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Implicit Language Attitudes among Young, White L1-Afrikaans Speakers Towards Two South African Englishes: The Role of Gender and Family Language

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Abstract

This paper reports on an Implicit Association Test (IAT)-based investigation of the language-attitudes of the white (Afrikaans and English) speech-communities of South Africa, with a focus on young, L1-Afrikaans speakers. Drawing from an extensive literature review, two hypotheses were formulated: 1) participants would exhibit out-group bias towards Standard South African English over Afrikaans-accented English; 2) contextually relevant socio-demographic and sociolinguistic factors would explain this bias. Contrary to the first hypothesis, L1-Afrikaans speakers showed an implicit bias towards their in-group accent. Gender and Family Language emerged as significant factors in explaining these results. More specifically, females were found to show significantly more in-group bias than men, while subjects reporting both English and Afrikaans as family languages showed the most in-group bias. Given that the outcomes from this implicit approach provide new insights, further research into the role of gender and language-loyalty within this speech-community through narrative-based elicitation methods is recommended.

Keywords: language attitudes, South Africa, South African English, Implicit Association Test, indirect methods, Afrikaans, gender, family language, in-group bias

1. Introduction

Multilingualism and ethno-linguistic contact, conflict and mixing are defining features of both pre- and post-democratic South Africa, reflecting the country's diverse cultural and linguistic heritage. The recent recognition of South African Sign Language (SASL) as the 12th official language (Constitution Eighteenth Amendment Bill 2023), or the current language policy framework aimed at enhancing multilingual Higher Education

(Department of Higher Education and Training 2020), are both notable examples of how the complex sociolinguistic fabric of South African society extends to the highest institutional levels. On the ground level, the latest census confirms the overall vitality of the various languages of the country, with only minor setbacks observed in some cases such as isiNdebele or, of particular relevance to this article, Afrikaans (Census 2022). Thus, taking into account the intrinsically complex dynamics of multilingual settings and the long-lasting effects of the apartheid era, monitoring language attitudes is central to understanding the constantly evolving local language dynamics, explaining inter-group relationships and communication patterns and identifying on-going and potential language shifts; among other sociolinguistic phenomena.

In line with this rationale and with English being one of the main lingua francas in South Africa nowadays (and increasingly dominant in this regard), research on attitudes towards this language is of central relevance and concern. In effect, the fact that only 8.7% of the population has identified English as the language of the household (Census 2022) implies that the vast majority of South Africans have a different L1, which in turn may of course determine their English accent.

Internationally, research has already proven and illustrated the complex interplay between accent indexicality and language attitudes, based on the former's associated social meanings and perceived social implications (Giles and Rakić 2014; Álvarez-Mosquera and Marín-Gutiérrez 2018, Dragojevic 2018, among others). However, with a number of exceptions, such as Vorster and Proctor (1976), Cooper (1989), De Klerk and Bosch (1994), Smit (1996), Nortje and Wissing (2012) and Neethling (2023), language-attitude research in South Africa has been mainly restricted to the use of so-called direct methods. As linguistic diversity in South Africa often overlaps with ethnicity and race, it is not unexpected that direct methods, as a whole, present limitations, particularly because respondents may be less inclined to provide truthful answers on potentially sensitive issues¹. The application of indirect methods is thus crucial in the local context. The first two authors of this paper have taken some steps in this regard with Bekker and Levon (2017) focusing on the application of the matched-guise technique (MGT) in the South African context and, more importantly, Álvarez-Mosquera (2017) introducing the use of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) to South African language-attitude research. In line with previous studies, where he explored language attitudes among various linguistic profiles within the black and coloured communities towards two accents historically associated with the white groups in the South African context (see Álvarez-Mosquera and Marín-Gutiérrez 2018; Álvarez-Mosquera 2019), this paper investigates language attitudes among white speakers towards the same accents, namely Standard South African

¹ As quite rightly pointed out by one of the reviewers of the first draft of this article, such direct methods can employ certain, mainly statistical, measures (e.g. factor-analysis) to ensure greater construct validity. The fact remains, however, that the main disadvantage of direct methods is the one pointed out in the main text – a disadvantage that explains, for example, Smit's (1996: 45) observation that "some scholars dismiss the use of direct methods [...] completely" as well as the initial motivation for the creation, design and implementation of the first indirect method (the matched-guise technique) in the early 1960s. It should be added that while it could be argued that the MGT is still open, to some degree, to dishonesty and manipulation by respondents, this is virtually impossible with the IAT, which relies on non-manipulable reaction times and on other well-tested measures for excluding manipulated responses (Lane et al. 2007; De Houwer et al. 2009; Gawronski and Hahn 2019).

English² and Afrikaans-accented English³. More specifically, as we will elucidate in the following sections, our first initial overarching hypothesis predicts the comparatively stronger association of a Standard South African English accent with positive social traits and an Afrikaans-accented English with negative ones as the **congruent condition** in our IAT-based model, while the reverse associations will be regarded as the **incongruent condition**. Our second hypothesis anticipates that contextually relevant sociolinguistic variables (such as gender or place of residence) included in this study will contribute to explaining any detected biases (see Methodology).

The following section seeks to highlight relevant contextual facts and features that explain the complex relationship between the two relevant speech communities; and as part of underscoring the significance of investigating current linguistic attitudes among their youngest speakers.

1.1 Socio-historical context of the study

Any attempt to fully understand any set of language attitudes needs context and, in particular, a full appreciation of the socio-historical context impacting on the formation and nature of these attitudes (Bekker 2003). In the current case we are dealing mainly with the relationship between the two languages originating from Europe and their white speakers in the South African context i.e. ancestral L1-English speakers and (white) L1-Afrikaans speakers⁴.

This relationship is predictably a complex one, stretching as it does back for just over two centuries; and is characterised, in very general terms, by both antagonism and rapprochement. On a linguistic level we can see the reflex of these two extremes: on the one hand both languages have had a substantial impact on each other due to long-term language (and cultural) contact; on the other hand, the white Afrikaans language-group

² An alternative, perhaps more well-known label here is General South African English. This term also corresponds to what Lass (2002) describes as the local standard (previously known as Respectable SAE). Formerly associated with Whites mainly (see Mesthrie 2010; 2017), this variety differs from an exocentric BBC-oriented English. Given that the focus here, however, is not on a fine-tuned linguistic analysis but rather on associations with the local (mother-tongue) English standard, the current term was preferred.

