The Effect of Immigrant Customer Service Representatives' (ICSRs) Accents on Customers' Experience and Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study shows that most customers are frustrated because of the unintelligible communication they usually have with Immigrants Customer Service Relations (ICSRs). Customers' experience worsens when they find it difficult to understand the customer representatives they are communicating with because their accents make them unintelligible, causing communication breakdown. This study adopted the qualitative research approach. Frame Analysis (FA) and Discursive Social Psychological (DSP) methods were used to analyze Reddit online forum users' responses to a peer's question posed on the forum. It found that accents play a significant role in why some customers, using American customers as cases, are rude to ICSRs. Aside from this, it also found that other factors, such as the organizations' systems—long wait times to access CSRs, network connection failures, inexperienced CSRs, and acts of racism affect customer experience.

Keywords: Immigrant Customer Service Representatives, Accent, Effective Communication, Customers, Customer Experience and Satisfaction, Business Organization

Introduction

There have been substantial studies on costumer-experience and satisfaction based on their connections and communication with Customer

Service Representatives (CSRs). Such studies include Lim, Tuli, and Grewal, 2020; Otto, Szymanski, and Varadarajan, 2020; Cruz and Lockwood, 2021; Bleier, Harmeling, and Palmatier, 2019. Most of these studies focused on how customer satisfaction helped business organizations' growth and revealed how customers' experience and satisfaction could be determined by effective communication with the CSRs. This study investigated whether accent affects customer experience and satisfaction that causes customers' rudeness to CSRs using Immigrant Customer Service Relations (ICSRs) as cases.

Communication and incredibly effective communication is vital to every human experience. Clear communication connects people better (Faisal & Drake, p. 73). In other words, effective communication enhances the success of organizations and brands (Schwager & Meyer, 2007, n.p.; Hoque & Baer, 2014, p. 67). A strategic communication plan is one of the effective primary strategies to meet up, increase, improve valued customers' experience, and maximize profit (Freberg, 2021; Mahoney & Tang, 2016). Employing ICSRs who can communicate effectively to assist customers in meeting their varied needs will be an excellent organizational decision.

When communicators with different accents communicate, there is a tendency that both will experience an element of noise that could amount to communication breakdown. If this happens between a customer and an ICSR, it could amount to customer dissatisfaction. In an everyday experience, a customer satisfied with ICSR's service will not reciprocate with rudeness. It shows that people and society will be befuddled with chaos without effective communication. Effective communication is essential to smoothen relationships between organizations, business owners, marketers, brands, and customers. It will breed customer loyalty (Husain, 2013).

It is established that individual skills and collaboration, conversations, and communications enhance flexibility and innovation (Highsmith, 2002, as cited in Mishra & Mishra, 2009, p. 440). These thoughts reveal how practical communication skills can enhance effective connections and understanding between ICSRs and customers. A positive experience between both parties can eliminate customer dissatisfaction or rudeness.

Various factors can affect how people understand each other during conversations. One such factor is the accent. Accent plays a significant role in the human communication process and encounters. It will determine how message senders and receivers understand, perceive each other, and assign meaning to the message (Villarroel, Theodoulidis, Burton, Gruber, & Zaki, 2014). The essence of communication is to generate mutual understanding with the other party. It means that intelligibility matters at every communication point. It could be submitted that if a message's sender, such as ICSR, is not intelligible, the customer's expectations will be dashed, generating frustration and rudeness in most cases. However, it could also

depend on the customer and their psychological experiences before the communication encounter. This thought is consistent with (Edwards, 1999, as cited in Dio, Schulz, & Gurd, 2006) that "Accent perception is known to vary according to the listeners' regional origin." This study focused on the customer because they choose a product based on brand promises and hope to satisfy their needs (Otto et al., p. 453) and on ICSRs because they bridge the gap between the customer and business organizations through communication (Cruz & Lockwood, 2021; Bleier, Harmeling, & Palmatier, 2019). Hence, the decision to investigate how communication affects both parties, using ICSRs accent as a case.

Research Question

This study adopted an online question posted on Reddit about an ICSRs experience with some American customers. The question stated, *Why do "some" Americans be disrespectful over the phone once they find out the one they are talking to does not have an American accent?* The question was, however, rephrased for grammatical correctness and used as this study's research question.

RQ: Why are some Americans rude over the phone when they realize the person (ICSR) does not speak in their native accent?

The question generated significant reactions on the forum, with every respondent giving their opinions. The responses gathered and analyzed provided answers to the research question.

