

Reading passage

A foreign accent undermines a person's credibility in ways that the speaker and the listener don't consciously realize, new research at the University of Chicago shows. Because an accent makes a person harder to understand, listeners are less likely to find what the person says truthful, researchers found. The problem of credibility increases with the severity of the accent.

"The results have important implications for how people perceive non-native speakers of a language, particularly as mobility increases in the modern world, leading millions of people to be non-native speakers of the language they use daily," said Boaz Keysar, a Professor of Psychology at the University of Chicago and an expert on communication.

"Accent might reduce the credibility of non-native job seekers, eyewitnesses, reporters or people taking calls in foreign call centers," said Shiri Levi, lead author of "Why Don't We Believe Non-native Speakers? The Influence of Accent on Credibility," written with Keysar and published in the current issue of the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. Levi is a post-doctoral researcher at the University whose work focuses on the interactions between native and non-native speakers. To test the impact of accent on credibility, American participants were asked to judge the truthfulness of trivia statements by native or non-native speakers of English, such as, "A giraffe can go without water longer than a camel can." Simple prejudice could affect ratings of truthfulness, so the researchers tried to minimize that effect by telling participants the information in the statements was prepared for the speakers, and was not based on the speakers' own knowledge.

Source: <http://news.uchicago.edu/article/2010/07/19/foreign-accents-make-speakers-seem-less-truthful-listeners-research-shows>