³ So-called **Afrikaans-English** is an under-researched variety in the South African context. The only real sustained analysis is Watermeyer (1996). While this author claims, perhaps rightly, that it “should be regarded as a separate, if small, variety of World English” (Watermeyer 1996: 99), it should not be confused with the more general influence of Afrikaans on the ancestral White variety of South African English, which even in its (local) standard form (i.e. General South African English) shows evidence of the historical influence (especially in terms of lexis) of English-Afrikaans contact. The matter is further complicated by the fact that the lower-class sociolect of ancestral White South African English (i.e. so-called Broad South African English) is often indistinguishable from Afrikaans-English; in principle however the first is an L1-variety while the second is an L2-variety. As confirmed by Watermeyer (1996: 99), “AfkE is an L2 variety of English and consequently there is no AfkE speech community *per se*. All speakers of AfkE belong to the Afrikaans speaking community”.

⁴ Afrikaans is very-loosely speaking a Dutch creole, with input from both Dutch and a plethora of other languages, languages both indigenous to South Africa as well as those brought by slaves during the Dutch colonial period, which began in 1652 and ended with the British taking over the Cape Colony (Kaapkolonie) in the early 19th-century. At this point it should be stressed that white Afrikaans-speakers are, in fact, less in number than the speakers of the other main Afrikaans-speech community i.e. so-called coloured speakers of Afrikaans. The white Afrikaner nationalist project mentioned above, based on long-standing racial prejudices existing from the inception of Dutch colonization in 1652, was, however, instrumental in creating a context whereby these two varieties of Afrikaans remain unequal in status to this day, with the **white** variety still retaining a higher status (see for example the recent Neethling (2023)). It should be mentioned here that the term **coloured** in the South African context has a different meaning to the term as employed, for example, in the USA (meaning mixed-race in South Africa and not black); individuals from this speech-community are also, in the main, comfortable with (and generally identify with) the label. Despite the origin of this term, it is widely used in public/official documents, including censuses.

has made clear and concerted efforts, particularly during the course of the 20th century, to *protect* Afrikaans against the influence of English; efforts which, in addition, formed one aspect of the broader Afrikaner nationalist project, culminating in the establishment of the Apartheid regime (1948-1994)⁵.

The historical development of Afrikaner nationalism was the consequence of a number of factors, one of which was British colonialism. Such colonialism was, for one, responsible for the displacement of many Dutch/Afrikaans-speakers from the Cape, i.e., from the area that had previously been under Dutch control (Giliomee 2003a). As a result, by the late 19th century, current-day South Africa was divided into two British Colonies as well as two Boer Republics, the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* and the *Oranje-Vrijstaat*. These two Afrikaner republics had been established as a reaction to attempts by the British to Anglicise the (white) Afrikaans-speaking community in the Cape. By 1898 the Boer Republics had already fended off the British during the First Anglo-Boer War (1880–1881) and were about to embark on a more extensive, but unsuccessful, effort to defend the republics from the British: the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

At the cessation of hostilities, the two republics became British colonies, with all four colonies eventually becoming separate provinces of the Union of South Africa in 1910. From Union until 1948, politics in South Africa, although exclusively white, was characterised by a degree of rapprochement between the English-cum-British and the (white) Afrikaans-speaking population. In 1948, however, the political and social landscape changed dramatically with the success of the National Party in that year's general elections. This political party ushered in apartheid and actively promoted (and constructed) the (white) Afrikaans identity, culture and language; and white Afrikaner nationalism more broadly.

Since 1990, however, the Afrikaans-speaking populations, both white and coloured, have become (a) minority group(s) in the new, democratic South Africa. Since this time, Afrikaner and Afrikaans identities have been in a state of flux. As stressed by Davies (2009: 130), for example, “there has been a paradigm shift in the political economic context of identifications among Afrikaans speakers in South Africa”. In short, the clear past connection between Afrikaner nationalist identity and contemporary Afrikaans social identity has been eroded. The end of white dominance involved more than just a changeover in political power. It transformed whiteness from being the embodiment of power and privilege into an icon of racial injustice and subjugation, a **dissonant** positionality (Steyn 2005) in the new South Africa; and also destabilised the entire coherence system (Linde 1993) undergirding white Afrikaner subjectivity. This transformation is described by Steyn (2004: 150) as follows:

a crisis of Afrikaner identity...a dislocation...when the previously unseen or denied is made visible, when the representations and constructions that shaped identities are recognized, and the boundaries of the approved have moved to such an extent that new horizons for the social imaginary have to be forged.

More generally, different strategies for forging these new *horizons* have been identified in the literature. Blaser and van der Westhuizen (2012) have argued that two such strategies predominate among white Afrikaner South Africans (see also Steyn 2014). The first is what they term **defensive ethnicization** (Visser 2004; Bentley and Habib 2008), essentially the recasting of Afrikaner identity as an ethnic category, within a logic of

⁵ While the broader goal of the research was to look at both of these groups, the current research site meant that the vast majority of subjects were L1-Afrikaans speakers. Attention will thus be primarily focused on this speech community from hereon.

multiculturalism and a discourse of community-based rights. Described by others as **semigration** (from segregation and emigration; Ballard 2004) or *inwaartse migrasie* (inward migration; Coetzee 2008, cited in Blaser and van der Westhuizen 2012), the strategy is **defensive** in that it is organised primarily around the view that the Afrikaner culture and language is under threat and must be protected from outside pressures. As such, defensive ethnicization is similar to traditional white Afrikaner nationalism, although, on the surface at least, boundaries are protected along **cultural**, as opposed to racial, lines (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). The second strategy is the promotion of a depoliticised, neoliberal, global Afrikanerdom (van der Westhuizen 2007; Davies 2009; Sonnekus 2017). This strategy rejects the political undertones of Afrikaner identity and the need to police community boundaries, while nevertheless maintaining an attachment to salient cultural practice. The neoliberal strategy views Afrikaner-identified **goods** (e.g. films, music, language, relationships) as desirable commodities. While the end-result may be a kind of cultural (and often more or less racial) exclusivity similar to that which characterises defensive ethnicization, the path taken is instead built on individual motivations to consume particular objects (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009).