The Rationale for Adopting Reddit

The rationale for using Reddit, an American social media news, web content rating, and discussion website, was that it serves as a news aggregate social media site that has become home to thousands of subcommunities known as subreddits since it began in 2005. Also, as of 2018, there were thousands of subreddits and 330 million users on the site (Pardes, 2018), making it an essential hub for online discussions (Bergstrom and Poor, 2021, p. 1). Reddit is proven to be suitable for various research purposes, ranging from the study of user engagement and interactions between highly related communities to postelection political analyses, among other topics (Barthel, 2020, as cited in Gozzi1, Tizzani, Starnini, Ciulla, Paolotti, Panisson, and Perra, 2020, p. 3).

Scope and Population of the Study

One hundred and sixty (160) secondary posts followed the Primary Post (PP) — the question raised on the Reddit forum. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to delimit this study's scope. From the one hundred and sixty (160) responses generated, forty-seven (47) answers, that is,

Secondary Posts (SPs), were selected. They represented 100% of the overall data drawn from the study's population. Further, it was followed by the final purposive selection of seventeen (17) responses representing 36.17%. These were the responses that most directly addressed the question. The responses were analyzed and used to answer the research question.

Significance of the Study

This study primarily contributes to and expands the scope of discussions regarding ICSRs and their roles in fostering customer experience and satisfaction. Its findings will benefit academics, communication students, business organizations/institutions, government, and non-governmental organizations. It reveals the general conception of ICSRs and customer relationships based on data gathered and analyzed through Reddit users' discussions. The discussions show people's perceptions and feelings about why some American customers are rude over the phone when they realize the person (ICSR) does not speak in their native accent. Business organizations or stakeholders can use this study's results to build a formidable global bridge between ICSRs and their customers to foster customer loyalty and reduce ICSRs-customers altercations significantly.

Literature Review

This researcher conducted a systematic literature review to select relevant research articles that studied customer experience in marketing, according to strict guidelines espoused by Booth, Papaioannou, & Sutton (2012) and Palmatier, Houston, & Hulland (2018). The approach helped to keep this study focused on the primary variables that addressed its purpose and objectives.

Customer Experience

Customer experience is one of the significant factors influencing the consumer's process for loyalty and a purchase decision. According to (Davidson, 1992, as cited in Joshi, 2014, p. 393), "Customer experience is a method of creating a differential advantage for establishing customer's loyalty." Customers respond to diverse stimuli residing between them and a business organization. The goal is to understand what the business organization offers and how customers can gratify their needs along their journey. A positive outcome of this experience will increase customer loyalty (Becker, L. & Jaakkola, 2020). When such goals are achieved, customers will not have any cause to engage business organizations' employees, such as ICSRs, in an altercation that may lead to rudeness. Instead, purchases will increase when the gratifications customers seek are obtained (Lim, Tuli, & Grewal, 2020, p. 24).

Bearing this in mind, every business organization must meet customers' needs to gain loyalty, allow mutual relationships between them and employees, especially ICSRs, and increase sales. When a positive customer experience and satisfaction are not met through one of the primary factors— human communication channels, it would not be out of place to investigate the process to resolve the issue.

Accent and Intelligibility

Every race has its unique accent. How it is understood depends on who the lister is at every point. Some authors, such as Adank et al., 2009; Clopper & Bradlow, 2008; Pinet et al. 2011; Smith et al., 2014, as cited in Stringer & Iverson (2019), have argued that the intelligibility of an accent depends heavily on the particular combination of talker and listener. Listeners with a standard native accent generally find their accents more intelligible than a regional accent (p. 2213). When immigrants migrate to other countries and communicate with others who are natives, accents could pose a problem to the listeners' level of intelligibility. This issue is the case in the US, where this study's data was generated.

Some studies, such as Adank et al., 2009; Floccia, Goslin, Girard, & Konopczynski, 2006; Sumner & Samuel, 2009, revealed that a regional accent is usually as intelligible as a standard native accent for regional-accented listeners. With lower proficiency, non-native listeners can find a non-native accent more comprehensible than a native accent. (Pinet & Iverson's, 2010 and Pinet et al.'s 2011 studies, as cited in Stringer & Iverson, 2019) reveal that the influence of talker–listener pairing on accent intelligibility is explicit, but the mechanism is not fully understood. It shows how ICSRs' accents can influence the US native customers' understanding of the message communicated during conversations. It is evident that most times, this experience between customers with American English (AE) as their First Language (L1) and ICSRs that speak AE as Second Language (L2) will lead to customers' negative or low satisfaction and experience, resulting in rudeness. An unintelligible accent will lead to noise during the communication encounter.

