

Abstract

Dialect impacts the way in which people are perceived. Perceptual dialectologists have found that people often draw on cultural stereotypes to shape their perceptions of a dialect, and in extension the speakers of a certain dialect. Rarely studied in linguistics, mobile individuals are more likely to be exposed to a wider variety of dialect variation than a non-mobile individual. Because of this potential, studying mobile individuals can examine if and how mobility impacts dialect perception. The hypothesis of this study is that mobility impacts dialect perception by undermining traditional dialect stereotypes. As a perceptual dialectology study, this study focuses on how mobility influences the perceptions of dialect by non-linguists. A survey was distributed via social media to 47 participants who were asked to rate Alabama, New York, California, Michigan, and Kansas on similarity to the dialect spoken by the participant, friendliness, and professionalism. The results of this study indicate that mobility does not influence prevailing dialect stereotypes. By mobility not impacting dialect perceptions, it appears that exposure to a larger range of dialects does not influence traditionally held dialect stereotypes, and thus disproves the hypothesis.