The historical sketch above has provided some idea of the complex relationship that (white) Afrikaans-speaking people have had towards their own identity as well as towards their white English counterparts. While there is clear evidence of antagonism, there is nevertheless also a long history of different forms of mixing. There are certain periods and places in South African history characterised, for example, by a high-degree of inter-marriage and bilingualism between the two white groups. More generally, there have always been a sizeable number of Afrikaners who have maintained a positive or at least neutral attitude towards the English language and ‘English-ness’ more broadly⁶. Right from the beginning of British colonialism, an ability to competently use English has been associated with prestige, urban-ness and education, and, for some, with generally enlightened values⁷. While different attitudes towards English and Afrikaans have mostly been assumed in the academic literature, one of the few attempts to empirically confirm them was De Klerk and Bosch’s study which states that (vis-à-vis English and isiXhosa), “the Afrikaans accents received the strongest negative reactions from all language groups, Afrikaans speakers included,” while in the same study English received uniformly higher ratings than Afrikaans.

This relatively positive attitude towards English, often associated with openness towards globalisation, the Western world, etc., has only accelerated in post-apartheid South Africa, with Afrikaans-English bilingualism among young Afrikaans-speakers being the norm. On the other hand, there remains a countervailing tendency: “there is certainly considerable empirical evidence as to the emergence and nature of a new cultural politics ... involved in the preservation of an evolving Afrikaans language and culture” (Davies 2009: 134). It is worth mentioning that the university attended by the respondents of the

⁶ We note in this context – and as a representative example – the active participation of well-known historical Afrikaner figures, such as Jan Smuts and Louis Botha in particular, on the side of the British during WWI. From a literary perspective there have been a host of Afrikaners who are, to this day, well-known for their ability to (and/or predisposition towards) writing in English (e.g. Herman Charles Bosman, Eugene Marais, Lourens van der Post and Andre P. Brink, to name a few. Such clear reflexes of Afrikaans-English contact (and rapprochement) should, however, not obscure developments in the opposite (‘antagonistic’) direction.

⁷ Such associations have, quite naturally, led to a fair amount of Afrikaans-English bilingualism, as confirmed by, for example, Coetzee-van Rooy (2013: 203), who also confirms that “Afrikaans home language respondents ... still regard English as an important language in which they want to be proficient”. Quite rightly this author warns that such attitudes towards English should not, however, lead one to assume that wholesale language-shift is underway in post-94 South Africa.

current study has become a recent site of Afrikaans politico-cultural struggle. As pointed out by Giliomee (2003a: 658), “soon after the transition in 1994 the new government claimed that Afrikaans was used as a language to retain ‘apartheid-style racial exclusivity’”. The Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University, while increasingly multilingual, still, in practice, shows widespread use of Afrikaans, both informally (e.g. conversations among staff and students) and in terms of the language-of-tuition⁸, a fact that has very recently come under criticism from the ANC-led South African government and its alliance partners⁹; criticism which has, in turn, provoked, in some (white) Afrikaans quarters, including among many of the relevant university’s students, a rather vitriolic reaction¹⁰.

Thus, while in the context of the New South Africa, antagonism between the two white groups has clearly diminished (Giliomee 2009: 661), some individuals (and groups) certainly do still see the increased status of English as a threat to the vitality and future of Afrikaans, particularly in the context of education; and regardless of whether this perception is realistic or not¹¹.

1.2 Research site

Potchefstroom is a university town situated approximately 120 kilometers south-west of Pretoria and Johannesburg and is located in a traditionally conservative (Afrikaans) area – see Figure 1.

⁸ The second author of this article is a staff-member at the Potchefstroom Campus of the NWU and has witnessed these phenomena first-hand. The continued use of Afrikaans for instruction at lectures (albeit with the option of simultaneous interpreting for non-L1-Afrikaans students) is mostly due to the language-profile of some staff.

⁹ See, for example, the following website: <https://mg.co.za/article/2013-07-20-nehawu-march-potchefstroom/>

¹⁰ As an example, see the following website: <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/what-is-afrikaans-future-on-nwus-potchefstroom-cam>

¹¹ The following quote from Giliomee (2009: 713) captures the basic ‘tone’ of this orientation: “Since the early 1990s Afrikaans had to vacate a large field in the face of the global impact of English and a new regime insistent on promoting English as far as possible. Afrikaans adapted and even flourished in some fields in both the ‘lower’ and some of the ‘higher’ functions. There was little doubt that it would survive over the longer term as a ‘grassroots’ language, in the sports stadiums and at home. But a comparative perspective made it clear that it would not be respected if it failed to make its mark as an intellectual and professional language. If squeezed out of high schools and universities, it would become decapitated like the other indigenous languages. The greatest immediate threat to Afrikaans was its weakening or disappearance as a language of instruction on university level. This would signal its demise as a language of intellectual discourse and as a literary language”.



Figure 1. The research site (Potchefstroom) in the broader Southern African context (sourced from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Potchefstroom>)

The NWU Potchefstroom campus used to be a separate university called the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education¹² – instrumental especially during the Apartheid period in cementing the religio-ideological foundations for this political and racial project¹³. At the time, the university was formally Afrikaans (and at the heart of the Afrikaner nationalist project, along with other Afrikaans-dominant South African universities such as Stellenbosch University and the *Randse Afrikaanse Universiteit* (now University of Johannesburg))¹⁴; to this day it (arguably) remains the public university in South Africa (at least its Potchefstroom campus) where Afrikaans is most ‘at home’ in the broadest sense; and the growing *threat* of English vis-a-vis the status of Afrikaans (particularly within the higher-education context) remains a recurrent refrain of commentary and concern from both within and without the locally-based academy (see footnote 10).

With more than 24,000 students today on the Potchefstroom campus alone (p.c., May 2024), the main catchment area for this university is, however, not just Potchefstroom and surrounding areas of the North-West Province but a much larger area, with many students coming from neighbouring Gauteng and Free State provinces and smaller numbers coming from further afield in South Africa (see Figure 2 in the next Section). While white (L1-Afrikaans) students still constitute a substantial (and visible) percentage of the student-body of this campus, this percentage has been decreasing consistently over the last 30 years, with an ever-increasingly diverse multilingual student body (p.c., May 2024). It is fair to say that most white L1-Afrikaans students are Afrikaans-English bilinguals (although they differ, of course, in terms of their competence in their L2).