Stringer & Iverson (2019, p. 2214) postulate, "If talker's L1 is more different to the listener's L1, this accent may be less intelligible than their own, particularly if the talker and/or listener have low proficiency in the target language." Therefore, it suggests that accents will affect intelligibility between an American L1 speaker-listener and an immigrant L2 speaker-listener. When this happens, customer frustration and aggression may occur, which might have warranted the question posed by the Reddit ICSR user. It should be noted that customer aggression has detrimental effects on service employees, such as ICSRs, and service companies.

Because of this, (Enosh et al.'s 2013, as cited in Kwon & Yi, 2019, p. 1120) argue that customer aggression leads to a decrease in daily performance in the short term and loss of trust in the system and organizational helplessness in the long term at the organizational level. This issue may be inevitable as ICSRs continue to relate with American native customers. The role of organizations' managers to nip this issue also becomes unavoidable. They must pay attention to customer aggression generated due to accent intelligibility to prevent its harmful influence on service workers—ICSRs or the company's brand to enhance all-time customer experience and satisfaction.

Customer Service

Every public or private organization, for-profit or non-profit, has customers they service. Aside from selling manufactured products, there are organizations whose sole practice is service-oriented. Whichever an organization practices, there must be deliberate and strategic efforts to satisfy its internal and external stakeholders. Whether emailing customer support, calling customer service, or speaking face-to-face with retail, or sales representatives, interacting with employees is a central feature of customer experiences with brands (Meyer and Schwager, 2007). To this end, business organizations must prioritize an effective interactive atmosphere internally or externally.

There has been an increase in the number of call-center customer service representatives, most of whom now work remotely due to the effect of COVID-19 (Gentles & Brown, 2021). Due to the break of the pandemic, governments imposed strict mitigation measures, such as lockdowns, to control the spread of the virus. Reuschke (2021, p. 4) asserts, "Within the United Kingdom (UK), for example, the rise in homeworking during the pandemic has been most striking in London – the financial service center – with a homeworking rate above 50% in June 2020 up from 7% at the beginning of 2020 before the Coronavirus outbreak." Other nations like the US also experienced the same deadly effect of the pandemic (Michèle et al., 2021).

At the height of the pandemic, most organizations were forced to close their door due to the government's stay-at-home order. Kozhemyakin (2021, p. 60) posits, "What has become new about the use of online workplace communications since the 'COVID-19 era is the use of our homes and our non-working time as part of organizational (corporate or business) interactions. Our homes become mediatized, converting into a sort of medium." Notwithstanding, businesses must continue. Then came the need to have customers connect with ICSRs, most of whom now work remotely, primarily through telephone conversations for purchases or to resolve issues.

This experience denied almost everyone the interpersonal communication experience enjoyed in workplaces. However, organizations

continued to create enabling channels to communicate with customers to survive and to keep the business running, leveraging other forms of communication—telephone conversations and others. Organizations tried and continued to satisfy customers by strategically putting human and material resources in place to provide excellent customer service.

Customer satisfaction refers to customers' post-consumption comparison of their expectations and perceptions of the performance of a product or service (Haumann et al., 2014, as cited in Lim, Tuli, & Grewal, 2020). Excellent service will positively influence customers' expectations post-consumption comparison. It is the most direct route to customer satisfaction (Marinova, Singh, & Singh, 2018; Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1988, as cited in Packard & Berger, 2020, p. 788). This experience has continued to date as most companies have embraced remote working. Organizations have also continued to engage ICSRs services to support and deliver customer services. However, the effect of accent remains a challenge that needs to be addressed.

Empirical Studies

This session discussed a few studies to show the empirical backing this study leveraged. The studies served as formidable literature and analysis guide to the concepts discussed and analyzed in this study. The first is Cruz & Lockwood's (2021) study that examined CSRs' losing control of a call' regarding the overall exchange. It noted that the problems of locally recruited CSRs losing control of the call have led to customer frustration and poor feedback, using the Philippine experience as a case. The problem was attributed to poor grammar and incomprehensible accents. The core aim of the study was to encourage the design of appropriate communications support for CSRs in contact centers. Likewise, ICSRs will require proper communication support to perform better. This action may likely reduce the number of altercations between them and the customers, reducing rudeness scenarios.

