

Is foreign-accented speech less credible? Evidence from the Illusory Truth Effect

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Introduction

Foreign-accented speakers are usually judged as **less trustworthy**, less educated, less intelligent and less competent than native-accented speakers [1,2].

Why? Possible reasons:

- **Automatic categorization** of the foreign-accented speaker as an **out-group** individual [3-5];
- **Foreign-accented speech** is perceived as **less fluent** and **harder to understand** than native-accented speech [6].

How true is this sentence?



Aims

We aim to address **how accent** (foreign vs. native) affects the **credibility** of the message.

To do this, we adopted the **illusory truth paradigm**.



• **Implicit task** directly related to cognitive fluency

- Based on the idea that sentence **repetition increases fluency**. This would improve cognitive fluency [7]

Methods & Material

Data collection: Online, through the LabVanced platform

Participants:

60 Italian native speakers (mean age =24,69y; 38 females). 30 completed the native-accented version; 30 completed the foreign-accented version.

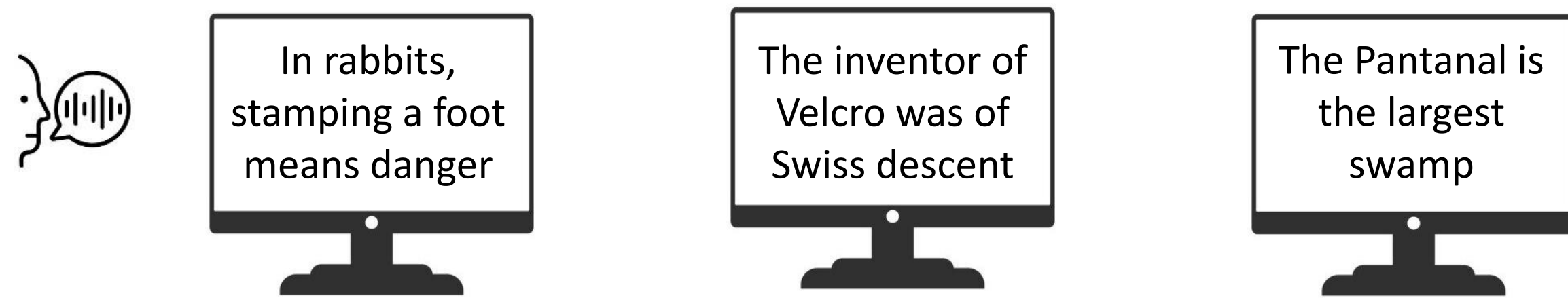
Stimuli:

80 unknown Italian sentences (e.g., *ants don't sleep*) recorded by 20 Italian speakers and 20 foreign speakers from all over the world.

Procedure:

1) **Encoding** Do you find the following statement interesting?