¹² More commonly known (in Afrikaans) as the *Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys*.

¹³ See, for example, Botha (1995: 121; our parenthesis) who argues, just after the advent of the new South Africa, that “the [university’s] understanding of the nature of a Christian university and Christian scholarship was influenced, even determined by its uncritical political position within the apartheid society”.

¹⁴ See Hill (2019: 41; our parenthesis) for an analysis of this phenomenon in the broader context of an article, “the empirical focus ... [of which] ... falls on long-run institutional changes in the South African university system; and on the deployment of ideas about ethnicity, nationalism, language, and race”.

2. Methodology

As anticipated in the introduction, the field of language-attitude studies has made considerable advancements over the past few decades; on both a theoretical and, especially, methodological basis. With respect to the latter, one important advancement in the field has, in general terms, involved the introduction of indirect methods .

Indirect methods of language-attitude research were, as is well-known, initiated with the use of the Matched-Guise Technique (MGT) in Canada in the 1960s (e.g. Lambert et al. 1960; Lambert, Anisfeld, and Yeni-Komshian 1965); a methodology that has undergone considerable refinement over the intervening 60 or so years, but one which is still basically premised on the notion that the relevant listeners are judging speakers and not accents. In many cases this premise is, in itself, debatable; and there are other methodological issues with this approach, including participants' actual level of awareness. A more recent approach has been introduced to the field in the form of the application of the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998). This tool¹⁵ – originally developed in social psychology – has been increasingly used in linguistic research for more than a decade now (Campbell-Kibler 2012; Rosseel, Speelman, and Geeraerts 2018; Callesano and Carter, 2023) due to its effectiveness in assessing the strength of the associations between concepts and evaluations by means of participants' reaction times towards provided stimuli (Olson and Fazio 2004; Baron and Banaji 2006; Greenwald et al. 2009).

Our methodology involved a two-fold approach, combining IAT data and a post-IAT sociolinguistic survey. Following previous models (see IAT Design, Section 2.1 below), an adapted version for our specific research purposes was developed in January 2024. More precisely, this IAT model was equipped with audio inputs from the two selected local (South African) varieties of English: **Standard South African English** and **Afrikaans-accented English**, with the aim of investigating the implicit language attitudes of L1 English and Afrikaans speakers. Following the standard procedures (see Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz 1998; Greenwald, Nosek, and Banaji 2003; Greenwald et al. 2009), participants' reaction times were recorded during a computer-based task that involved sorting both words (social traits, e.g. rude, loving, racist, educated, etc.) and audio inputs (accented varieties) as fast as possible in order to measure implicit biases or automatic associations that individuals may have towards these accents as a result of their sociolinguistic trajectories, exposure and experiences (Bekker and Levon 2017; Paladino and Mazzurega 2020). That is, as in the case of other physical features, the audio stimuli's indexicality elicits measurable automatic responses resulting from participants' unconscious mental operations originating in their life experiences throughout their lifespan (Pantos and Perkins 2013; Kurdi et al. 2019). This approach implies that, unlike more direct methods, IAT minimises conscious manipulation and accesses implicit levels which are less subject to conscious control or intentional distortion (Brunel, Tietje, and Greenwald 2004; Nosek and Smyth 2011).

From a logistics viewpoint, this previously tested IAT model was installed on a computer designated solely for research use and disconnected from the Internet. The equipment was placed in an office located in the central part of NWU's Potchefstroom campus. Participants were mostly approached on campus and voluntarily took part in the study. All individually administered IAT sessions were personally facilitated by the same member of the research team and under the same conditions.

¹⁵ For an extensive explanation of the psychometrical control and properties as well as a review of the existing criticism, please see previous publications by Álvarez-Mosquera and Marín-Gutiérrez (2019; 2021).

In reference to the post-IAT survey, participants were asked to provide their general demographic information (e.g. age, gender, place of residence), their L1 and family language(s), specific details about their command and use of both English and Afrikaans, and type of schooling (public vs private). The last section of the survey consisted of five questions¹⁶ used to determine their potential degree of social distance/contact with members of the targeted language groups.

2.1 IAT Design

Programmed in OpenSesame (Mathôt, Schreij, and Theeuwes 2012; Mathôt and March 2022), this design was tasked with presenting the audio clips and social traits to participants, subsequently capturing their responses as well as their reaction times. The software ensures high timing precision while enabling the association of accents and social traits in order to establish participants' biases (for other psychometric qualities, see also Bosson, Swann, and Pennebaker 2000; Teige et al. 2004; Nosek, Greenwald, and Banaji 2007). The model incorporated seven previously tested neutral audio recordings in each of these two selected varieties¹⁷. Audio files, originally recorded in a different urban area, were re-evaluated to guarantee their indexical nature in the local context. These audios were not normalized. Their validity was confirmed by the research team after a small-scale test involving local participants. In line with previous IAT research in South Africa, the seven sentences in both accents were pronounced by two female speakers, from a similar age group and educational background, with a perceptible accent of their own mother tongue¹⁸.

In contrast to the auditory inputs, social traits were introduced as textual inputs, consisting of terms predominantly reported by young South African participants in a prior study on intergroup categorisation. This set comprised eight clearly positive social traits and eight clearly negative ones which were also extensively discussed with eminent South African scholars in closely related fields (see Álvarez-Mosquera 2017).

Each IAT session consisted of five blocks where participants were presented with consistent inter-stimuli intervals. Blocks 1, 2 and 4 are definable as practice blocks aimed to familiarise participants with the stimuli and ensure that they understand the categorisation task. Blocks 3 and 5 were experimental blocks where audio stimuli were

¹⁶ The original version of this section was designed in collaboration with a number of South African scholars. By means of a 10-point grading scale, results were calculated based on participants' answers to the following questions: 1) How familiar would you say you are with members of these groups?; 2) How often do you do things socially with members of this group? (This includes things like going to movies or parties, eating together, etc.); 3) How often do you study or do other class work with members of this group?; 4) How often do you have social contact with members of this group in your/their home? and 5) How many people from this group do you consider core/close friends? With a maximum of 50, we grouped participants' overall answers into four stages of social distance: low (39–50), mid-low (26–38), mid-high (13–25), high (0–12). (See Álvarez-Mosquera and Marín-Guitérrez 2019).

