (S) and non-standardized (NS) varieties.

¹¹ Similar to the aforementioned Cockney and Brummie, Scouse and Geordie represent the local varieties spoken in the towns of Liverpool and Newcastle respectively, while RP (Received Pronunciation) is a well-established term designating a socially prestigious accent spoken mainly in the south of England.

A short follow-up questionnaire with twelve Likert-scale and open-ended questions was distributed to the participants to gain insight into Serbian speakers' attitudes and reasoning that lie behind the decisions expressed in the testing.

3.3. Procedure and data analysis

The examination was conducted in March 2014, i.e. during the summer semester of the 2013/2014 academic year as a part of the academic course *English as an International language*. The informants filled in the questionnaire on bio-data first and then listened to the provided recordings circling the values on the semantic differential scales for each speaker, after which they were instructed to provide ratings merely based on the first impression. Each recording lasted for approximately 3-5 minutes for both L1 and L2 speakers, making up a total of about 50 minutes of recorded speech. The testing was performed on two separate occasions, with special attention paid to the environmental conditions and the elimination of background noise.

Mean scores and standard deviation for semantic differential scales were calculated using SPSS statistical software package version 24.0. The results were later compared using the student's t-test to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the answers for the judgments concerning L1 and L2 speakers, as well as of standard and non-standard accents within a single language, along the three examined social dimensions. Percentage counts from the answers in the follow-up questionnaire were calculated using the same software.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of students' testing for the status dimension are provided in Table 3. Mean scores are given for each of the attributes belonging to the aforementioned dimensions for each recorded speaker. Serbian regional varieties are listed first, and are followed by English regional/social varieties. The organization is the same in all three tables.

4.1. Social status dimension

Albeit representing social rather than regional variations, Cockney and RP are both included as characteristic varieties in English, being highly recognizable manifestations of the English language. However, as the two accents are predominantly located in Southeastern England, for our purposes we shall regard them as representatives of this particular region of the United Kingdom.

Table 3: Attitudes to regional varieties – the social status dimension

Speaker's accent	Attributes (Mean)		
	Education	Social Class	Authority
East-Herzegovian (S)	5.64 SD=1.41	5.57 SD=1.44	6.1 SD=1.03
Šumadija-Vojvodina (S)	5.88 SD=1.11	5.74 SD=0.86	5.12 SD=0.63
Kosovo-Resavian (NS)	4.19 SD=1.66	2.93 SD=1.42	4.55 SD=2.04
Prizren-Timok (NS)	2.36 SD=1.39	2.17 SD=1.06	3.05 SD=1.51
Zeta-South Sandžak (NS)	3.12 SD=2.24	2.57 SD=1.09	4.79 SD=1.34
Cockney (NS)	5.07 SD=0.92	4.31 SD=1.58	5.02 SD=1.77
Brummie (NS)	4.26 SD=1.13	3.59 SD=1.47	4.31 SD=1.80
Scouse (NS)	5.17 SD=1.12	4.5 SD=0.92	3.31 SD=1.52
Geordie (NS)	4.47 SD=1.31	4.98 SD=1.47	4.93 SD=1.24
RP (S)	6.43 SD=0.73	6.24 SD=0.88	5.93 SD=1.35

We notice that the selected respondents rate standardized varieties of Serbian higher than non-standardized varieties in terms of education, social class and authority. The scores pertaining to education and social class are very close for Šumadija-Vojvodina and East-Herzegovian versions, but slightly diverging, however, when it comes to authority. It should also be noted that the participants rated the East-Herzegovian speaker as the one with the greatest authority. The Prizren-Timok speaker is rated lowest in all three aspects of the status dimension.

When it comes to the non-native speakers, it can be seen that the mean scores show more even distribution. Nevertheless, we observe that RP received the highest scores for all the attributes describing the status dimension. Unlike Serbian varieties, non-standardized varieties of English received higher scores for education and social class, especially Geordie. This leads to the conclusion that students do not necessarily employ the same social stratification criteria for status categorization in their mother tongue and in a foreign language, most likely due to the stronger familiarity with the varieties of their mother tongue.

