

Indexing sexual orientation in non-native speakers of English

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Sibilant variation has consistently been shown to be a robust correlate for indexing gay identity or non-normative masculinity in different speech communities and languages, primarily English (e.g., Munson et al. 2006; Levon 2006; Campbell-Kibler 2011) but also in Spanish (Mack 2010; Walker, *et al.* 2014), Hungarian (Rácz & Schepács 2013), and Danish (Pharao, *et al.* 2014). This body of research has looked solely at monolinguals, leaving open the question of how bilingual speakers construct their gay identity, specifically in their L2. The present study expands upon this existing framework by examining sibilant variation as a potential index of gay identity in French and Dutch L2 speakers of English, with consideration to the many external factors that may effect this variation including native language, L2 proficiency, L1 transfer, and local versus global constructions of gay identity.

Drawing on naturalistic speech data from gay and straight French and Dutch men the present study examines if and to what extent /s/, /z/, and /ʃ/ index gayness in L2 English speech. The data was aligned using the FAVE automatic alignment suite (Rosenfelder *et al.* 2011) and a Praat script was created to extract all sibilant measures. English proficiency was assessed by native English speakers utilising a methodology adapted from White & Genesee (1996) and Sorace & Fillicci (2006).

Results of the current research reveal that the gay speakers exhibit a higher centre of gravity, higher peak frequency, and more negative skew than the straight speakers across all three sibilants in their English production. This is consistent with previous research which shows sibilant variation to index gayness in monolingual speakers. Preliminary data from native language speech establishes that these sibilants are consistently marked in the gay speakers' native language regardless of nationality. Furthermore, English language proficiency is shown to have no effect on this variation. While these results may be evidence for the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence among non-native speakers of English or arise as a product of L1 transfer, the results more likely point to a collapsed dichotomy of local and global constructions of gay identity and exhibit preliminary evidence of these sibilants' cross-culturally salient indexical meaning.

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