¹⁷ Audio stimuli, comprising brief sentences, underwent a pre-testing phase to determine their semantic neutrality, thereby ensuring that participant responses would not be unduly influenced by the content (Álvarez-Mosquera 2017).

¹⁸ The second author is a trained (local) phonetician; the validity of the accents (as recognizable exemplars of Standard (or General) South African English and Afrikaans-English respectively) were also confirmed by a number of other trained linguists, both at the NWU and other South African higher-education institutions. On a purely phonetic level, the Standard SAE stimuli showed characteristic features of this variety such as the KIN-PIN Split, a [e:] -like (i.e. relatively close and monophthongized) SQUARE vowel and a GOAT vowel with a clearly fronted and rounded nucleus. Similarly, the Afrikaans English stimuli showed the following typical phonetic characteristics: a lack of aspiration on phonologically voiceless plosives, a comparatively high-front ([i] -like) KIT vowel and rhoticization.

associated with positive or negative traits. To robustly ensure the reliability of our study, both the principles of balancing and randomisation were taken into account to prevent systematic response strategies and minimise the potential impact of order effects. As anticipated in the introduction, drawing on the socio-historical background provided in Section 1 above, our first general hypothesis predicted the association of a Standard South African English accent with positive social traits and the Afrikaans-accented English with negative ones (the **congruent condition**). The reverse associations were considered as the **incongruent condition**. Our second hypothesis predicted that the survey's context-relevant sociolinguistic variables would contribute to explaining any detected biases.

2.2 Participants

A total of 99 Afrikaans or English L1 speakers were recruited on the Potchefstroom Campus of the NWU for this study. Two participants were removed from the sample for methodological reasons. In addition, an outlier was removed from our sample to ensure a better alignment of the analytical outcomes with the specific aims of the current study. Results were calculated with the data gleaned from the remaining 96 participants. Geographically speaking, the sampling can be considered as inclusive, meaning that answers to **place of residence** were not used to exclude any subject's response from further analysis (see Figure 2). This was inclusive of two South African subjects who spent a significant part of their lives in Namibia. This was deemed the correct approach given the strong historical, social and familial ties between the Afrikaans populations of the two relevant countries.

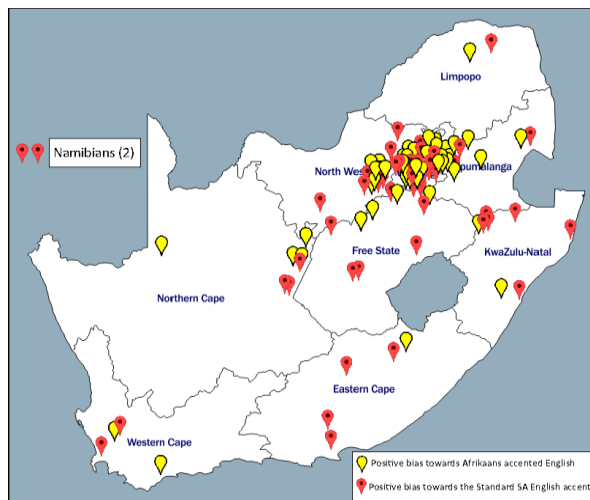


Figure 2. place of residence of the research subjects

In line with previous research, we focused on students (young speakers), as their language attitudes are both the result of their sociolinguistic trajectories in the country and their central role in the transmission of these attitudes to the next generation. The sample encompasses 8 self-identified English L1 speakers, 86 Afrikaans L1 speakers and 2 bilinguals (41 males and 55 females, M (age) = 20.08 (1.7); range from 18 to 28). Regarding their household language(s), 67 participants stated that their family language was Afrikaans, 25 indicated that both English and Afrikaans were spoken in the house regularly, and four came from English-speaking families.

3. Results

Collected data files from the fieldwork were merged into a single file. Taking into consideration the counterbalancing conditions integrated into the task design, participants were first assigned to the respective conditions based on the participant number and parity (even or odd). Before proceeding with the analyses, participants' raw data were first screened for errors and outliers. Following the standard procedures, this process resulted in the elimination of one outlier and a total of 762 trials (7.9%).

With the data corresponding to the remaining 96 participants, mean scores of the reaction time and standard deviations across all the blocks were calculated. By subtracting the mean score of block 3 (congruent) from block 5 (incongruent) and dividing the difference by the standard deviation, we calculated the *D* score for all participants, which was defined as the IAT score. Henceforth, we derived the variable **BIAS** from the IAT scores, where positive values indicate biases aligned with the first hypothesis (a positive bias towards Standard South African English) while negative values signify positive biases towards Afrikaans-accented English, contradicting our first hypothesis. Figure 3 shows the distribution of each participant's IAT scores.

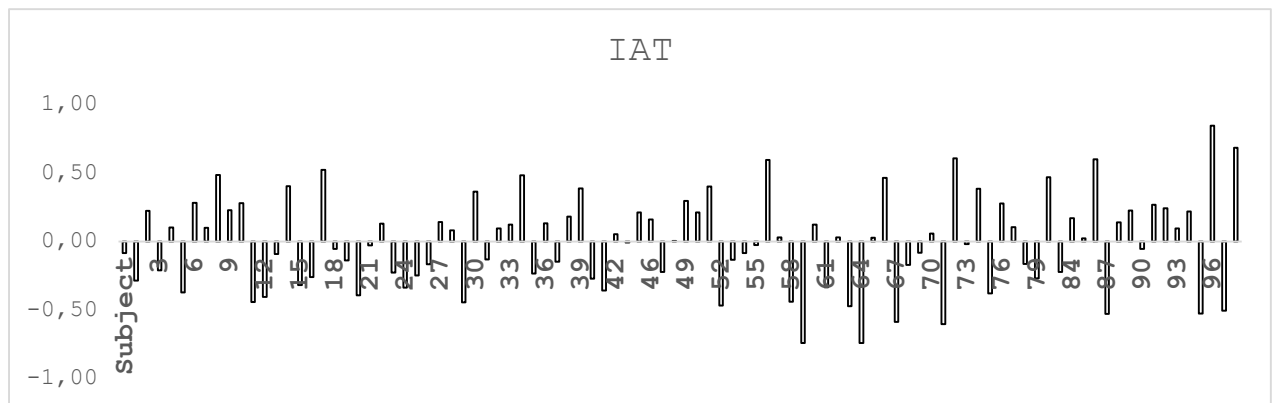


Figure 3. Individual IAT scores

Continuing with our analysis, a one-way ANOVA, showed a statistically significant difference between the two varieties (see Table 1), where the bias towards Afrikaans-accented English (-0.284) was statistically higher than towards the standard variety (0.262 - see Table 2). That is to say, there was a stronger bias towards the incongruent condition than towards the congruent one (see Figure 4).