4.2. Competence dimension

The results of evaluations within the competence dimension are presented in Table 4. Mean scores are provided for the three attributes: *industrious*, *determined* and *intelligent*.

Table 4: Attitudes to regional varieties – the competence dimension

Speaker's accent	Attributes (Mean)		
	Industrious	Determined	Intelligent
East-Herzegovian (S)	6.36 SD=1.03	6.59 SD=0.94	6.26 SD=0.91
Šumadija-Vojvodina (S)	6.12 SD=1.06	5.93 SD=1.02	5.38 SD=0.73
Kosovo-Resavian (NS)	4.76 SD=2.21	4.79 SD=2.22	3.64 SD=1.88
Prizren-Timok (NS)	4.93 SD=1.89	4.02 SD=1.02	2.59 SD=0.99
Zeta-South Sandžak (NS)	5.26 SD=1.17	5.05 SD=1.34	4.07 SD=1.6
Cockney (NS)	4.79 SD=1.62	3.76 SD=1.34	4.26 SD=1.43
Brummie (NS)	5.81 SD=1.89	2.93 SD=1.40	3.45 SD=1.40
Scouse (NS)	3.19 SD=0.94	3.19 SD=3.95	3.1 SD=1.51
Geordie (NS)	5.55 SD=1.38	3.95 SD=0.88	5.07 SD=1.55
RP (S)	5.02 SD=1.33	5.12 SD=1.67	6.36 SD=1.14

Here, instances of judgments pertaining to native language varieties show that the same principles of categorization apply again. Specifically, students consistently ascribe more positive qualities to the speakers of standardized varieties. However, the distribution of mean scores is slightly different than with the status dimension, since they expressed the opinion that Zeta-South Sandžak speaker was industrious and determined, while slightly lower scores were given for intelligence. The lowest score for intelligence, however, was allocated to the Prizren-Timok speaker.

When it comes to the non-native speakers, the lowest scores for the attributes within the competence dimension were given to the Scouse speaker, which goes in line with the standard language ideology tenets. As expected, the highest scores for intelligence and determination were ascribed to the RP speaker, yet the Brummie speaker received the highest scores for industriousness. The same speaker simultaneously got the lowest score for determination. Excluding Scouse, the mean scores for industriousness are distributed rather evenly among the remaining four speakers.

4.3. Linguistic attractiveness dimension

The third investigated sociolinguistic dimension, linguistic attractiveness, is represented by the attributes *honest*, *pleasant to listen to* and *friendly* and the scores are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Attitudes to regional varieties – the linguistic attractiveness dimension

Speaker	Attributes (Mean)		
	Honest	Pleasant	Friendly
East-Herzegovian (S)	5.19 SD=1.06	6.14 SD=1.59	5.83 SD=1.06
Šumadija-Vojvodina (S)	4.45 SD=1.25	5.62 SD=0.96	4.52 SD=1.09
Kosovo-Resavian (NS)	6.07 SD=0.99	2.09 SD=1.28	5.29 SD=1.92
Prizren-Timok (NS)	4.79 SD=2.21	1.5 SD=0.74	4.93 SD=2.09
Zeta-South Sandžak (NS)	4.76 SD=1.68	3.35 SD=1.53	4.02 SD=1.15
Cockney (NS)	4.17 SD=1.58	3.55 SD=1.25	3.69 SD=1.41
Brummie (NS)	2.69 SD=1.6	2.71 SD=1.52	4.93 SD=1.88
Scouse (NS)	3.19 SD=2.2	2.83 SD=1.81	3.67 SD=1.43
Geordie (NS)	3.31 SD=1.72	4.02 SD=2.01	5.55 SD=1.58
RP (S)	4.38 SD=2.39	6.19 SD=1.21	5.12 SD=1.9