The second study is Tombs & Hill's (2014) study that investigated customer reactions to service employees with accents that differ from a non-native accent taking into account customer emotions. It is assumed that interactions between people with different accents are often challenging due to communication difficulties or native speakers' perceptions of individuals with foreign accents. Two accents of service employees from Australia or India were used to reveal service employees' competence or incompetence, adopting an experimental design to uncover the effects of service employees' accents on customers' reactions. Results show that acceptance of accent did not correlate with either the impressions of the duty manager or the repurchase intentions, hence providing evidence of discriminant validity. The study indicated that customers use accents as a cue to evaluate service employees.

The final study is Baquiran & Nicoladis' (2020) study that investigated if doctors who speak with a foreign accent are perceived as less competent than doctors who speak with a standard accent. It was based on the authors' thoughts that people sometimes assume someone who speaks with a foreign accent possesses negative traits and personality characteristics. The study found that all participants judged the Chinese-accented doctor's competence more negatively than the standard Canadian-accented doctor. The authors summed that the results suggest that foreign-accented doctors face biases about their competence from their patients. This experience might likely influence why Americans might be rude to ICSRs, as presumed by the Reddit user, especially when effective communication fails.

Methodology
Data Collection and Analysis

The qualitative research approach was adopted, using the Frame Analysis (FA) and Discursive Social Psychological (DSP) methods to analyze Reddit users' responses to the question posed by a peer on the forum. The question was adopted as this study's research question – "Is there a reason why some Americans are rude over the phone when they realize the person (ICSR) does not speak in their native accent?" It related to this study's preconceived assumption that accents will negatively affect customer satisfaction and experience. The question attracted one hundred and sixty (160) responses on the Reddit forum. This makes it a significant number of data for this study.

The selected research approaches were chosen because they have been adopted by past research that investigated the relationships between people's reactions to other people's thoughts in a given setting, such as in the Reddit online forum. Also, discursive psychology considers how psychological words and displays influence people's activities in particular environments (Potter and Hepburn (2005, p. 338). Frame analysis explained how Reddit forum users engaged each other in a bid to provide answers to the question raised. Respondents framed their responses based on their understanding of the question and experiences as ICSRs and American or Immigrant customers. The discursive social psychology method analyzed how respondents constructed their responses during discussions on the subject.

An Analytic Approach

A Reddit online forum user posted a question on the forum, seeking answers from other users who might have had a similar experience. Respondents responses were selected and analyzed. The Reddit online forum provided a significant amount of data for this study. It revealed how social media forums allow participants to understand and participate in societal debates regarding diverse topics. It was discovered that the users who

discussed the post reflected divergent views based on their experiences. For instance, some respondents believed that accent was the causative factor; some felt it was racistly induced, while others disagreed with both positions, noting that it was a system failure-induced issue. The analysis focused on how other users related to the case outlined in the question. That is some American customers' rudeness to ICSRs and the reason(s) behind it. Data generated helped to give answers to the question.

In discussing frame analysis, (Goffman, 1974, as cited in Norton et al., 2021) asserts that people view the social situations they enter through frames that work to make those situations understandable" (p. 442). In the ethnomethodological reading of Goffman (1974), frames are culturally embedded resources for meaning-making. It is believed not to be cognitions but enables the organization of experience and the interpretation of events and the social world (Niska, 2015; Peräkylä, 1990), such as the issue raised on the Reddit forum, which is this study's focus.

In most discussions, a primary frame can be distorted. In other words, some respondents may likely respond differently from the discussed primary issue. In line with this thought, Nortio et al. (2021) assert that the "primary frame can also be altered in many ways…" (p. 443). Based on this finding, the purposive sampling technique was adopted to eliminate posts that did not address the question directly. Only the responses that answered the research question without distortion were selected, using keying as a category. For this study's objective, keying refers to a process through which the frame directly addresses the subject matter. Hence, the purposive selection of the appropriate responses.

In using the discursive social psychology analysis approach, this researcher leveraged (Potter, 1998, as cited in Norton et al., 2021, p. 443). Potter stated, "Discursive Social Psychological approach is a broad and versatile analytic approach rooted in social constructionism in two senses." It focuses on how people, such as Reddit online forum users, construct their worlds through accounts and descriptions and the practices sustained by those accounts and reports. An established argument revealed that a standard view endorsing the use of discursive approaches when studying online discussions is to define these discussions as 'naturally occurring' (Giles, 2016; Jowett, 2015; Lamerichs and te Molder, 2003, as cited in Norton et al., 2021). Against this background, this study approached the Reddit online forum discussions as social participation, helping to answer the ICSR's quest to know how users who had experienced identical challenges regarding American customers' rudeness to ICSRs related to it.

