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Children's accent-based preferences and stereotypes in media contexts

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Abstract

Children are avid consumers of screen media, including television and mobile apps. Non-native and non-standard accents are underrepresented in media, and representations are often stereotypical. The present research investigated children's accent-based preferences and stereotypes in media contexts. Children aged 5-6 and 9-10 selected characters, from a variety of characters with different accents, to play different archetypes in a television program (Experiment 1) or to serve as teachers in an educational app (Experiment 2). Results revealed that, in Experiment 1, children generally preferred for television characters to speak with a Canadian accent (versus British, Chinese, and Indian accents), regardless of character valence. In Experiment 2, in educational apps, children aged 9-10 preferred Canadian- or British-accented teachers for culturally-neutral subjects (e.g., oceans), and Chinese- and Indian-accented teachers for culturally-relevant subjects (e.g., Chinese pottery). This research contributes to our knowledge about children's accent-based biases, and may guide development of more inclusive media offerings.