

THE SOCIAL PERCEPTION OF FLORENTINE SPEECH IN RENZI'S TIME

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigates the correlation between pronunciation and social identity. The experimental design used a verbal guise technique in association with brand logos and images in order to verify whether listeners familiar with a particular regional speech could access social stereotypes to categorize phonetic variation. The main focus is the social evaluation of Florentine regional speech with respect to Milanese and Neapolitan, in a peculiar time within the Italian political scenario, where the two opposite leaders – Berlusconi and Renzi – uttered a phonetically marked Italian. The fieldwork was carried out in two different Italian cities (Bergamo and Arezzo). The results have proven that social profile is not independent from accent in the Italian population. In particular, the evaluation of Milanese and Neapolitan appeared rather stable in both the listener samples, while the evaluation of Florentine was more controversial: the Bergamo sample considered the Florentine speech higher in the ‘competence’ dimension than did the Arezzo sample.