Theoretical Framework
Goffman's Framing Theory

Reddit online forum allows users to connect, engage, and discuss topics ranging from politics, games, sports, economy, business, and many more. Whenever an issue is framed and posted by a Primary User (PU) on the platform, such as this study's research question, other users, Secondary Users (SUs), give answers to the post (question) by framing their views about the question/issue based on their experiences. Sometimes, a heated discussion of the subject may follow.

This study adopted Goffman's (1974) framing theory because it focuses on human communication experiences—broadcast talk and interaction. The origin of the framing concept lies in the field of cognitive psychology and anthropology (Gorp, 2007, p. 60). Gorp further noted that it has now been used by other disciplines such as sociology, economics, linguistics, social-movements research, policy research, communication science, political communication, public-relations research, and health communication. According to Goffman (1974, p. 21), frames are the conduit through which individuals interpret their world. The author submitted that while individuals could not necessarily articulate what "frame" they were using to make sense of their experiences, they nonetheless enabled people to "locate, perceive, identify and label" an infinite number of occurrences to make meaningless information meaningful. Goffman's (1974) theory explains how Reddit online forum users related to the question asked by one of their peers and how their understanding, interpretation, and discussion of the subject shaped their responses.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings
Data Analysis

One hundred and sixty (160) secondary posts (SPs) followed the primary post (PP) posted by an ICSR Reddit online forum user. Many other users reacted to the post. To delimit the scope of this study, only the responses that provided direct answers to the question were purposively selected. Forty-seven (47) SPs representing 100% of the overall data drawn from the study's population of one hundred and sixty (160) were selected. These responses were precise in addressing the issues raised and were devoid of distortion. Therefore, based on this researcher's judgment, sixteen (16) discussions (see excerpts 1-3) representing 36.17% were finally drawn and analyzed because they met this study's criteria.

Discussions and data analysis were placed on three framing and discoursive categories, (1) Frame of Accent as a Causative Factor (FACF), (2) Frame of the System as a Causative Factor (FSCF), (3) Frame of Racism as a Causative Factor (FRCF). These categories show respondents framed and

discussed why they believe some customers, using the American experience, are rude over the phone when they realize the person (ICSR) does not speak in their native accent. Note that all the selected Reddit users' (PU and SUs) responses for this study are unedited; they are cited precisely.

Discussion of Findings
Primary Post (PP) – The Question and the Follow-up Statement of the Primary User (PU)

In this study, the PU is the person who raised an issue (the primary post—PP) that generated the secondary users' (SUs) responses. The SUs' posts are known as secondary posts (SPs). The original PP stated, "*Why do "some" Americans be disrespectful over the phone once they find out the one they are talking to does not have an American accent.*" For this study, it was rephrased thus, "Is there a reason why some Americans are rude over the phone when they realize the person (ICSR) does not speak in their native accent? The excerpts below were analyzed to answer the research question.

Excerpt A: Frame of Accent as a Causative Factor (FACF)

SP 1
1. The way you write, here and elsewhere, suggests to me your "perfect understandable 2. English" is …something less than that. Your customers are getting frustrated by trying 3. to communicate with someone they can't understand. It's not their job to accommodate 4. you, and the reason they are calling in the first place is because they've got a problem. 5. Now they've got another one - trying to figure out what the CSR thinks he is saying.

SP 2
1. Well, remember, people are calling customer service because they're having a problem. 2. So, now add to the fact that someone might not be able to understand you.... I don't 3. think the outcome is surprising. I actually understand people's anger when having a 4. problem and then also talking to someone they can't communicate with... That is an 5. ESSENTIAL part of getting the issue resolved. It's a bad practice by companies to put 6. people who aren't "well spoken" in customer service roles. It's not a role that should be 7. outsourced or given to people who don't speak without a hard to understand accent.

SP 3
1. Some people are just mean to customer service in general and use accents as an excuse. 2. Your English may not be as clear as you think, especially if your feedback is from 3. others with whom you share a first language and you both speak English as a second 4. language. The way you speak would be comparable - in other words, you may be both 5. saying the word "wrong" the same way, so it sounds right to both of you. I've seen this 6. exact thing even with native English speakers from areas with heavy local dialects. 7. If the connection is also not clear, the two can compound to make understanding more 8. difficult. This is very common now that most people are on a cell phone. I've also run 9. into situations where the customer service center had a lot of background noise. All 10. three together make it really hard to understand the service rep. 11. There's nothing you can do about the assholes, but there may be some value in seeing if