As we can see, the situation with the distribution of scores is somewhat different from the other two dimensions, at least when it comes to evaluations of native speaker varieties. The highest scores for honesty and friendliness were this time allocated to the Kosovo-Resavian speaker, along with the standard variety speakers. This indicates that the students, who had previously attributed lower scores to this variety when compared to the standardized ones, assumed that the non-standard regional variety speaker was more honest in that particular recording (or in general, potentially), than the speaker of the standard variety. It is therefore interesting that the lowest score for honesty was given to the Šumadija-Vojvodina speaker. The least pleasant variety to listen to appeared to be Prizren-Timok, and the most pleasant one is East-Herzegovian. Bearing in mind that the majority of the students spoke in Šumadija-Vojvodina and Kosovo-Resavian variety, such results do not fully correspond to the predictions on pleasantness expounded by Preston (1998). The scores regarding friendliness are mostly even, which may point to the fact

that it was not easy for the listeners to make judgments on a speaker's friendliness based on hearing them only.

In the list of non-native speakers, the lowest rated one for honesty was the speaker of Brummie and the highest rated one was the speaker of RP, with the Cockney speaker being very close to RP. Brummie and Scouse were deemed the least pleasant to listen to, with RP obtaining the highest scores once more. Again, the high scores allocated to the RP accent may result from the greatest level of familiarity with this particular variety of British English, thus confirming the findings of a similar study by Hiraga (2005). Scouse and Cockney received almost identical scores for friendliness, located at the bottom of the scale, whereas the Geordie speaker was found to be the friendliest of them all.

4.4. Statistical analysis

In order to gain a more precise insight into the differences in ratings of the speakers, we provide additional statistical representation of results, presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Statistical analysis results relative to social dimensions

Dimensions	Native vs. Non-Native	Standard vs. Non-Standard in Serbian	Standard vs. Non-Standard in English
Status	t=1.348 p=0.010	t=5.720 p=0.014	t=4.790 p=0.225
Competence	t=1.670 p=0.723	t=0.570 p=0.405	t=2.262 p=0.381
Attractiveness	t=1.281 p=0.591	t=1.808 p=0.099	t=2.701 p=0.978

Firstly, the intention was to examine whether there was any difference in the treatment of native and non-native speakers along the lines of the three proposed sociolinguistic dimensions. The t-test showed statistical significance for the social status dimension only, which means that Serbian EFL students make different predictions about the education, social class and authority of speakers of their native regional varieties compared to the speakers of non-native regional varieties. This can be attributed to the geographical or psychological distance from the foreign language socio-cultural context. Another relevant explanation is associated with the fact that students are better acquainted with the regional varieties of their mother tongue than with the ones from the L2. Admittedly, it is possible that students resort to visualizing a speaker that they already know, a representative of a particular dialect, so they accordingly form judgments of the unknown speakers that they listen to for the first time based on the previous experience with the one that they have already come across, hence limiting the impact of the accent in general.

Secondly, we wanted to compare the mean scores for standard and non-standard variety judgments in Serbian and in English. T-test results again

indicate statistical significance solely within the status dimension. This means that our respondents decided upon their evaluations of education, social class and authority of Serbian speakers depending on whether the variety was standard or not, where standard varieties typically received higher scores than non-standard ones. The presented results emphasize the inclination of speakers towards standard language ideology, especially in the mother tongue, confirming the findings of Lippi-Green's (1997) research. Standard language ideology is not absent in the evaluations of non-native speakers, yet it seems slightly less salient, which is manifested by the lack of statistical significance in the means. Such a state of affairs could be explained by psychological and cultural factors affecting L2 learners' decision making. Significant amount of negative stereotyping is present in Serbian EFL students' evaluations, which is further supported by the fact that they formed an opinion on speakers based on a single recording. Even though this was the required task in the questionnaire, the participants made no additional comments of disagreement or rejection of the task.

In order to examine the possible factors more closely, we asked students to fill in a questionnaire subsequent to the testing procedure. The percentage counts for the given answers are presented in Table 7. The answers are ordered from the highest to the lowest score.