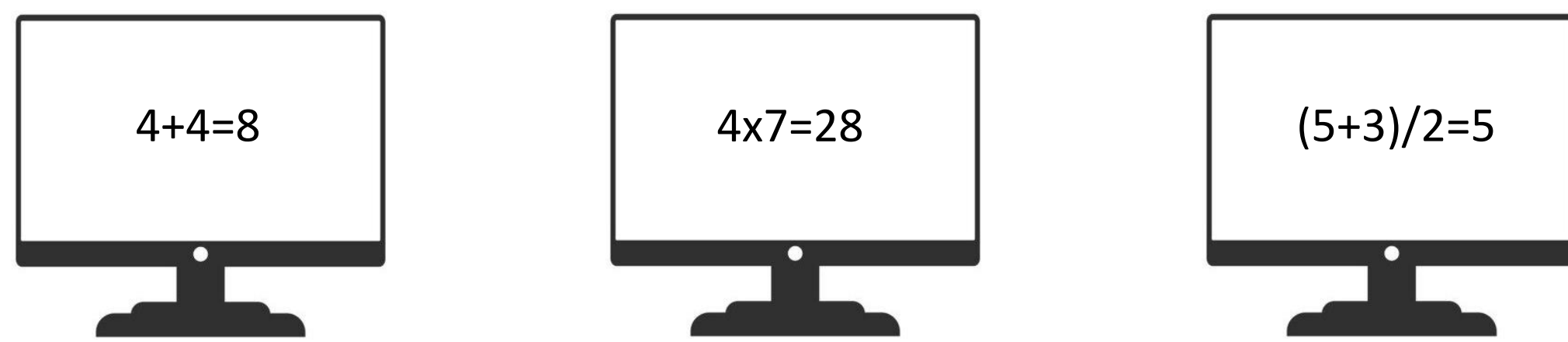
YES / NO



2) **Distractor**

Are these mathematical operations true?