12. you can talk with a native speaker, if you haven't, and see if they can point out any
13. problem words or phrases.
SP 4
1.   First, let me say that it is not okay to be rude to someone who is just doing their job.
2.   2nd, some people, and I know this from experience, can't hear accents. There are
3.   certain accents I can't hear, but I can hear normally very well. The way I hear certain
4.   accents is like listening to a blank noise (sorry, I don't know how else to describe it).
5.   You may speak perfect English, but if you have a certain accent, some people may not
6.   hear it. I would hope that people would be more respectful though. Cheers!
SP 5
1.   Accents even with perfect English makes it unintelligible some times, I've heard people
2.   raised and born in the US but from a part of the US that has a thick accent.. can hardly
3.   understand them. Not to mention you get people who talk too fast which causes words
4.   to either meld together or words being jibberish from not pronouncing everything.
5.   Shit happens, it's not because you're an immigrant. People live in an area with X accent
6.   and they get use to that accent so other accents become difficult to understand. Of
7.   course accents can cause a language to become weird sounding, that why you always
8.   see videos of people saying words in X language and them making the word sound
9.   weird. They are probably just frustrated with having to wait an hour+ to talk to
10. someone and then non fully understanding the person they're talking to. It's shitty they
11. get mean with you, not much else I can say on that.

As discussed earlier in this study, some studies have found that accents play significant roles in how communicators understand the messages shared. Customer relations is a serious business because it determines how people perceive and want to relate to an organization. According to Cruz & Lockwood's (2021) study that examined how CSRs lose control of a call in terms of the overall exchange, the problem was attributed to poor grammar and incomprehensible accents. In another study in Canada, participants judged the Chinese-accented doctor's competence more negatively than the standard Canadian-accented doctor because Canadian-accented doctors were more intelligible (Baquiran & Nicoladis, 2020). It shows that this challenge, especially in the business world, is not peculiar to American society. However, this study showed how this played out among customers and ICSRs, using the American experience as a case.

Reddit SUs' responses to the question raised in the forum are consistent with these research findings. Excerpt A (SP1 – SP 5) reveal how accent and other factors combined to affect customer experience and satisfaction based on whom they talked with on the telephone. For example, SP 1 (1-3): The way you write, here and elsewhere, suggests to me your "perfect understandable English" is ...something less than that. Your customers are getting frustrated by trying to communicate with someone they can't understand. This response addressed the PU's assertion thus:

> *I'm new to customer service and immigrant here in USA. I speak perfect*
> *understandable english but I do not have the slang americans accent.*

One thing I noticed when I entertain people via phone through customer service. Myfirst time and job in america. Some americans tend to be disrespectful like they cant understand me when i speak the perfect english just the accent is not american like indiants or mexicans speaking english its clearly understandble but why do some americans think they cantunderstand is this kind of a superiority complex or plainly they want pure. American blooded to help them over the phone?

Also, SP 2 (2-3) states: … So, now add to the fact that someone might not be able to understand you.... I don't think the outcome is surprising. I actually understand people's anger when having a problem and then also talking to someone they can't communicate with... These excerpts reveal that SU's responses framed accent as a causative factor to why some Americans get rude at ICSRs on the phone.

However, SP 3 did not accord all the blames on ICSRs' accent. The respondent alluded to other factors, such as technological and background noise. It shows that these can also influence some Americans' reactions during a telephone conversation with ICSRs (SP 3: 5-10). The respondent asserts: I've seen this exact thing even with native English speakers from areas with heavy local dialects. If the connection is also not clear, the two can compound to make understanding more difficult. This is very common now that most people are on cell phones. I've also encountered situations where the customer service center had a lot of background noise. All three together make it hard to understand the service rep.

These responses reveal that the cause of rudeness or dissatisfaction on the part of some Americans toward ICSRs is multifaceted. The factors work against customer experience and satisfaction because it ends in insolence. It will be submitted that ICSRs' accents affect some American customers' experience and satisfaction. It then becomes imperative for business owners to look into this issue to solve it because, without the customers, no business or organization will exist. Training and re-training become inevitable. A Reddit online forum user (see Excerpt 2, SP 1: 1-3) asserts, "As someone who has dealt with a lot of customer service on both sides of the aisle, there is nothing more frustrating than getting foreign customer service because their training is typically subpar compared to local customer service." While accent has been pinpointed as a factor, it also shows that lack of adequate training is one of the causative factors to customers' frustration. Cruz & Lockwood's (2021) proposed that frequent communication training must be organized and focused on how the spoken language will function in the specific context of calls regarding how the CSRs understand, select, and relay product knowledge.