Table 7: Follow-up questionnaire results

Question	Answers
1. What did you base your evaluations of the Serbian speakers' characteristics on?	<i>Pronunciation</i> 45.24% <i>Lexis</i> 28.57% <i>Grammar</i> 16.67% <i>Understanding</i> 9.52%
2. What did you base your evaluations of the English speakers' characteristics on?	<i>Understanding</i> 52.38% <i>Pronunciation</i> 19.05% <i>Grammar</i> 14.29% <i>Lexis</i> 14.29%
3. Were you able to apply the same criteria in Serbian and English?	<i>No</i> 76.19% <i>Yes</i> 19.05% <i>Not sure</i> 4.76%
4. Was it easier to make predictions regarding speakers' education and social status in Serbian or in English?	<i>Serbian</i> 88.09% <i>English</i> 11.9%
5. Which social dimension represented the greatest challenge to estimate Serbian speakers on?	<i>Attractiveness</i> 42.85% <i>Competence</i> 35.71% <i>Status</i> 21.43%
6. Which social dimension represented the greatest challenge to estimate English speakers on?	<i>Competence</i> 45.24% <i>Status</i> 28.57 <i>Attractiveness</i> 26.19%
7. Do you feel that someone's regional variety influences the first impression they make on a listener?	<i>Yes</i> 45.24% <i>No</i> 35.71 <i>Not sure</i> 19.04

8. Can a speaker be discriminated based on their accent?	No 40.48% Yes 33.33% Not sure 26.19%
9. Do you form stereotypes based on someone's accent?	No 66.67% Yes 16.67% Not sure 16.67%
10. Is stereotyping connected to one's own regional variety?	Yes 38.1% Not sure 33.33% No 28.57%
11. Is stereotyping related to one's own level of education?	Yes 66.67% Not sure 21.43% No 11.9%
12. Do you think that your way of judging others based on the way they speak has changed with the level of education?	Yes 61.09% Not sure 23.81% No 14.29%

What seems interesting is that the majority of students formed their L1 judgments based on pronunciation, whereas for L2 the judgments were made taking comprehensibility into account. Moreover, the examinees reported on not being able to apply the same criteria in evaluating L1 and L2 speakers, claiming that predicting speakers' traits was easier in the case of Serbian than English speakers, so this can potentially be considered a factor for the different scores for Serbian and English speakers when it comes to certain qualities in various sociolinguistic dimensions. According to the results of the questionnaire, linguistic attractiveness posed the greatest difficulty in estimating Serbian speakers, which means that from the perspective of our participants a speaker's accent does not reveal much about their friendliness or honesty, as it does about social class or education. Competence, however, was the hardest to evaluate in English in terms of a regional/social variety. The students prevailingly feel that one's variety affects the kind of the first impression they make, yet it does not affect discrimination as much. What we found the most interesting is that the majority of students purport not to be stereotypical, but practical results show otherwise. The students are less confident regarding the question of the relatedness between stereotyping and one's personal regional variety, so an almost equal number is uncertain about it and believes that judging other people on their variety depends on one's own regional variety. Education, however, is, according to the students, estimated to be a more informative predictor. Students also claim that their level of stereotyping has changed with education, which pedagogically appears to be a hopeful prospect.

5. CONCLUSION

In relation to the questions raised in the methodological section of this paper, we can conclude the obtained results show that Serbian EFL students did not use identical criteria when evaluating speakers using the students' mother tongue and those using the foreign language. However, it has been

shown that language ideology is prevalent in both cases, inevitably leading to negative stereotyping.

Additionally, we have observed that standardized varieties typically received the highest scores in terms of education, social class and authority of speakers, especially for the Serbian language. Attractiveness dimension appeared to be more challenging for the participants, since a speaker's accent proved not to be a sufficient factor to make clear predictions about, for instance, speakers' honesty or friendliness. Interestingly enough, some speakers of non-standardized varieties received higher scores for honesty than standard speakers. Moreover, non-standardized variety speakers seemed more industrious to the students than speakers of the standard. Not surprisingly, students reported that they based their judgments in L1 on pronunciation, but on understanding in L2, which may partially explain somewhat discrepant results of the evaluation across the two analogous domains.

