

Non-Native English Speakers in Canada: Relationships between Self-Reported Accent Strength, Self-Determination, Psychological Engagement, and Well-Being

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Summary:

The objectives of this study were to explore how perceived accent strength relates to the following: perceived accent discrimination, psychological well-being, competence, autonomy, relatedness satisfaction, and psychological engagement. Prior research has shown that non-native English speakers can be subject to discrimination. Additionally, previous research has shown that non-native English speakers are aware of the biases toward their differing foreign accent strengths. However, few studies have investigated the psychological well-being of speaking English with a foreign accent. Eighty-nine participants volunteered to participate in the study, and they were non-native English speakers who completed questionnaires that examined the constructs of interest.

The study results showed that, as expected, positive correlations arose between psychological engagement, self-determination factors and well-being. Negative correlations were found between greater perceived accent discrimination and lower psychological engagement, English proficiency, and native-like English accent. Contrary to expectations, no relationships were found between perceived accent discrimination and overall well-being. Linear regression analyses showed that greater psychological well-being was predicted by greater psychological engagement in learning to speak English and greater self-determination (competence satisfaction). A second linear regression showed that greater perceived accent strength was predicted by how important it was for them to speak English without a foreign accent and their time in Canada. The results have implications for immigrants' successful incorporation into a new English-speaking host country, particularly how psychological engagement and self-perceptions about their accent strength and English proficiency may contribute to their overall experience in English-speaking countries.