Excerpt B: Frame of the System as Causative Factor (FSCF)

SP 1

1. As someone who has dealt with a lot of customer service on both side of the aisle, there
2. is nothing more frustrating than getting foreign customer service, because their training
3. is typically subpar compared to local customer service. This is the fault of the
4. corporation who outsourced their customer service. When I worked at x-Mobile, there
5. was a stark difference in understanding of systems when comparing the Colorado and
6. Filipino call centers. Part of the overarching company saving money involves where
7. the call center is located and also how much training these call centers actually receive,
8. so my immediate frustration is about the situation and has nothing to do with the
9. individual with whom I am speaking.

SP 2

1. It's probably not because of your accent... it's likely because you're new to customer
2. service. A lot of people calling are likely already frustrated that they have to call and if
3. you're new and don't fully know what you're doing it's probably going to piss them off
4. a bit more.

SP 3

1. I was about to say this as well. Sometimes it's not an accent, but rather we have seen
2. our economy, which is mostly a service economy, get shipped overseas while still
3. paying high premium prices for goods/ said services.

SP 4

1. Customer service can be a difficult job. Most of the people that you interact with have
2. some kind of problem that they want to have fixed and they want it fixed quickly.
3. Combine that with the fact that most company have extensive automated phone
4. answering systems that they may have had to navigate to even get to you and it's easy
5. to understand how they might already be pre-annoyed before they ever even reach you.
6. Then, if they are able to detect a non-American accent it immediately gives the
7. impression that you are "outsourced" service. There is a prevailing attitude amongst
8. many Americans that outsourced support or service is less competent or less connected
9. to the "real" company than their American counterparts. So, rather than the solution to
10. their problem they see you as yet another obstacle that they have to overcome to
11. achieve their solution. That's just one explanation though. Some people are just
12. … Or racists. But customer service is a difficult field in terms of people. Most
13. everyone you are talking to is already annoyed. Try not to take it personally or too
14. seriously. Congratulations on your immigration! I hope you find that most Americans
15. are welcoming and I know many of us enjoy talking to immigrants.

SP 5

1. I'm Latina and I don't have an accent. English is my second language and when I call
2. CSR based in India I find it's not the accent that bothers me or the fact they're over
3. seas, it's the lack of conceptual understanding. I feel I'm talking to a heavily scripted
4. robot. You can't feel any emotion on their end, sympathy or empathy. Most just keep
5. reading to me the same sentences over and over again. And here I am saying "but do
6. you really understand the problem?" From my end I don't feel they do. It's
7. communication 101. It's part of the natural back and forth that happens when you have
8. a speaker and a receiver. From my experiences every time I call, and they're Indian, I
9. don't get empathy or sympathy or any kind of understanding from their tone. It could
10. very well be a cultural aspect of their way of communicating, however, it's frustrating
11. to add more to a situation and feeling the other side is really not comprehending the
12. issue at all & just reading from scripts.

Reddit online forum users framed the system as a causative factor (FSCF) to ICSRs operations and how they affect some Americans' customer experience and satisfaction. In this context, the "system" relates to how business organizations harness human and material resources to enhance effective workers' operations and how this action affects customer experience and satisfaction. The framing of the system as a causative factor, aside from accent, is reflected in Excerpt B (SP 1 – SP 5).

According to an SP (SP 1: 6-9), "Part of the overarching company saving money involves where the call center is located and also how much training these call centers actually receive, so my immediate frustration is about the situation and has nothing to do with the individual with whom I am speaking." Another SP (SP 2: 1-4) responds, "It's probably not because of your accent... A lot of people calling are likely already frustrated that they have to call and if you're new and don't fully know what you're doing it's probably going to piss them off a bit more." These responses also laid credence to the fact that accent is not the only factor contributing to why some American customers are dissatisfied and rude to ICSRs—employing inexperienced personnel, whether native CSRs or ICSRs, will be detrimental to customer experience and satisfaction. A company that values its customer will ensure that the human and material resources engaged provide services that meet customers' expectations.

Referencing P4: 7-9, it was mentioned that American companies' automated phone answering systems and personnel outsourcing induce customer frustration significantly. The respondent asserted:

> … combine that with the fact that most companies have extensive automated phone answering systems that they may have had to navigate to even get to you and it's easy to understand how they might already be pre-annoyed before they ever even reach you. There is a prevailing attitude amongst many Americans that outsourced support or service is less competent or less connected to the "real" company than their American counterparts.