Table 1. ANOVA - IAT

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2	η^2_p
Congruency	7.138	1	7.138	188.901	< .001	0.668	0.668
Residuals	3.552	94	0.038				

Note. Type III Sum of Squares

Table 2. Descriptives - IAT

Congruency	N	Mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of variation
English	49	0.262	0.198	0.028	0.757
Afrikaans	47	-0.284	0.191	0.028	-0.671

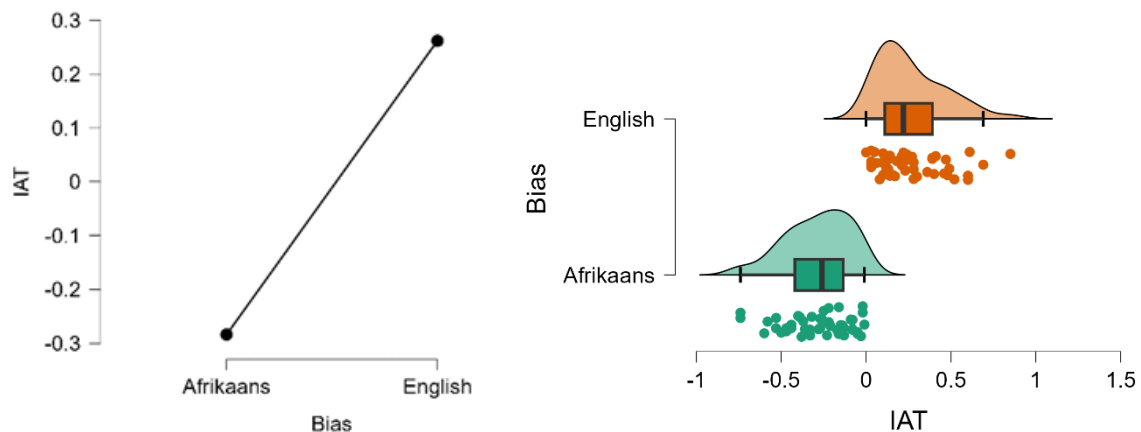


Figure 4. IAT scores and bias

In other words, while there were both a roughly equal number of individuals in the data who displayed a positive bias towards English and individuals who displayed positive bias towards Afrikaans ($N=49$ and $N=47$ respectively¹⁹), when positive bias towards Afrikaans was displayed it tended, on average, to be higher than the alternative bias towards English.

In order to explore the potential factors determining the IAT scores (i.e. relating to hypothesis 2), a correlation, a linear regression model, and an ANOVA were performed. The linear regression model showed no statistically significant results. The results of the remaining analyses are presented in detail below.

3.1 The effect of gender

The correlation analysis yielded a statistically significant effect between IAT and *Gender* ($r = -0.209$; $p = 0.041$), showing that women were more likely to present a positive bias towards the Afrikaans-accented variety whereas men show more positive bias towards Standard South African English. A subsequent ANOVA revealed similar results i.e. that *gender* differences were statistically significant in that woman's IAT scores were more negative than the men's, $F(1,94) = 4.29$, $p = 0.04$ (see Figure 5). We also note the simple fact that out of the 42 L1-Afrikaans individuals who displayed positive bias towards Afrikaans 27 were women (i.e. 64%), while out of the 44 L1-Afrikaans individuals who displayed positive bias towards English 23 were men (i.e. 52%).

¹⁹ If we exclude the L1 English and bilingual speakers from this, we end up with 42 L1-Afrikaans speaking individuals who had a positive bias towards Afrikaans and 44 L1-Afrikaans speaking individuals who had a positive bias towards English.

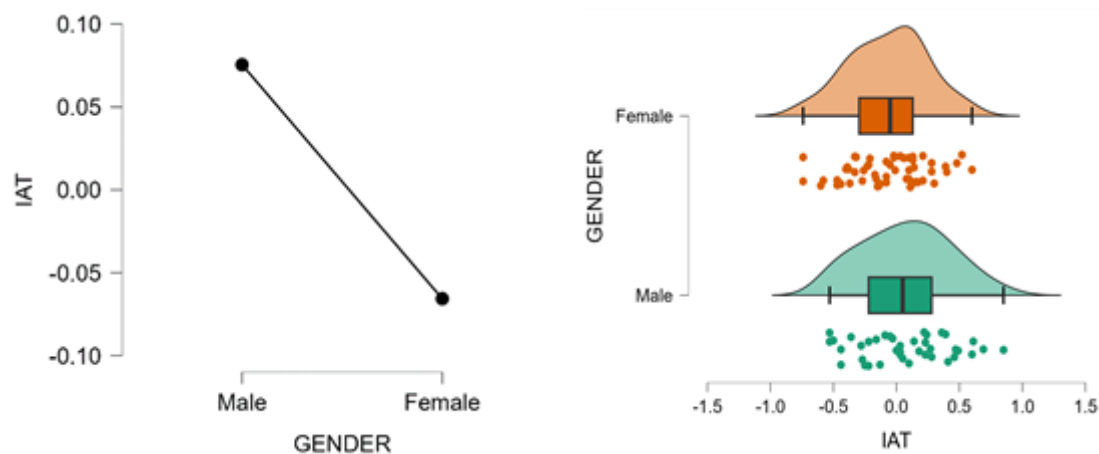


Figure 5. Gender and IAT scores

3.2 The effect of family language

A correlation analysis revealed a trend between IAT and *Family Language* ($r=-0.184$; $p=0.07$). A follow-up ANOVA showed a statistically significant main effect of condition $F(2,93) = 4.67$, $p=0.01$, where the group that used both languages at home ($N=25$) presented more negative IAT scores (positive bias towards Afrikaans-accented English) than the other two groups, as depicted in Figure 6.