What is particularly interesting is that negative stereotyping is evident even with the students of philology, whose tertiary education heavily relied on adopting modern perspectives to linguistic phenomena, and the reasons for this seem to be manifold. It has to be taken into account that since attitudes are primarily founded on a person's mental configuration, psychological factors undoubtedly play a considerable role in their formation. However, as indicated by our research, linguistic attitudes formed by listeners are highly affected both by the listener's own socio-geographical background and the background of the person being listened to, particularly if the listeners are familiar with the statuses that the respective varieties enjoy in a given socio-linguistic context. The results suggest that the associations made when forming an opinion about the speaker of a particular variety mostly conform to the preconceptions a listener has regardless of the language he or she assesses, where slight divergence in opinion may be attributed to the relative lack of closeness to the specific variety. We can thus conclude that regional varieties can be considered special brands of a language, evoking distinct mental images and serving as alloforms of a broader socio-cultural identity, characterized by its own unique features and effects on listeners.

Despite some limitations of our research, which may include the choice of the choice of recorded representatives of regional varieties both in L1 and L2, as well as the exploration of other, possibly non-linguistic factors lying behind certain ratings, we believe that this paper and its findings serve as a valid contribution to the investigated topic. This is particularly noticeable bearing in mind that the topic of accentism has been widely explored in the world for several decades, whereas similar type of research is much scarcer in Serbian scientific context, especially when two languages are involved.

Finally, the presence of negative stereotyping in the students' judgments also raises certain pedagogical concerns. It underscores the need for an increased level of awareness of both teachers and students in line with the tenets of modern sociolinguistics, particularly regarding the covert and overt prestige in language and overgeneralized conclusions resulting in negative

social categorization of speakers based on their regional language variety. Practical solutions to these issues may be offered in the form of seminars and workshops that can provide grounds for expansion of teachers' and students' knowledge on the subject, the relevance of the international varieties of English and their teaching potential. This could be applied not only on the subject of English varieties, but native language dialects as well, as closer insight into the field may lead to less pronounced prejudice and increased level of tolerance and acceptance.

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РЕГИОНАЛНИ ВАРИЈЕТЕТ КАО СОЦИЈАЛНИ И КУЛТУРНИ БРЕНД ПОЈЕДИНЦА КРОЗ ПРИЗМУ МАТЕРЊЕГ И СТРАНОГ ЈЕЗИКА

Резиме

Рад истражује ставове/стереотипе српских студената енглеског као страног језика према говорницима чији је говор маркиран обележјима регионалних варијетета у српском и енглеском језику, тј. у нашем случају матерњем и страном језику. Стога наше истраживање има двоструки циљ: с једне стране, да испита да ли регионални варијетет може утицати на то како ће други људи гледати на говорника матерњег/страног језика, као и какав први утисак они остављају, а са друге, да прикаже ниво стереотипизације код студената чије је основно усмерење филологија. Како бисмо спровели емпиријску анализу, упутили смо студенте на преслушавање снимака изворних говорника матерњег и страног језика, типичних представника регионалних варијетета. Од студената се тражило да опишу говорнике пратећи три социалингвистичке димензије: друштвени статус, компетенцију и језичку привлачност, те је у те сврхе употребљена семантичко-диференцијална скала особина који потенцијално описују говорнике. Резултати су показали да је негативна стереотипизација на снази у нешто већој мери када српски студенти англистике описују говорнике регионалних варијетета матерњег језика. Ипак, само на основу говорниковог нагласка успели су релативно лако да припишу одређене особине говорницима, што нас је навело да закључимо да локални варијетет представља својеврсни бренд и део идентитета појединца.

Кључне речи: акцентизам, идеологија стандардног језика, бренд, регионални варијетети, српски, енглески

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