ACCENTuate the Positive
Perception of Accent and Authority among Classroom Instructors at Queen's University

Accents believed to be more respected: British, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, Scottish, Irish, American (excluding Southern US).

Accents believed to be less respected: Chinese, Indian, Arabic, Japanese, South American, African, Eastern European.

Survey Participant: “There is a culture in Canada that gives authority to British accents (whether explicitly or implicitly) likely because of imperial history. I believe there are mythologies of authenticity relegated to accents based on listeners’ assumptions about the world. Many people assume authority based on the relation between accent and content.”

Why are some accents more respected?
Understandability:
“I believe they are less respected or viewed as less authoritative based on how easily they can be understood by the students. If the students can’t understand a person’s accent they might be less likely to respect them.” Survey participant

Unconscious Biases:
“Some people have racialized opinions of people based on their accent...Canadians are taught to Anglo-American-European accent because of a history of colonialism and imperial order.” Survey Participant

Understandability or Bias?
Listening is everyone’s responsibility.

“Everyone’s accent is foreign to a certain percentage of the audience, as everyone has an accent” Survey participant.