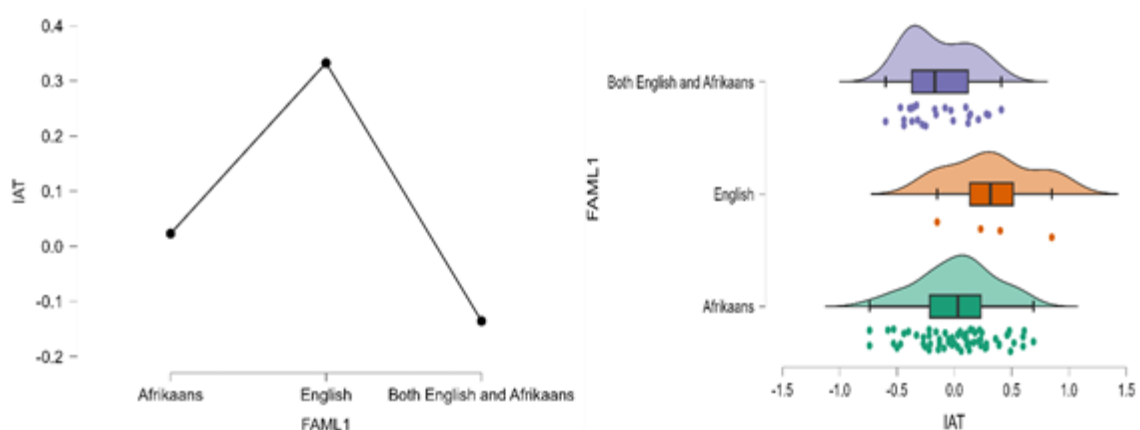


Figure 6. Family Language and IAT scores

4. Discussion

Flowing from the theoretical framework operationalised by our two hypotheses, the initial focus of this study was to investigate the target group's implicit attitudes towards the two English varieties under consideration. As we can see from Figure 3 above, which shows the wide distribution of IAT scores, there is a high degree of variability across respondents in terms of their implicit biases towards the two white English varieties in question (i.e. Afrikaans-accented and Standard South African English). This possibly speaks to the long-standing ambivalent attitudes towards the English language within this speech community; a feature not however unique to this language group. In this respect, the results obtained support the existing literature.

However, results also show that there is a bias effect towards the Afrikaans-accented variety (see Table 2 and Figure 4), that is to say, the outcome rejects our first hypothesis which is in alignment with the congruent condition (i.e. overall positive bias towards the L1-English out-group/accented variety). Participants, in fact, presented shorter reaction times on average when the Afrikaans-accented variety was associated with positive social traits (the incongruent condition) than under the congruent condition when it was associated with negative traits. The distribution shown in Figure 3, together with the overall detected bias, can be taken as combined support for the idea that many Afrikaans-speakers are engaging in linguistic strategies for the maintenance of positive in-group discrimination. Note that this result is in direct opposition to, for example, Bekker and Levon (2017), where English female guises were rated more positively than Afrikaans female guises; as well as earlier research such as that of De Klerk and Bosch (1994), where both the Afrikaans language as well as Afrikaans accents were uniformly rated lower than the English equivalents²⁰.

With the aim of providing a sociolinguistic explanation for these overall results (hypothesis 2), a number of socio-demographic and sociolinguistic variables were included in the methodological design. Two main factors were isolated by the statistical methods: **Gender** and **Family Language**.

The gender analysis showed that women were significantly more likely to present a positive bias towards the Afrikaans-accented variety, while men presented a more positive bias towards Standard South African English. This is a highly relevant finding in that many studies underline that women are more inclined to use more standard or prestigious forms of languages, whilst men tend to show more vernacular features in their language use; all as a result of power dynamics, gender roles or even socialisation processes (Lakoff 1975; Tannen 1990). Due to the close (but definitely not certain) connection between language attitudes and behaviour, it is important to address this finding carefully. First, from a sociolinguistic viewpoint, the intersection of race and language, as in this case, leads us to consider potentially unique and context-bound social practices that may contribute to explain the obtained results²¹. In this regard, the notions of status and solidarity, as explained in Álvarez-Mosquera and Marín-Gutiérrez (2021), could play a relevant role in that standard varieties are often associated with dominant socioeconomic groups and non-standard ones are more prone to index in-group loyalty and lower social status (Otten and Moskowitz 2000; Giles and Marlow 2011; Dragojevic 2018). In this vein, and within the long-established notion of covert prestige (Trudgill 1972), we cannot disregard the fact that the Afrikaans-accented variety as pronounced by a *female* speaker indexed more in-group loyalty in the local context for **female** participants. In addition to emerging psychological evidence of automatic ingroup bias resistance to traditional gender roles or expectations (de Lemus et al. 2018), another possible hint towards a solution is provided in Bekker and Levon (2017), where it became

²⁰ As rightly pointed out by one of the reviewers of the first draft of this article, the contexts in which these other studies were conducted (e.g. the Eastern Cape province in the case of De Klerk & Bosch (1994)) are substantially different from the current (traditionally Afrikaans) one. This is perhaps enough to explain the differences here. At this point, it should also be stressed again that while the initial goal was to focus on both the (Afrikaans *and* English) speech-communities, the demographic profile of white students at the relevant research site meant that the main focus of this article has been on the Afrikaans speech-community (albeit with some data included for English and bilingual speakers e.g. the results relating to family language). A future goal is to supplement the current study with similar research at other South African universities with a larger (white) L1-English student body.

²¹ What is somewhat surprising here, given existing sociolinguistic research, is the more positive attitude among women (as against men) towards the in-group variety; and the more positive attitude among men towards the (overtly) prestige variety.

clear that the **Kugel**²² stereotype –associated with the female L1-English accent – was associated with unfriendliness; albeit that this association was non-gender-specific (i.e. both male and female L1-Afrikaans respondents displayed the relevant association). Equally intriguing, from a socio-historical perspective, are facts relating to the role played by women during the formative years of Afrikaner nationalism, especially given that – and as confirmed in Bekker and Levon (2020: 119) – “the (white) Afrikaner female stereotype remains a relatively conservative one”:

Women have occupied a central place in the ideological formulations of nationalist movements. In particular, the figure of woman as mother recurs throughout the history of nationalist political mobilizations. In Afrikaner nationalism, this symbolic female identity takes the form of the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation) icon, commonly assumed to describe a highly circumscribed set of women’s social roles (Vincent 2000: 61; see also Giliomee 2003b)

