

New Trends in Perceptual Dialectology

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The systematic study of perceptual (or folk or subjective or lay) dialectology dates back to at least the 19th Century (Polle, Willems) but was seriously developed in the mid 20th, especially in The Netherlands and Japan (Büld, Daan, Grootaers, Mase, Sibata, Weijnen). A late 20th Century revival (Inoue, Long, Preston, and others) has now established this mode of enquiry as one very commonly attached to general studies of varieties or carried out independently. In this presentation the various goals, methods, and findings are summarized and evaluated, with special regard to the following questions:

- 1) Where do people believe speech differs?
- 2) To what extent and where do the folk boundaries determined in 1) differ from those discovered by professionals?
- 3) In what way do people believe speech differs — linguistically (i.e., with reference to details) and/or incrementally (e.g., by degree).
- 4) Which linguistic signals do (and can) people use to identify varieties?
- 5) Which variant linguistic facts influence comprehension?
- 6) What sorts of factors (e.g., social stereotypes, caricatures) accompany and influence any of the answers sought in 1) through 5) above.

I examine the methodological approaches taken to answer each question, ranging from the map oriented work of the early approaches to more recent experimentally grounded procedures using resynthesized material and increasingly sophisticated experimental protocols (e.g., implicit evaluation tasks). I summarize the sorts of results obtained by each method and provide comparisons between them, as well as evaluations of their contributions to dialectology, contact (between languages and dialects), and, in some cases, sociolinguistics and even general linguistics. I conclude with a list expectations for developing and future research.



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