

**Accent Perception**  
**Accent and Employment in Hawaii:**  
**Immigrant Filipino self-perceptions and potential employer perceptions**

**Presenters:** Randy Weirather (Lead Presenter); Kimberly Swanson

**Intended audience:** Introductory level of difficulty; individuals with foreign accents and individuals interested in employment equity.

**Session Description**

This study examined the interactions among employability and perceptions of accent. Questions addressed were the degree to which Hawaiian Filipinos with accents rated the degree of their accent, the degree of handicap to employment caused by their accent, and their likelihood to seek its correction from accent reduction services. The degree of handicap was assessed with respect to both white and blue collar jobs. Potential employers were also asked to rate the degree of perceived accent of individuals seeking employment, and to estimate the degree to which accent affected their willingness to hire. Audiotaped speech samples were used, and participants were found with assistance from the Oahu labor union Unite Here 5, and the Filipino Community Center in Waipahu. Eight employers of both high and low status positions also participated. Results addressed the issue of accent as a hidden handicap to employment by nonnative speakers of English in Hawaii.