The broader question of course is, given the fractured nature of Afrikaner-identity in post-94 South Africa, whether similar nationalist **conservative** sentiments remain, especially among Afrikaner women. While one cannot directly associate in-group bias with nationalism *per se*, it is illuminating that, for example, a relatively recent study by Delpont and Olivier (2003) confirmed that many young white Afrikaans-speaking women showed clearly positive attitudes towards their own ethnic identity (and that, in addition, their ethnic identity was seen to be under threat). With reference to the broader question of whether women tend to show more or less in-group bias than men, there is at least one rather dated but suggestive South African study conducted by Pettigrew (1960: 252) during the Apartheid period, whose “findings [show] ... that in regions with culturally-sanctioned prejudice - like ... South Africa - females, ‘the carriers of culture,’ will better reflect the norms and tend to be more prejudiced than males”. Overall though, differences between heteronormative genders in this regard seem to be highly context specific. Pettigrew (1960: 252) himself confirms this (“it varies as to which sex is the most intolerant”), while Sassenberg et al. (2013) provides a relatively recent example of the complexities in this regard. All-in-all, while this is an interesting result, and the above commentary provides some potentially fruitful avenues, any attempt to explain it needs to ideally be supplemented by other methods of data-collection; of particular relevance here would be qualitative, in-depth (and narrative) approaches such as interviews and focus-groups (see concluding remarks).

Language attitudes can be socialised by a range of agents, such as educators, peers, family members, and media sources, among others (Dragojevic 2018). In our study, the variable **Family Language** emerged as one of the two relevant factors in determining participants’ implicit biases. The ANOVA results indicated that the group that used both languages regularly at home presented the lowest IAT scores, that is, a stronger positive bias towards the Afrikaans-accented variety. However, Figure 5 also shows that when families tend to communicate in (mostly) one language, the bias tends to align with the accented variety. In general terms, the fact that this variable appeared to play a central

²² As indicated by the authors, in the context of South Africa, *kugel* was originally used to refer to a stereotyped young, rich, L1-English, normally Jewish woman who seeks a doctor or a lawyer as a husband (Lanham and Macdonald 1979). However, in recent decades, “it has taken on a more generalized indexical meaning (Johnstone and Kiesling 2008) such that it now largely serves as a broad regional indicator of the rich (northern) suburbs of Johannesburg” (Bekker and Levon 2017: 1128). It should be stressed, however, that in the opinion of the second author, the Standard/General SAE stimulus material displayed no *obvious* features of this stereotype e.g. dramatic PRICE monophthongization or extreme GOOSE-Fronting.

role at the implicit level led us to rethink the impact of language dynamics at the household level in bias formation.

In relation to the previous point, language loyalty is not a constant but a variable part of language culture, especially in language-contact situations (Coulmas 2005). Dragojevic (2018) emphasises that in solidarity-stressing contexts, such as the home and family, nonstandard varieties can sometimes possess **covert prestige**, and this is even more so if we take into account that perceived (or subjective) ethnolinguistic vitality is a better predictor of language choice and language use (Coulmas 2005). Taking into account the generally negative social connotations that have followed Afrikaans throughout its history (see Section 1 above), it would be interesting to further explore participants' family language policies to obtain a precise representation of language use and behaviour at home. Having said that, socialisation practices – through which people learn the culture of their society – primarily take place in childhood and usually within the family (Park and King 2003; Mesthrie et al. 2009). Our data suggest that these practices allow participants to possess, under certain conditions, a more positive bias towards the Afrikaans-accented variety than the socially preferable standard accent. This potentially brings to light additional implications for the overall relevance of the “beloved languages” (Fishman 1997) or the language spoken in intimate domains, in a context where the standard has made substantial in-roads into the less formal domains. In light of limited information regarding the participants' actual language usage and behaviour, these results invite a reconsideration of the significance and impact of the socio-cognitive dimension, gauged through implicit (cognitive processing) and explicit (overt behaviour) metrics.

Sociolinguistic and socio-demographic factors clearly play a role, in the white Afrikaans-speaking speech-community, in predicting bias towards both the out-group (Standard South African English) and in-group (Afrikaans-accented) English varieties. It is also clear that, at least implicitly and among at least a substantial proportion of its young members, the white Afrikaans-speaking community still harbours a strong sense of in-group bias and loyalty; a finding which supports research such as that of Coetzee-van Rooy (2013), which questions the likelihood of dramatic language-shift towards English in this speech-community. These quantitatively-ascertained results will, however, benefit from the application of qualitative methods of research in order to reveal the full complexity underlying the broader trends identified in this paper.

5. Concluding Remarks

The predominant role of English as a lingua franca in South Africa underlines the need for further and more robust research on English accents and varieties. This study builds upon research into the ever-evolving language attitudes in the South African context, focusing on the application of a relatively recent indirect-method of language-attitude research (the IAT) and on the white speech-communities of South Africa, particularly that of young, L1-Afrikaans speakers. It posited two hypotheses, based on a broad analysis of socio-historical facts: first, that young members of this speech-community will show positive out-group bias towards Standard South African English and, second, that a range of socio-demographic and sociolinguistic factors will serve to predict this bias. Hypothesis 1 was, in fact, disconfirmed, showing this group as having a strong in-group bias; a result in alignment with the broader social history of this speech community. Hypothesis 2 was confirmed, highlighting two factors which explained the previous result i.e. Gender and Family Language. In the first case, gender emerged as a predictive factor, but in a direction ‘opposite’ to what one would normally expect from reading the traditional sociolinguistic literature i.e. with females leading the way in terms of in-group bias (covert prestige). Family language was also seen to provide predictive value, with the results showing that individuals reporting the use of both English and Afrikaans showed the highest degree of in-group bias. In both cases - in order to uncover the deeper reasons behind these trends - the

suggestion is made that further research be conducted from a qualitative perspective (e.g. interviews, focus-groups, the application of a narrative approach). The research as a whole underlines the importance of continued monitoring of language attitudes in a highly multilingual (and evolving) context such as that of South Africa; it also underlines the utility of the IAT in uncovering implicit biases that might not necessarily be detectable using other techniques. Finally, additional research should be conducted to investigate the potential alignment of IAT scores and established language attitude dimensions in the field of linguistics, including solidarity and status.

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