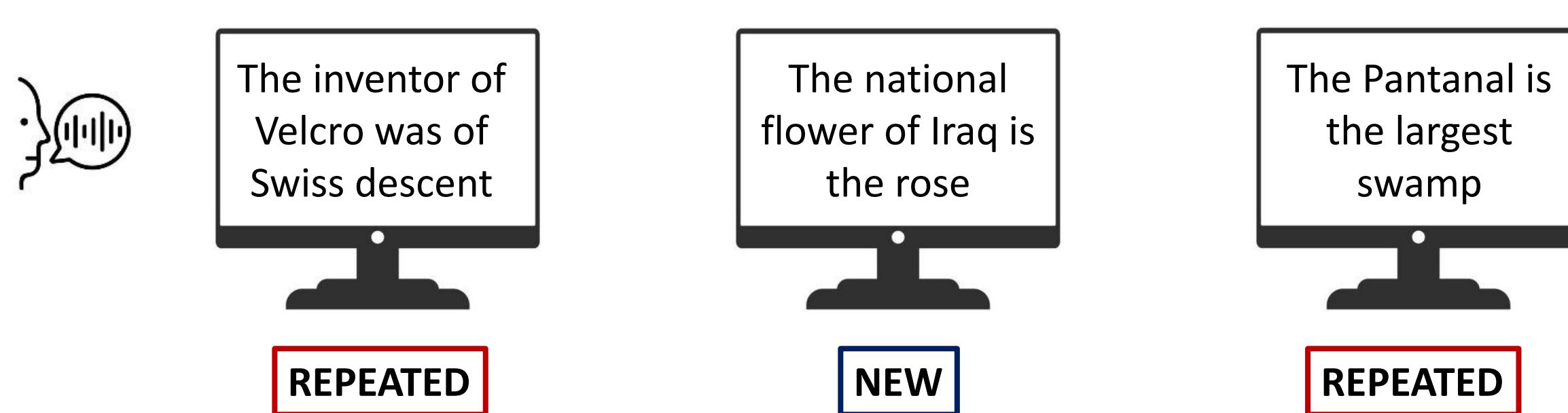
YES / NO



3) **Test**

Evaluate the veracity of the following sentences

False 1 2 3 4 5 6 True



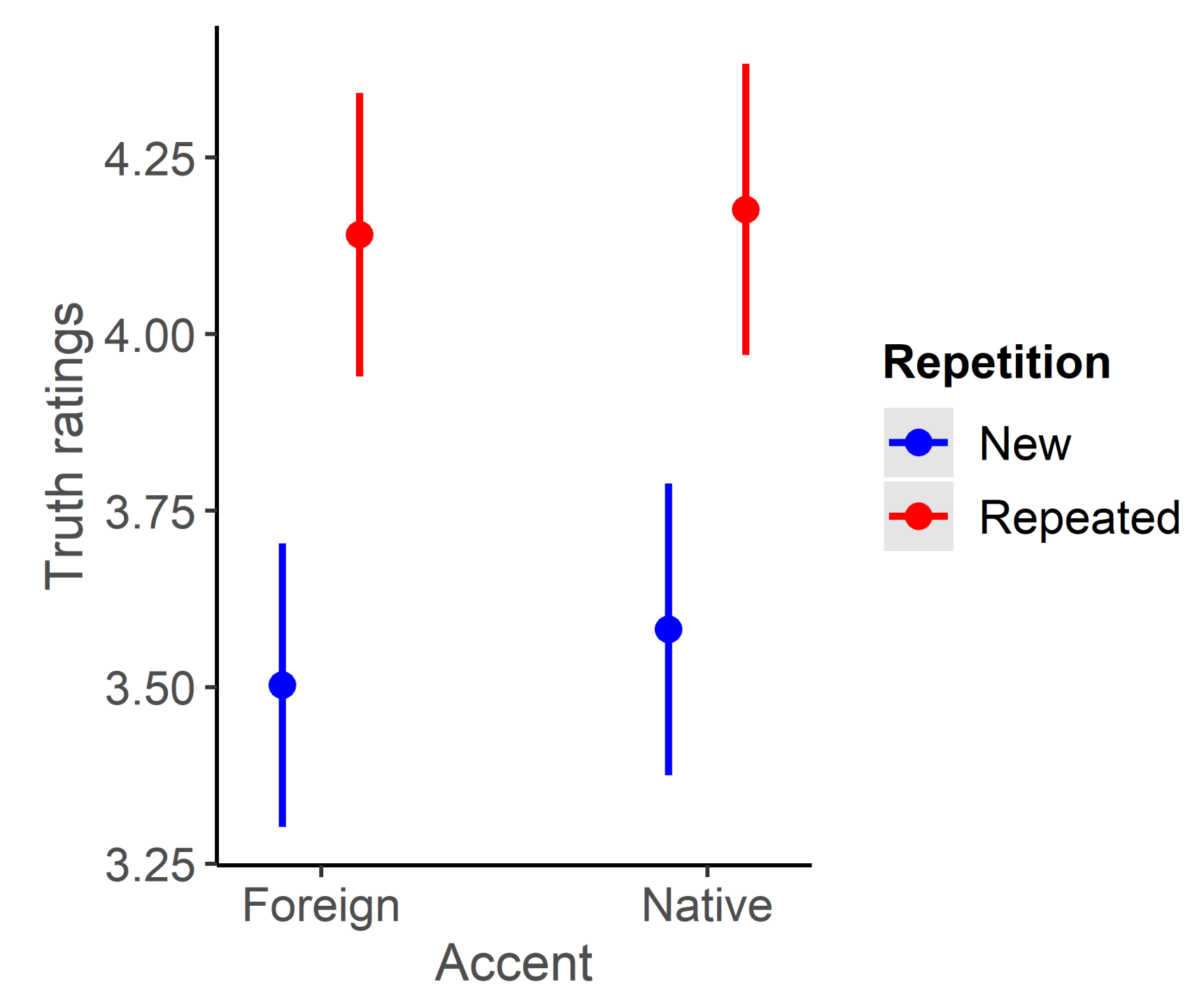
Analysis

Responses (range: 1-6) for the test phase were analyzed employing cumulative link mixed model (**clmm** on R). We considered Repetition (Repeated vs New), Accent (Foreign vs Native) and the interaction between them as fixed effects.

