

Impact of accommodated speech on autistic adults' comprehension and evaluation of the speaker

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INTRODUCTION

- Speakers often use simplified speech when talking to listeners with certain social identities such as older adults or L2 speakers.^{1,2}
- Characteristics of speech registers used in these contexts (*Elderspeak* and *Foreigner-Directed Speech*) include slower speech, simpler sentences, and more repetitions.¹⁻³
- While such accommodations might be well-intentioned and may sometimes support comprehension, they can also be perceived as patronizing.^{4,5}
- Impact of accommodations on disabled listeners, who are also recipients of linguistic accommodations⁶, remains underexplored.

AIM: Examine how accommodated speech impacts autistic adults' comprehension and evaluation of speakers who use a simplified register in the style of *Elderspeak* and *Foreigner-Directed Speech*.

METHODS

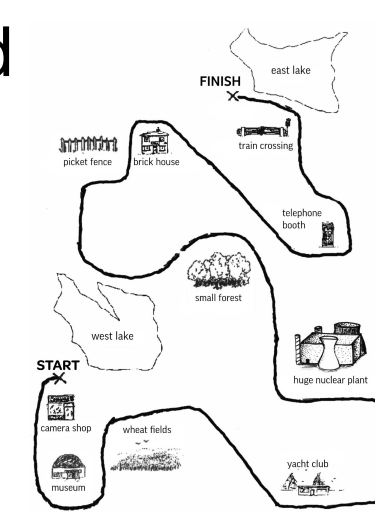
preregistered methods and analysis:



- **Map Task:** Participants followed recorded audio instructions directing the listener to draw a path on a map.

Route accuracy: passing each of the landmarks on the correct side

Terminus accuracy: correctly locating the "Finish" point.



- **Audio Stimuli:** Neutral  Simplified 

- **Perception Ratings:**

1. I thought that the speaker was difficult to understand.
2. I thought the speaker's instructions were helpful.
3. * I thought the speaker's instructions were unclear.
4. * I thought the speaker was disrespectful.
5. I thought the speaker was friendly.
6. * I thought the speaker was condescending.

* reverse coded

RESULTS

Better task performance in the Simplified condition.