Business organizations must ensure they strategically and effectively harness human and material resources by putting the right pegs in the suitable holes, especially by empowering ICSRs to deliver more effective communication services to enhance customer experience and satisfaction. In line with this thought and how an effective system can improve customer relations, Madan (2017) suggests that organizations can generally overcome some challenges CSRs face. This can be achieved by increased corporate awareness, highlighting customers' importance, better communication about customers across different units of the organization, best practices, and better

knowledge and understanding of the solutions available to support organizational customer needs. Others include an increased budget for customer programs, customer experience management development, and employee training about implementing customer programs.

Excerpt C: Frame of Racism as a Causative Factor (FRCF)

SP1	
1.	Because America is a bully nation, run by bullies who were elected in by bully
2.	thinking citizens. This is not a friendly country to outsiders coming to take "our jobs".
SP 2	
1.	Ah, because theyre racist. Sorry you have to deal with that
SP 3	
1.	you answered your own question. no american would say "when i entertain people via
2.	phone through customer service". its a weird turn of phrase here. a lot of racists in
3.	america. taught by rush limbaugh to hate anyone with an accent. any job where you
4.	deal with the public you will run into it. :(best advice: practice an american accent like
5.	idris alba or daniel craig uses. or like a texas howdy yall accent. it will make things go
6.	way way more smoothly . "howdy yall, are you having a good ole day today?" "why
7.	yessir, I was raised in the great state of texas"
SP 4	
1.	It's a form of racism. I've come to the conclusion that if a person is speaking my
2.	language poorly, then I have an instant respect for someone who knows two languages
3.	and I only know one.
SP 5	
1.	Xenophobia.
SP 6	
1.	Xenophobic nationalists exist in every country

The last category discussed how some Reddit online forum users' framed their opinions to show that those rude toward ICSRs on the phone are racists. These SPs are showcased in Excerpt C, SP 1-5. However, a respondent's (SP 6:1) opinion differs. To some respondents, racism was a causative factor for American customers who were rude to ICSRs during a telephone conversation. For instance, SP 1:1-2 categorically stated, "Because America is a bully nation, run by bullies whom bully thinking citizens elected in. This is not a friendly country to outsiders coming to take "our jobs". Likewise, other SPs were equally categorical and mentioned racism without mincing words, using a word like xenophobia.

Going by these frames, it was also revealed that ICSRs' accents are not the primary reason why some Americans react rudely over the phone when they realize the ICSR does not speak in their native accent. It shows that people frame issues differently within a social construct or environment (Norton et al., 2021). Most times, it depends on each person or group's experiences. An interesting twist is SP 6: 1. This respondent states, **"**Xenophobic nationalists

exist in every country." It is not peculiar to American society. In other words, racism was not why some Americans were dissatisfied and rude to ICSRs.

Conclusion, Recommendation, Limitations, and Suggestions

This study examined what could cause some Americans' dissatisfaction and rudeness toward ICSRs during telephone communication encounters. An ICSR, a Reddit online forum user, raised the concern on the forum. The question was posted, generating a hundred and sixty (160) responses. The responses selected were analyzed to answer this question using the three categories developed for this study. Findings showed that all the respondents believed that accent plays a significant role. However, other factors, such as the system and racism, were mentioned as causative factors to some customers' dissatisfaction and rudeness. Consistent with

Goffman's (1974) framing theory shows that frames are indeed the conduit through which individuals interpret their world. As stated by Goffman (1974), this study indicates that Reddit inline forum users used the frame to make sense of their experiences and to locate, perceive, identify, and label an infinite number of occurrences to make meaningless information meaningful (p. 21). In other words, the respondents (SUs) made meanings and gave meanings to the question posed by the PU. The PU would have also made meaning to what might have been confusing about why some American customers were rude during telephone conversations.

In conclusion, it becomes logical to submit that customer experience and satisfaction are primarily affected by ICSRs accents because, in the natural sense, no customer would be rude to a CSR, whether they are ICSRs or not, if they satisfy them—provided the information or service they needed. Therefore, it is recommended that business organizations take CSRs units more seriously by providing them with the tools to operate effectively. Consistent training and re-training to improve ICSRs spoken English and effectively use human and technical communication tools will significantly reduce squabbles between ICSRs and customers.

This study is without its limitations. It is more of a presumed relation tilted toward ICSRs. Further studies may investigate if customers (in America or other places) feel a certain way when talking to a given ICSR. Also, using a single data collection technique limited this study. Future studies are encouraged to adopt multiple approaches such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and other suitable social science research techniques. This procedure would help generate more diverse and robust data from ICSRs' experiences and customers, giving more depth to the results. Notwithstanding, it is believed that the research approach used and the data collected and analyzed in this study provided salient information for its purpose and scope making its results reliable.

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