

## Can you tell by their English if they can speak Welsh? Accent perception in a language contact situation

It is well known that the widespread acquisition of a new language often results in the creation of a new variety which is heavily influenced by the community's original language (e.g. Dubois & Horvath, 1998). Such substratum effects often remain following a shift to the dominant language and become features of a distinct contact variety (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988). In the case of Welsh English, substratum effects from the Welsh language are notable in communities where there has been historical language shift (Thomas, 1994). In contrast, Welsh remains the dominant community language in many areas, and has been shown to affect the English accent of Welsh-English bilinguals due to cross-linguistic interaction (Paulasto, 2016). Recent work which aimed to disentangle the effects of long-term contact and individual bilingualism found that monolinguals and bilinguals from the same area produced English monophthongs and lexical stress near-identically (Mayr et al., 2017; Mennen et al., under review). However, it is unclear (1) to what extent the English of Welsh-English bilinguals is different from that of monolinguals from the same area and (2) to what extent these differences are perceptible to other speakers of Welsh English. The present paper sought to address these questions across three inter-related studies.

Study 1 comprised an accent perception experiment whereby listeners from four different groups ( $n=75$ ) were asked to differentiate English monolinguals and Welsh-English bilinguals based on short English speech samples. The results revealed that monolinguals and bilinguals can be identified above chance based on their English accent, but performance was unexceptional, particularly on the monolingual samples (see Figure 1). Correct identification was more likely among listeners from the local area but was unrelated to listeners' ability to speak Welsh.

In Study 2, the same participants' views about differences between the accentual features of monolinguals and bilinguals were examined in structured interviews. The results revealed the specific segmental and suprasegmental features that the listeners considered indicative of monolingual and bilingual speakers' English accents (see Tables 1 and 2) and showed that participants had a clearer notion of the features of a bilingual's English accent than a monolingual's accent.

Finally, in Study 3, the speech samples from Study 1 were analysed phonetically (auditorily and acoustically) in terms of the most commonly mentioned accentual features in Study 2. The results confirmed some of the listeners' claims, such as greater use of trilled realisations of /r/ by bilinguals. However, many of the participants' claims were not borne out.

Together, this research shows that settings in which minority-language features originate from historical language contact and individual bilingualism yield subtle accentual differences in the majority language between monolinguals and bilinguals to which even listeners from the same accent background may not be responsive.

The role of cognitive, input-related and socio-indexical factors will be discussed, as well as the extent to which monolinguals' and bilinguals' English accents constitute distinct varieties.

### References

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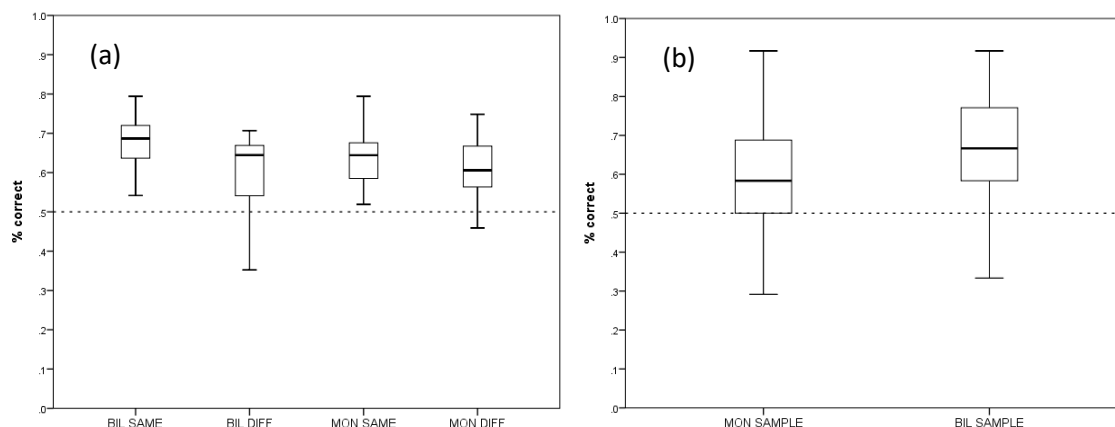


Figure 1. Percent accuracy by group (a) and sample (b); broken line denotes 50% chance level.

Table 1: Perceived features of bilingual speakers' English accent

<i>Feature mentioned</i>	<i>Number (%) of participants</i>	<i>Example</i>
vowels	50 (66.67%)	"... those who drew their vowels out more were more likely to be Welsh speakers"
/r/	42 (56%)	"... the Welsh speakers were rolling their 'r's a bit more."
speaking rate	27 (36%)	"... it was a faster rate of speech"
intonation/ pitch	24 (32%)	"... Welsh speakers speak more slowly" "... more of a lilt in the way that they spoke"
word-final consonants	15 (20%)	"... it seems to be more monotonous" "... more enunciating their 't's and 'd's" "... a teathy kind of t"
lexical stress	13 (17.3%)	"... more emphasis on the end of words"
rhythm	6 (8%)	"... different speed between words"
other	6 (8%)	"... pronounces 'h's" "... add in a syllable, so like ['hɛlpə]"

Table 2: Perceived features of monolingual speakers' English accent

<i>Feature mentioned</i>	<i>Number (%) of participants</i>	<i>Example</i>
vowels	18 (24%)	"... they tended to hold out vowels for longer"
speaking rate	10 (13.3%)	"... they speak faster"
/r/	6 (8%)	"... they don't have rolled /r/s"
intonation/ pitch	3 (4%)	"... they were going up at the end of a sentence"
t-glottaling	3 (4%)	"... instead of [ðat], they say [ðaʔ]"
lexical stress	2 (2.7%)	"...less emphasis on the end of words"
h-dropping	2 (2.7%)	"... they said 'house' like [aʊs]"
other	2 (2.7%)	"...they say ['slipɪn] instead of ['slipɪŋ]"