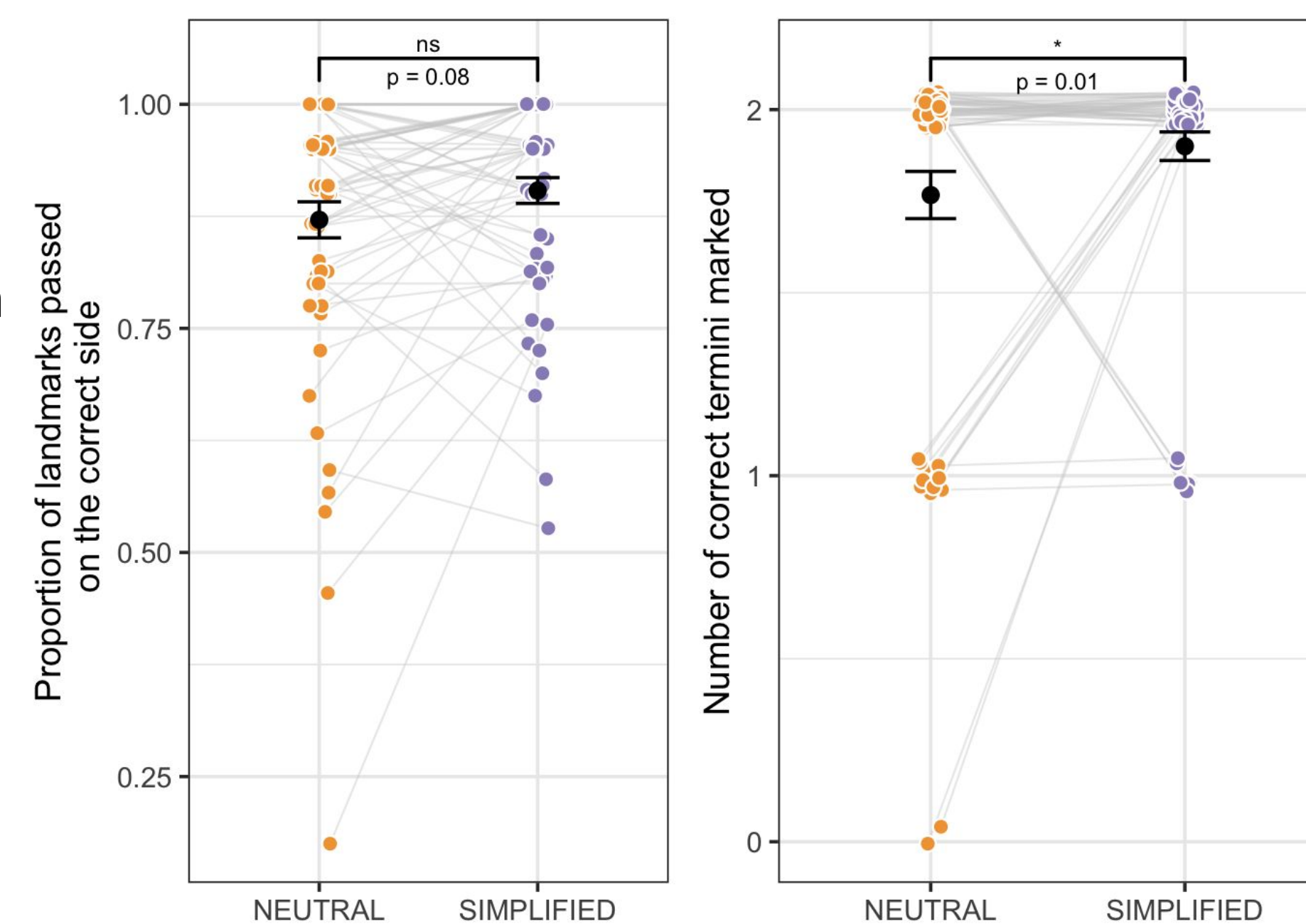


Figure 1. Effect of speech type on task accuracy.

Simplified speech rated as demonstrating lower interpersonal regard for the listener.