Results

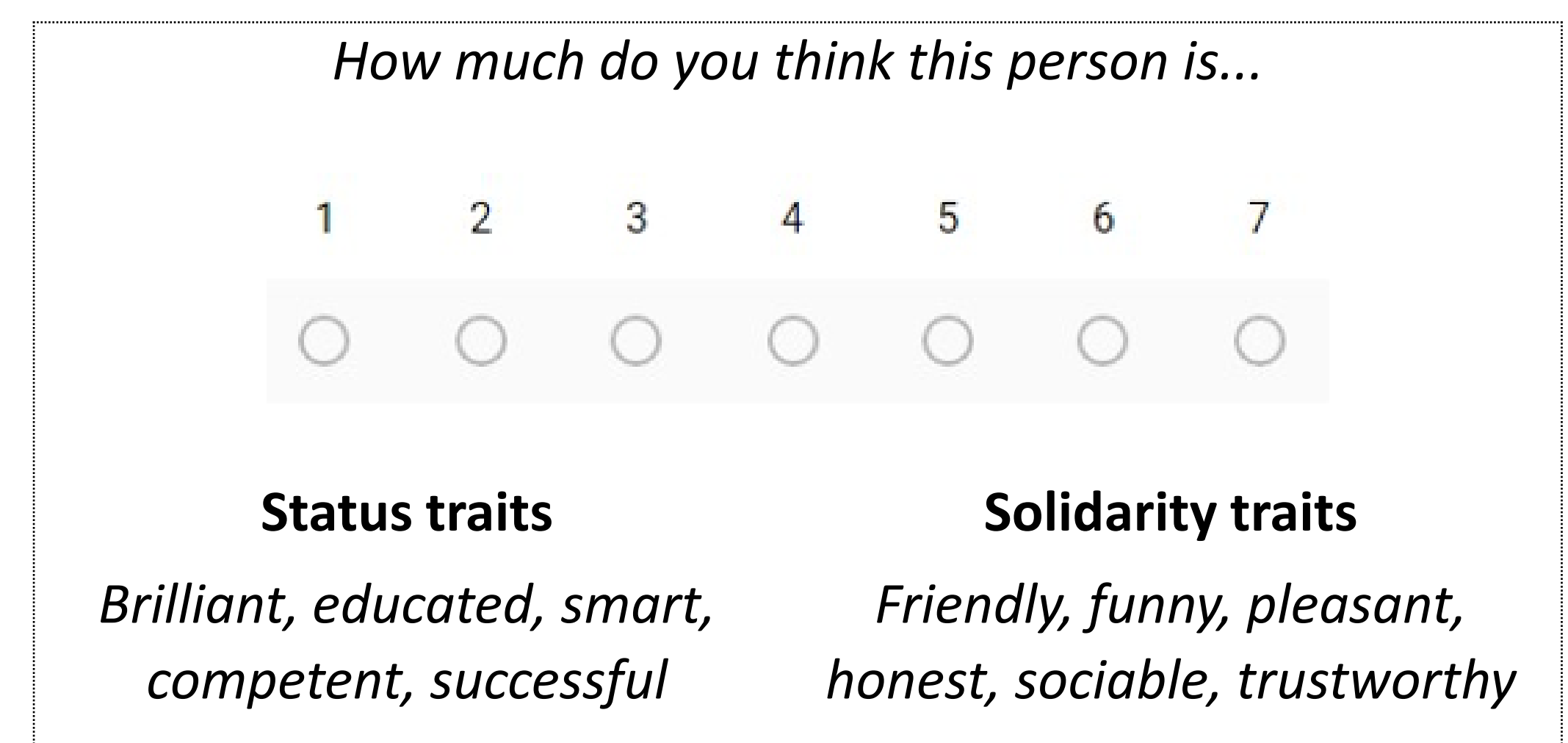
We **replicated** previous research on the **illusory truth effect**, by showing higher truthfulness rating for repeated sentences compared to the new sentences [7,8].

The amount of the illusory truth effect was not modulated by accent: the same increasing credibility was observed in the repeated sentences in both the accented-speech versions of the task.



Speaker's traits ratings

A new group of 109 participants rated the 40 speakers on Status and Solidarity traits.



Results: **brilliance, smartness, competence, success, funniness, pleasantness, honesty and trustworthiness** were judged **lower** when attributed to the foreign speakers, indicating a negative bias toward foreigners. However, any of this traits tied to the speaker voices modulate the main effect on credibility judgments.

Discussion

Our findings challenge previous evidence indicating that foreign-accented speech is judged as less credible [9]. Based on our findings we conclude that **research** on the influence of foreign-accented speech on message credibility **needs to take into account several social and cognitive factors**.

Forthcoming Research

To better understand the role of accent on message credibility, **we will investigate the role of this bias at the participants level**. Indeed, studies in the literature have shown that personal experiences can shape, for example, the Other Race Effect [10].

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