

## **"Funny (and wrong) you should say that": Towards a practical framework for studying the effect of personal epistemologies on tolerance of nonstandard language use**

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This paper discusses several aspects of personal philosophy and individual cognitive preferences, or tendencies, and their consequences for the categorization of language perception and production. The author argues in favor of taking into consideration interpersonal differences in the way one conceptualizes reality through the lens of language, and vice versa, as valid factors in the study of language perception and production. Given the context of information receiving and processing typical of the present, when individuals are forced to make sense of multiple, often conflicting texts (Richter 2011) and are able to form social networks based on their preferred news outlets and ideologies increasingly free of geographical constraints, such a working assumption seems fully justified. In particular, essentialism in personal epistemology has been argued to affect, to a considerable extent subconsciously, one's tolerance for nonstandard and ambiguous language (Janicki 1999), which in turn influences covert and overt attitudes toward not only individual forms, but also entire spoken and written styles. The relationship between political attitudes and types of reasoning, as expressed through and influenced by language, would therefore be expected to show a significant and complex correlation (cf. Kahan 2013).

The study described in this paper was devised in order to test and calibrate an experimental design for testing individual language-related epistemological and cognitive tendencies. The subjects are Polish university students of computer science aged 19 to 24 with no special linguistic training. The study consists of a two-part essentialism test (structured interview and questionnaire) and a language perception survey concentrating on nonstandard forms in conversational Polish, such as confusing number and gender. The tendencies observed in the analysis of the results of the language perception survey and one's essentialism score, as compared with the control group, constitute a contribution to the overall inquiry of the eluding and often confusing mechanisms governing the perception of language. Some answers and a number of questions resulting from the study point to further research (including the correlation of the essentialist score on various types of ambiguity) into the matter investigated.

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