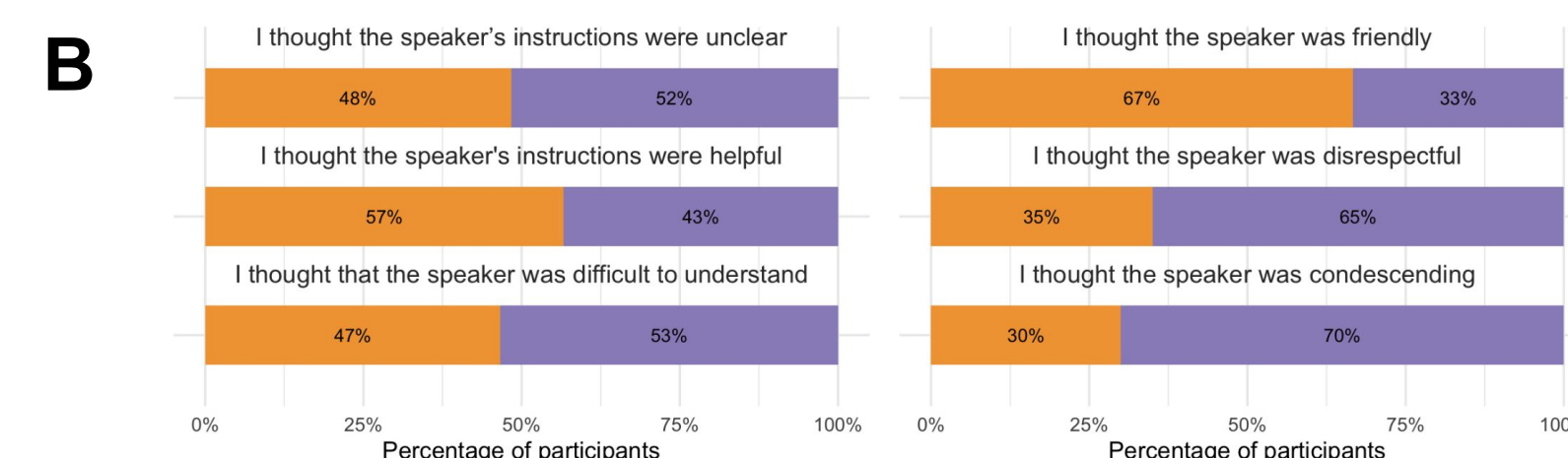
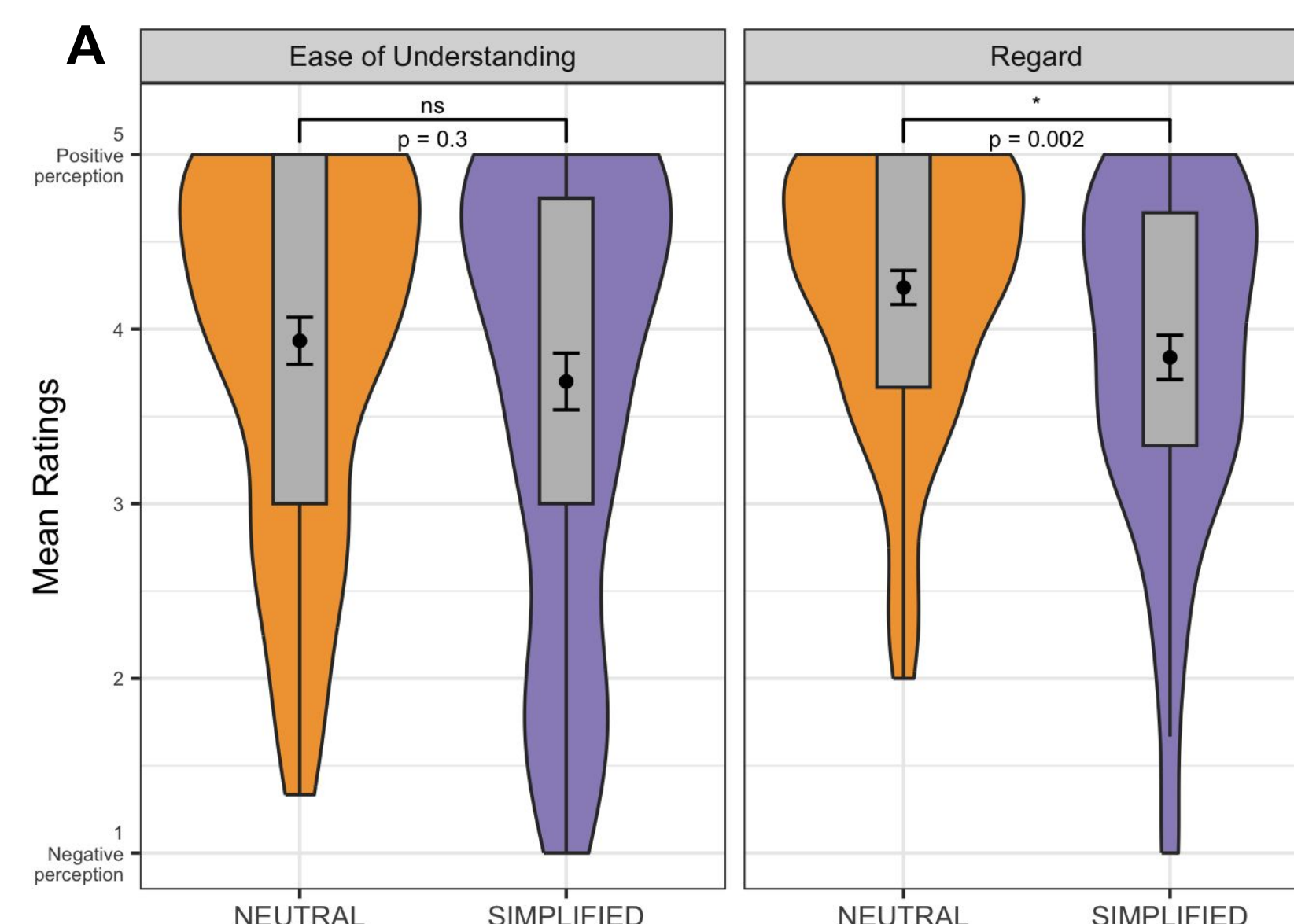


Figure 2. A. Effect of speech type on perception ratings. B. Participants' choice between the two speakers on each item.

CONCLUSIONS

- Participants performed slightly better on the Map Task with simplified speech but rated the speaker who used simplified speech as demonstrating lower regard for the listener.
- These findings suggest a critical dissociation between comprehension benefits of linguistic accommodation and its social-emotional consequences for autistic adults. This has been noted in *Elderspeak* research as well.⁷

Future/Ongoing Work

- Which specific features support comprehension without leading to negative evaluation of the speaker?
- What cues speakers to accommodate autistic listeners: Labels or specific characteristics? Do attitudes toward autism impact accommodation?

Shukla, V., Jaswal, V., Arunachalam, S. (under review). *Linguistic accommodation made by non-autistic speakers in response to being told the listener is autistic.*

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